



# ILLINOIS FARM AND FOOD OUTLOOK

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Urbana, Illinois 61801

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## HOGS ON FARMS UP 8 PERCENT

THE MARCH 1 HOGS AND PIGS REPORT recently released by the USDA reported 44.2 million hogs on farms in the fourteen major states, an increase of 8 percent over last year. The figure for breeding stock was 7.1 million head, up 5 percent from last year. Market hogs at 37.1 million were up 9 percent. These figures were generally as expected, a slowdown in the rate of increase but a continuing buildup in hog numbers.

*SOW FARROWINGS.* The number of sows farrowing in the December-March quarter was placed at 2.3 million, a 12-percent increase. In the December report, producers planned to have a 10-percent increase. In September, the intention was for an increase of 9 percent. For the March-May period, producers were planning a 3-percent increase, compared to an increase of 4 percent indicated by the December report. The influence of the severe winter was shown by the average litter size. It was 6.81 pigs, 4 percent less than last year and the lowest average in recent years.

*WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION OF MARKET HOGS.* The heaviest weight group of over 220 pounds numbered 851 thousand, 1 percent less than last year. These hogs were mostly marketed in the first two weeks of March. At that time, federally inspected slaughter was about 12 to 14 percent above last year. The group weighing 180 to 219 pounds totaled 5 million, 9-percent increase over last year. Most of these hogs have now been marketed. The 120- to 179-pound group numbered 8.4 million, 15 percent above last year. That was the largest percentage increase of any category. These hogs will supply the market largely during April. The category of 60 to 119 pounds totaled 8.6 million, up 11 percent. The group under 60 pounds totaled 14.2 million, and this group reflected the lower litter size with an increase of only a 4 percent. These hogs will be going to market in the latter part of June and in July.

*CHANGES BY STATES IN HOG NUMBERS.* Illinois was up only 4 percent in total from last year. The number for breeding stock was the same. The greatest percentage increase was in Kansas, up 19 percent to a total of 2.1 million head and a 24-percent increase in breeding stock. The greatest increase in numbers was in Iowa, up 1.6 million to a total of 13.7 million hogs. Of the fourteen states surveyed, only Indiana and North Carolina reported lower numbers than a year ago.

*PRICE PROSPECTS.* The favorable prices since December indicate a good demand for pork. However, prices have been further benefited by the lighter weights being marketed. The average weight of barrows and gilts being marketed has generally been from 5 to 10 pounds less than a year ago. Another supporting factor has been the relatively narrow marketing margins. The industry had geared up for a heavy flow of product. With some reduction in the actual quantity, margins have been kept narrow. In the next few weeks, margins are likely to increase with the greater flow of hogs.

Some further weakness in hog prices will occur over the next few weeks with the increase in slaughter. This summer will likely see a greater-than-usual seasonal reduction, producing a stronger summer market. The price of hogs will probably reach the mid-forties.

Farrowing intentions probably will be carried out, and the number of hogs this fall may slightly exceed that of last year. Prices will not drop as low as in 1976. Demand will be stronger. The continued impact of inflation will support price rises. With an adequate corn crop, the reduction in hog numbers will not occur until 1978.

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