

THE VEGETABLE REGIONS OF INDIANA.

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The vegetable regions of Indiana cover almost the entire state. In each of these regions the soil varies greatly which permits a wide range of vegetables to be grown. The climate in these regions also assists in widening the range of vegetables grown in each section. Because of this wide variation in soil and climate the vegetable sections overlap so that within a given section which is especially adapted to a certain crop, the soil may vary to such an extent that one or more other crops may also be successfully grown.

An attempt has been made to outline the extent of these regions on the accompanying map (fig. 1). While it is impossible to show in detail the exact location of each soil type, it is understood that suitable types are present and these together with the climatic conditions adapt the regions to the crops suggested. The map is a combination in that it indicates soil adaptation and at the same time points out the present development of the vegetable industry in the state. It should also suggest lines of future development.

The principal vegetable crops raised in Indiana are tomatoes, sweet corn, potatoes, onions, cucumbers, cabbage, watermelons, cantaloupes, sweet potatoes and celery. Peppermint while not commercially classed as a vegetable crop, is included because of its special importance. Peas, green beans and pumpkins are raised to a limited extent for canning purposes, but their chief importance is as market gardening crops.

Because of its great importance as a canning crop the tomato is the second in importance of the vegetables grown in the state. There are between 60,000 and 65,000 acres of tomatoes grown annually in Indiana for canning purposes and as the industry develops this acreage will undoubtedly be materially increased. The acreage of tomatoes grown for market garden and other uses will bring the total up nearly to 75,000 acres. Tomatoes may be grown anywhere in the state and on practically any type of soil. However, it has been found that they can be raised most profitably in that part indicated on the map by the horizontal lines, or that part of the state from the Wabash Valley south to the Ohio River. A rather extensive strip of very rough territory, extending east and west, nearly across the state, and lying between the west and east branches of the White River, and crossed by the latter, is largely undeveloped as a truck region, and much of it never will be because of the difficulty in getting these products to market in good condition. Several narrow regions lying along certain rivers are composed of sand, and since they are better adapted to certain other crops, few tomatoes are raised in them. The soil north of the Wabash Valley is adapted to tomato growing but the early frosts kill the plants often

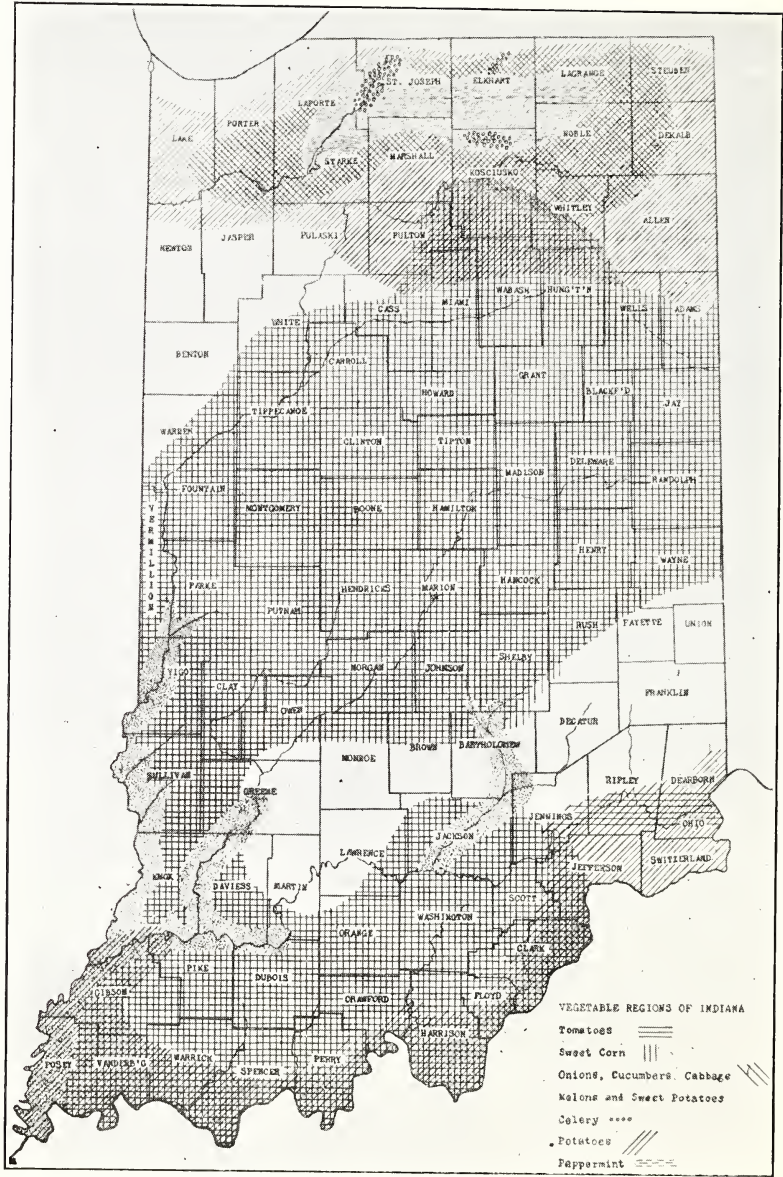


Fig. 1. Vegetable Regions of Indiana.

before a very large part of the fruit can be harvested, and for this reason the canning industry is not expanding rapidly in this direction.

Lake Michigan tempers the northwest winds and tends to protect a strip of territory lying between South Bend and Valparaiso north of the Kankakee River from late spring and early fall frosts. Hence, here lies a possibility for further profitable expansion of the tomato as well as other vegetable industries.

The soil best adapted to sweet corn is indicated by the perpendicular lines on the map. Approximately 20,000 acres of sweet corn are raised annually for canning purposes and this total will probably be increased if the present demand for the canned product continues. Probably 5,000 to 6,000 acres are raised for other purposes in the state, which brings the total acreage for this vegetable close to 25,000 acres. This crop is a little more exacting in its soil requirements than tomatoes, yet with proper soil treatment, sweet corn can be profitably raised over a wide range of soil types. It does best under conditions which produce the best dent corn and for this reason the largest acreages are confined to the best corn producing counties.

Potatoes are raised in every county and on nearly every farm in the state, in relatively small patches, and for the most part the yields are small. Potatoes can be grown on a fairly wide range of soils, if proper care and fertility are supplied and the climate is favorable. There are two good regions for potato growing in the state. The larger lies between the Wabash Valley and the state line on the north and extends east and west across the state. Potatoes do best in the muck and rich loams which are relatively cool, and the highest yields are obtained from the late varieties. The other region lies along the Ohio River where the early varieties, especially Irish Cobblers, are planted as a second crop. By this treatment large yields of high quality tubers are being produced. The total acreage is probably between 80,000 and 90,000 acres.

The northern vegetable soils vary suddenly and widely in type. In the potato region they vary from peats through mucks, loams, sand and clays in short distances. This region has many lakes and streams which afford an abundance of water. The muck soils produce large yields of onions, celery and peppermint. The sands are planted to cucumbers and the cool loams and to a certain extent the muck soils to cabbage. There are about 6,000 acres of onions and 7,500 acres of cucumbers planted annually in this region. The cabbage acreage is smaller, probably about 1,500 acres.

There are three well defined celery districts in this region. The largest lies southwest of South Bend, along the upper Kankakee River. It is still new and in the process of development at the present time. The second district lies just east of the city of Elkhart and the third lies in the northern part of Kosciusko County. This crop can and doubtless will be extended to other sections as the demands of the market increase. It is now being grown in a small way in other parts of the state. The total area is about 500 to 700 acres.

The sandy soils along the rivers in southern and southwestern Indiana, as indicated by the stripped areas, have developed into extensive melon regions. Both watermelons and cantaloupes are being raised on a commercial scale, and about 3,500 to 4,000 acres of cantaloupes and 3,000 to 3,500 acres of watermelons are raised annually. In certain parts of these regions, notably Knox, Sullivan, Gibson and Vigo counties, sweet potatoes are being raised. This crop is proving to be a success, when handled properly and in all probability will be extended farther. At present there are about 3,000 acres of sweet potatoes grown in Indiana.

Peas, beans, and pumpkins are being raised in limited amounts, as canning crops. No well defined areas have yet developed and probably will not for a long time, if ever. The climate is not favorable for producing peas of high quality. The season is too short, and hot weather comes on about the time the pea pods are filling. This causes a rapid maturing of the seed which is poor in quality. There are two centers where peas are still being canned. The larger of the two lies between Indianapolis and Tipton, taking in the counties of Marion, Hamilton, Tipton and Madison. The second is just north of this one and lies in the Wabash Valley, in Wabash, Miami, Fulton, Cass and Carroll counties. The total acreage is not large, probably not more than 5,000 acres annually.

Green beans are raised for canning purposes less extensively than peas, but they occupy about the same general territory and probably have an acreage less than 1,000.

Pumpkins are usually grown with sweet corn or dent corn as a companion crop and no estimated acreage is available. Most of this crop is raised in the central part of the state, in that region where sweet corn is raised in the greatest quantity, and is used to lengthen the canning season for these factories.

Peppermint is confined almost wholly to the deep non-acid mucks of northern Indiana. The oil produced is the valuable part of the crop and it often brings \$10.00 per pound. The acreage varies somewhat with the price of the oil, but it usually averages about 10,000 acres.

The areas just described show the centers of heaviest production for the various vegetable crops. It is, however, common knowledge that these crops are, or can be grown in many other places in commercial quantities. For example cantaloupes are being raised with success and good profit in Allen, DeKalb, Noble, Tippecanoe and other counties and can be raised equally advantageously in the sands of the northwestern part of the state. Celery is being grown profitably in Tippecanoe County. Cabbage, green beans and other crops are being raised everywhere in the state. The possibilities of the vegetable gardening industry are unlimited, but the most alluring opportunities lie in the muck soils of the northern part of the state. Here thousands of acres lie relatively undeveloped and at the threshold of the world's most rapidly developing industrial region. With the growth of population, due to the concentration of industrial workers, this region will be called upon more and more to furnish food. Railroads, interurban lines and good roads, leading to these markets have already been established and all is now ready for the vegetable grower to develop his business.