

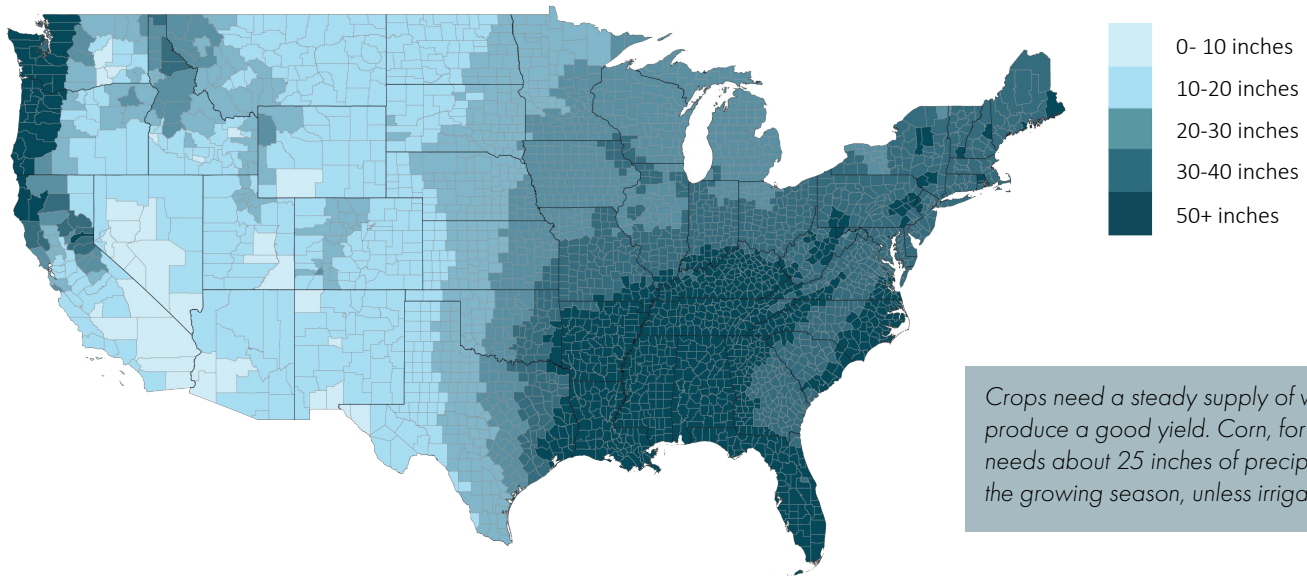
Agricultural Water Use in the United States

Irrigation helps sustain the productivity of US farmland and helps to prevent crop loss during dry periods. In much of the western part of the US, there is not enough rainfall during the growing season to support successful farming operations. By using surface or groundwater to irrigate fields, US farmers are able to produce more crops for food, fiber and fuel to meet the needs of the growing population. Irrigation can also be useful in areas that may normally get enough rain to support crops, but experience periods of drought or decreased rainfall.

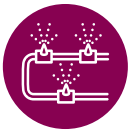


Average precipitation by county (2010-2020)

Overall, the West gets less precipitation than the East.

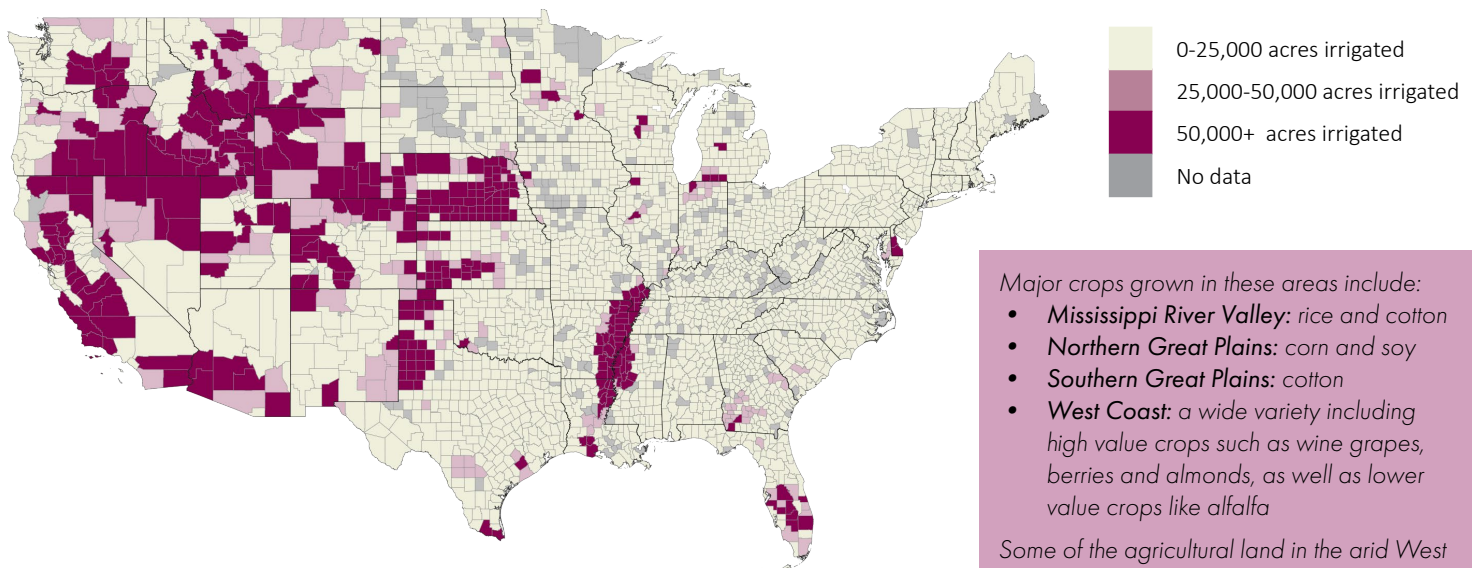


Crops need a steady supply of water to produce a good yield. Corn, for example, needs about 25 inches of precipitation during the growing season, unless irrigation is possible.



Farmland irrigated by county (2017)

Most irrigated farmland is located in the drier areas of the West. Almost 60 million acres of farmland were irrigated in 2017 (not including rainfed acres). This is about the same area as the state of Indiana.



Major crops grown in these areas include:

- **Mississippi River Valley:** rice and cotton
- **Northern Great Plains:** corn and soy
- **Southern Great Plains:** cotton
- **West Coast:** a wide variety including high value crops such as wine grapes, berries and almonds, as well as lower value crops like alfalfa

Some of the agricultural land in the arid West is used as rangeland and is not irrigated.