

Most demographers and other professionals concerned with population and economic growth appear to be inclined to believe the area will grow at least as rapidly during the coming decade as it did in the 1970s. The rates of growth of the past decade were applied to the 1980 population of each state to develop Table 2.

If the projections in Table 2 turn out to be essentially correct, total population in the nine states will be more than 60 million in 1985 and will exceed 62 million in 1986. This would represent a population expansion of 16 per cent since 1980 and an increase of 43 per cent since 1970.

BEEF CATTLE PRODUCTION IN THE NINE-STATE AREA

Beef cattle production in the southern United States is composed primarily of commercial cow-calf operations. A breeding herd is kept on pasture the year round, and calves are sold as weanlings in the fall. The calves then move out of the area to the Midwestern and Plains states where they are stockered for later movement into feedlots. Not infrequently the animals are transported back into the South as finished beef.

About one-third of the beef cattle inventory of the United States is in the nine southern states. Texas leads the nation in the number of beef cattle and has more than one-sixth of the country's cattle. This state has one-half of the cattle in the nine states included in this study (Table 2).

The number of cows that had calved declined in the nation and in the area between 1977 and 1979. The largest percentage drop occurred in Mississippi (28 per cent) while Texas numbers showed the greatest absolute decline (592,000 head). At the beginning of 1981 Texas and Florida were the only southern states that reported more than a million head of beef cows that had calved. Numbers in the nine states are not growing relative to the national total. Only Florida, North Carolina, and Texas had higher percentages of the national total in January 1981 than in January 1977.

The bull inventory of the nine-state area comprises approximately one-third of the total beef breeding males of the nation. The numbers declined in the area and nation from 1977 until 1980 but had increased somewhat by January 1981 (Table 3).