

## GEOGRAPHICAL RECORD

### BOVOTOPIA\*

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Hay meadows and grass pastures grazed by small herds of beef cattle dominate the open rural landscape of much of the eastern United States (Figure 1). I coined the name “Bovotopia”—from the Latin word for “cow” and the Greek word for “place”—to describe this vast area of cattle rearing, which is far larger than any of the traditional regions of the East.

Bovotopia has become a cattle-rearing area by default, because much of the land suffers from such serious environmental limitations that it cannot produce row crops competitively, and its only alternative economic use is forestry. Beef cattle are a last resort, albeit a very prestigious last resort, for agricultural areas that have no better alternative.

The alluvial plain of the lower Mississippi River divides Bovotopia into two major segments. The eastern segment extends northeastward from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where it melds into the great milky way of dairy farms that runs westward from Maine to Minnesota. The western segment reaches southwestward from Saint Louis, Missouri through San Antonio, Texas, toward the Rio Grande.

In some parts of Bovotopia more than 90 percent of the farmland is wooded, and hence of only limited agricultural value, even though some owners have what are called “tree farms.” I subtracted the acreage of farm woodland from the total acreage of land in farms to calculate the acreage of open farmland in each county. Throughout Bovotopia more than half of the open farmland is used only for hay crops and pasture, and in much of the area more than three-quarters is so used (Figure 2).

I calculated the total acreage of hay crops and pasture by adding three categories from the census of agriculture: land used for hay, haylage, grass silage, and greenchop; cropland used only for pasture and grazing; and all pastureland and rangeland except cropland pastured and woodland pastured. Combining these three categories of land use into one single category makes eminent good sense, both visually and functionally, because hay land looks much like pastureland, and both produce only forage that is used primarily, if not exclusively, to feed cattle.

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