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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 26, 1931

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WATER SHORTAGE IN TONS

The statement that certain parts of the United States had so many inches less rain last year than the average fails to convey to most people's minds any clear idea as to the actual shortage of water involved in the great drought. Not everybody realizes that an inch of rainfall is equivalent to 113 short tons (101 long tons) of water to the acre.

A more illuminating mode of reporting the rainfall deficiency has been adopted by J. B. Kincer, of the U. S. Weather Bureau. He says:

"Twenty-seven states had deficient precipitation each month for periods ranging from two to twelve months, and the total shortage for these states during the droughty periods was more than 700,000,000,000 tons of water. For the eight states-- Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Missouri, Indiana and Illinois -- most affected by the drought, the shortage was nearly 300,000,000,000 tons, and, in general, for each 100-acre farm, for the three summer months alone, it was about 60,000 tons, or an average of nearly 700 tons a day."

These figures are given in short tons -- 2,000 pounds to the ton. Thus the daily shortage during the summer on a good-sized farm in the states mentioned averaged 1,400,000 pounds, or about 167,500 U. S. gallons, of water, as compared with the supply in a normal year.

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