



Crop circles in southwest Kansas, in the central United States, June 24, 2001. This region had been covered largely by shortgrass prairie prior to human settlement but now is dominated by agricultural plots, particularly corn, wheat, and sorghum. The prominent circular shapes are due to central pivot irrigation, with water drawn out of a well in the center of the field and long pipes on wheels rotating around the pivot and spraying the water on the crops. The small circular fields in this image are 0.8 km (0.5 mi) in diameter, and the large fields are 1.6 km (1 mi) in diameter. In general, the mature growing crops are dark green, the less mature growing crops are paler green, the recently harvested fields are gold, and the fields that have been plowed under or lie fallow are brown. (Data from the ASTER instrument on the Terra satellite; figure courtesy of the United States/Japan ASTER Science Team and the NASA Earth Observatory.)