Farm Labor

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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FARM EMPLOYMENT LOWER THAN YEAR AGO
FARM WAGES HIGHEST OF RECORD

The number of people working on farms the first of April was 9,080,000 -- or about 3 percent lower than for the same date last year; and the general level of farm wage rates was at an all time high, the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported today. The index of farm wages was 292 percent of the 1910-14 average -- 17 points higher than on January 1 this year and 53 points higher than on the first of April a year ago.

All sections of the country indicated sharp increases in farm wage rates from April last year with the largest gain recorded by the Pacific Region where the index rose 57 points during the 12 month period. The rise in the average rates per month with board ranged from 16 percent in the East North Central Region to 26 percent in the West South Central States. The largest relative increase from last April in the rate per day without board was in the West South Central Region where a gain of 28 percent was made; the smallest increase was 13 percent in New England.

The index of supply of farm workers available April 1 this year was 54 percent of the 1935-39 average based on the judgment of crop reporters. This percentage is only slightly smaller than the percentage reported for the same date last year. The demand for farm workers, at 127 percent of the 1935-39 average was also about the same as reported a year ago.

The estimated number of unpaid family workers -- 7,401,000 on April 1 -- is only slightly lower than the 7,433,000 working on farms April 1, 1943, but is about 200,000, or around 3 percent less than the April 1 average for the period 1935-39. Hired farm employment dropped about 10 percent from 1,875,000 April 1, 1943, to 1,679,000 April 1, 1944. Hired employment April 1 this year was about 16 percent below the 1935-39 April average. All geographic regions recorded declines from a year ago in hired workers except the Pacific which showed no change. The largest decrease from last year was in the West South Central Region where unseasonable weather plus the general scarcity of help combined to reduce the number of paid workers on farms 25 percent below the April 1, 1943 level.

Estimates of numbers of farm workers, farm wage rates, etc., in these Farm Labor Reports, are based upon data from about 25,000 farms so distributed throughout the country that practically every county is represented. The respondents for the most part are farm operators who regularly each month report to the Department on crop prospects, milk and egg production, farm employment, etc. The correspondents are requested to report the number of family workers and hired workers doing 2 or more days of work during the previous week. The farm employment estimates, therefore, represent the total number of persons 10 years of age and over regardless of sex, doing two days or more of work on farms during the week including the first of the month. Exchange workers and persons doing primarily house work are not included in these figures. Migratory workers, war prisoners, foreign importees, such as Mexicans, Jamaicans and Bahamians, townspeople, furloughed soldiers, Japanese evacuees, and any other persons doing two days of farm work during the week of inquiry are reflected in the farm employment estimates in these reports. Part-time farmers and others whose major occupation may be of a non-farm nature are included provided they did two days or more of farm work during the week specified. The primary purpose of the labor questions on these inquiries is to obtain data relative to the number of people actually working on farms during a definite period and is not an attempt to classify individuals as to their major occupation. During the past two years a large number of people have left farms to enter industry or the armed forces and many of the people now in the farm labor force do not have the work capacity of those formerly employed but in a record of persons working they are counted the same as more experienced help.

Wet Fields Delayed Farm Work in Most Regions During March

The problem of labor for farm work continues to be a pressing one in New England and is becoming a matter of greatest concern as the spring work season approaches. The index of supply of farm labor is 46 percent of the 1935-39 period, 2 points lower than in April a year ago and the lowest index for any geographic division this month. The number of people working on New England farms declined from 223,000 April 1, 1943, to 217,000 the first of April this year.

The Middle Atlantic States experienced varied weather during March and in some areas, particularly in New Jersey, farmers were unable to accomplish much field work because of wet soils. The April 1 index of supply of farm labor at 53 percent was unchanged from a year earlier and the demand index of 126 was only slightly different than on April 1, 1943. Farm work though delayed is not far behind schedule for this season of the year. Rain and snow during March over most of the North Central States prevented much field work being done and field conditions the latter part of the month were quite comparable to those prevailing at the end of February. Usually a considerable part of spring seeding of small grains has been done by the first of April but this

year unfavorable weather had prevented much of this being accomplished. In the West North Central region the April farm labor supply index was only 49 percent of the 1935-39 average and the demand index was 139, the highest for any region. Many farm boys prefer to get into the armed forces even though their local draft boards are willing to defer them for farm work. As a consequence this region is very much concerned over the lost of young men competent to operate the machinery which is customarily used in the production and harvest of crops in the area. The number of hired workers on April 1 was 14 percent below the April 1943 estimates.

Throughout most of the South wet fields prevented normal performance of farm work. This contributed to the decline of nearly 20 percent in number of hired workers on April 1 this year from the number on the same date a year ago. In the West South Central region the April index of supply of farm labor was only 51 percent compared to 57 a year earlier, the biggest decline indicated for any region. The index of farm wage rates rose 55 points from April 1943 to April 1944, the largest gain for any region except the Pacific. As has been noted, wet or snow-covered fields have delayed farm operations in the States east of the Rockies but in the Mountain Region and on the West Coast lack of soil moisture has been somewhat of a deterrent to normal progress of work on farms. In the Mountain States March was cold, windy and dry. This delayed farm work and further lowered the already low moisture content of the soil. In some parts of Idaho the soil is so dry that irrigation may be used to bring up spring sown grains. Normally the latter part of March marks the low point in farm employment in California. The job of pruning has about been finished and the cotton and olive harvests have practically been completed. Principal jobs using large numbers of hired workers around the first of April include the harvest of spring vegetable crops including asparagus, picking of citrus in southern California, thinning and hoeing sugar beets and planting of late grains, vegetables, etc. The April index of supply of farm labor for the Pacific Region is 6 points higher than a year earlier but the demand index remained practically unchanged. The index of farm wage rates in the Pacific area rose 57 points during the year, the most for any region, and on April 1 it was 360 percent of the 1910-14 base.

Farm wage rates and related data, United States, April 1, 1944 with comparisons

	Annual average 1910-14	Annual average 1935-39	April 1, 1943	Jan. 1, 1944	April 1, 1944
FARM WAGE RATES:					
Per month, with board	$22.09	$26.01	$56.84	$63.01	$68.95
Per month, without board	29.18	34.17	67.21	76.06	81.15
Per day, with board	11.16	1.23	2.47	2.96	3.07
Per day, without board	1.42	1.50	2.88	3.50	3.58
FARM WAGE RATE INDEXES: U. S.	100	118			
Unadjusted	100	118	239	275	292
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	118	244	286	298
FARM EMPLOYMENT:					
(Thousands of persons)					
Total	12,052	10,920	9,308	8,202	9,080
Family labor	9,160	8,353	7,433	6,622	7,401
Hired labor	2,892	2,567	1,875	1,580	1,679
FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES					
(Adjusted for seasonal variation)					
Total	100	91	84	86	82
Family labor	100	91	84	86	84
Hired	100	89	83	87	74
FARM WAGE RATE INDEXES BY REGIONS					
United States	100	118	239	275	292
New England	100	143	269	303	314
Middle Atlantic	100	129	251	275	293
East North Central	100	115	233	254	272
West North Central	100	98	223	234	265
South Atlantic	100	111	203	245	251
East South Central	100	101	186	220	225
West South Central	100	102	211	264	266
Mountain	100	106	219	245	263
Pacific	100	129	303	342	360
FARM LABOR SUPPLY AND DEMAND INDEXES					
Supply as percent of normal	---	100	56	58	54
Demand as percent of normal	---	100	126	123	127

Based on reports from 24,854 farmers.

Farm wage rates, by geographic divisions, April 1, 1944 with comparisons

Geographic division	Annual average 1910-14	Jan. 1, 1943	Apr. 1, 1943	Jan. 1, 1944	Apr. 1, 1944
FARM WAGE RATES	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars
PER MONTH WITH BOARD					
New England	24.18	61.43	66.50	73.40	78.49
Middle Atlantic	22.25	51.53	57.25	62.40	66.72
East North Central	23.75	50.60	56.14	60.00	65.16
West North Central	26.32	49.81	61.93	61.60	72.84
South Atlantic	14.62	28.68	29.63	35.20	36.88
East South Central	14.71	28.09	29.14	32.70	34.26
West South Central	17.35	38.29	38.60	48.70	48.26
Mountain	32.48	65.51	72.38	80.60	87.29
Pacific	33.45	93.21	104.99	117.80	126.78
PER MONTH WITHOUT BOARD					
New England	37.70	93.63	98.00	1/109.30	115.00
Middle Atlantic	33.41	75.26	83.21	89.70	96.05
East North Central	32.80	68.34	76.18	82.90	88.80
West North Central	36.86	67.37	81.18	83.20	93.75
South Atlantic	20.97	42.36	42.62	50.50	51.51
East South Central	20.80	39.02	40.01	45.50	46.92
West South Central	24.93	52.39	54.80	65.50	68.84
Mountain	46.42	89.30	98.21	110.90	118.18
Pacific	48.16	125.70	139.50	153.80	163.35
PER DAY WITH BOARD					
New England	1.27	3.18	3.22	3.70	3.75
Middle Atlantic	1.24	2.90	3.04	3.42	3.62
East North Central	1.31	2.80	2.96	3.36	3.49
West North Central	1.46	2.83	2.99	3.42	3.65
South Atlantic	.81	1.53	1.59	1.97	2.02
East South Central	.81	1.39	1.42	1.76	1.77
West South Central	.98	2.03	1.98	2.58	2.51
Mountain	1.50	3.20	3.27	3.82	4.04
Pacific	1.49	4.45	4.63	5.52	5.71
PER DAY WITHOUT BOARD					
New England	1.71	4.19	4.33	4.72	4.89
Middle Atlantic	1.63	3.75	3.89	4.37	4.58
East North Central	1.68	3.53	3.69	4.23	4.33
West North Central	1.88	3.65	3.76	4.42	4.72
South Atlantic	1.05	2.01	2.06	2.54	2.55
East South Central	1.05	1.79	1.80	2.23	2.27
West South Central	1.25	2.43	2.40	3.09	3.06
Mountain	2.05	3.91	4.13	4.56	4.80
Pacific	2.06	5.65	5.92	6.83	6.91

1/ Correction.

Farm wage rates, by States, April 1, 1943, and April 1, 1944

State	Per month with board		Per month without board		Per day with board		Per day without board	
	1943	1944	1943	1944	1943	1944	1943	1944
	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars
Maine	64.00	80.00	92.00	112.00	3.45	4.05	4.25	5.10
N.H.	61.75	73.00	94.00	113.00	3.40	3.90	4.30	4.90
Vt.	63.25	76.50	87.50	103.00	3.40	3.60	4.20	4.55
Mass.	70.25	79.25	104.00	119.00	3.35	3.60	4.40	4.90
R.I.	73.50	85.00	110.00	122.00	3.40	3.80	4.40	4.80
Conn.	68.50	78.75	102.00	120.00	3.10	3.90	4.35	4.95
N.Y.	64.50	74.50	91.50	105.00	3.25	3.85	4.15	4.90
N.J.	64.25	78.00	95.75	109.00	3.15	3.95	4.15	4.90
Pa.	46.75	55.00	70.75	82.75	2.75	3.25	3.55	4.10
Ohio	48.25	55.25	68.50	78.50	2.85	3.30	3.50	4.05
Ind.	51.50	58.00	68.75	81.00	2.85	3.30	3.45	4.05
Ill.	61.25	72.50	77.50	92.00	3.10	3.65	3.75	4.40
Mich.	56.00	66.00	80.50	94.50	3.05	3.85	4.05	4.70
Wis.	59.75	68.25	83.00	94.50	2.90	3.40	3.75	4.40
Minn.	63.75	73.00	84.75	95.25	2.95	3.70	3.95	5.10
Iowa	73.00	85.00	90.25	106.00	3.50	4.25	4.25	5.20
Mo.	44.00	52.50	59.00	70.00	2.10	2.65	2.60	3.30
N.Dak.	70.00	82.00	92.00	105.00	3.15	3.75	4.20	5.00
S.Dak.	69.50	83.00	91.00	107.00	3.15	3.85	4.10	4.85
Nebr.	63.00	75.75	82.75	99.25	3.40	4.05	4.25	5.10
Kans.	56.75	68.50	77.00	91.00	3.15	3.65	3.95	4.60
Del.	50.25	56.00	69.25	86.00	3.10	3.80	4.00	4.60
Md.	46.75	52.75	66.25	74.75	2.70	3.20	3.45	3.95
Va.	35.75	41.75	49.25	56.75	1.85	2.40	2.45	2.95
W.Va.	36.75	42.50	51.75	58.50	1.85	2.15	2.45	2.75
N.C.	32.25	40.00	44.25	54.50	1.80	2.25	2.20	2.70
S.C.	23.00	27.00	31.75	39.00	1.10	1.40	1.40	1.80
Ga.	24.00	28.75	33.50	41.00	1.25	1.65	1.55	2.05
Fla.	30.00	46.00	52.00	64.00	1.65	2.20	2.50	3.20
Ky.	34.75	41.50	48.50	55.25	1.65	2.05	2.10	2.65
Tenn.	29.50	35.25	40.50	49.00	1.40	1.70	1.75	2.15
Ala.	27.50	30.50	37.00	41.50	1.35	1.65	1.70	2.10
Miss.	26.75	31.75	36.75	43.25	1.35	1.75	1.75	2.25
Ark.	32.75	40.75	45.50	56.00	1.60	2.00	2.05	2.50
La.	27.00	33.50	39.00	48.00	1.40	1.95	1.75	2.40
Okla.	43.00	54.00	60.00	76.00	2.30	2.90	2.90	3.50
Tex.	43.00	54.25	61.00	78.50	2.20	2.75	2.60	3.35
Mont.	86.75	103.00	111.00	134.00	4.00	4.60	4.75	5.80
Idaho	84.50	107.00	114.00	142.00	4.05	5.00	4.85	6.00
Wyo.	73.00	92.00	101.00	125.00	3.30	4.00	4.30	4.95
Colo.	65.25	76.00	92.50	106.00	3.30	3.70	4.10	4.80
N.Mex.	53.00	64.00	75.50	85.00	2.55	3.20	3.15	3.70
Ariz.	75.50	85.00	108.00	123.00	2.80	3.60	4.10	4.65
Utah	86.75	106.00	105.00	132.00	3.60	4.20	4.25	4.75
Nev.	82.75	90.00	103.00	115.00	3.65	4.45	4.60	5.00
Wash.	103.00	124.00	143.00	167.00	4.85	5.80	6.30	7.20
Oreg.	97.50	119.00	129.00	151.00	4.50	5.60	5.50	6.60
Calif.	106.00	128.00	140.00	164.00	4.60	5.70	5.90	6.90
U.S.	56.84	68.95	67.21	81.15	2.47	3.07	2.88	3.58

Farm Labor Supply and Demand: Index Numbers, by Geographic Divisions

January 1, 1941 - April 1, 1944

Geographic Division	Based period 1935-39 1/	Index of Supply													
		1941				1942				1943				1944	
		Jan.	April	July	Oct.	Jan.	April	July	Oct.	Jan.	April	July	Oct.	Jan.	April
New England	100	84	73	60	57	60	56	52	49	49	48	50	44	45	46
Middle Atlantic	100	92	77	60	61	65	60	57	51	52	53	55	54	58	53
East North Central	100	95	80	66	66	69	66	64	52	57	57	55	54	60	64
West North Central	100	96	84	74	71	70	66	61	48	53	54	55	52	57	49
South Atlantic	100	92	80	75	71	71	70	67	60	61	60	60	58	59	57
East South Central	100	94	87	82	74	76	71	71	63	66	63	64	61	62	60
West South Central	100	91	84	76	70	71	69	65	56	55	57	57	53	56	51
Mountain	100	93	85	72	69	69	64	56	47	50	53	53	53	59	50
Pacific	100	93	84	73	69	66	66	54	47	52	52	55	62	61	58
United States		93	82	73	70	70	67	62	54	56	56	57	56	58	54
		Index of Demand													
New England	100	103	112	113	114	109	117	119	116	116	123	120	124	119	121
Middle Atlantic	100	103	111	111	114	108	117	116	120	118	124	122	122	119	126
East North Central	100	105	111	115	117	112	118	119	124	122	127	123	123	119	125
West North Central	100	112	122	127	127	125	130	131	139	135	138	139	137	132	139
South Atlantic	100	105	108	108	108	110	116	114	118	117	120	117	117	121	119
East South Central	100	103	111	107	113	116	120	119	123	122	125	122	125	124	128
West South Central	100	107	114	121	124	120	123	128	136	128	131	132	129	125	132
Mountain	100	108	115	124	128	119	125	131	131	126	135	30	132	126	133
Pacific	100	104	111	113	115	113	114	121	122	122	122	121	122	122	123
United States		105	112	115	117	114	119	121	125	122	126	125	125	123	127

1/ Base average of reported data for 20 quarters, January 1935 - October 1939.

Farm employment, United States and geographic divisions, April 1, 1944 with comparisons

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT

Geographic Division	Jan. 1, 1942	Apr. 1 1942	Jan. 1 1943	Apr. 1 1943	Jan. 1 1944	Apr. 1 1944
	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's
United States	8,287	9,483	8,171	9,308	8,202	9,080
New England	210	229	207	223	201	217
Middle Atlantic	497	575	485	553	493	544
East North Central	1,226	1,382	1,233	1,335	1,223	1,313
West North Central	1,408	1,523	1,380	1,500	1,383	1,467
South Atlantic	1,459	1,805	1,463	1,758	1,477	1,723
East South Central	1,271	1,547	1,242	1,512	1,275	1,466
West South Central	1,424	1,548	1,400	1,542	1,366	1,470
Mountain	361	409	343	398	348	390
Pacific	431	465	418	487	436	490

FAMILY WORKERS 1/

United States	6,632	7,473	6,615	7,433	6,622	7,401
New England	151	161	155	161	153	158
Middle Atlantic	377	414	371	404	373	400
East North Central	1,027	1,135	1,047	1,123	1,038	1,118
West North Central	1,205	1,280	1,197	1,281	1,200	1,279
South Atlantic	1,131	1,386	1,139	1,361	1,156	1,357
East South Central	1,096	1,322	1,079	1,295	1,095	1,283
West South Central	1,102	1,189	1,099	1,209	1,074	1,203
Mountain	272	292	263	297	262	298
Pacific	271	294	265	302	271	305

HIRED WORKERS

United States	1,655	2,010	1,556	1,875	1,580	1,679
New England	59	68	52	62	48	59
Middle Atlantic	120	161	114	149	120	144
East North Central	199	247	186	212	185	195
West North Central	203	243	183	219	183	188
South Atlantic	328	419	324	397	321	366
East South Central	175	225	163	217	180	183
West South Central	322	359	301	333	292	267
Mountain	89	117	80	101	86	92
Pacific	160	171	153	185	165	185

1/ Includes farm operators and members of their families doing farm work without wages.

Based on reports from 24,954 farmers who reported for their own farms the number of family and hired workers doing 2 or more days of work during the week of inquiry.

Foreign workers employed in or available for Agricultural work, by country of origin and State of employment, about the first of months shown

State	1943						1944				
	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.
Number of MEXICAN Workers											
Minn.	--	--	--	381	--	90	--	--	--	--	--
N.Dak.	--	--	--	--	209	190	--	--	--	--	--
S.Dak.	100	100	91	60	86	150	1	1	--	--	--
Nebr.	150	150	284	154	189	180	219	134	29	88	--
Kans.	--	50	67	--	--	50	52	--	--	--	--
Mont.	1,125	1,127	1,257	878	1,818	1,906	6	6	4	3	50
Idaho	305	655	559	985	815	1,779	31	1	2	2	52
Wyo.	300	300	285	339	465	482	10	10	5	5	--
Colo.	593	593	624	1,086	705	790	104	1	1	1	--
Ariz.	1,318	1,558	984	849	1,096	1,600	1,625	1,499	1,259	959	1,068
Nev.	--	101	549	549	332	193	146	98	61	60	50
Wash.	250	350	1,704	1,220	2,065	2,397	165	49	48	49	162
Oreg.	250	1,475	1,936	3,138	2,498	1,874	328	265	261	263	486
Calif.	13,489	16,639	22,075	26,386	26,000	23,787	20,980	12,981	11,819	12,731	20,011
Total	17,880	23,098	30,415	36,025	36,278	35,468	23,667	15,045	13,489	14,161	21,877

State	1943						1944				
	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.
Number of JAMAICAN Workers											
Maine	--	--	--	--	291	129	--	--	--	--	--
Conn.	954	1,003	1,000	1,275	1,169	238	226	222	223	223	224
N.Y.	--	1,529	1,524	1,529	1,890	623	--	--	--	--	--
N.J.	1,086	2,052	1,942	1,121	1,738	--	980	187	194	194	191
Pa.	304	311	309	306	294	161	87	--	--	--	--
Ohio	40	40	181	208	393	180	15	6	6	6	--
Ind.	136	208	186	315	220	42	2	--	--	--	--
Ill.	175	343	638	587	121	39	7	--	--	--	--
Mich.	1,467	723	747	1,267	1,021	339	26	18	20	20	20
Wis.	200	1,041	1,046	878	487	223	7	--	--	--	--
Minn.	--	672	357	624	359	--	--	--	--	--	--
Iowa	--	--	314	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
N.Dak.	--	--	--	--	135	1,194	--	--	--	--	--
Md.	--	--	--	100	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Del.	--	--	--	--	--	109	--	--	--	--	--
Fla.	--	--	--	--	--	1,315	1,471	1,702	1,699	1,684	1,684
Idaho	306	561	560	558	532	374	1	--	--	--	--
Total	4,668	8,483	8,804	8,768	8,650	4,966	2,822	2,135	2,142	2,127	2,125

Foreign workers employed in or available for Agricultural work, by country of origin and State of employment, about the first of months shown

State	1943						1944				
	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.
Number of BAHAMIAN Workers											
N.Y.	--	--	393	903	837	100	--	--	--	--	--
Ind.	--	--	--	27	121	11	--	--	--	--	--
Ill.	--	--	--	50	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Mich.	--	--	--	--	94	--	--	--	--	--	--
Minn.	--	--	--	32	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Del.	105	105	105	278	227	72	72	--	--	--	--
Md.	214	1,266	1,785	1,373	1,446	951	--	50	41	37	37
Va.	--	692	699	707	251	420	--	--	--	--	--
N.C.	--	290	754	227	937	--	--	--	--	--	--
S.C.	--	20	13	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Fla.	2,655	541	260	276	340	2,259	3,755	3,616	3,483	3,399	5,144
Tenn.	--	--	301	412	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	2,974	2,914	4,310	4,285	4,253	3,813	3,827	3,666	3,524	3,436	5,181
Total Foreign Workers											
U.S.	25,522	34,495	43,529	49,078	49,181	44,247	30,316	20,846	19,155	19,724	29,184

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