Farm Labor

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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FARM EMPLOYMENT HIGHER ON FEBRUARY 1

With above normal temperatures and fair weather prevailing in most parts of the country during the last week in January, seasonal farm work progressed rather satisfactorily, and the number of persons working on farms rose almost as much as usual, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported today. Farm employment totaled 8,383,000 persons on February 1, up about 180,000 from a month earlier, to a point just a trifle higher than a year ago.

Activity on the farm was limited to care of livestock, cutting wood, and other midwinter tasks in the more northerly regions of the country. In the central portions, plowing for spring crops was proceeding in many areas; in the South, preparation for spring planting made good progress, while harvesting of winter truck and citrus crops continued at an accelerated pace.

Over half of the January increase in persons working on farms occurred in the hired labor category. About 100,000 additional hired hands were taken on during the month. This increase was distributed throughout all regions of the country except the West South Central and Rocky Mountain States, where small declines occurred. Despite these increases the national total of 1,681,000 hired workers on February 1 was 50,000 smaller than a year earlier.

The number of family workers (including farm operators) employed on the first of this month totaled 6,702,000, up 80,000 from January 1 and about 65,000 more than a year earlier. These increases accounted for the slight excess in the total number of people working over the number a year ago.

Work done on New England farms was restricted largely to the care of livestock and poultry and wood cutting during the last week in January. Similar jobs were being handled in other Northeastern States. In addition the

mild weather and thawing of the ground enabled farmers in parts of New Jersey to proceed with their spring plowing.

The mild open winter in the East North Central States also has enabled farmers to do more work than usual. In Ohio, corn husking has been completed after the considerable delay experienced last fall. Conditions have been suitable for plowing in sections of Illinois and spring oats already planted in some instances in the southern most counties of Illinois.

Farm employment in the West North Central States continued to decline during January with snow and heavy rain in the northern Great Plains hampering farm activities. The use of war prisoners is reported to be adding to the labor supply somewhat in Kansas. The drain of the draft and of higher-wage industries on the farm labor supply is still causing some concern in other parts of the region but, so far this year, farm work apparently is well advanced.

In the Southeast, more people were working on farms on February 1 than a month earlier, and more family workers were employed than a year ago. In Maryland, care of livestock, cutting wood, and pruning were the principal jobs performed on February 1. Some plowing was accomplished as the weather permitted. Farther South tobacco was being sown. Stripping and grading the 1943 tobacco crop was still under way in Kentucky. Southern Alabama farmers were planting potatoes during the last week in January while in Florida, the harvesting of citrus and winter truck crops continued at an accelerated pace. Carlot shipments of these crops from all States during the week including February 1 were 47 percent heavier than a month earlier and 7 percent larger than a year ago.

Stormy weather in the West South Central States on February 1 was reflected in a lower level of farm employment than a month earlier, whereas some seasonal advance usually occurs. Preparations for spring planting were beind made in Oklahoma as weather permitted, but as yet there was no demand for seasonal workers except in the area producing spinach for market. Wet fields and continuous rains delayed spring plowing in Texas.

Farther West, in Arizona, cotton picking continued in Maricopa County. Farm workers also were actively engaged in lettuce cutting and carrot pulling. Some fields of spring lettuce were being thinned but a favorable season has cut down the need for help for weeding and chopping.

On the Pacific Coast, February 1 farm employment was somewhat higher than a year ago, with weather conditions almost ideal for seasonal work in the Northwest. Washington orchards were being pruned and some early season plowing was being done in the western fringe of counties in that State. California ranchers were busy supervising the citrus harvest in the southern part of the State where the navel orange harvest was getting well under way. Vegetables were being harvested in the Imperial Valley. Lettuce and early sugar beets were being thinned. Orchards and vineyards were being pruned throughout the State. Kern county growers were planting early potatoes and others were preparing land and planting field and vegetable crops. Mexican nationals have been moved into the southern California citrus area to help with the harvest as well as into the Imperial Valley vegetable area where lettuce, carrots, and peas are going to market in considerable volume.

Farm employment indexes and related data, United States, February 1, 1944, with comparisons

	Annual average 1910-14	Jan.1, 1943	Feb.1, 1943	Jan.1, 1944	Feb. 1, 1944
FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES:					
Total:					
Unadjusted	100	68	69	68	70
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	85	85	86	85
Family labor -					
Unadjusted	100	72	72	72	73
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	85	84	86	85
Hired labor -					
Unadjusted	100	54	60	55	58
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	83	90	87	87
EMPLOYMENT (Thousands of persons)					
Farm	12,052	8,171	8,369	8,202	8,383
Family labor	9,160	6,615	6,638	6,622	6,702
Hired labor	2,892	1,556	1,731	1,580	1,681
Civilian Labor Force	---	51,800	51,700 1/	51,000	---

1/ December 1943 - latest data available.

Foreign workers employed in or available for agricultural work by country of origin and State of employment as of January 29, 1944

Mexicans		Jamaicans		Bahamians	
State	No. of workers	State	No. of workers	State	No. of workers
Nebraska	29	Connecticut	223	Maryland	41
Montana	4	New Jersey	194	Florida	3,483
Idaho	2	Ohio	6		
Wyoming	5	Michigan	20		
Colorado	1	Florida	1,699		
Arizona	1,259				
Nevada	61				
Washington	48				
Oregon	261				
California	11,819				
Total	13,489	Total	2,142	Total	3,524

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

TOTAL FARM EMPLOYMENT

Geographic division	Dec. 1, 1942	Jan. 1, 1943	Feb. 1, 1943	Dec. 1, 1943	Jan. 1, 1944	Feb. 1, 1944
	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's
United States	9,551	8,171	8,369	9,519	8,202	8,383
New England	239	207	216	231	201	211
Middle Atlantic	569	485	507	588	493	512
East North Central	1,373	1,233	1,218	1,378	1,223	1,234
West North Central	1,512	1,380	1,355	1,512	1,383	1,362
South Atlantic	1,634	1,463	1,524	1,669	1,477	1,584
East South Central	1,467	1,242	1,326	1,534	1,275	1,317
West South Central	1,841	1,400	1,426	1,677	1,366	1,344
Mountain	394	343	370	402	348	359
Pacific	522	418	427	528	436	460
FAMILY WORKERS 1/						
United States	7,272	6,615	6,638	7,269	6,622	6,702
New England	172	155	161	162	153	157
Middle Atlantic	402	371	378	394	373	373
East North Central	1,120	1,047	1,020	1,118	1,038	1,038
West North Central	1,266	1,197	1,155	1,271	1,200	1,175
South Atlantic	1,252	1,139	1,158	1,296	1,156	1,204
East South Central	1,199	1,079	1,123	1,253	1,095	1,133
West South Central	1,296	1,099	1,106	1,205	1,074	1,065
Mountain	279	263	271	285	262	275
Pacific	286	265	266	285	271	282
HIRED WORKERS						
United States	2,279	1,556	1,731	2,250	1,580	1,681
New England	67	52	55	69	48	54
Middle Atlantic	167	114	129	194	120	139
East North Central	253	186	198	260	185	196
West North Central	246	183	200	241	183	187
South Atlantic	382	324	366	373	321	380
East South Central	268	163	203	281	180	184
West South Central	545	301	320	472	292	279
Mountain	115	80	99	117	86	84
Pacific	236	153	161	243	165	178

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

Based on reports from 20,545 farmers.

Annual Farm Wage Rates and Index Numbers, by States, 1943

State	Per month		Per day		Composite rate per month 1/	Indexes of composite rates (1910-14 = 100)
	With board	Without board	With board	Without board		
	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	
Maine	71.20	102.00	3.84	4.77	88.50	289
N.H.	65.50	96.40	3.60	4.51	85.20	273
Vt.	64.30	90.60	3.45	4.38	79.90	260
Mass.	72.20	109.00	3.50	4.57	91.40	284
R.I.	74.00	113.00	3.60	4.59	97.60	326
Conn.	69.80	107.00	3.37	4.52	89.00	295
N.Y.	66.60	93.50	3.56	4.55	79.40	266
N.J.	69.10	99.20	3.52	4.42	82.10	304
Pa.	49.10	82.50	3.01	3.84	65.30	261
Ohio	50.40	70.50	3.09	3.83	61.30	234
Ind.	52.50	73.20	3.09	3.78	63.00	249
Ill.	63.30	80.10	3.38	4.12	71.30	250
Mich.	59.60	84.60	3.38	4.35	71.50	248
Wis.	62.00	85.70	3.24	4.08	72.00	225
Minn.	67.50	88.70	3.63	4.66	74.30	236
Iowa	72.50	89.60	3.87	4.69	78.20	239
Mo.	46.80	60.90	2.38	3.01	50.40	220
N.Dak.	82.20	107.00	4.73	6.01	92.20	266
S.Dak.	72.30	93.90	3.78	4.70	78.60	240
Nebr.	66.50	86.70	3.81	4.72	74.20	241
Kans.	59.60	81.20	3.67	4.57	68.90	251
Del.	52.40	77.30	3.28	4.13	70.10	309
Md.	49.00	68.60	2.98	3.76	63.80	302
Va.	37.70	52.80	2.05	2.66	47.30	248
W.Va.	38.50	54.20	2.02	2.62	47.70	189
N.C.	35.00	48.00	1.92	2.33	43.10	233
S.C.	24.80	34.50	1.23	1.55	29.80	193
Ga.	25.20	34.70	1.37	1.72	31.20	181
Fla.	34.70	57.00	1.84	2.64	47.50	209
Ky.	38.50	52.70	1.91	2.45	46.70	224
Tenn.	31.70	43.60	1.56	1.96	38.00	202
Ala.	27.80	38.30	1.48	1.90	34.90	194
Miss.	27.60	38.20	1.50	1.91	34.90	193
Ark.	35.10	48.50	1.80	2.27	43.30	200
La.	29.30	42.10	1.63	2.01	37.90	198
Okla.	46.30	63.40	2.75	3.24	59.80	227
Tex.	48.90	66.60	2.54	3.03	59.20	243
Mont.	94.00	120.00	4.79	5.58	99.70	252
Idaho	93.20	120.00	4.60	5.61	98.10	257
Wyo.	79.60	108.00	3.78	4.84	84.20	225
Colo.	70.40	97.90	3.71	4.61	76.50	240
N.Mex.	57.40	79.50	2.84	3.36	60.80	231
Ariz.	80.00	116.00	3.23	4.40	83.10	238
Utah	91.40	115.00	3.82	4.59	91.90	241
Nev.	84.50	107.00	3.78	4.70	84.40	208
Wash.	112.00	152.00	5.58	7.15	130.00	325
Oreg.	107.00	138.00	5.19	6.19	120.00	324
Calif.	114.00	147.00	5.15	6.48	126.00	320
U.S.	61.91	72.85	2.87	3.27	65.45	264

1/ Weighted average of all classes of payments. Daily rates were multiplied by 30 to obtain approximate monthly rates.

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