UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics

FARM LABOR REPORT

Washington, D. C. August 13, 1943

FARM EMPLOYMENT DOWN SEASONALLY; LITTLE LOWER THAN YEAR AGO

Approximately 11,000,000 persons were working on farms on August 1, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported today. This is a decline of about 6 percent from the July 1 peak, a decrease of 2 percent from the total of 11,249,000 persons employed on August 1, 1942, and about 3 percent less than the 5-year (1938-42) average August employment.

Total farm employment remained the same as a year ago in the Middle Atlantic and Mountain States and increased about 3 percent on the West Coast, but elsewhere declines of 2 to 4 percent are recorded. The number of hired farm workers decreased 5 percent between August 1, 1942, and the same date this year; but the number of family workers dropped only about 1 percent. All geographic divisions show declines in the number of hired workers except those on the Pacific Coast where a seasonal increase of 3 percent is indicated.

The greatest decrease from last August occurred in the West North Central States where hired employment is down about 12 percent from a year ago. Heavy rains in the Upper Mississippi and Lower Missouri Valleys delayed farm work and accounted in part for the decline.

Many farmers are paying cash wages to members of their families who in ordinary times would receive only their "keep." These people are now classed as hired workers; but despite this shift in classification, hired workers each month this year have represented a smaller percentage of total employment than during 1942.

Total farm employment on August 1 was only 3 percent less than the 1938-42 average but this does not reflect the actual change in the farm labor situation that has occurred in the last 2 years. During the months before Pearl Harbor many men and boys left the farm to enter the army or to take city jobs but after our entry into the war, the upsurge in industrial activity coupled with the tremendous expansion in the armed forces greatly increased the movement of workers away from farms. Many of the people involved were able-bodied experienced workers and to take their places, farm operators have had to employ increased numbers of farm women, and children and high school boys from the city. They have also drawn upon Japanese evacuees, soldiers on leave, Bahamian, Jamaican, and Mexican nationals, townspeople and others not normally a part of their farm labor force. Although numerically there may be as nearly as many "hands" on farms as formerly, yet the skill and capacity of many of the present workers are not equal to those employed on farms in the past.

These characteristics of the present labor force have made it necessary for farm operators to put in longer hours in the field, work more days per week, plan carefully all farm operations, make the most efficient use of machinery, simplify farm jobs, and in some instances shift to crops requiring less labor.

EMPLOYMENT BY REGIONS

New England Farm Labor Situation Continues Critical

An adequate supply of labor continues to be a serious problem to New England farmers where enticing opportunities for industrial employment are numerous and nearby. Hired labor consists increasingly of older men, school boys, women, and to some extent college girls. With the advance of the harvest season the labor problem is becoming more acute. Haying operations have been retarded by a limited labor supply with a deterioration in quality and the prospect that some hay may be uncut. Employment of family workers was higher on August 1 than on the same date last year but the number of hired workers was off about 10 percent.

Farm Employment Same as Last August in Middle Atlantic States

Total farm employment remained unchanged from last August in the Middle Atlantic States with a small increase in family workers being offset by a decline in hired employment. In the staple crop section of the northern part of New Jersey and in the northern part of Central New Jersey, the usual farming operations are probably 10 days to 2 weeks late. This late season has carried forward since the month of May.

In Central Jersey the principal activity the first of August was the harvesting of the potato crop. Growers in South and Central Jersey are beginning to harvest Wealthy apples and Golden Jubilee and Globe peaches. Berry crops are all completed with the exception of cranberries and harvesting of this crop will get underway the last part of the month. In South Jersey in the strictly commercial truck crop section, growers are harvesting both canning and fresh market tomatoes.

Farm Work Getting Done Despite Difficulties In North Central States

The number of persons working on farms in the North Central States is about the same as on August 1 last year. However, there has been a rather sharp drop in hired employment in the region west of the Mississippi River. In Indiana, apparently farm work is progressing satisfactorily despite handicaps and there is not much work that should be done being left undone because of the labor scarcity. The job is being accomplished primarily by working longer hours, exchange of labor between farms and in some cases by volunteer crews from town. Michigan vegetable growers are having a breathing spell between weeding and harvest. The question of where to obtain workers to do the heavy work at harvest time is worrying many growers.

The farm labor situation in Wisconsin continues to be a difficult one. The past month has been rather favorable from the standpoint of getting work done, however, and threshing has progressed more rapidly than usual. Haying has been

somewhat delayed by lack of labor and there is still hay to harvest which should have been cut earlier. To an increasing extent, children are assisting with the various types of farm work.

July, the month of peak labor requirements on Iowa farms, appears to have passed without any significant amount of essential work undone. There is probably more threshing to be done than usual at the first of August, but the job can be stretched out over a longer period and finally completed with the short crews available. Combines have been used more commonly this year on oats than in the past and that has shortened the threshing job. While not as extensive as in previous years, there appears to have been the usual movement of workers from southern Iowa and Missouri to the larger farms in central and northern Iowa. Hybrid corn detasseling has passed its peak with no serious shortage of workers indicated. War prisoners were used to a limited extent.

In North Dakota, members of farmers' families are all joining in an effort to take care of the immense amount of labor facing them with both haying and harvesting operations coming at the same time. With harvest just getting into full swing the number of hired workers will doubtless increase sharply as there is considerable volunteer labor waiting call wherever emergencies are anticipated. The harvest demand will also be partially met by a more universal use of exchange labor, and by the development of a program whereby outside combines from States further south will come in to take care of a large acreage.

Perhaps the greatest shortage of harvest help in Nebraska developed in the wild hay harvest work in the Sand Hills. This was partly due to the fact that this wild hay harvest work did not appeal to transient labor. Because of distances it was rather impractical to hire war prisoners, Japanese or military service men.

Workload Lighter in South on August First

Throughout the South from Maryland to Texas total farm employment dropped only about 3 percent from August 1, 1942, to the first of August this season. The decline was rather uniform over the area except that the number of hired workers decreased much more sharply in the South Central States than in the South Atlantic States. This may be accounted for in part by shifts in types of crops grown, differences in the two seasons, a return to the sharecropper system rather than depending on hired labor and the use of "importees" in some of the east coast States.

Virginia crop reporters didn't say much about help except in the flue-cured tobacco area where dry weather is causing the tobacco to ripen rapidly and hence piling up the work. Most of the threshing has been done and all row crops laid by. Fruit will be very light this year so demand for pickers should not be heavy.

In West Virginia also there were only scattered comments on the farm labor situation. Many correspondents are now telling how they have got their work done without hiring so much extra help. Generally, neighborhood exchange of

help, increase in family help, working longer hours, and better planning of work so that all farmers will be doing the same thing at the same time have greatly eased the labor situation.

North Carolina farmers were in the midst of harvesting the tobacco crop August 1 and while it was coming off the stalk at a comparatively rapid rate in some areas, field losses because of labor shortages have been negligible. Farmers in the Mountain counties were busy harvesting beans and making hay. Despite the greatly expanded bean acreage in Mountain counties, producers have had little trouble in harvesting their crop. Bahamian labor is being used in the Henderson County area to good advantage. Practically all truck crops in the eastern half of North Carolina have been harvested and while the labor situation was tight throughout the harvesting season, the loss of crops was not excessive. Labor conditions were partly responsible for the prolonged harvest season for potatoes this year, but if labor had been ample, transportation, expanded production, and the price situation, no doubt, would have extended the harvest season longer than usual.

The first of August in Georgia is a transition period between the harvest of peaches, early potatoes and truck crops along with cultivation of other crops and the approaching harvest period for cotton, sweetpotatoes, peanuts and saving of hays.

August 1 is also more or less a slack time in most parts of Kentucky. Early summer work has been completed, and small grains have been harvested. Hay is being harvested under favorable conditions as rains did not interfere so much as earlier in the season. War prisoner labor has been used in some cases around Camp Breckinridge in the western part of the State.

With farm operations in Tennessee at a seasonally low level, reporters had little comment to make concerning the labor problem. The tone of the comments from that State indicates many respondents are much more concerned over the drought than the farm labor situation at this time.

There is generally not much urgent farm work around the first of August in Alabama. Most field crops are "laid by" and cotton picking has begun in southern counties. Within the first week or teh days picking will become general over the southern third of the State and labor will be in greater demand. Without too much rainy and unfavorable weather, however, no critical labor problems are expected during the cotton harvest. The acreage has been reduced considerably in south Alabama. With the start of peanut digging there will no doubt be a need for workers in certain areas.

Wheat harvest in the Texas Panhandle had been completed, but many farmers were plowing in preparation for fall seeding. Sorghum crops in the High Plains and Panhandle areas were making good growth and were not requiring much field work. The potato crop in the area was being harvested but is confined to a rather limited area and not a large amount of labor is involved.

In the central west Texas area farm work was about at a standstill as a result of the fact that crops had been laid by, and a period of very hot dry weather had slowed up plant growth. There was some harvest of fruit in the central West Texas area, but light crops were made this year and only a small amount of labor was needed. Through central and east Texas crops had been laid by and cotton picking was not ready, so farm work in this area was principally concerned with haying, tending livestock and making preparations for cotton and feed harvest.

In the rice belt of the southeast Coastal counties harvest of early varieties had started but was interrupted by a tropical hurricane the last week of July. It now appears that the storm damage to the rice crop was not extensive and preparations are being made for harvest of rice crops to get under way early in August.

Cotton picking was in full swing in the lower Rio Grande Valley and the Nuecessan Patricio area. The crop was opening farther north into south central counties and the south part of east Texas, and picking was expected to be under way by mid-August in the entire South central and southeastern part of the State.

Farm Employment up Seasonally in Mountain States

The employment of family workers and also hired workers remained at about last year's August level. It is up from a month ago by about the usual seasonal increase.

In Utah by the end of July the red raspberries and sweet cherries were gone except for the red raspberry crop in high altitudes at Garden City in Rich County. Also, all the apricots were gone except a few too ripe ones, fit only for canning, which will still be moving to canneries for another week. About half the sour cherries had been picked by August 1. Much second cut alfalfa as well as wild hay was put up and a good portion of the small grain crop was also harvested in July. No serious labor deficiency was encountered due largely to good planning for use of women and youth labor. No mass importation of Mexican or other labor has so far been attempted. Some Mexican labor will no doubt be used for sugar beet harvest in the fall. The next peak for labor demand will be for the big peach harvest in August which promises to be acute in the Salt Lake Basin and in Utah County.

Farm Employment Higher Than Last Year on West Coast

The Pacific Coast is the only region to show a definite increase in farm employment over a year ago. The gain of 3 percent was rather uniform over the area and applied to both family and hired workers.

In Washington, weather during the first part of July was relatively cool, but during the latter part of the month was hot and clear. This provided good growing conditions and, in particularly, the hot weather the last two weeks of July had advanced the season so that it has now gained at least a week and is probably no more than two weeks behind normal and probably a week later than a year ago. Harvest conditions were good during July, and the weather did not interfere with any farm activities.

The first of the month in California large numbers of workers were being employed in the harvesting of apples, pears, and peaches. Seasonal vegetable harvest was more or less normal for the seeason. Some grain harvest also continues, as does hay and hay baling, and the usual citrus harvesting in the south. Farm employment will begin to increase rapidly now as pear and prune and almond harvesting begins. Sugar beet harvest will also begin in the early fields very shortly. The farm labor situation does not seem to be more acute than in other recent months, and is possibly somewhat relieved by the response from cities and towns to the need for farm labor, and because of the comparatively large number of Mexican nationals at work.

Farm employment and related data, United States, August 1, 1943, with comparisons

	Annual average 1910-14	July 1, 1942	Aug. 1, 1942	July 1, 1943	Aug. 1, 1943
FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES:					
Total -					
Unadjusted	100	100	93	97	91
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	86	88	85	85
Family labor -					
Unadjusted	100	96	89	96	88
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	86	87	86	86
Hired labor -					
Unadjusted	100	110	108	103	102
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	85	89	81	84
EMPLOYMENT: (thousands of persons)					
Farm	12,052	12,009	11,249	11,749	11,020
Family labor	9,160	8,827	8,122	8,763	8,058
Hired labor	2,892	3,182	3,127	2,986	2,962
Nonagricultural 1/	---	42,300	42,800	42,200	---
RELATED INDEXES:					
Prices received by farmers 2/	100	154	163	188	---
Ratio of prices received to farm wage rates	100	76	---	69	---
Factory employment 3/	100	181	183	4/200	---
Average weekly factory earnings 5/	100	341	344	4/393	---

1/ Estimates of the Bureau of the Census relating to the week preceding the middle of the month. Excludes institutional population and estimated number of persons in the armed forces.
2/ Average of the 15th of the given and the 15th of the preceding month.
3/ Adjusted for seasonal variation.
4/ June 1943 - latest data available.
5/ Factory payroll per employed worker adjusted for seasonal variation.

Farm employment based on reports from 19,762 farmers.

Farm employment, United States and geographic divisions, August 1, 1943, with comparisons

Geographic division	June 1, 1942	July 1, 1942	Aug. 1, 1942	June 1, 1943	July 1, 1943	Aug. 1, 1943
	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's
TOTAL FARM EMPLOYMENT						
United States	11,917	12,009	11,249	11,659	11,749	11,020
New England	259	290	313	257	281	306
Middle Atlantic	657	772	757	632	743	755
East North Central	1,584	1,569	1,575	1,502	1,528	1,555
West North Central	1,773	1,878	1,883	1,756	1,846	1,842
South Atlantic	2,430	2,309	2,146	2,340	2,302	2,083
East South Central	2,014	1,862	1,524	2,021	1,831	1,482
West South Central	2,152	2,146	1,833	2,079	2,064	1,759
Mountain	482	474	520	479	484	518
Pacific	566	709	698	593	670	720
FAMILY WORKERS 1/						
United States	9,037	8,827	8,122	8,962	8,763	8,058
New England	169	178	176	166	170	183
Middle Atlantic	431	468	457	415	468	467
East North Central	1,267	1,223	1,225	1,221	1,196	1,217
West North Central	1,417	1,481	1,414	1,438	1,488	1,429
South Atlantic	1,848	1,763	1,590	1,812	1,761	1,540
East South Central	1,683	1,553	1,284	1,703	1,552	1,264
West South Central	1,582	1,543	1,354	1,564	1,515	1,324
Mountain	318	283	318	319	299	318
Pacific	322	335	304	324	314	316
HIRED WORKERS						
United States	2,880	3,182	3,127	2,697	2,986	2,962
New England	90	112	137	91	111	123
Middle Atlantic	228	304	300	217	275	288
East North Central	317	346	350	281	332	338
West North Central	356	397	469	318	358	413
South Atlantic	582	546	556	528	541	543
East South Central	331	309	240	318	279	218
West South Central	570	603	479	515	549	435
Mountain	164	191	202	160	185	200
Pacific	244	374	394	269	356	404

1/ Including farm operators and members of their families working without wages.

Based on reports from 19,762 farmers.

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Farm wage rates: Index numbers of annual average rates, by States, 1923-42 1/

State	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932
Maine	180	181	174	182	185	186	191	185	157	112
N.H.	197	197	195	198	197	199	206	193	167	127
Vt.	172	184	187	187	193	198	201	188	146	114
Mass.	207	209	204	211	208	209	213	205	187	148
R.I.	214	220	217	238	230	234	238	231	199	168
Conn.	214	218	219	227	234	230	237	220	184	143
N.Eng.	193	199	200	206	207	208	213	203	174	135
N.Y.	190	195	197	202	203	200	203	188	154	116
N.J.	215	217	220	232	230	220	226	219	177	146
Pa.	197	200	201	205	207	199	204	191	155	119
M.Atl.	198	201	203	208	209	203	207	195	159	122
Ohio	172	174	175	181	180	180	178	162	126	95
Ind.	168	169	165	171	173	169	173	157	125	92
Ill.	161	168	171	172	171	168	170	154	124	90
Mich.	171	172	169	178	179	178	181	150	109	78
Wis.	162	159	159	167	170	167	172	148	109	77
E.N.Cent.	168	170	171	175	176	174	177	156	121	85
Minn.	146	143	150	153	154	153	155	139	103	74
Iowa	144	146	147	150	152	154	156	146	111	74
Mo.	147	152	153	157	157	156	159	150	122	92
N.Dak.	139	143	145	143	151	153	142	118	81	64
S.Dak.	152	150	152	150	155	157	156	146	102	70
Nebr.	146	144	147	148	153	156	158	149	114	79
Kans.	144	150	151	154	157	160	165	151	114	84
W.N.Cent.	146	148	152	153	156	157	158	145	109	78
Del.	201	206	206	206	205	198	214	189	161	120
Md.	192	212	219	224	226	221	219	206	172	138
Va.	184	195	196	193	198	195	195	183	148	114
W.Va.	178	181	176	172	167	166	161	147	122	94
N.C.	176	192	194	192	183	185	182	155	116	83
S.C.	141	162	165	164	161	158	151	138	98	71
Ga.	124	136	145	149	144	142	138	126	90	64
Fla.	132	136	146	162	144	132	132	127	106	78
S.Atl.	158	172	183	182	176	175	172	157	122	90
Ky.	166	169	161	163	157	158	158	146	123	90
Tenn.	158	161	157	156	154	153	154	146	115	85
Ala.	139	150	156	156	147	150	147	131	89	65
Miss.	144	153	157	162	158	158	159	139	95	69
E.S.Cent.	152	159	158	160	154	155	154	141	105	77
Ark.	135	140	145	145	141	140	145	128	93	71
La.	143	152	156	164	155	156	162	142	111	83
Okla.	135	143	148	155	152	149	145	130	96	75
Tex.	141	157	148	153	145	150	149	135	102	77
W.S.Cent.	141	154	154	159	152	154	155	139	104	79
Mont.	135	137	140	143	152	156	150	126	94	71
Idaho	143	141	147	152	156	153	159	147	109	79
Wyo.	137	132	130	137	140	147	148	138	110	77
Colo.	135	139	137	143	144	142	149	139	109	77
N.Mex.	133	137	133	139	142	144	146	148	114	87
Ariz.	136	137	142	140	137	142	149	145	116	90
Utah	125	144	149	151	157	152	162	156	125	92
Nev.	135	148	136	152	157	154	156	150	119	99
Mount.	137	140	142	146	148	151	155	133	110	82
Wash.	159	146	154	156	156	154	158	146	110	84
Oreg.	165	154	144	157	161	156	163	155	117	88
Calif.	180	168	174	179	182	180	182	177	141	106
Pacific	177	165	173	177	180	178	179	174	137	103
U.S.	169	173	176	179	179	179	180	167	130	96

1/ 1910-14 = 100.

Continued

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Farm wage rates: Index numbers of annual average rates, by States, 1923-42 1/- continued

State	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942
Maine	100	116	117	123	133	127	133	136	173	225
N.H.	117	127	132	135	145	147	152	150	175	221
Vt.	98	109	116	121	133	132	135	140	171	213
Mass.	129	133	138	144	151	150	155	156	184	233
R.I.	150	161	167	180	183	176	178	175	214	256
Conn.	127	133	138	150	169	171	171	173	212	251
N.Eng.	118	126	131	137	149	148	151	152	175	223
N.Y.	96	102	107	116	132	128	126	132	169	215
N.J.	122	131	131	140	157	156	156	163	195	241
Pa.	103	109	115	126	143	141	139	143	168	207
M.Atl.	102	109	113	123	140	137	135	140	173	216
Ohio	81	87	97	111	129	125	125	127	154	190
Ind.	82	90	101	112	130	128	127	131	159	197
Ill.	75	85	99	111	128	128	130	132	160	199
Mich.	69	80	92	107	133	121	121	124	157	193
Wis.	65	71	85	100	115	111	108	109	142	184
E.N.Cent.	75	83	92	109	128	124	123	126	161	196
Minn.	61	68	85	96	112	110	107	107	133	181
Iowa	59	68	83	93	106	106	108	110	136	181
Mo.	78	81	88	95	106	107	109	111	132	173
N.Dak.	56	63	76	77	89	90	88	95	133	194
S.Dak.	56	60	78	79	92	93	94	96	121	178
Nebr.	65	70	79	89	91	94	92	95	121	176
Kans.	73	81	88	98	107	105	103	106	133	184
W.N.Cent.	65	72	85	94	105	105	104	106	143	185
Del.	112	112	124	134	155	147	148	157	192	246
Md.	120	132	136	144	161	161	160	165	198	247
Va.	105	115	121	125	137	136	139	143	167	209
W.Va.	89	93	98	104	111	109	108	110	125	156
N.C.	81	102	109	112	122	118	118	121	138	177
S.C.	72	87	87	93	100	96	101	104	119	151
Ga.	63	77	81	85	96	89	91	96	109	139
Fla.	72	83	84	87	95	97	97	101	117	155
S.Atl.	84	97	101	105	118	116	116	124	137	171
Ky.	84	91	98	103	116	117	119	119	136	177
Tenn.	83	93	99	101	110	107	108	110	129	161
Ala.	63	80	85	90	99	94	95	95	111	153
Miss.	69	80	84	91	102	99	99	101	117	148
E.S.Cent.	74	85	91	95	106	104	106	107	119	158
Ark.	69	78	80	87	97	93	93	96	118	157
La.	80	86	91	93	104	102	105	105	116	149
Okla.	76	84	89	93	106	103	102	103	125	169
Tex.	77	90	95	101	109	107	104	108	132	178
W.S.Cent.	77	87	92	98	109	107	105	108	126	175
Mont.	67	81	87	95	102	107	105	108	132	187
Idaho	71	88	96	108	117	109	108	113	139	192
Wyo.	70	79	89	95	103	101	103	105	128	173
Colo.	70	74	87	96	107	105	103	106	131	179
N.Mex.	79	88	96	102	112	109	114	114	136	177
Ariz.	81	96	103	102	114	111	114	110	129	183
Utah	82	91	102	113	123	119	120	124	142	194
Nev.	79	85	95	100	113	111	107	112	127	161
Mount.	75	87	95	101	112	111	111	112	148	184
Wash.	74	87	91	106	120	113	115	122	155	233
Oreg.	78	89	98	111	123	118	119	121	157	238
Calif.	95	108	118	127	144	141	140	142	173	237
Pacific	91	103	113	123	139	134	133	136	167	241
U.S.	85	95	103	111	126	125	123	126	154	201

1/ 1910-14 = 100.

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EMPLOYMENT OF FARM WORKERS BROUGHT IN FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES UP TO July 31, 1943

MEXICANS		JAMAICANS		BAHAMIANS	
State	Number of workers	State	Number of workers	State	Number of workers
S.Dak.	91	Conn.	1,000	N. Y.	393
Nebr.	284	N. Y.	1,524	Del.	105
Kans.	67	N. J.	1,942	Md.	1,785
Mont.	1,257	Pa.	309	Va.	699
Idaho	559	Ohio	181	N. C.	754
Wyo.	285	Ind.	186	S. C.	13
Colo.	624	Ill.	638	Fla.	260
Ariz.	984	Mich.	747	Tenn.	301
Nev.	549	Wis.	1,046		
Wash.	1,704	Minn.	357		
Oreg.	1,936	Iowa	314		
Calif.	22,075				
Total	30,415		8,804		4,310