H. M. Curtiss

Farm Labor

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BAE

Washington, D. C. July 14, 1944

FARM EMPLOYMENT LOWER THAN YEAR AGO WAGE RATES HIGHEST OF RECORD

The Department of Agriculture reported today that of the 11,355,000 persons estimated to be working on farms in the United States the first of July those who received wages were paid at the highest rates of record. Farm employment was down about 3 percent from July 1, 1943 and about 9 percent from the 1935-39 average. Wages paid to farm workers, however, were 20 percent higher than in July last year and abour 2 3/4 times as high as in the 1935-39 period. The farm wage rate index of 328 on July 1 is 36 points higher than it was in April 1944 and is 54 points higher than on July 1 a year ago. Thus the quarterly increase in the farm wage rate index which began in January 1941 has continued to the present with each quarterly index higher than the one preceding it.

All parts of the country report higher wage rates than for July 1, 1943, with the largest gain (25 percent) recorded by the West South Central Region.

The employment of unpaid family workers on July 1 is estimated at 8,623,000 persons or only 2 percent less than a year ago. In two regions, the East North Central and the Pacific, the number of family workers was slightly higher than the previous July but all other geographic divisions recorded small decreases in numbers of family workers employed on farms.

Hired farm employment, estimated at 2,732,000 persons, was off 8 percent from July 1, 1943 and was 13 percent lower than the July 1 average for the 1935-39 period. The Pacific Region showed a slight gain compared to last July but all other areas reported reduced numbers of wage workers with the biggest declines occurring in the South Atlantic and East South Central regions. Part of this decline in hired farm employment in the Old South is no doubt due to the reduction in acreage in crops this year compared to last and particularly to the sharp curtailment in cotton acreage. A late spring plus uncertainty as to labor supplies caused many farmers to shift to other crops requiring less hand labor or to allow their fields to lie idle.

For the country as a whole, the index of supply of farm labor on July 1 was 55 percent of the 1935-39 base and that for demand 125 percent, both being the same or very close to the indexes for July 1943. Thus, in the opinion of crop reporters

the situation relative to the supply of and demand for farm labor is about the same as in July of last year. The farm labor force this summer continues to be made up of an unusually large percentage of farm women and children, townspeople, war prisoners, foreign workers, and others, some of whom have had little experience at farm work. These people are making an important contribution to the wartime job of food production but frequently their lack of skill and unsuitability for certain types of farm work create a difficult problem for farm operators. The chart on page 11 indicates the increasing spread between the size of the labor force and the aggregate size of the farm enterprise. It is clear that the output per worker has increased sharply in recent years.

New England - In New England, the season is about up to normal. Cultivation of row crops, haying, and spraying and dusting fruit and vegetable crops are the dominant farm operations in early July. The supply of farm labor is, of course, short and particularly in regard to experienced workers that can instruct and supervise inexperienced help. A considerable number of laborers have been brought from Newfoundland and Jamaica for work on New England farms. Farm wage rates currently reported are somewhat higher in New England than they were in April of this year, and considerably higher than in July a year ago. The number of people working on farms is lower than at this time last year.

Middle Atlantic States - This is a particularly busy season for farmers in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania as they are engaged in cultivating row crops, cutting hay, threshing grain, and harvesting fruit. Every one on a farm who is able to do any work at all is in the field at this time and in addition large numbers of women and school children from towns and villages are being employed at farm work. Later in the month potato digging will get under way and additional workers will be needed at that time. It is expected that this need will be met to some extent by migratory workers from the South and by foreign importees, many of whom are now working on farms in this region. Employment of hired workers was down 7 percent from July 1943. This was the greatest percentage decrease for any region except the South Central.

East North Central States - At the turn of the month the weather over most of the East North Central region was favorable for farm work. Harvesting of wheat, hay, and oats was in progress and fruit picking was getting under way. The delayed planting of row crops and the early harvesting of small grains has doubled up farm work in many areas so that planting, cultivating, haying, and small grain harvest are all going on at the same time. The fuller use of tractors and tractor equipment plus long hours and wide cooperation among farmers is getting the job done in a generally satisfactory manner despite limited labor supplies. Farm wage rates have continued to increase in this region as elsewhere and are the highest so far reported during the present war. The number of family workers increased slightly over July a year ago, but hired farm employment dropped about 6 percent.

West North Central States - The estimated number of workers on farms in the West North Central region is relatively lower than in the East North Central region compared to a year ago. This reflects a generally tighter farm labor situation in this area than exists farther east as indicated by the farm labor demand index and the relative change in farm wage rates compared to July 1943. The Office of Labor is cooperating with the State Extension Service in recruiting domestic workers from other States for the wheat harvest. In addition, Mexican Nationals will be moved into the wheat harvest as soon as arrangements can be made to release them from

ugar beet hoeing in the inter-mountain States. Wage rates in the West North entral region increased from July 1943 to July 1944 about the same as the U. S. verage.

uth Atlantic States - Farm operations in the South Atlantic States the first of ly varied from the "summer lull" in Florida to rather intense activity farther rth. The weather was favorable for farm work throughout most of this area at the irst of the month. The estimated total number of people working on farms July 1 s about 5 percent less than for the previous July but hired employment was lower y 15 percent. Part of this decline in number of wage hands is attributed to the eduction in cotton acreage from last season of 3 to 20 percent in the Coastal tates. It is reported that this year the labor force includes greater numbers of risoners of war, conscientious objectors, penal prisoners, and imported foreign orkers than in any previous season. The exchange of work between farmers is robably a more important factor in this region than ever before.

ast South Central States - Drought in Kentucky and Tennessee may account in part or the decreased number of hired workers on farms in the East South Central region. owever, with a general decrease in acreage of crops in this region compared to a ear ago and especially in the acreage of cotton, the need for hired workers on arms in this region would be expected to be somewhat less than in 1943. The index f demand for farm workers was 121 on July 1 compared to 128 April 1 and 122 the irst of July last year, thus although the actual need for workers may be somewhat ess, the demand for workers, that is to say experienced workers, continues un- ated.

est South Central States - The West South Central States had excellent weather for ing field work and a great many different operations were in progress the first f July. Harvesting small grains represented the major labor need at the time, though planting sorghums, cultivating late corn, harvesting hay crops and egetables all placed drains upon the limited labor supply. As elsewhere, farm ge rates were higher on July 1 than they were a year earlier and the 25-percent ncrease in the wage index was the largest for any region.

ountain States - The many Mexican Nationals who have been brought into the ountain region to work on farms have done much to relieve the farm labor situation, pecially insofar as sugar beet production is concerned. Such workers, however, e not being employed to the full extent possible for such jobs as haying, har- esting truck crops and helping with livestock as many farmers appear reluctant to e workers other than the type they have been accustomed to in the past.

cific Region - The farm labor situation on the West Coast does not appear to be critical as a year ago. The supply index is up a little and the number of eople working on farms July 1 is slightly higher than for the same date last year. e farm wage rate index rose 15 percent or less than the national average. exican Nationals are becoming an increasingly important factor in the labor force Coast States. In addition, strenuous efforts made to recruit women and children d others not normally a part of the farm labor force have greatly helped in tting the farm work done. The employment of hired workers on farms is increasing

seasonally and many activities requiring large numbers of workers are now in progress. Farm wage rates governing a number of operations have been stabilized by the War Food Administration through State wage boards. Up to July 1, wage ceiling regulations had been established so far this year covering wage rates for harvest of 10 different items including asparagus, hay, potatoes, oranges, peas, cherries, apricots, lettuce, and peaches and for certain workers on dairy farms. Most of these regulations were put into effect in California but some also in Oregon, Idaho, and Delaware.

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

	Annual average 1910-14	Annual average 1935-39	July 1, 1943	April 1, 1944	July 1, 1944
FARM WAGE RATES					
Per month, with board	$22.09	$26.01	$64.62	$68.95	$77.79
Per month, without board	29.18	34.17	76.00	81.15	89.54
Per day, with board	1.16	1.23	2.93	3.07	3.58
Per day without board	1.42	1.50	3.34	3.58	4.06
FARM WAGE RATE INDEXES					
Unadjusted	100	118	274	292	328
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	118	266	298	318
FARM WAGE RATE INDEXES BY REGIONS					
New England	100	143	279	314	324
Middle Atlantic	100	129	277	293	306
East North Central	100	115	249	272	286
West North Central	100	98	250	265	297
South Atlantic	100	111	222	251	261
East South Central	100	101	199	225	239
West South Central	100	102	232	266	291
Mountain	100	106	250	263	302
Pacific	100	129	331	360	381
FARM EMPLOYMENT (thousands of persons)					
Total	12,052	10,920	11,749	9,080	11,355
Family labor	9,160	8,353	8,763	7,401	8,623
Hired labor	2,892	2,567	2,986	1,679	2,732
FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES (Adjusted for seasonal variation)					
Total	100	91	85	82	82
Family labor	100	91	86	84	84
Hired	100	89	81	74	74
FARM LABOR SUPPLY AND DEMAND INDEXES					
Supply as percent of normal	---	100	57	54	55
Demand as percent of normal	---	100	125	127	125
RELATED INDEXES					
Prices received by farmers 1/	100	107	194	196	2/193
Ratio of prices received to farm wage rates	100	91	71	67	59

1/ Average of the 15th of the given and the 15th of the following month.
2/ June 15, 1944 - latest data available.

Based on reports from 17,052 farmers.

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

Geographic division	Annual average 1910-14	April 1, 1943	July 1, 1943	April 1, 1944	July 1, 1944
FARM WAGE RATES	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars
Per month with board					
New England	24.18	66.50	69.47	78.49	80.73
Middle Atlantic	22.25	57.25	61.19	66.72	70.09
East North Central	23.75	56.14	59.29	65.16	67.98
West North Central	26.32	61.93	68.02	72.84	81.18
South Atlantic	14.62	29.63	32.75	36.88	38.55
East South Central	14.71	29.14	30.85	34.26	36.28
West South Central	17.35	38.60	43.01	48.26	53.27
Mountain	32.48	72.38	82.69	87.29	101.23
Pacific	33.45	104.99	114.54	126.78	134.88
Per month without board					
New England	37.70	98.00	102.07	115.00	118.56
Middle Atlantic	33.41	83.21	93.11	96.05	100.66
East North Central	32.80	76.18	80.70	88.80	92.00
West North Central	36.86	81.18	87.35	93.75	101.76
South Atlantic	20.97	42.62	46.54	51.51	53.04
East South Central	20.80	40.01	42.13	46.92	49.76
West South Central	24.93	54.80	58.13	68.84	71.83
Mountain	46.42	98.21	109.15	118.18	129.90
Pacific	48.16	139.50	150.38	163.35	169.94
Per day with board					
New England	1.27	3.22	3.54	3.75	4.15
Middle Atlantic	1.24	3.04	3.37	3.62	3.80
East North Central	1.31	2.96	3.32	3.49	3.82
West North Central	1.46	2.99	3.55	3.65	4.30
South Atlantic	.81	1.59	1.74	2.02	2.16
East South Central	.81	1.42	1.54	1.77	1.92
West South Central	.98	1.98	2.24	2.51	3.03
Mountain	1.50	3.27	3.82	4.04	4.54
Pacific	1.49	4.63	5.24	5.71	6.10
Per day without board					
New England	1.71	4.33	4.48	4.89	5.13
Middle Atlantic	1.63	3.89	4.33	4.58	4.71
East North Central	1.68	3.69	4.07	4.33	4.67
West North Central	1.88	3.76	4.44	4.72	5.19
South Atlantic	1.05	2.06	2.19	2.55	2.64
East South Central	1.05	1.80	1.96	2.27	2.41
West South Central	1.25	2.40	2.70	3.06	3.39
Mountain	2.05	4.13	4.85	4.80	5.63
Pacific	2.06	5.92	6.50	6.91	7.39

Farm Wage Rates, by States, July 1, 1943 and July 1, 1944

State	Per month				Per day			
	With board		Without board		With board		Without board	
	July 1, 1943	July 1, 1944	July 1, 1943	July 1, 1944	July 1, 1943	July 1, 1944	July 1, 1943	July 1, 1944
	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars
Maine	73.50	86.50	103.00	123.00	3.55	4.70	4.50	5.60
N.H.	66.25	73.00	94.00	115.00	3.70	3.95	4.50	5.00
Vt.	64.25	76.50	91.00	104.00	3.45	3.85	4.40	5.00
Mass.	70.25	81.00	106.00	123.00	3.60	4.05	4.50	5.00
R.I.	75.00	86.00	112.00	124.00	3.60	4.10	4.60	5.20
Conn.	68.50	78.75	108.00	120.00	3.50	4.00	4.50	4.95
N.Y.	66.75	76.75	93.75	108.00	3.60	4.10	4.60	5.00
N.J.	71.00	83.00	100.75	119.00	3.50	4.20	4.40	5.10
Pa.	49.00	56.75	89.00	84.25	3.00	3.30	3.90	4.15
Ohio	51.75	55.75	72.00	79.50	3.15	3.50	3.85	4.40
Ind.	52.50	62.50	76.00	84.50	3.10	3.50	3.80	4.25
Ill.	65.25	75.50	82.00	94.50	3.50	4.15	4.25	4.95
Mich.	60.25	70.75	85.00	99.75	3.40	4.05	4.30	5.00
Wis.	64.00	73.75	87.50	101.00	3.40	3.85	4.15	4.75
Minn.	73.00	84.00	92.80	106.00	3.70	4.20	4.70	5.30
Iowa	74.75	88.75	91.00	108.00	3.95	4.85	4.75	5.70
Mo.	47.00	57.00	61.00	73.00	2.40	3.05	3.05	3.80
N.Dak.	81.50	100.00	106.75	124.00	3.75	4.75	4.75	5.80
S.Dak.	76.00	91.25	95.50	115.00	3.60	4.40	4.50	5.20
Nebr.	68.00	82.50	89.00	105.00	3.75	4.45	4.60	5.30
Kans.	62.00	74.50	85.00	96.75	4.10	4.80	5.00	5.50
Del.	53.00	68.50	81.00	91.00	3.15	4.25	4.00	4.90
Md.	49.25	57.50	70.00	76.00	2.95	3.65	3.75	4.45
Va.	38.00	43.75	54.00	59.25	2.00	2.60	2.60	3.15
W.Va.	39.25	44.50	55.25	61.75	2.00	2.30	2.60	3.00
N.C.	35.00	42.00	48.00	55.75	1.95	2.35	2.30	2.70
S.C.	25.00	28.25	35.00	41.25	1.20	1.55	1.50	1.90
Ga.	26.00	31.25	35.25	44.25	1.35	1.80	1.70	2.15
Fla.	37.00	50.00	59.00	70.00	1.75	2.40	2.50	3.40
Ky.	40.00	44.00	54.00	59.00	1.90	2.20	2.40	2.95
Tenn.	33.00	36.25	44.75	50.50	1.55	1.85	1.95	2.35
Ala.	27.50	35.50	37.50	48.50	1.40	1.90	1.85	2.20
Miss.	27.50	32.00	38.00	44.75	1.45	1.80	1.80	2.30
Ark.	36.00	40.75	49.50	56.00	1.80	2.10	2.20	2.60
La.	29.75	35.50	43.00	50.25	1.50	2.05	1.85	2.40
Okla.	47.75	56.75	64.00	78.00	3.05	3.90	3.50	4.15
Tex.	49.00	60.75	65.00	80.75	2.50	3.40	3.00	3.75
Mont.	97.00	113.00	121.00	136.00	4.50	5.20	5.40	6.30
Idaho	92.00	116.00	120.00	150.00	4.50	5.30	5.40	6.40
Wyo.	83.35	100.00	112.00	136.00	3.85	4.25	4.90	5.30
Colo.	70.75	88.00	96.25	117.00	3.50	4.15	4.40	5.30
N.Mex.	57.00	74.00	79.00	95.00	2.80	3.70	3.25	4.25
Ariz.	82.00	98.00	114.00	135.00	3.35	4.00	4.55	5.10
Utah	90.00	106.00	115.00	133.00	3.80	4.30	4.70	5.20
Nev.	88.00	110.00	112.00	135.00	3.75	4.90	4.60	6.00
Wash.	113.00	135.00	151.00	176.00	5.45	6.50	6.80	7.90
Oreg.	108.00	128.00	138.00	163.00	5.00	5.90	6.10	6.80
Calif.	116.00	136.00	152.00	169.00	5.20	6.00	6.45	7.30
U.S.	64.62	77.79	76.00	89.54	2.93	3.58	3.34	4.06

Farm Labor Supply and Demand: Index Numbers, by Geographic Divisions
April 1, 1941 - July 1, 1944

Geographic division	Based period 1935-39 1/	Index of supply													
		1941			1942				1943				1944		
		April	July	Oct.	Jan.	April	July	Oct.	Jan.	April	July	Oct.	Jan.	April	July
New England	100	73	60	57	60	56	52	49	49	48	50	44	45	46	47
Middle Atlantic	100	77	60	61	65	60	57	51	52	53	55	54	58	53	54
East North Central	100	80	66	66	69	66	64	52	57	57	55	54	60	54	53
West North Central	100	84	74	71	70	66	61	48	53	54	55	52	57	49	52
South Atlantic	100	80	75	71	71	70	67	60	61	60	60	58	59	57	59
East South Central	100	87	82	74	76	71	71	63	66	63	64	61	62	60	59
West South Central	100	84	76	70	71	69	65	56	55	57	57	53	56	51	52
Mountain	100	85	72	69	69	64	56	47	50	53	53	53	59	50	52
Pacific	100	84	73	69	66	66	54	47	52	52	55	62	61	58	59
United States		82	73	70	70	67	62	54	56	56	57	56	58	54	55

Index of Demand

New England	100	112	113	114	109	117	119	116	116	123	120	124	119	121	115
Middle Atlantic	100	111	111	114	108	117	116	120	118	124	122	122	119	126	123
East North Central	100	111	115	117	112	118	119	124	122	127	123	123	119	125	124
West North Central	100	122	127	127	125	130	131	139	135	138	139	137	132	139	136
South Atlantic	100	108	108	108	110	116	114	118	117	120	117	117	121	119	115
East South Central	100	111	107	113	116	120	119	123	122	125	122	125	124	128	121
West South Central	100	114	121	124	120	123	128	136	128	131	132	129	125	132	133
Mountain	100	115	124	128	119	125	131	131	126	135	130	132	126	133	133
Pacific	100	111	113	115	113	114	121	122	122	122	121	122	122	123	123
United States		112	115	117	114	119	121	125	122	126	125	125	123	127	125

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

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

TOTAL FARM EMPLOYMENT

Geographic division	May 1, 1943	June 1, 1943	July 1, 1943	May 1, 1944	June 1, 1944	July 1, 1944
	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's
United States	10,492	11,659	11,749	10,068	11,285	11,355
New England	246	257	281	232	250	268
Middle Atlantic	590	632	743	580	613	710
East North Central	1,437	1,502	1,528	1,414	1,499	1,515
West North Central	1,626	1,756	1,846	1,564	1,707	1,787
South Atlantic	2,083	2,340	2,302	2,002	2,285	2,197
East South Central	1,750	2,021	1,831	1,662	1,924	1,754
West South Central	1,802	2,079	2,064	1,685	1,928	1,985
Mountain	427	479	484	411	476	465
Pacific	531	593	670	518	603	674
FAMILY WORKERS 1/						
United States	8,248	8,962	8,763	8.079	8,845	8,623
New England	169	166	170	159	168	163
Middle Atlantic	414	415	468	407	417	454
East North Central	1,166	1,221	1,196	1,167	1,217	1,202
West North Central	1,345	1,438	1,488	1,336	1,428	1,459
South Atlantic	1,603	1,812	1,761	1,583	1,785	1,735
East South Central	1,524	1,703	1,552	1,457	1,681	1,520
West South Central	1,404	1,564	1,515	1,359	1,503	1,485
Mountain	301	319	299	300	328	290
Pacific	322	324	314	311	318	315
HIRED WORKERS						
United States	2,244	2,697	2,986	1,989	2,440	2,732
New England	77	91	111	73	82	105
Middle Atlantic	176	217	275	173	196	256
East North Central	271	281	332	247	282	313
West North Central	281	318	358	228	279	328
South Atlantic	480	528	541	419	500	462
East South Central	226	318	279	205	243	234
West South Central	398	515	549	326	425	500
Mountain	126	160	185	111	148	175
Pacific	209	269	356	207	285	359

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

Based on reports from 17,052 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.

Relation of employment in agriculture to the size of agricultural enterprise

Index numbers (1910 = 100)

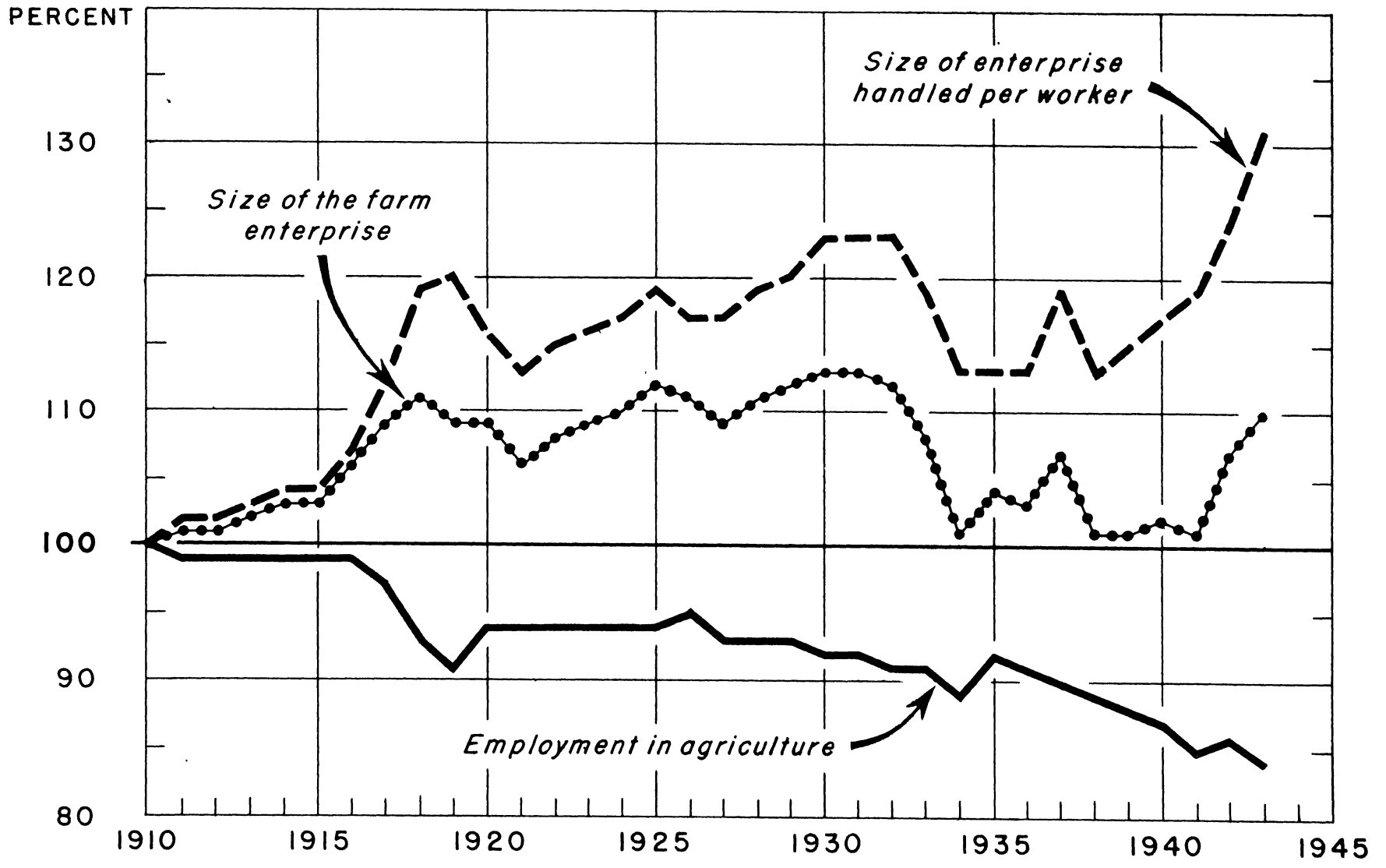
Year	Employment in agriculture	Size of the farm enterprise	Size of enterprise handled per farm worker
1910	100	100	100
1911	99	101	1/102
1912	99	101	1/102
1913	99	102	103
1914	99	103	104
1915	99	103	104
1916	99	106	107
1917	97	109	112
1918	93	111	119
1919	91	109	120
1920	94	109	116
1921	94	106	113
1922	94	108	115
1923	94	109	116
1924	94	110	117
1925	94	112	119
1926	95	111	117
1927	93	109	117
1928	93	111	119
1929	93	112	120
1930	92	113	123
1931	92	113	123
1932	91	112	123
1933	91	108	119
1934	89	101	113
1935	92	104	113
1936 1/	91	103	113
1937 1/	90	107	119
1938 1/	89	101	113
1939 1/	88	101	115
1940 1/	87	102	117
1941	85	101	119
1942	86	107	124
1943 2/	84	110	131

1/ Revised.
2/ Preliminary.

The basic data used for the period 1910-36 were compiled and published by the Works Progress Administration in the National Research Project Report No. A-8, November 1938. The data have been brought up to date by the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture and are shown in the accompanying table and chart.

RELATION OF EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE TO THE SIZE OF AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISE

INDEX NUMBERS (1910=100)



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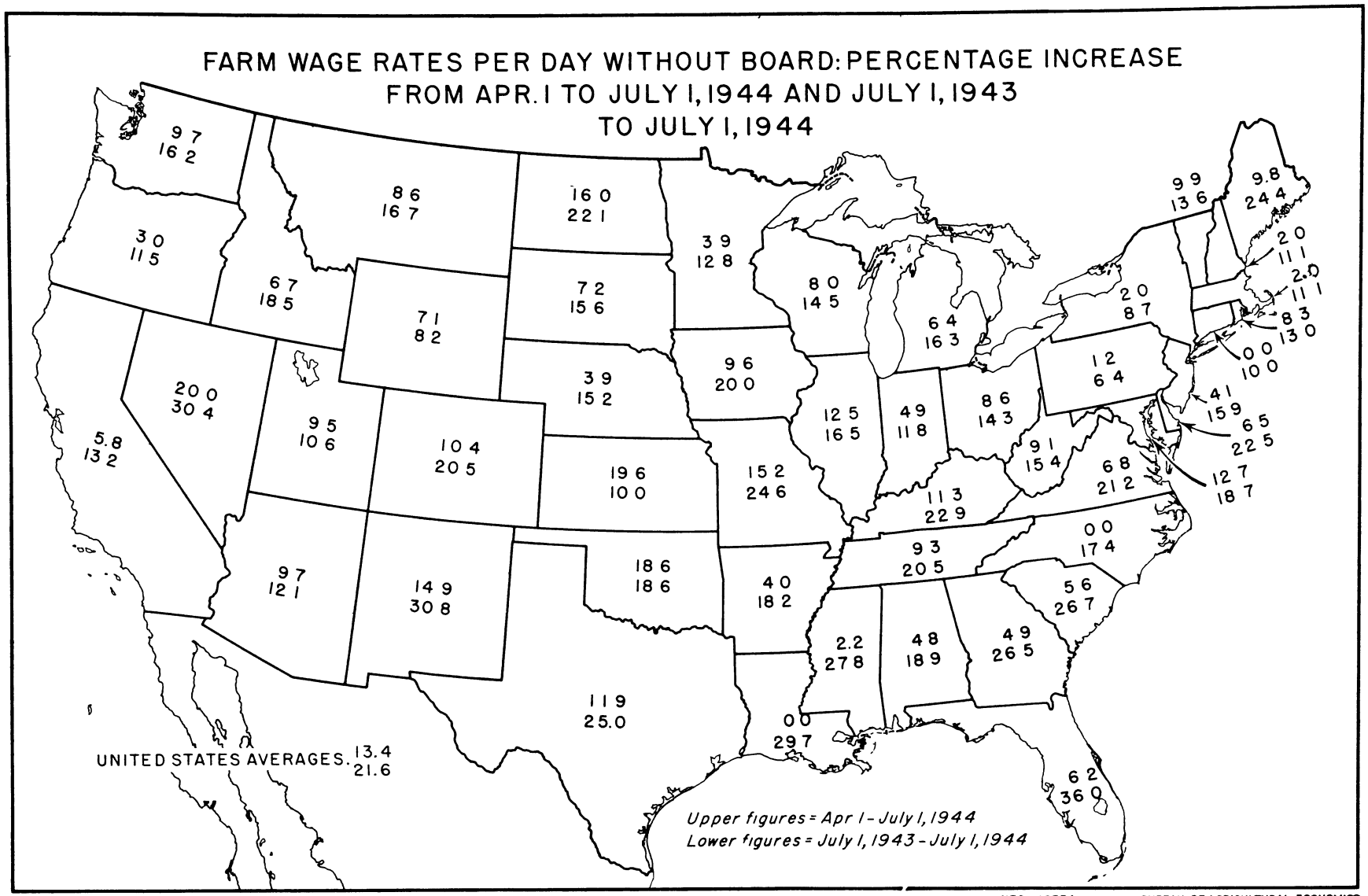

U S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE NEG 43774 BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Number of agricultural workers transported by the Office of Labor, W.F.A that were employed on July 1, 1944 1/

State	Mexicans	Jamaicans	Bahamians	Newfoundlanders	Jap. Evacuees	Barbadians
Conn.		2,016		103		
Dela.		288	469	19		
Maine		328		78		
Md.		423	1,412			
Mass.		150		63		
N.H.				74		
N.J.		1,702	12	68		
N.Y.		2,714		292		
Pa.		602	90	131		
Vt.				92		
Fla.		2,854	1,203			
Ga.			252			
N.C.			310			
Tenn.			205			
Va.			1,809			
Ill.		1,000			115	
Iowa		85				
Ind.		359				
Kans.	298					
Mich.	2,006	1,467				
Minn.	1,299	567				408
Neb.	1,444				57	
N.Dak.	432					
Ohio		1,079				
S.Dak.	297					
Wis.	191	1,729				500
Colo.	3,335				190	
Idaho	2,410				1,200	
Mont.	4,434				46	
Oreg.	3,018				235	
Utah	689				680	
Wash.	2,857				55	
Wyo.	961				3	
Ariz.	1,414					
Calif.	27,653					
Nev.	329					
Totals	53,067	17,453	5,762	920	2,581	908

1/ Data provided by Requirements and Certification Division, Program Branch, Office of Labor, W. F. A.