Farm Labor

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Washington, D. C. BAE November 13, 1943

FARM EMPLOYMENT DOWN SEASONALLY

There was a total of 10,698,000 persons working on farms the first of November, the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported today. This number represents a decline of about a million and a quarter workers during the month of October, or somewhat more than the usual seasonal decrease. It is about 2 percent less than the 10,879,000 workers November 1, 1942, and 3 percent less than the 1938-42 average farm employment.

The decline from a year ago is entirely accounted for by a drop of nearly 7 percent in hired employment as the number of family workers is slightly higher this November than for the same date last season. The greater employment of members of the operator's family perhaps stems from three causes: (1) patriotic appeals to such persons to help during the emergency, (2) dismissal of schools in many communities this year to allow pupils to assist at home in the harvest of crops, (3) tendency of some farmers to get along as best they can with such family labor as there is available rather than to hire inexperienced help.

The change in numbers of family workers was not uniform throughout the country as some geographic divisions showed increases and others small declines. All geographic regions recorded decreases in numbers of hired workers, compared with a year ago, except New England and the Middle Atlantic States. The largest decline is shown by the West South Central States where stormy weather at the end of the month tended to reduce employment.

The estimate of 2,634,000 hired workers for November 1 is the lowest for the month since the depression years and is 8 percent less than the 1938-42 average.

Climatic conditions over most of the country the first of the month were favorable for doing outdoor jobs and in most rural sections farm activity was at an unusually high level. Where fall harvest was completed farmers were busy trying to catch up with an accumulation of maintenance work that had been postponed from time to time during the year.

The growing season in New England is well past by November 1 so requirements for farm labor decline seasonally. This fall, harvest operations were delayed by rainy weather especially during the latter part of October. This situation also prevailed over most of the Atlantic Region. As the bulk of crops had been housed by November 1, the delay in harvest probably did not result in any significant loss of production. Open, clear, fall weather prevailed over most of the North Central States and farm work was progressing well as

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Farm employment indexes and related data, United States, November 1943, with comparisons

	Annual average 1910-14	Oct. 1 1942	Nov. 1, 1942	Oct. 1, 1943	Nov. 1 1943
FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES-					
Total:					
Unadjusted	100	99	90	99	89
Seasonally adjusted	100	84	85	84	83
Family labor -					
Unadjusted	100	94	88	96	88
Seasonally adjusted	100	85	85	87	85
Hired labor -					
Unadjusted	100	113	98	107	91
Seasonally adjusted	100	83	84	80	78
FARM EMPLOYMENT- (Thousands of persons)					
Total	12,052	11,921	10,879	11,938	10,698
Family labor	9,160	8,653	8,052	8,834	8,064
Hired labor	2,892	3,268	2,827	3,104	2,634
NON-AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT	---	41,900	43,000	41,200	---

Foreign workers employed in or available for agricultural work by country of origin and State of employment, as of October 30, 1943

Mexicans		Jamaicans		Bahamians	
State	No. of workers	State	No. of workers	State	No. of workers
Minn.	90	Maine	129	N.Y.	100
N.Dak.	190	Conn.	238	Ind.	11
S.Dak.	150	N.Y.	623	Del.	72
Nebr.	180	Pa.	161	Md.	951
Kans.	50	Ohio	180	Va.	420
Mont.	1,906	Ind.	42	Fla.	2,259
Idaho	1,779	Ill.	39		
Wyo.	482	Mich.	339		
Colo.	790	Wis.	223		
Ariz.	1,600	N.Dak.	1,194		
Nev.	193	Del.	109		
Wash.	2,397	Fla.	1,315		
Oreg.	1,874	Idaho	374		
Calif.	23,787				
Total	35,468	Total	4,966	Total	3,813

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

TOTAL FARM EMPLOYMENT

Geographic division	Sept.1, 1942	Oct.1, 1942	Nov.1, 1942	Sept.1 1943	Oct. 1 1943	Nov.1, 1943
	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's
United States	11,390	11,921	10,879	11,502	11,938	10,698
New England	285	285	242	290	276	238
Middle Atlantic	732	719	626	733	704	630
East North Central	1,527	1,445	1,451	1,541	1,464	1,460
West North Central	1,828	1,675	1,635	1,793	1,661	1,617
South Atlantic	2,183	2,315	2,086	2,167	2,312	2,045
East South Central	1,804	2,187	1,778	1,862	2,171	1,754
West South Central	1,687	2,155	1,972	1,757	2,190	1,893
Mountain	518	477	452	539	486	450
Pacific	826	663	637	830	674	611
FAMILY WORKERS 1/						
United States	8,191	8,653	8,052	8,402	8,834	8,064
New England	175	191	172	185	170	165
Middle Atlantic	447	434	417	446	429	421
East North Central	1,189	1,140	1,164	1,223	1,152	1,178
West North Central	1,364	1,321	1,317	1,380	1,337	1,323
South Atlantic	1,599	1,695	1,546	1,629	1,713	1,552
East South Central	1,478	1,740	1,452	1,549	1,782	1,438
West South Central	1,276	1,522	1,389	1,308	1,616	1,387
Mountain	313	296	290	326	311	298
Pacific	350	324	305	356	324	302
HIRED WORKERS						
United States	3,199	3,268	2,827	3,100	3,104	2,634
New England	110	104	70	105	106	73
Middle Atlantic	285	285	209	277	275	209
East North Central	338	305	287	318	312	282
West North Central	464	354	318	413	324	294
South Atlantic	584	620	540	538	599	493
East South Central	326	447	326	313	389	316
West South Central	411	633	583	449	574	506
Mountain	205	181	162	213	175	152
Pacific	476	339	332	474	350	309

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

Based on reports from 21,624 farmers.

Farm employment: United States total with unadjusted index numbers, by months, December 1941-November 1943

(1910-14 = 100)

Year and month	Total employed	Index	Family workers 1/	Index	Hired workers	Index
	Number		Number		Number	
1941						
December	9,428	78	7,113	78	2,315	80
1942						
January	8,287	69	6,632	72	1,655	57
February	8,540	71	6,655	73	1,885	65
March	8,738	73	6,940	76	1,798	62
April	9,483	79	7,473	82	2,010	70
May	10,796	90	8,399	92	2,397	83
June	11,917	99	9,037	99	2,880	100
July	12,009	100	8,827	96	3,182	110
August	11,249	93	8,122	89	3,127	108
September	11,390	95	8,191	89	3,199	111
October	11,921	99	8,653	94	3,268	113
November	10,879	90	8,052	88	2,827	98
December	9,551	79	7,272	79	2,279	79
1943						
January	8,171	68	6,615	72	1,556	54
February	8,369	69	6,638	72	1,731	60
March	8,730	72	7,003	76	1,727	60
April	9,308	77	7,433	81	1,875	65
May	10,492	87	8,248	90	2,244	78
June	11,659	97	8,962	98	2,697	93
July	11,749	98	8,763	96	2,986	104
August	11,030	91	8,058	88	2,962	102
September	11,502	95	8,402	92	3,100	107
October	11,938	99	8,834	96	3,104	107
November	11,698	89	8,064	88	2,634	91

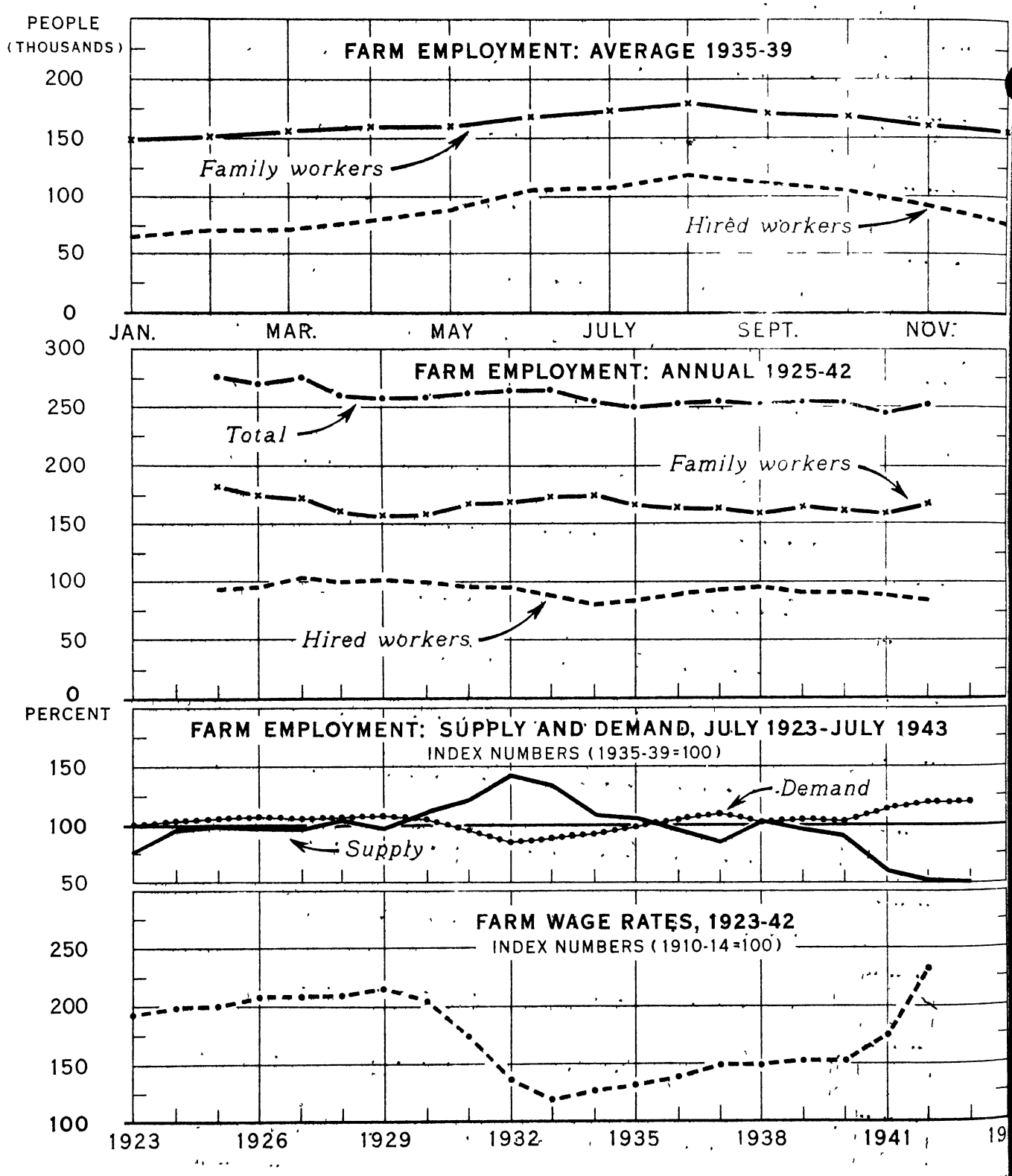
1/Includes farm operators and members of his family working without wages.

Average wage rates for picking 100 pounds of seed cotton, by States, up to November 1, 1925-43

State	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941 1/	1942 1/	1943 1/
	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.
Mo....	1.38	1.12	1.14	1.14	1.12	.71	.49	.52	.67	.80	.75	.95	.80	.75	.75	.77	1.40	1.85	2.00
Va....	1.13	1.00	1.12	1.23	1.15	.75	.45	.34	.45	.65	.65	.70	.75	.65	.60	.70	1.00	1.50	1.80
N.C....	1.17	1.03	1.07	1.07	1.01	.58	.36	.38	.48	.65	.65	.65	.70	.60	.60	.67	.95	1.40	1.75
S.C....	.86	.82	.78	.83	.81	.52	.36	.36	.45	.50	.50	.55	.60	.50	.50	.54	.75	1.00	1.25
Ga....	.94	.90	.88	.85	.90	.57	.35	.33	.45	.50	.50	.55	.60	.50	.50	.53	.75	1.00	1.30
Fla....	1.13	1.12	.95	1.02	1.07	.76	.41	.39	.48	.55	.55	.60	.65	.60	.60	.67	.85	1.15	1.45
Tenn..	1.41	1.05	1.08	1.04	1.34	.63	.43	.47	.54	.65	.60	.80	.70	.60	.60	.65	1.20	1.50	1.80
Ala....	1.08	1.03	.96	.95	.92	.55	.34	.36	.45	.55	.50	.60	.60	.50	.50	.51	.85	1.10	1.40
Miss..	1.35	1.16	1.08	1.02	1.08	.56	.39	.40	.49	.55	.55	.75	.80	.55	.60	.57	1.10	1.40	1.70
Ark....	1.27	1.06	1.05	1.03	1.06	.56	.40	.44	.52	.60	.55	.75	.70	.60	.60	.65	1.20	1.50	1.70
La....	1.25	1.12	1.03	1.03	1.01	.61	.41	.39	.48	.55	.55	.65	.70	.55	.55	.55	.85	1.20	1.50
Okla..	1.60	1.28	1.40	1.28	1.22	.73	.45	.48	.65	.75	.70	.75	.75	.70	.65	.72	1.20	1.50	1.95
Tex....	1.33	1.20	1.24	1.21	1.11	.71	.44	.45	.55	.60	.60	.65	.65	.55	.55	.58	1.10	1.45	1.80
N.Mex.	1.40	1.15	1.30	1.22	1.25	.68	.43	.44	.55	.65	.65	.70	.70	.60	.65	.68	1.20	1.75	2.00
Ariz..	1.75	1.45	1.53	1.50	1.50	.89	.58	.50	.67	.90	.90	1.10	.85	.80	.90	.93	1.45	2.45	2.70
Calif.	1.65	1.55	1.47	1.46	1.45	.89	.50	.45	.65	.90	.90	1.00	.95	.75	.85	.95	1.30	1.90	2.10
Ill....	--	--	1.20	1.20	1.15	.71	.50	.40	.65	.75	.75	.90	.70	.70	.70	.70	1.35	1.70	2.00
Kans..	1.54	--	1.50	1.40	1.30	.75	.45	.48	.65	.75	.70	.75	.65	.65	.65	.65	1.10	1.50	1.95
Ky....	1.48	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.18	.70	.49	.50	.60	.80	.75	.95	.80	.80	.80	.80	1.25	1.80	2.00
U.S.	1.27	1.11	1.12	1.10	1.06	.63	.41	.42	.53	.60	.58	.69	.69	.57	.58	.62	1.09	1.41	1.69

1/ Includes rates paid for snapping bolls converted to seed cotton equivalent.

FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, NEW ENGLAND STATES



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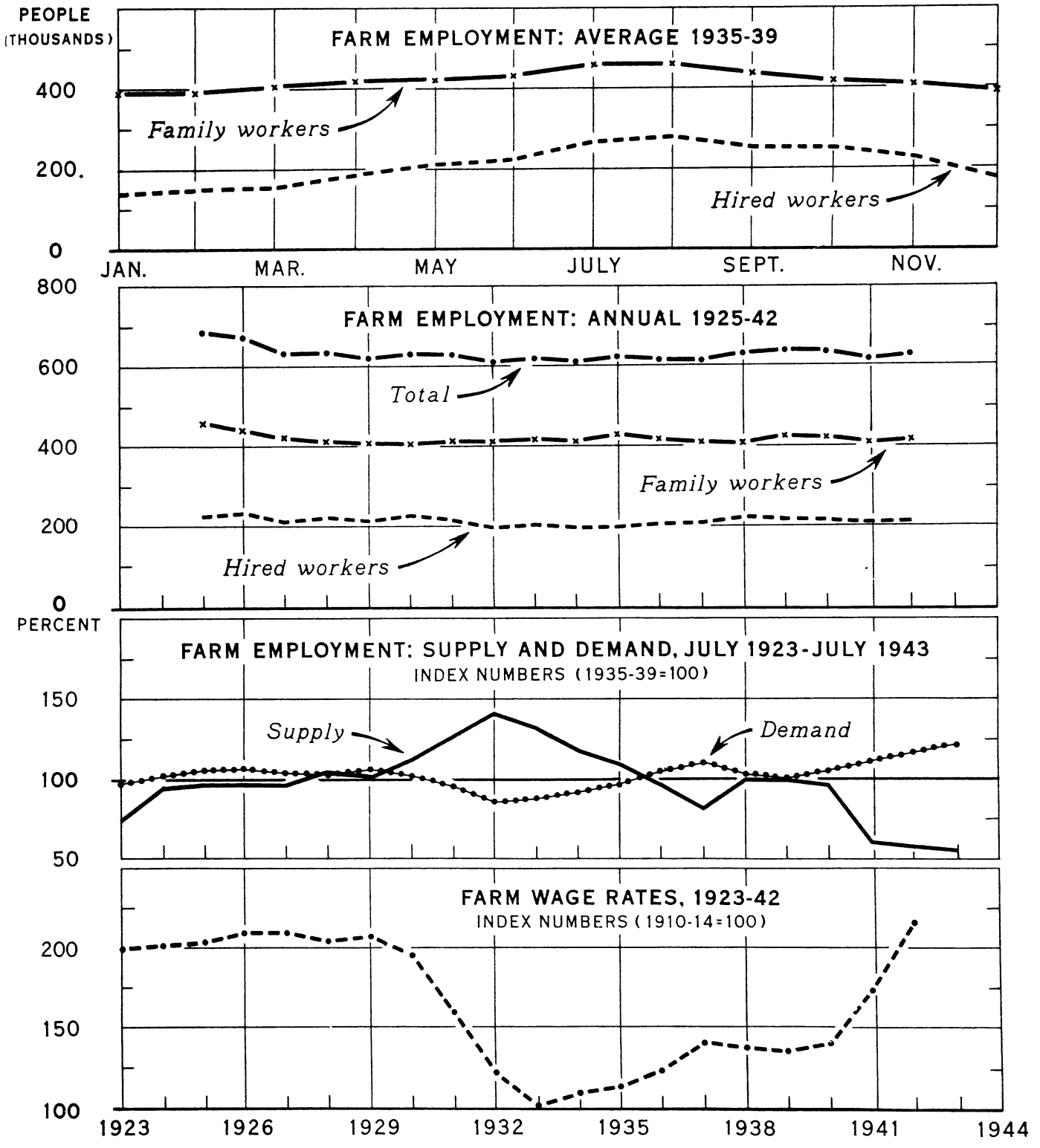
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, MIDDLE ATLANTIC STATES



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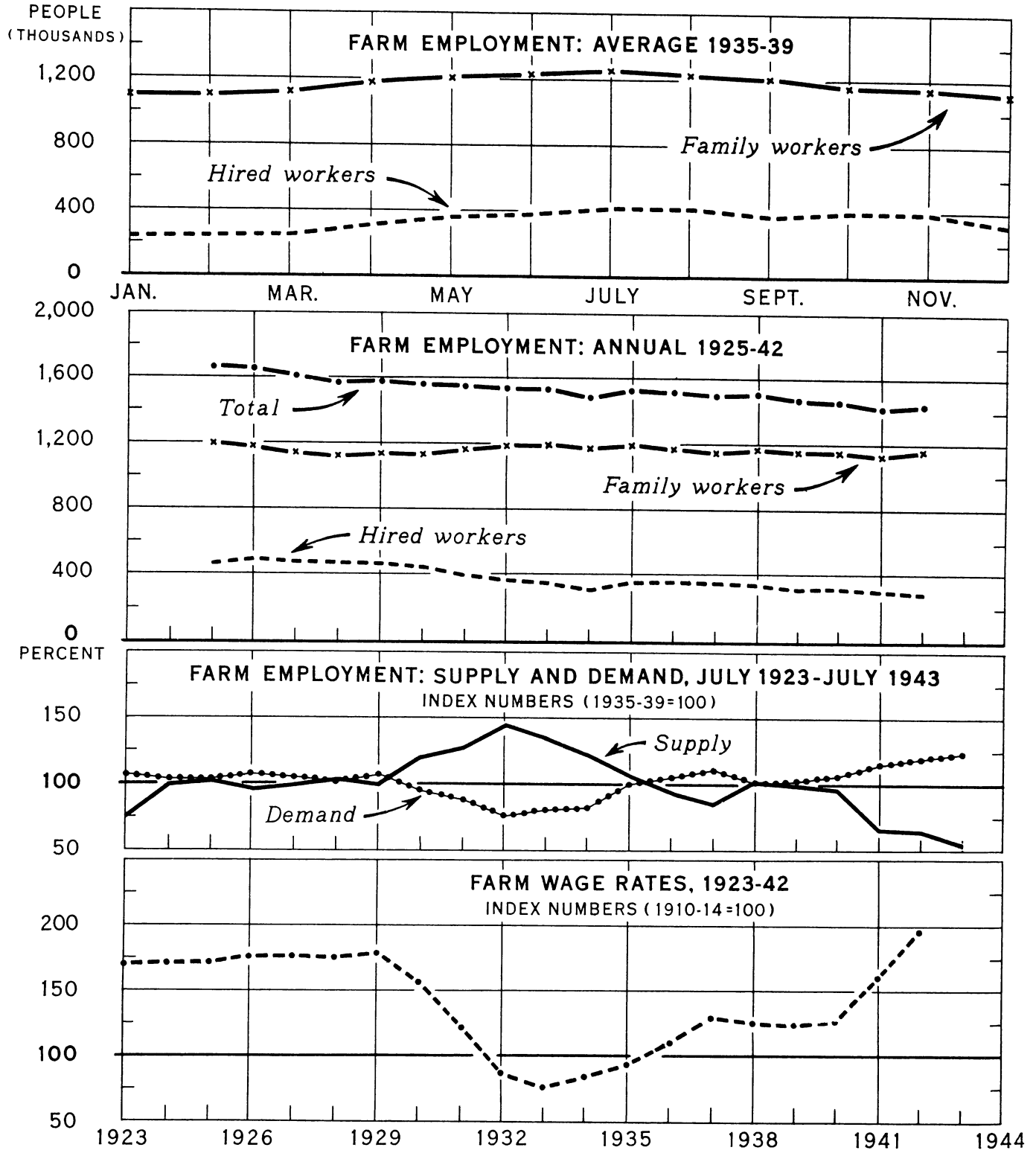
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, EAST NORTH CENTRAL STATES



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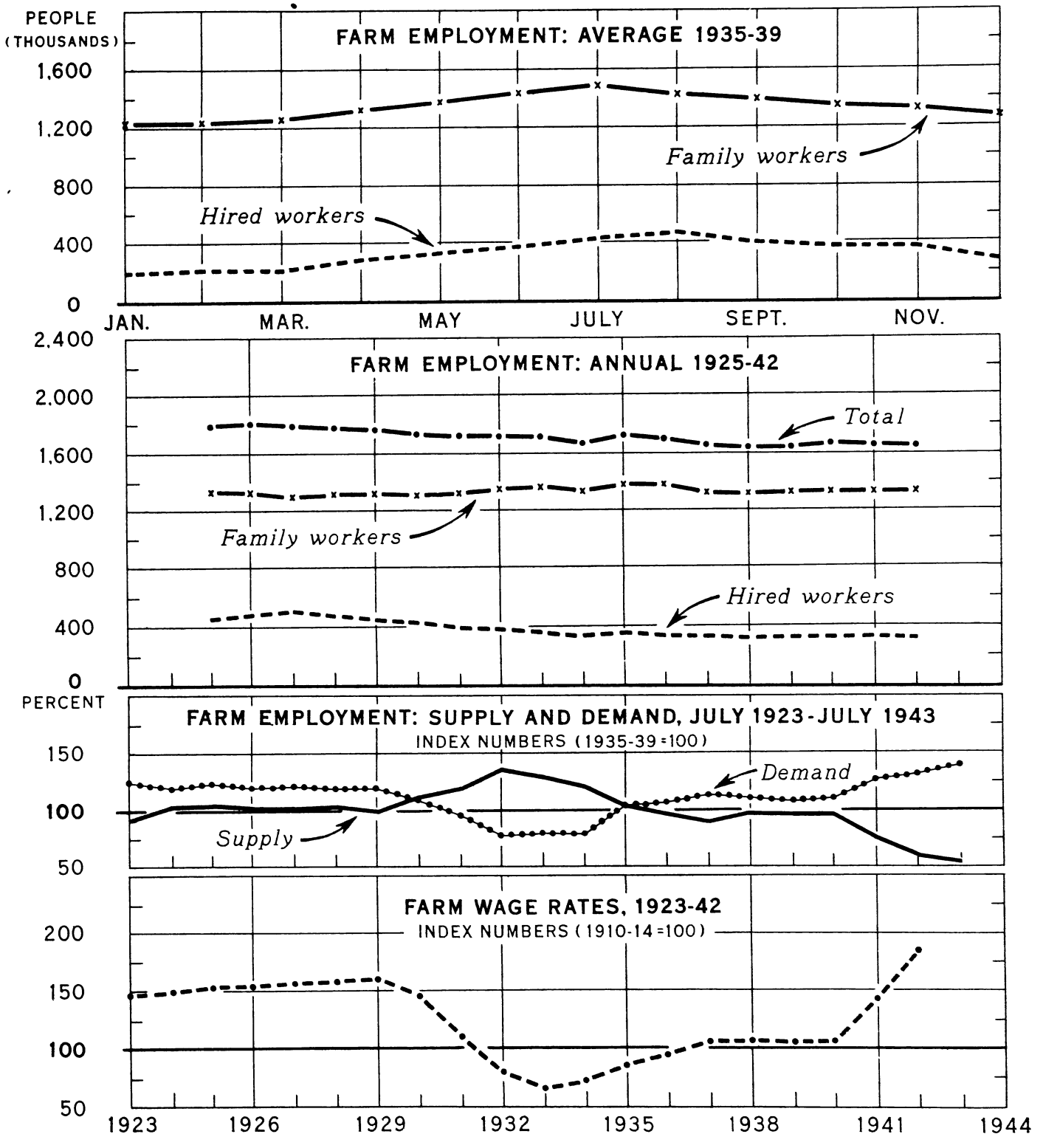
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, WEST NORTH CENTRAL STATES



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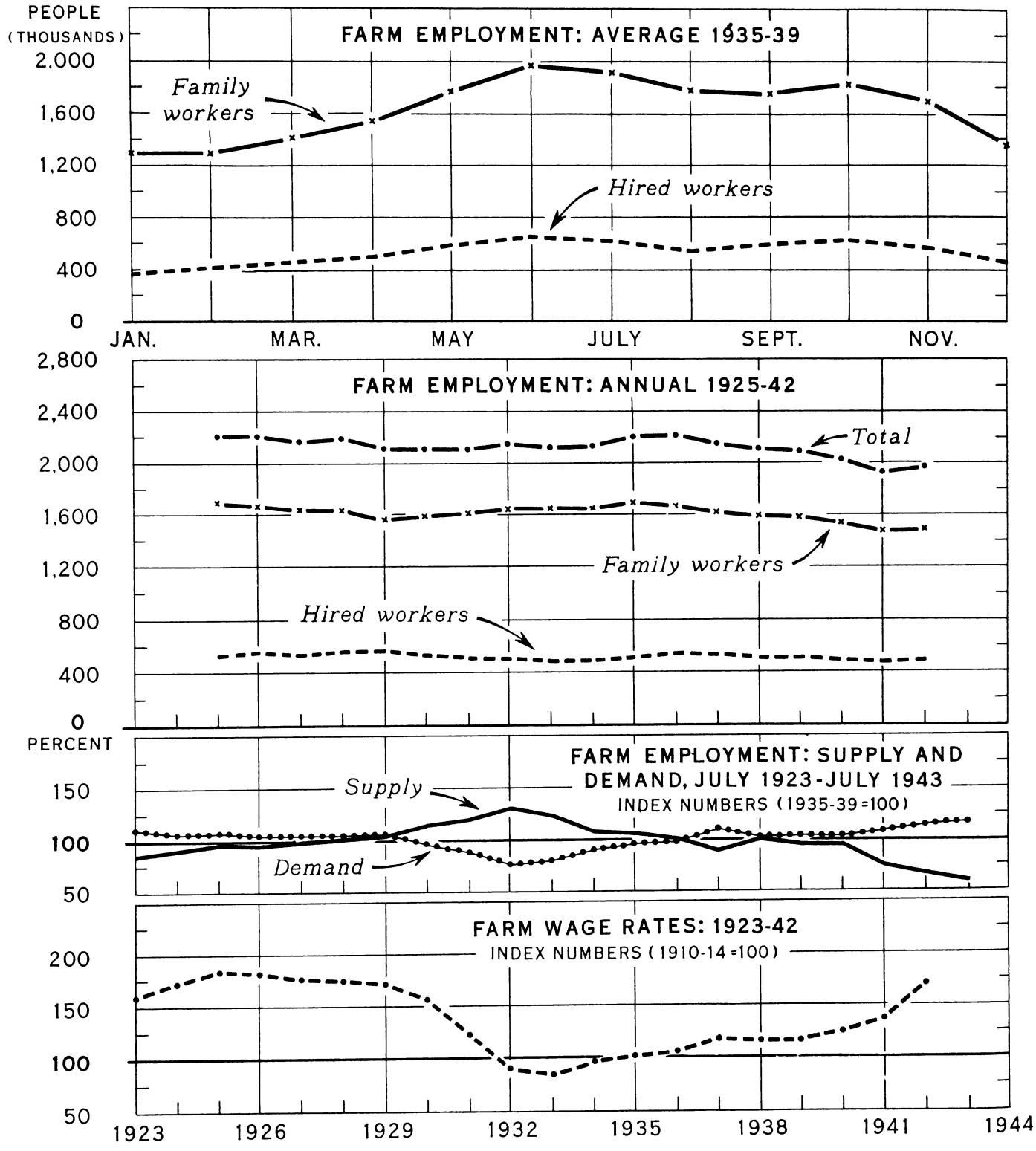
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, SOUTH ATLANTIC STATES



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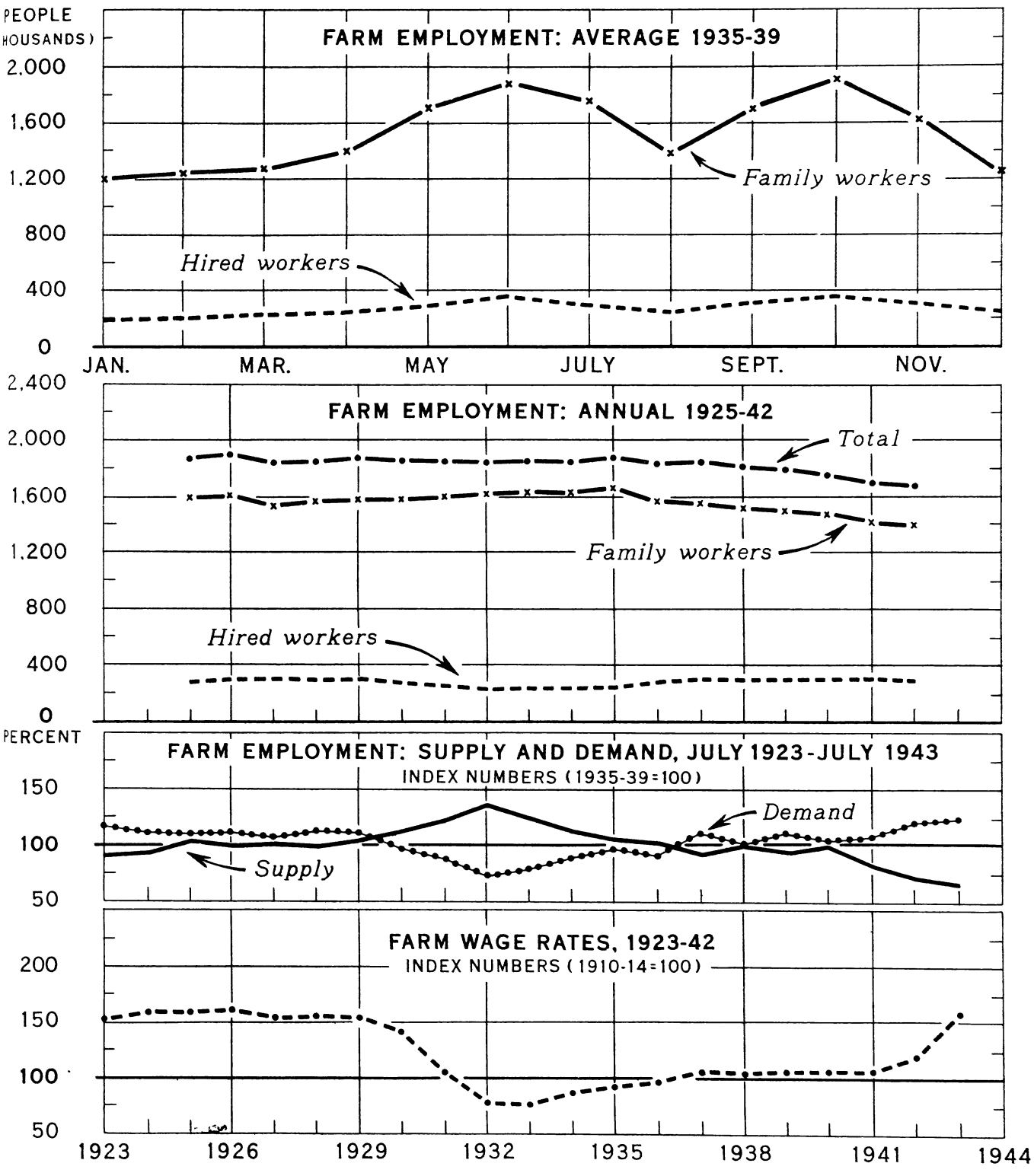
ARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, EAST SOUTH CENTRAL STATES



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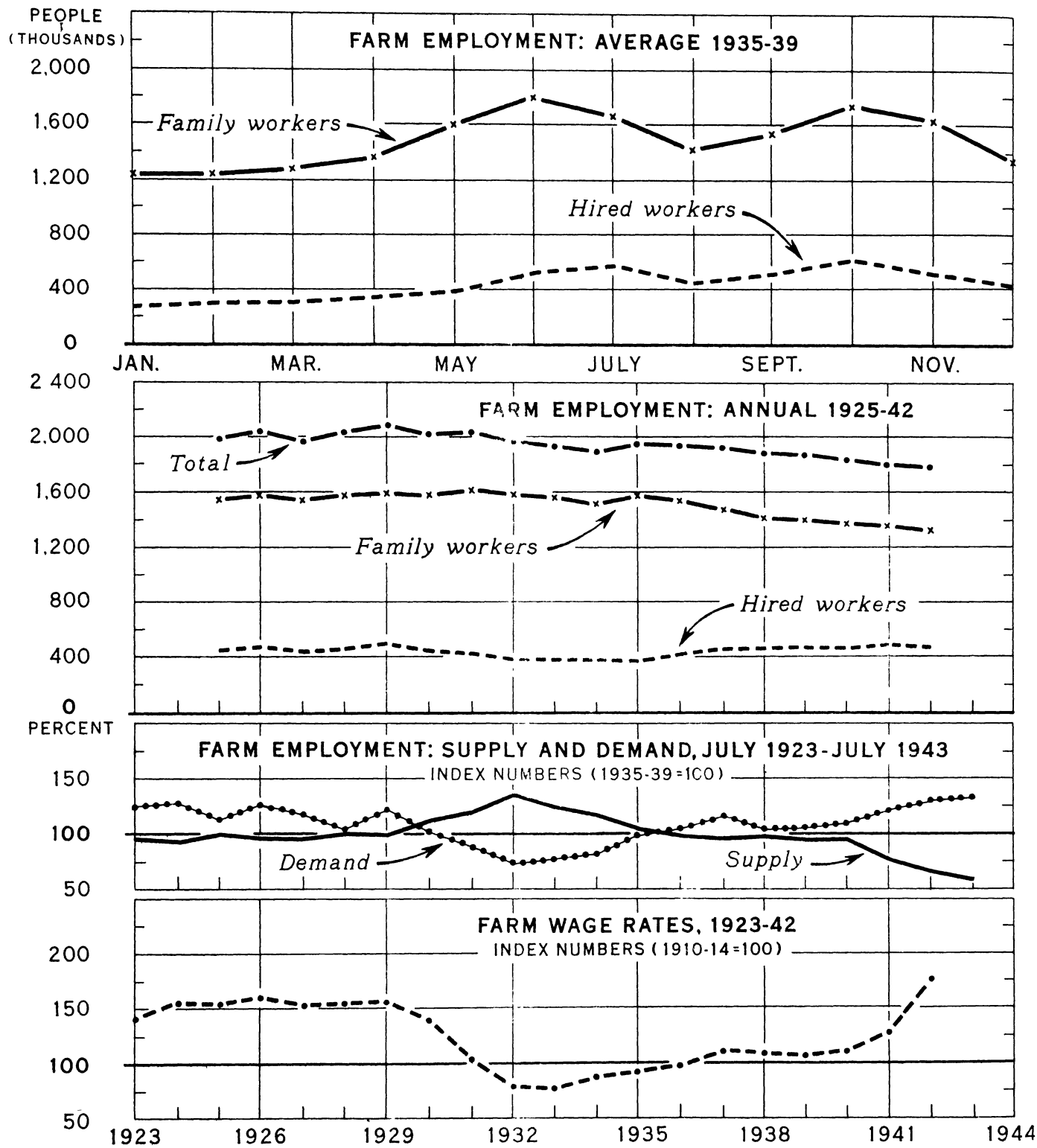
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, WEST SOUTH CENTRAL STATES



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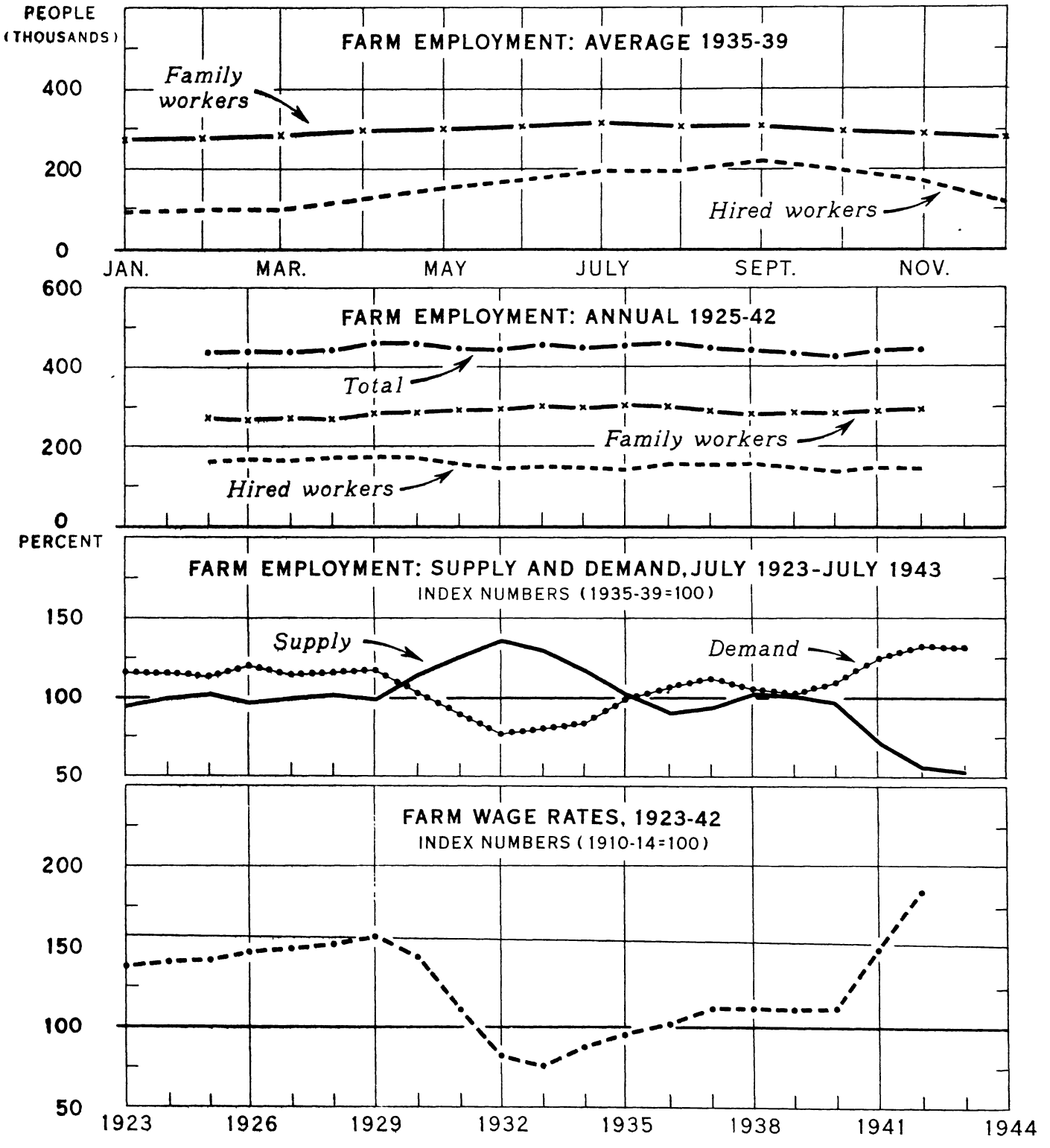
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, MOUNTAIN STATES



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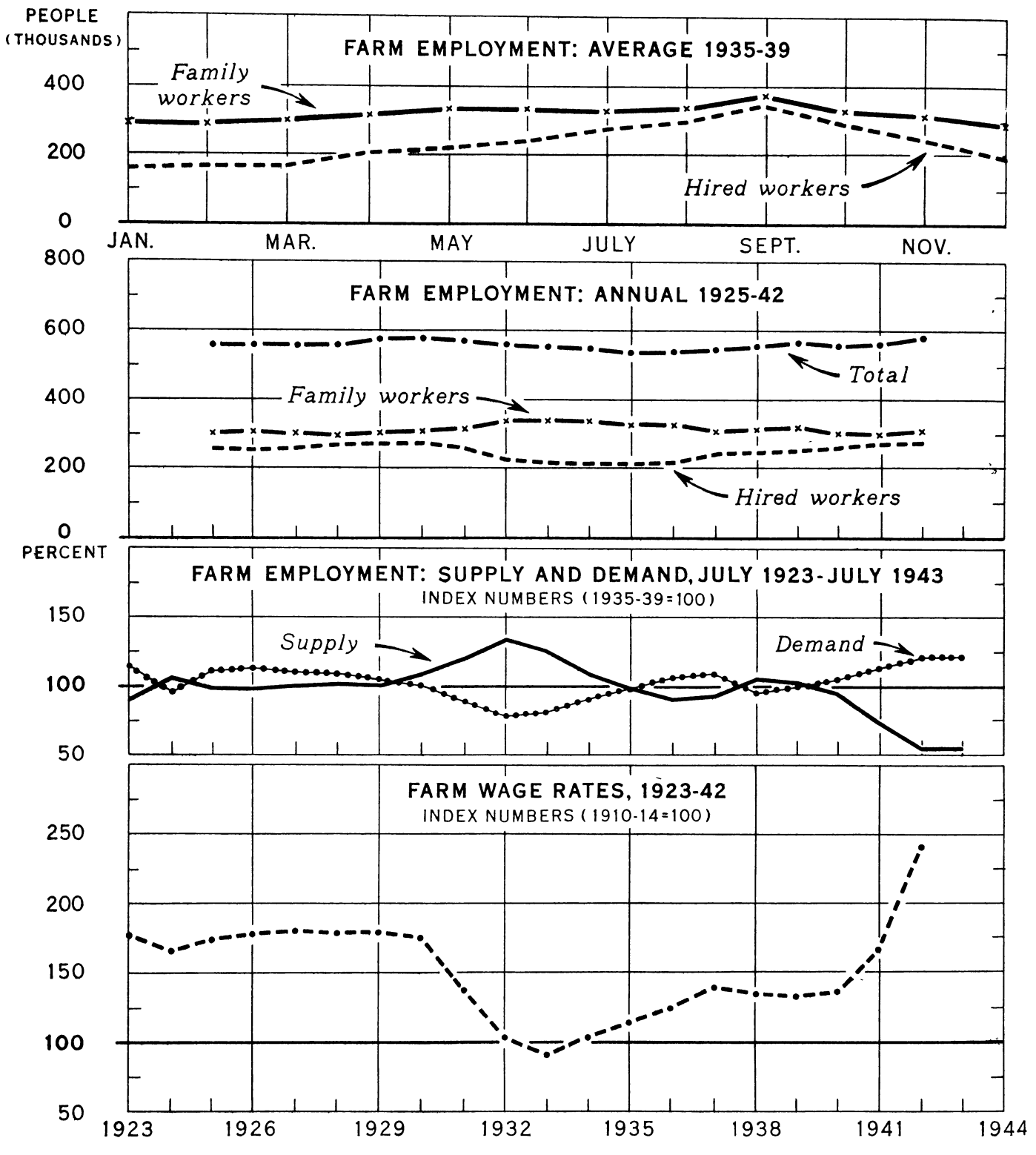
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, PACIFIC STATES



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October came to an end. Except for a few spotted areas the farm labor situation throughout the Corn Belt was not acute and necessary tasks were being accomplished more easily than a year ago.

In the South, cotton picking got off to an early start this fall, and by the first of this month it was nearing completion in some areas. Nearly ideal weather enabled farmers to push cotton picking and to harvest other crops, such as rice, sugarcane, and peanuts.

In the Mountain Region the farm labor situation is somewhat spotted primarily because of rains and snow which delayed harvest of some crops. A considerable acreage of sugar beets was still in the ground the first of November and some farmers were postponing beet pulling in order to dig potatoes which are more susceptible to frost damage. Schools have been closed and business places shut down temporarily to help cope with the farm labor problem.

As in most areas, West Coast fall weather was generally favorable for farm work; and on November 1 the farm labor situation was rather satisfactory. There were places of course where farmers were experiencing difficulty obtaining the workers needed but in general progress of farm work was considered better than at this time last year.

The average wage rates paid so far this season for picking cotton are the highest of record. Every cotton producing State reports picking rates to be above last year's high rates, and above the rates for all other previous years. The averages vary from $1.25 for picking 100 pounds of seed cotton in South Carolina to $2.70 in Arizona. The average for Arizona excluding rates for picking American-Egyptian cotton is $2.10 per 100 pounds. In California, a wage ceiling of $2.25 per 100 pounds was placed on cotton picking in October. According to the cotton reporters, the average rate so far this season in that State is $2.10 per hundred pounds. The picking rate usually climbs higher at the end of the season because there are fewer bolls per plant and it takes longer to pick a bag of cotton so it may be that the rates will go still higher before picking is completed.