Farm Labor

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Washington, D. C. BAE October 13, 1944

FARM EMPLOYMENT HITS NEW OCTOBER LOW

The smallest farm labor force of record is harvesting one of the biggest production of full crops this country has ever raised, the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported today. The job is being accomplished through efficient use of available workers and machinery, working more hours per day and more days per week by lengthening the time of harvests and the employment of large numbers of farm women, children, townspeople, war prisoners, foreign workers, and others not normally a part of the farm labor force. Despite the utilization of workers from unusual sources, the number of people working on farms October 1 was slightly lower than at the same time last year and 5 percent less than the 1935-39 October average, when crop production was much smaller than this year. Farm wage rates averaged 16 percent higher on October 1 than for the same date last year; the index of farm labor supply remained unchanged and the demand index declined 1 point.

Of the 11,839,000 persons working on farms the first of October, 8,928,000 or 75.4 percent, -- the highest percentage in more than a decade -- were unpaid family workers. A year earlier there were 11,938,000 persons doing farm work, 8,834,000 of these being family workers. Hence the slight decline in total farm employment is accounted for entirely by a drop of 6 percent since October 1943 in number of hired workers. Nearly all sections of the country recorded fewer hired workers than a year ago with the largest decline occurring in the East North Central region. The decrease of 6 percent in number of hired workers from October 1943 to October 1944 for the country as a whole is in agreement with similar declines recorded monthly throughout most of this year. The scarcity of competent help and in some instances, relatively high wages, have caused some farm operators to decide to "get by" without hiring additional workers.

The October 1 index of farm wages was 325 percent of the 1910-14 average, 46 points or 17 percent higher than on October 1, 1943 and 160 points higher than on October 1, 1941 just before Pearl Harbor. The 46 point rise from last October was not so great as the 60 point rise made between October 1, 1942 and the same date in 1943 which was the greatest increase ever recorded within a year's time. Gains in wage rates from last October were shown by all regions and ranged from 32 points in New England to 50 points in the West South Central region.

All four classes of farm wage payment rose about the same (17 percent) from October 1, 1943. The rate per month with board was $76.40 on the first of October compared to $65.22 a year earlier; per month without board $86.80 compared to $74.92; per day with board $3.72 compared to $3.17; and per day without board $4.08 compared to $3.51. At this season of the year a great many farm workers are being paid at a daily rate without board. This rate varied greatly throughout the country ranging from $2.77 in the South Atlantic region to $7.65 on the West Coast. These differences reflect regional variations in skill of workers, volume of output, living costs, sex and age of workers, available supplies of workers, and other factors in addition to actual differences in the general level of all wage rates.

The supply index at 56 percent of the 1935-39 average is the same as last October 1, but is 14 points or 20 percent lower than on October 1, 1941. Most of the regions showed small increases over last October. However, nominal decreases are indicated in the West North Central, South Atlantic and West South Central regions. New England continues to have the lowest supply index but at 48 it represents an increase of 4 points over a year ago, the largest gain for any region. The Pacific region now records a supply index of 64 compared to 62 last October, 47 in October 1942, and 69 for October 1, 1941. In general, the farm labor supply situation appears somewhat less stringent than a year ago.

The U. S. index of demand for farm labor on the first of October was 124 percent of the 1935-39 average or 1 point lower than for October 1943 and 1942 but 6 points higher than in October 1941. Slight declines in demand from October 1943 were shown for all regions east of the Mississippi except the East South Central which remained unchanged at 125 percent of the 1935-39 average. The index for the Pacific region, also, was the same as October 1943, but slight upturns were shown for the West South Central and Mountain regions.

The effectiveness of the various local and national programs in obtaining farm workers and in using them efficiently is no doubt responsible to a considerable extent for the improved farm employment situation. Foreign workers brought into the country to help on farms have, for the most part, proved very satisfactory, and it is probable that considerable acreages of some crops have been saved that otherwise would have been lost without this assistance. As of September 30, there were 63,819 Mexican Nationals, 16,678 Jamaicans, 897 Barbadians, 5,407 Bahamians and 986 Newfoundlanders employed on farms in the United States. About 90 percent of the Mexicans were employed on farms in the Western States. Michigan is using about 2,200, and in the Red River Valley of North Dakota and Minnesota about 1,500 Mexican Nationals were working in the sugar beet fields. Other foreign workers were helping to harvest fruit -- especially apples, potatoes, some truck crops, and other miscellaneous crops. Under an arrangement between the Canadian and United States Governments, about 1,400 Canadians came into Aroostook county, Maine for the potato harvest. War prisoners are being used in considerable numbers in a wide range of jobs including digging peanuts, picking cotton, cutting cane, harvesting rice, and pulling and topping sugar beets.

New England: Between October 1, 1943 and October 1, 1944 the wage rate index increased 32 points, family employment increased 2 percent, but hired employment declined 10 percent. With the harvest of apples, potatoes, and field corn in progress generally during the past month, farm labor needs have been at the peak for the year. Farm labor requirements have been somewhat reduced by the lighter cranberry crop and by the more normal potato crop in Maine

as compared with last year. The windfall of apples in mid-September temporarily "peaked-up" the apple harvest job, and the harvest of wind-whipped corn has required more hand labor. Farm work was facilitated by pleasant weather during most of September.

Middle Atlantic Region: The hurricane which struck part of the Middle Atlantic region in September caused considerable damage to crops, especially fruit orchards, and created heavier than usual needs for farm workers. In general, however, favorable weather prevailed for farm work, and fall harvest operations have proceeded rapidly. The wage rate index was up 39 points from last October.

The situation in the North Central region relative to the supply of and demand for farm labor appears better in October this year than for any fall since our entry into the War. An important contributing factor has been the favorable weather that has prevailed over most of this area, enabling farmers to make maximum use of the time of all available workers and equipment. Wage rates are about 14 percent higher than a year ago which may account in part for the decline in number of paid workers on farms in this area and for the somewhat lower indexes of demand for farm workers in the East North Central and West North Central regions.

The farm employment situation in the South appears to be about the same as last fall except that wage rates have risen sharply. The number of people working on farms has not changed materially from October 1943, and the supply and demand indexes do not indicate a significant change in the farm employment situation. Cotton growers have experienced favorable weather for picking the cotton crop which is about 5 percent larger than that of last year. Wage rates are up about 20 percent from October 1943.

Mountain States and Pacific Coast: In October 1941, the index of supply of farm workers was the same (69 percent of the 1935-39 average) in both the Mountain and Pacific regions. This was just before we got into the war. A year later, in October 1942, the index was again the same for the two regions but had dropped to 47. By October 1943 the index for the Mountain States had risen to 53 and for the Pacific region to 62. On October 1 this year, the indexes were 57 and 64 respectively for the Mountain and Pacific regions. It appears, therefore, that the farm labor situation on the West Coast has improved more than it has in the Mountain States. Wage rates increased nearly 18 percent from October a year ago in the Mountain region compared to 12 percent in the Pacific region. The latter, of course, has a higher level of rates than does the Mountain region. The total number of people working on farms in the Mountain region decreased 5 percent compared to only 1 percent for the Pacific region, and the latter shows no decline in number of hired workers, whereas a 10-percent decrease is recorded for the Mountain region. Compared to a year ago, the farm employment situation is relatively less favorable in the Mountain States than on the West Coast.

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

	Annual average 1910-14	Annual average 1935-39	Oct. 1, 1943	July 1, 1944	Oct. 1, 1944
FARM WAGE RATES					
Per month, with board	$22.09	$26.01	$65.22	$77.79	$76.40
Per month, without board	29.18	34.17	1/74.92	89.54	86.80
Per day, with board	1.16	1.23	3.17	3.58	3.72
Per day, without board	1.42	1.50	3.51	4.06	4.08
FARM WAGE RAGE INDEXES					
Unadjusted	100	118	1/279	328	325
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	118	1/271	318	316
FARM WAGE RATE INDEXES BY REGIONS					
New England	100	143	298	324	330
Middle Atlantic	100	129	1/275	306	314
East North Central	100	115	256	286	291
West North Central	100	98	281	297	322
South Atlantic	100	111	223	261	267
East South Central	100	101	213	239	261
West South Central	100	102	247	291	297
Mountain	100	106	266	302	313
Pacific	100	129	345	381	387
FARM EMPLOYMENT (thousands of persons)					
Total	12,052	10,920	11,938	11,040	11,839
Family labor	9,160	8,353	8,834	8,223	8,928
Hired labor	2,892	2,567	3,104	2,817	2,911
FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES (Adjusted for seasonal variation)					
Total	100	91	84	82	84
Family labor	100	91	87	84	87
Hired labor	100	89	80	78	75
FARM LABOR SUPPLY AND DEMAND INDEXES					
Supply as percent of normal	---	100	56	55	56
Demand as percent of normal	---	100	125	125	124
RELATED INDEXES					
Prices received by farmers 2/	100	107	194	192	3/192
Ratio of prices received to farm wage rates	100	91	70	59	59

1/ Revised.
2/ Average of the 15th of the given and the 15th of the previous month.
3/ September 15, 1944 - latest data available.

Based on reports from 19,347 farmers.

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

Geographic division	Annual average 1910-14	July 1, 1943	Oct. 1, 1943	July 1, 1944	Oct. 1, 1944
	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars
FARM WAGE RATES					
Per month with board					
ew England	24.18	69.47	72.80	80.73	82.00
iddle Atlantic	22.25	61.19	62.00	70.09	71.40
ast North Central	23.75	59.29	60.50	67.98	68.90
est North Central	26.32	68.02	73.40	81.18	84.70
outh Atlantic	14.62	32.75	32.80	38.55	39.20
ast South Central	14.71	30.85	31.30	36.28	37.30
est South Central	17.35	43.01	44.30	53.27	54.00
ountain	32.48	82.69	85.80	101.23	103.00
acific	33.45	114.54	118.00	134.88	135.00
Per month without board					
ew England	37.70	102.07	108.40	118.56	119.00
iddle Atlantic	33.41	1/87.27	1/89.00	100.66	102.00
ast North Central	32.80	80.70	82.10	92.00	93.70
est North Central	36.86	87.35	93.10	101.76	106.00
outh Atlantic	20.97	46.54	45.60	53.04	53.60
ast South Central	20.80	42.13	43.20	49.76	51.40
est South Central	24.93	58.13	61.10	71.83	72.70
ountain	46.42	109.15	115.40	129.90	135.00
acific	48.16	150.38	153.30	169.94	173.00
Per day with board					
ew England	1.27	3.54	3.86	4.15	4.32
iddle Atlantic	1.24	3.37	3.56	3.80	4.04
ast North Central	1.31	3.32	3.47	3.82	3.95
est North Central	1.46	3.55	4.44	4.30	5.07
outh Atlantic	.81	1.74	1/1.80	2.16	2.27
ast South Central	.81	1.54	1.71	1.92	2.17
est South Central	.98	2.24	2.43	3.03	2.98
ountain	1.50	3.82	4.42	4.54	5.04
acific	1.49	5.24	5.60	6.10	6.19
Per day without board					
ew England	1.71	4.48	4.88	5.13	5.34
iddle Atlantic	1.63	4.33	4.49	4.71	4.97
ast North Central	1.68	4.07	4.34	4.67	4.82
est North Central	1.88	4.44	5.54	5.19	6.08
outh Atlantic	1.05	2.19	2.28	2.64	2.77
ast South Central	1.05	1.96	2.20	2.41	2.80
est South Central	1.25	2.70	2.95	3.39	3.54
ountain	2.05	4.85	5.34	5.63	5.89
acific	2.06	6.50	7.08	7.39	7.65

1/ Revised.

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

Geographic division	Oct. average 1935-39	Sept. 1, 1943	Oct. 1, 1943	Sept. 1, 1944	Oct. 1, 1944
	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's
TOTAL FARM EMPLOYMENT					
United States	12,389	11,502	11,938	11,040	11,839
New England	273	290	276	271	268
Middle Atlantic	672	723	704	694	677
East North Central	1,551	1,541	1,464	1,477	1,439
West North Central	1,725	1,793	1,661	1,766	1,671
South Atlantic	2,451	2,167	2,312	2,099	2,341
East South Central	2,275	1,862	2,171	1,689	2,207
West South Central	2,339	1,757	2,190	1,710	2,107
Mountain	488	539	486	519	462
Pacific	615	830	674	815	667
FAMILY WORKERS 1/					
United States	9,190	8,402	8,834	8,223	8,928
New England	168	185	170	171	173
Middle Atlantic	418	446	429	448	423
East North Central	1,156	1,223	1,152	1,191	1,165
West North Central	1,347	1,380	1,337	1,389	1,348
South Atlantic	1,825	1,629	1,713	1,585	1,790
East South Central	1,919	1,549	1,782	1,445	1,816
West South Central	1,737	1,308	1,616	1,311	1,561
Mountain	293	326	311	328	304
Pacific	327	356	324	355	318
HIRED WORKERS					
United States	3,199	3,100	3,104	2,817	2,911
New England	105	105	106	100	95
Middle Atlantic	254	277	275	246	254
East North Central	395	318	312	286	274
West North Central	378	413	324	377	323
South Atlantic	626	538	599	514	551
East South Central	356	313	389	244	391
West South Central	602	449	574	399	516
Mountain	195	213	175	191	158
Pacific	288	474	350	460	349

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

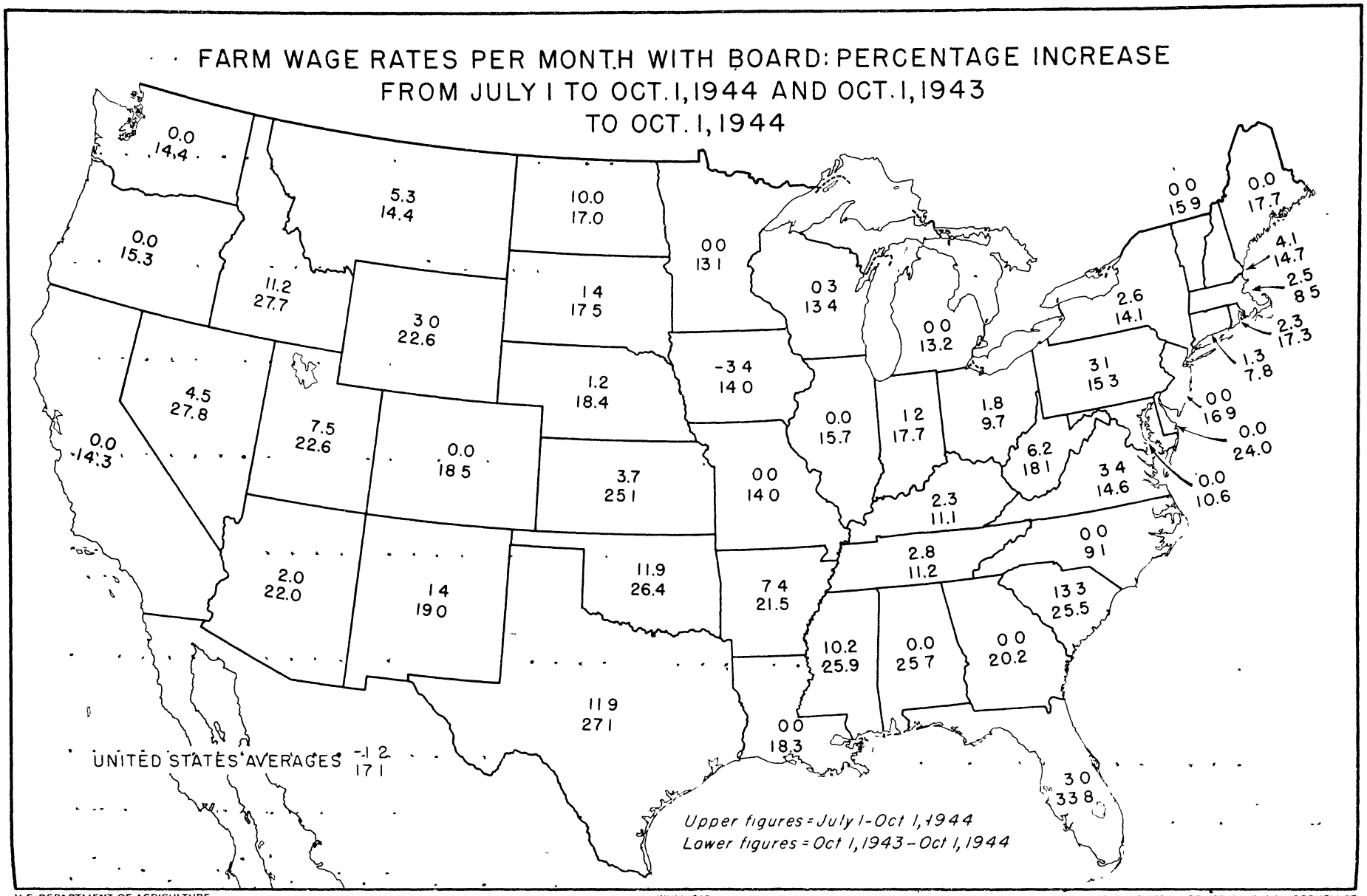
Based on reports from 19,347 farmers who reported for their own farms the number of family and hired workers doing 2 or more days of work during the week of inquiry.

Farm wage rates, by States, October 1, 1943 and October 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	73.50	86.50	106.00	123.00	4.75	4.90	5.50	6.00
N.H.	66.25	76.00	99.00	115.00	3.70	4.30	4.65	5.40
Vt.	66.00	76.50	94.00	104.00	3.55	3.95	4.55	5.00
Mass.	76.50	83.00	117.00	123.00	3.60	4.10	4.80	5.10
R.I.	75.00	88.00	119.00	125.00	3.60	4.25	4.75	5.40
Conn.	74.00	79.75	111.00	121.00	3.55	4.35	4.70	5.10
N.Y.	69.00	78.75	96.50	110.00	3.80	4.40	4.85	5.40
N.J.	71.00	83.00	101.00	119.00	3.80	4.20	4.70	5.30
Pa.	50.75	58.50	1/76.50	86.25	3.20	3.55	4.00	4.35
Ohio	51.75	56.75	72.00	79.50	3.25	3.70	4.10	4.50
Ind.	53.75	63.25	76.00	85.50	3.30	3.75	4.05	4.45
Ill.	65.25	75.50	82.50	95.75	3.60	4.15	4.40	4.95
Mich.	62.50	70.75	88.25	100.00	3.65	4.20	4.70	5.20
Wis.	65.25	74.00	89.25	103.00	3.50	3.90	4.40	4.90
Minn.	74.25	84.00	95.75	106.00	4.45	4.95	5.50	6.10
Iowa	75.25	85.75	92.00	107.00	4.30	4.75	5.20	5.70
Mo.	50.00	57.00	63.50	74.00	2.60	3.10	3.30	3.80
N.Dak.	94.00	110.00	119.00	135.00	6.40	7.20	7.90	8.50
S.Dak.	78.75	92.50	101.00	117.00	4.70	5.50	5.60	6.50
Nebr.	70.50	83.50	91.00	105.00	4.20	4.80	5.10	5.80
Kans.	61.75	77.25	84.00	101.00	3.85	5.20	4.85	6.10
Del.	55.25	68.50	81.00	91.00	3.60	4.35	4.35	5.80
Md.	52.00	57.50	70.00	80.00	3.30	3.90	4.10	4.60
Va.	39.50	45.25	55.00	61.00	2.25	2.75	2.90	3.35
W.Va.	40.00	47.25	56.25	65.25	2.20	2.45	2.80	3.05
N.C.	38.50	42.00	52.00	57.00	2.00	2.50	2.50	3.00
S.C.	25.50	32.00	35.25	42.50	1.30	1.65	1.65	2.05
Ga.	26.00	31.25	35.25	44.75	1.50	1.95	1.90	2.35
Fla.	38.50	51.50	62.00	73.00	2.15	2.75	3.00	3.75
Ky.	40.50	45.00	55.00	61.00	2.10	3.00	2.75	3.80
Tenn.	33.50	37.25	46.00	51.50	1.70	2.00	2.15	2.50
Ala.	28.25	35.50	39.50	48.50	1.65	2.00	2.10	2.60
Miss.	28.00	35.25	39.00	49.25	1.60	2.05	2.05	2.65
Ark.	36.00	43.75	49.50	60.50	1.90	2.40	2.45	3.05
La.	30.00	35.50	43.50	50.25	1.80	2.10	2.25	2.60
Okla.	50.25	63.50	69.00	87.75	3.05	4.10	3.50	4.50
Tex.	53.50	68.00	72.75	89.25	2.85	3.60	3.40	4.15
Mont.	104.00	119.00	131.00	145.00	5.90	6.60	6.50	7.10
Idaho	101.00	129.00	126.00	158.00	5.10	6.00	6.30	6.70
Wyo.	84.00	103.00	112.00	136.00	4.20	4.60	5.40	5.70
Colo.	74.25	88.00	104.00	121.00	4.20	4.80	5.20	5.90
N.Mex.	63.00	75.00	86.25	99.00	3.20	3.90	3.70	4.60
Ariz.	82.00	100.00	123.00	135.00	3.50	4.00	4.55	5.10
Utah	93.00	114.00	118.00	145.00	4.00	4.50	4.80	5.40
Nev.	90.00	115.00	115.00	150.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	6.10
Wash.	118.00	135.00	160.00	176.00	6.00	6.80	8.00	8.20
Oreg.	111.00	128.00	143.00	163.00	5.60	6.20	6.60	7.50
Calif.	119.00	136.00	153.00	173.00	5.50	6.00	6.90	7.50
U.S.	65.22	76.40	1/74.92	86.80	3.17	3.72	3.51	4.08

1/ Revised.

FARM WAGE RATES PER MONTH WITH BOARD: PERCENTAGE INCREASE FROM JULY 1 TO OCT. 1, 1944 AND OCT. 1, 1943 TO OCT. 1, 1944



U S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE JULY 1 1940 NEG 13917 BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Hourly earnings of factory workers by months, United States
January 1939 - July 1944

Month	Actual earnings in cents					
	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
January	63.2	65.5	68.3	80.1	91.9	100.2
February	63.1	65.4	68.5	80.3	92.4	100.3
March	63.2	65.7	68.9	81.1	93.4	100.6
April	63.0	65.6	70.2	82.2	94.4	101.3
May	63.2	66.0	72.1	83.5	95.3	101.7
June	63.1	66.2	73.2	84.5	95.9	101.8
July	62.6	65.8	73.5	85.6	96.3	101.9
August	62.4	66.0	73.6	87.0	96.5	
September	62.8	66.3	74.8	89.2	99.3	
October	63.5	66.5	76.1	89.3	98.8	
November	64.2	67.1	77.3	90.5	99.6	
December	65.2	67.6	78.3	90.7	99.5	
Average	63.3	66.1	72.9	85.3	96.1	

Month	Index numbers (1935-39 = 100)					
	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
January	104.3	108.1	112.7	132.2	151.7	165.4
February	104.2	108.0	113.1	132.6	152.5	165.6
March	104.3	108.5	113.7	133.9	154.2	166.1
April	104.0	108.3	115.9	135.7	155.8	167.2
May	104.3	108.9	119.0	137.8	157.5	167.9
June	104.2	109.3	120.8	139.5	158.3	168.0
July	103.3	108.6	121.3	141.3	159.0	168.2
August	103.0	108.9	121.5	143.6	159.3	
September	103.7	109.4	123.5	147.2	164.1	
October	104.8	109.8	125.6	147.4	163.3	
November	106.0	110.8	127.6	149.4	164.4	
December	107.6	111.6	129.2	149.7	164.2	
Average	104.5	109.1	120.3	140.8	158.7	

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor

Farm Labor Supply and Demand: Index numbers, by geographic divisions.
July 1, 1941 - October 1, 1944

Geographic division	Based period 1935-39 1/	1941		1942				1943				1944			
		July	Oct.	Jan.	April	July	Oct.	Jan.	April	July	Oct.	Jan.	April	July	Oct.
Index of supply															
New England	100	60	57	60	56	52	49	49	48	50	44	45	46	47	48
Middle Atlantic	100	60	61	65	60	57	51	52	53	55	54	58	53	54	56
East North Central	100	66	66	69	66	64	52	57	57	55	54	60	54	53	54
West North Central	100	74	71	70	66	61	48	53	54	55	52	57	49	52	51
South Atlantic	100	75	71	71	70	67	60	61	60	60	58	59	57	59	57
East South Central	100	82	74	76	71	71	63	66	63	64	61	62	60	59	58
West South Central	100	76	70	71	69	65	56	55	57	57	53	56	51	52	55
Mountain	100	72	69	69	64	56	47	50	53	53	53	59	50	52	57
Pacific	100	73	69	66	66	54	47	52	52	55	62	61	58	59	64
United States		73	70	70	67	62	54	56	56	57	56	58	54	55	56
Index of Demand															
New England	100	113	114	109	117	119	116	116	123	120	124	119	121	115	115
Middle Atlantic	100	111	114	108	117	116	120	118	124	122	122	119	126	123	120
East North Central	100	115	117	112	118	119	124	122	127	123	123	119	125	124	121
West North Central	100	127	127	125	130	131	139	135	138	139	137	132	139	136	134
South Atlantic	100	108	108	110	116	114	118	117	120	117	117	121	119	115	116
East South Central	100	107	113	116	120	119	123	122	125	122	125	124	128	121	125
West South Central	100	121	124	120	123	128	136	128	131	132	129	125	132	133	131
Mountain	100	124	128	119	125	131	131	126	135	130	132	126	133	133	133
Pacific	100	113	115	113	114	121	122	122	122	121	122	122	123	123	122
United States		115	117	114	119	121	125	122	126	125	125	123	127	125	124

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

Number of Agricultural Workers Transported by the Office of Labor, W.F.A., that were Employed on September 30, 1944 1/

State	Mexicans	Jamaicans	Bahamians	Newfound-landers	Barbadians
Maine		493		83	
N.H.		182		76	
Vt.				94	
Mass.		255		72	
R.I.				8	
Conn.		2,052		90	
N.Y.		3,102	519	362	
N.J.		1,737	56	71	
Pa.		685		117	
Ohio	186	1,925			127
Ind.	108	483			
Ill.	106	696			
Mich.	2,175	1,299			
Wis.	457	846			340
Minn.	877	339			
Iowa	57	60			
N.Dak.	2,325				95
S.Dak.	290				
Nebr.	516				
Kans.	230				
Del.		303	352	13	
Md.		560	1,238		
Va.		118	1,204		
W.Va.					333
N.C.			251		
Fla.		1,452	1,009		
Tenn.			269		
Mont.	2/ 3,324				
Idaho	2/ 3,557				
Wyo.	2/ 608				
Colo.	2/ 2,217				
Ariz.	928				
Utah	2/ 620				
Nev.	499				
Wash.	2/ 3,484				
Oreg.	2/ 4,651				
Calif.	32,680				
TOTAL	2/59,895	16,587	4,898	986	895

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

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