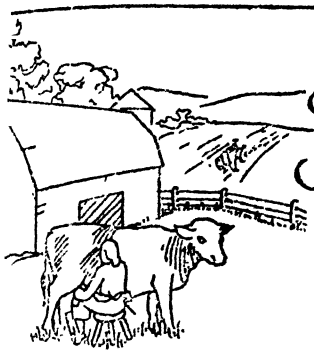
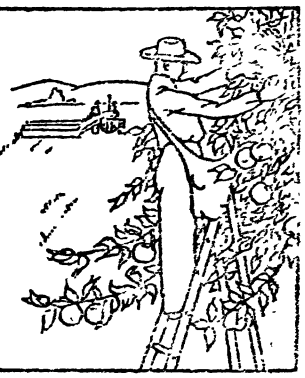


Farm Labor



BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Washington, D. C. BAE January 12, 1945

FARM WAGE RATES AT JANUARY RECORD; EMPLOYMENT REACHES NEW SEASONAL LOW

Wage rates paid hired farm workers on January 1 were at the highest level for that date in more than 20 years of quarterly records, the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported today. At the same time the number of farm workers had fallen to its lowest point during that period. The farm wage rate index, at 324 percent of the 1910-14 average, was down only 1 point from October, compared with an average decline of 6 points in the 10 years, 1934-43. This index was 18 percent, or 49 points, higher than on January 1, 1944. Competition among farmers and between agriculture and industry for the diminishing labor supply has been pushing farm wage rates to ever-higher levels since the beginning of World War II. Industrial wages, as measured by the index of average weekly factory earnings, were 424 percent of the 1910-14 average in October, compared with the October farm wage rate index of 325. However, average weekly factory earnings were up only 4 percent from the previous October, compared with a 16-percent advance in farm wage rates during that 12-month period.

All types of farm wage payments were up sharply from a year ago. Rates per month, with board, averaged $74.60 on January 1, or 18 percent above the January level last year. Average rates per month, without board, were $88.90, up 17 percent. Rates per day with and without board averaged $3.54 and $4.15, up 20 and 19 percent, respectively, from a year ago.

Every section of the country showed much higher farm wage rates this January 1 than last. Advances in monthly rates with board ranged from $5.90 in the East South Central States, the geographic division with the lowest farm wage rates, to $15.00 in the Pacific States, normally the section paying the highest wage rates in the country.

Farm wages per month without board were up from $7.60 in the East South Central region to $17.00 in the Pacific area. Actual wage rates paid hired workers on January 1 per day without board varied greatly, averaging from a low of $2.05 in South Carolina to a high of $7.50 in California.

For 1944 as a whole, farm wage rates averaged far above any other year in almost 80 years of record. The general level of all farm wage rates combined, at 315 percent of the 1910-14 average, was 51 points above the 1943 level. Compared with 1943 averages, farm wage rates in 1944 per month with and without board and per day with and without board were up about one-fifth.

Farm Employment Hits New January Low

There were fewer hired and family workers on the nation's farms January 1 than on that date during the past two decades of monthly farm employment records. Total farm employment fell 14 percent during December compared with a 5-year average decline of 10 percent in that month from 1935 through 1939. Unseasonal weather conditions contributed largely to the current decrease. On January 1, the number of all farm workers was 8,005,000, about 2 percent below the number employed on farms a year earlier, but 9 percent smaller than the average working on January 1, 1935-39.

Hired workers numbered 1,434,000 at the beginning of 1945 compared with 1,580,000 on January 1, 1944, and a 1,675,000 average for that date in 1935-39. The decline during December was only slightly larger than usual but was sufficient to drop the January 1 estimate to the lowest level for that date on record. The number of hired farm workers has been below the corresponding month a year earlier in every month since September 1942.

For the first time in four months, however, farm family workers totaled fewer than a year earlier. Estimated at 6,571,000 on January 1, the number of family workers (including farm operators) decreased 10 percent from December 1 or twice the 1935-39 average decline during December, and is also the lowest January 1 number in 21 years of monthly record.

Farm Work at Minimum

Unfavorable weather and the holiday season appear to have reduced farm activities to a minimum. Except for some southern and southwestern parts of the country, most of the work done at the turn of the year was necessary chores and care of livestock.

Farm work in Northeastern States was at the seasonal low point on January 1 and consisted mostly of caring for livestock, grading, packing, and delivery of stored crops, some cutting of wood, putting up ice, and readying machinery for next season's work. In scattered sections, particularly in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, some farmers still have corn to husk. The number of persons employed on New England and Middle Atlantic farms on January 1 was estimated as 691,000 compared with 694,000 on that date last year and the January 1, 1935-39 average of 735,000.

Much of the North Central area was blanketed with snow in early January and in many sections of this area, outside work had come to a standstill. A scattering of corn and soybeans remained to be harvested, but the cleaning-up of these crops, in the main, will have to await more favorable weather. In Nebraska, 17 percent of the corn crop remained to be husked at the end of December. Farm employment in the East and West North Central States combined totaled 2,569,000 persons, only 37 thousands fewer than on January 1, 1944, but 161 thousands below the 5-year (1935-39) average for January 1.

In the Southern States, also, farm work was not very active on January 1. Planting of vegetable crops, picking citrus fruit, and some harvesting of winter crops was under way in Florida. Most of the activity in Texas around January 1 was in the fruit and vegetable areas of South Texas, and it was too wet there for full-scale operations. Preparation of land was halted by end-of-December rains, but fair progress had already been made there through the fall and early winter. Total farm employment in the Southern Divisions dropped off faster than usual during December. Declines were 12 percent in the South Atlantic States, 17 in the East South Central, and 25 percent in the West South Central States, while the average declines December 1 to January 1 (1935-39) were 11, 7, and 17 percent respectively....

Farm activities in most Mountain States at the beginning of the New Year were largely limited to dairying, stock feeding, repair of farm machinery, and some sorting of onions and potatoes in States producing those crops. Farm workers in Arizona were engaged, for the most part, in handling truck crops and in picking cotton and citrus. The total number of persons employed in the Mountain Division of States was 345,000 compared with 348,000 on January 1 last year, and 358,000 for the January 1, 1935-39 average.

Although farm employment in the Pacific region declined more than usual during December, the number of farm workers in this region on January 1, at 455,000, was 19,000 above a year ago and 11,000 larger than the 1935-39 average for January 1. Farm work in Washington consisted mainly of repairing farm machinery, feeding livestock, mending fences, barns, and buildings, pruning in the fruit areas, and general duties on dairy and poultry farms. The principal activities on California farms requiring large numbers of workers January 1 were cotton picking, citrus harvest, seasonal vegetable harvest and cultivation, harvesting dates, oil olives, and the remnants of the sugar beet crop, and general pruning of orchards and vineyards.

Farm wage rates and related data, United States, January 1, 1945, with comparisons

	Annual average 1910-14	Annual average 1935-39	Jan. 1, 1944	Oct. 1, 1944	Jan. 1 1945
FARM WAGE RATES					
Per month, with board	$22.09	$26.01	$63.01	$76.40	$74.60
Per month, without board	29.18	34.17	76.06	86.80	88.90
Per day, with board	1.16	1.23	2.96	3.72	3.54
Per day, without board	1.42	1.50	3.50	4.08	4.15
FARM WAGE RATE INDEXES					
Unadjusted	100	118	275	325	324
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	118	286	316	338
FARM WAGE RATE INDEXES BY REGIONS					
New England	100	143	303	330	325
Middle Atlantic	100	129	275	314	307
East North Central	100	115	254	291	286
West North Central	100	98	234	322	282
South Atlantic	100	111	245	267	293
East South Central	100	101	220	261	261
West South Central	100	102	264	297	317
Mountain	100	106	245	313	286
Pacific	100	129	342	387	379
FARM EMPLOYMENT (thousands of persons):					
Total	12,052	10,920	8,202	11,839	8,005
Family labor	9,160	8,353	6,622	8,928	6,571
Hired labor	2,892	2,567	1,580	2,911	1,434
FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES (Adjusted for seasonal variation)					
Total	100	91	86	84	85
Family labor	100	91	86	87	86
Hired labor	100	89	87	75	79
RELATED INDEXES					
Prices received by farmers 2/	100	107	196	193	3/200
Ratio of prices received to farm wage rates	100	91	71	59	62
Average weekly factory earnings 4/	100	200	409	1/ 424	--

1/ Revised.
2/ Average of the 15th of the given and the 15th of the previous month.
3/ December 15, 1944 - latest data available.
4/ Factory pay roll per employed worker; average of all weeks during the designated month.

Based on reports from 18,045 farmers.

Farm wage rates, by geographic divisions, January 1, 1945 with comparisons

Geographic division	Annual average 1910-14	Oct. 1, 1943	Jan. 1, 1944	Oct. 1, 1944	Jan. 1, 1945
FARM WAGE RATES	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars
PER MONTH WITH BOARD					
New England	24.18	72.80	73.40	82.00	80.70
Middle Atlantic	22.25	62.00	62.40	71.40	69.90
East North Central	23.75	60.50	60.00	68.90	67.70
West North Central	26.32	73.40	61.60	84.70	74.50
South Atlantic	14.62	32.80	35.20	39.20	43.60
East South Central	14.71	31.30	32.70	37.30	38.60
West South Central	17.35	44.30	48.70	54.00	56.50
Mountain	32.48	85.80	80.60	103.00	95.20
Pacific	33.45	118.00	118.00	135.00	133.00
PER MONTH WITHOUT BOARD					
New England	37.70	108.40	1/109.00	119.00	119.00
Middle Atlantic	33.41	89.00	89.70	102.00	101.00
East North Central	32.80	82.10	82.90	93.70	93.00
West North Central	36.86	93.10	83.20	106.00	99.30
South Atlantic	20.97	45.60	50.50	53.60	59.10
East South Central	20.80	43.20	45.50	51.40	53.10
West South Central	24.93	61.10	65.50	72.70	77.60
Mountain	46.42	115.40	111.00	135.00	124.00
Pacific	48.16	153.30	154.00	173.00	171.00
PER DAY WITH BOARD					
New England	1.27	3.86	1/3.70	4.32	4.10
Middle Atlantic	1.24	3.56	3.42	4.04	3.85
East North Central	1.31	3.47	3.36	3.95	3.80
West North Central	1.46	4.44	3.42	5.07	4.19
South Atlantic	.81	1.80	1.97	2.27	2.41
East South Central	.81	1.71	1.76	2.17	2.12
West South Central	.98	2.43	2.58	2.98	3.23
Mountain	1.50	4.42	3.82	5.04	4.43
Pacific	1.49	5.60	5.52	6.19	5.97
PER DAY WITHOUT BOARD					
New England	1.71	4.88	4.72	5.34	5.15
Middle Atlantic	1.63	4.49	4.37	4.97	4.76
East North Central	1.68	4.34	4.23	4.82	4.70
West North Central	1.88	5.54	4.42	6.08	5.20
South Atlantic	1.05	2.28	2.54	2.77	3.01
East South Central	1.05	2.20	2.23	2.80	2.69
West South Central	1.25	2.95	3.09	3.54	3.77
Mountain	2.05	5.34	4.56	5.89	5.38
Pacific	2.06	7.08	6.83	7.65	7.43

1/ Revised.

Farm wage rates, by States, January 1, 1944 and January 1, 1945

State	Per month, with board		Per month, without board		Per day with board		Per day without board	
	1944	1945	1944	1945	1944	1945	1944	1945
	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.
Maine	74.00	84.50	106.00	120.00	3.90	4.75	4.90	5.80
N.H.	73.00	77.00	110.00	116.00	3.70	4.10	4.90	5.10
Vt.	67.25	77.25	94.00	108.00	3.60	3.90	4.55	4.85
Mass.	78.00	83.75	117.00	124.00	3.60	4.10	4.70	5.10
R.I.	79.00	88.00	119.00	125.00	3.60	4.10	4.80	5.20
Conn.	72.00	76.00	109.00	119.00	3.55	4.10	4.70	5.00
N.Y.	69.50	78.00	96.50	110.00	3.60	4.10	4.60	5.10
N.J.	73.00	83.00	103.00	120.00	3.65	4.10	4.65	5.10
Pa.	52.00	59.00	78.50	86.25	3.15	3.50	4.05	4.30
Ohio	52.00	56.00	73.25	79.50	3.25	3.55	4.00	4.40
Ind.	56.00	60.00	76.00	82.00	3.30	3.60	4.05	4.35
Ill.	65.00	75.00	83.75	95.75	3.50	4.05	4.30	4.85
Mich.	61.75	69.75	90.00	99.50	3.55	4.10	4.50	5.00
Wis.	61.00	71.00	88.00	99.50	3.25	3.70	4.25	4.75
Minn.	60.00	72.00	85.00	99.25	3.50	3.95	4.65	5.10
Iowa	71.75	85.00	92.00	107.00	3.90	4.50	4.80	5.40
Mo.	47.00	57.25	62.50	76.75	2.50	3.15	3.20	3.90
N.Dak.	59.00	72.25	87.00	107.00	3.25	4.15	4.25	5.75
S.Dak.	67.75	81.00	92.50	107.00	3.65	4.55	4.70	5.70
Nebr.	66.50	83.50	86.25	107.00	4.05	4.95	5.10	5.95
Kans.	62.25	77.75	85.00	105.00	3.60	4.70	4.50	5.75
Del.	54.00	68.50	81.00	91.00	3.60	4.35	4.35	5.60
Md.	50.25	58.50	70.00	81.00	3.05	3.65	3.90	4.45
Va.	39.75	46.00	55.25	62.00	2.30	2.75	2.90	3.35
W.Va.	38.75	46.50	54.00	65.00	2.10	2.45	2.70	3.05
N.C.	37.50	42.50	52.00	58.00	2.15	2.55	2.60	3.10
S.C.	27.00	31.25	38.00	42.50	1.40	1.65	1.75	2.05
Ga.	28.00	32.00	39.25	44.75	1.55	1.95	1.95	2.40
Fla.	38.50	58.00	62.00	78.00	2.20	2.75	3.10	3.75
Ky.	40.00	46.50	54.50	63.50	2.05	2.50	2.65	3.10
Tenn.	32.75	40.00	45.75	53.50	1.70	2.00	2.10	2.50
Ala.	29.50	33.75	42.00	47.50	1.65	2.00	2.10	2.60
Miss.	29.50	34.25	41.00	48.00	1.70	2.00	2.10	2.60
Ark.	36.25	40.25	50.25	56.50	1.95	2.30	2.40	3.00
La.	32.50	39.00	45.75	53.75	1.95	2.20	2.35	2.75
Okla.	50.00	63.50	69.00	86.00	2.85	3.60	3.40	4.40
Tex.	53.50	63.00	71.50	87.25	2.75	3.60	3.30	4.10
Mont.	90.50	105.00	120.00	132.00	4.50	5.20	5.30	6.10
Idaho	93.50	111.00	123.00	142.00	4.35	5.40	5.50	6.50
Wyo.	79.75	99.75	108.00	132.00	3.80	4.55	4.70	5.70
Colo.	72.25	88.00	103.00	119.00	3.70	4.40	4.60	5.40
N.Mex.	64.00	79.50	86.50	105.00	3.20	3.50	3.70	4.50
Ariz.	83.00	96.50	124.00	128.00	3.55	3.90	4.45	4.90
Utah	106.00	112.00	131.00	140.00	3.90	4.50	4.75	5.40
Nev.	90.00	115.00	115.00	150.00	3.90	5.00	4.90	6.00
Wash.	110.00	124.00	146.00	165.00	5.60	5.80	6.70	7.30
Oreg.	108.00	121.00	142.00	156.00	5.50	5.80	6.40	6.80
Calif.	120.00	135.00	156.00	173.00	5.50	6.00	6.90	7.50
U. S.	63.01	74.60	76.06	88.90	2.96	3.54	3.50	4.15

Farm employment, United States and geographic divisions, January 1, 1945, with comparisons

TOTAL FARM EMPLOYMENT

Geographic division	January 1 average 1935-39	December 1, 1943	January 1, 1944	December 1, 1944	January 1, 1945
	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's
United States	8,834	9,519	8,202	9,337	8,005
New England	213	231	201	215	200
Middle Atlantic	522	588	493	575	491
East North Central	1,316	1,378	1,223	1,346	1,201
West North Central	1,414	1,512	1,383	1,490	1,368
South Atlantic	1,643	1,669	1,477	1,628	1,435
East South Central	1,426	1,534	1,275	1,472	1,228
West South Central	1,498	1,677	1,366	1,706	1,282
Mountain	358	402	348	386	345
Pacific	444	528	436	519	455

FAMILY WORKERS 1/

United States	7,159	7,269	6,622	7,289	6,571
New England	149	162	153	155	150
Middle Atlantic	386	394	373	394	367
East North Central	1,086	1,118	1,038	1,114	1,041
West North Central	1,223	1,271	1,200	1,277	1,204
South Atlantic	1,288	1,296	1,156	1,300	1,133
East South Central	1,238	1,253	1,095	1,240	1,069
West South Central	1,231	1,205	1,074	1,240	1,065
Mountain	271	285	262	286	261
Pacific	287	285	271	283	231

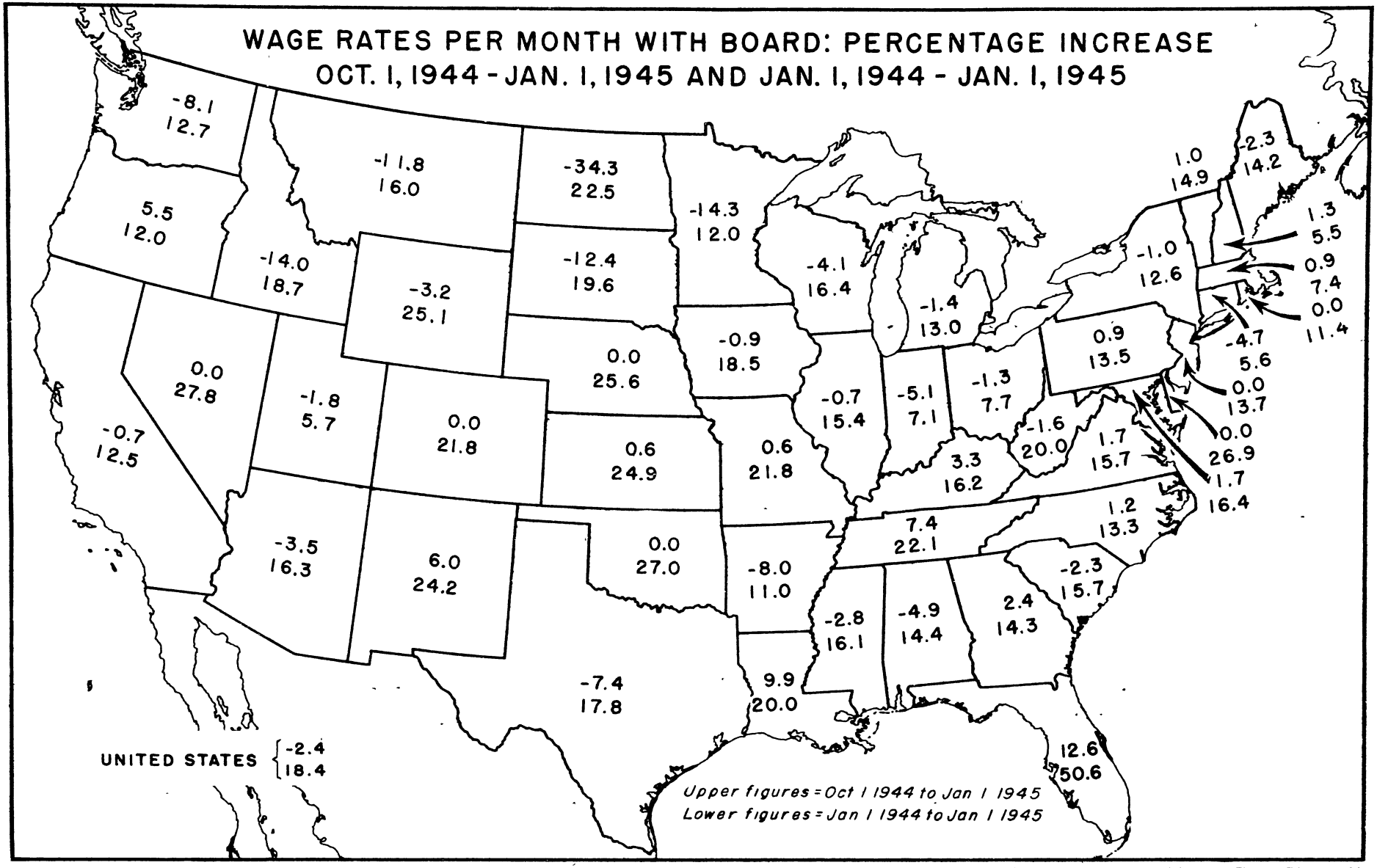
HIRED WORKERS

United States	1,675	2,250	1,580	2,048	1,434
New England	64	69	48	60	50
Middle Atlantic	136	194	120	181	134
East North Central	230	260	185	232	160
West North Central	191	241	183	213	164
South Atlantic	355	373	321	328	302
East South Central	188	281	180	232	159
West South Central	267	472	292	466	217
Mountain	87	117	86	100	84
Pacific	157	243	165	236	174

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

Based on reports from 18,045 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.

WAGE RATES PER MONTH WITH BOARD: PERCENTAGE INCREASE OCT. 1, 1944 - JAN. 1, 1945 AND JAN. 1, 1944 - JAN. 1, 1945



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEG. 45073 BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Annual Farm Wage Rates and Index Numbers, United States, 1909-44

Year	Per month		Per day		Weighted average rate per month	Index numbers of farm wage rates (1910-14 =100)
	With board	Without board	With board	Without board		
	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	
1909	22.21	28.10	1.09	1.30	23.77	96
1910	21.22	28.08	1.12	1.39	23.93	97
1911	21.49	28.54	1.13	1.39	24.15	98
1912	22.23	29.34	1.18	1.43	24.98	101
1913	22.89	30.21	1.20	1.46	25.59	103
1914	22.62	29.74	1.17	1.43	25.13	101
1915	22.97	30.06	1.18	1.44	25.41	103
1916	25.17	32.84	1.31	1.58	27.93	113
1917	31.11	40.52	1.65	1.98	34.79	141
1918	37.96	48.80	2.15	2.54	43.73	177
1919	43.29	56.63	2.54	3.03	51.13	207
1920	51.73	65.40	2.98	3.46	59.88	242
1921	33.62	44.67	1.77	2.12	38.29	155
1922	32.75	43.33	1.73	2.07	37.47	151
1923	37.24	48.25	1.89	2.25	41.87	169
1924	37.92	49.32	1.94	2.29	42.91	173
1925	38.77	49.90	1.97	2.29	43.51	176
1926	39.87	50.83	1.98	2.31	44.36	179
1927	40.11	50.85	1.98	2.28	44.36	179
1928	40.11	50.72	1.98	2.27	44.28	179
1929	40.61	51.22	1.96	2.25	44.52	180
1930	37.59	48.10	1.76	2.08	41.25	167
1931	28.77	38.38	1.32	1.62	32.11	130
1932	20.85	28.88	.94	1.20	23.66	96
1933	18.07	25.67	.85	1.11	21.10	85
1934	20.24	28.19	.98	1.26	23.61	95
1935	22.42	30.24	1.07	1.33	25.53	103
1936	24.53	32.28	1.15	1.42	27.51	111
1937	28.00	36.32	1.33	1.61	31.25	126
1938	27.73	36.18	1.31	1.58	30.91	125
1939	27.39	35.82	1.30	1.56	30.56	123
1940	28.05	36.68	1.36	1.59	31.28	126
1941	34.85	43.64	1.69	1.93	38.14	154
1942	46.64	1/ 55.91	2.19	2.49	1/ 49.80	201
1943	61.91	1/ 72.51	2.87	3.27	1/ 65.35	264
1944	74.00	85.70	3.46	3.93	78.00	315

1/ Revised.

Farm wage rates: Annual averages, United States and geographic divisions, 1943 and 1944

Geographic division	Per month				Per day			
	With board		Without board		With board		Without board	
	1943	1944	1943	1944	1943	1944	1943	1944
	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.
United States	61.91	74.00	1/72.51	85.70	2.87	3.46	3.27	3.97
New England	69.54	80.00	1/103.10	117.00	3.55	4.07	4.56	5.11
Middle Atlantic	60.09	69.20	1/86.39	99.30	3.34	3.81	4.26	4.74
East North Central	58.25	66.80	79.25	91.00	3.24	3.74	4.04	4.60
West North Central	66.25	78.30	85.75	99.70	3.63	4.33	4.56	5.31
South Atlantic	31.91	38.50	45.36	53.20	1.72	2.16	2.20	2.66
East South Central	30.61	36.10	42.16	49.70	1.58	1.98	2.02	2.53
West South Central	42.75	52.60	58.70	71.70	2.27	2.90	2.74	3.39
Mountain	80.14	96.90	107.57	127.00	3.86	4.53	4.77	5.44
Pacific	112.89	132.00	148.10	169.00	5.23	6.00	6.57	7.36

1/ Revised.

Farm employment: Annual averages, United States and geographic divisions, 1943 and 1944 1/

Geographic division	Total		Family		Hired	
	1943	1944	1943	1944	1943	1944
	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's
United States	10,263	10,037	7,857	7,810	2,406	2,227
New England	249	237	167	161	82	76
Middle Atlantic	619	606	416	412	203	194
East North Central	1,410	1,388	1,144	1,142	266	246
West North Central	1,608	1,580	1,322	1,321	286	259
South Atlantic	1,950	1,916	1,487	1,489	463	427
East South Central	1,655	1,609	1,394	1,378	261	231
West South Central	1,755	1,694	1,325	1,305	430	389
Mountain	439	426	297	297	142	129
Pacific	578	581	305	305	273	276

1/ Annual averages are straight averages of first of month employment estimates.

Number of Agricultural Workers Transported by the Office of Labor, W.F.A., That Were Employed on December 31, 1944 1/

State	Mexicans	Jamaicans	Bahamians	Newfoundlanders	Barbadians
Maine		12		74	
N.H.		3		60	
Vt.				83	
Mass.				59	
R.I.				7	
Conn.		744		77	
N.Y.		55		304	
N.J.		121		63	
Pa.		5		94	
Ohio	1	142			
Ind.	22	6			
Ill.	14	11			
Mich.		76			
Wis.	6	31			
Minn.	5				
Nebr.	195				
Kans.	10				
Del.		56	11	12	
Md.		32	71		
Va.			27		
W.Va.					3
Fla.		2,910	4,135		
Mont.	39				
Idaho	32				
Wyoming	7				
Colorado	99				
Ariz.	2/2,386	2/407			
Utah	15				
Nev.	2/ 223				
Wash.	241				
Oreg.	491				
Calif.	2/28,088				
Total	2/31,874	2/4,611	4,244	833	3

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

2/ Preliminary.

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