# A N N U A L  R E P O R T

# F A R M  P L A C E M E N T

# I N

# N E W  M E X I C O

NEW MEXICO STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Albuquerque, New Mexico

January 10, 1949

# INTRODUCTION

During the years 1943-1947, while the Employment Service carried the responsibility of recruiting workers to staff other war industries, the Farm Labor Program was temporarily turned over to the Extension Service. This year the responsibility was returned to the Employment Service in order that the Farm Placement activity might be integrated with the placement activities of all other employers and workers.

With a greatly reduced budget, no funds for transporting workers, insufficient funds to hire needed personnel, no work camps from which to dispense workers, with non-agricultural employment at an all-time high, and the largest cotton crop in history in prospect, it was reasonable to assume that we might not be able to supply the labor needed for the 1948 harvest. However, the N.M.S.E.S. can now look back with satisfaction at this year's record, since, although the best course may not have been followed in all instances, there was no loss of crop due to lack of labor. (See Appendix Exhibit A, Graph comparing 1948 Employment Service placements with placements made in 1942.)

Considerable credit for the success of the program goes to the advisory committees throughout the State, the State College, the County Agents, the AAA, the Chambers of Commerce, the newspapers, radio stations, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Farm Home Administration, operators of cotton gins, and the Employment Service personnel in neighboring states.

## Intrastate and Interstate Labor Supplies

Few, if any, workers were supplied through intrastate clearance because of the aversions of workers in the supply area of New Mexico to move into the demand area. Early in the harvest season most in-migration of workers was undirected. A total of 1194 workers was secured during the season through clearance mainly from Texas and Oklahoma. The remainder of the in-migrants, 8423 in number, followed the established migratory pattern into the state without direction from other states. In-migrants were composed largely of family groups and organized crews all of whom follow the cotton harvest each year over approximately the same route. Most of these came from Texas and Oklahoma although many other states were represented by a few workers.

## Other Sources of Labor Supply

Due to complication with the Mexican Government in designating recruitment points, only four Mexican Nationals were brought in under contract this year. One hundred and sixty-two Mexican Nationals who remained in New Mexico at the close of 1947 were recontracted. Through special arrangements, Texas referred 5100 Mexican Nationals to New Mexico for cotton harvest.

## Mechanization

The rate of mechanization in New Mexico is again on the increase after remaining relatively static during the war years because of the shortage of machinery. Mechanization has decreased the number of farms and increased the number of acres per farm; this results in less family labor per acre and a corresponding increase in the demand for hired labor during peak demand periods. The net effect has been an increased seasonal demand and an increase in unemployment in the local labor supply during the remainder of the year. This employment on a seasonal basis has encouraged workers to seek non-agricultural employment which intensifies the shortage at harvest time. The crops most affected are wheat and small grains, such as sorghums, beans, barley, oats, etc. Use of combines has reduced the need of labor, but not to any appreciable extent.

There were between 1650 and 1700 locally owned combines and 76 out-of-state combines used during the past season's wheat harvest. Two hundred combine operators from this State were directed to other states who had completed the local harvest. There were only two mechanical cotton picking machines in use in this State during the past cotton harvest; these were mostly on an experimental basis, and were only partially successful.

In order for the mechanical picker to operate successfully, the field must first be defoliated; otherwise the lint is stained by the green leaves and bolls. Future use of the machines is expected to increase, but will depend somewhat on the wage demands for hand picking. If wages are relatively high, mechanization will probably proceed much more rapidly during the next few years. A number of large growers are said to be contemplating trying them in the coming year. However, as yet they have not had any effect on labor needs.

## FOREIGN LABOR

It was early realized that local and migrant labor would be insufficient to meet peak harvest needs. Accordingly, fifty-two major growers requested authorization to contract and import 8693 workers. Of this number, forty-nine employer requests were approved for a total of 8675 workers. Plans were then made for recruitment at various designated points in Mexico, but for various reasons, New Mexico growers were never actually permitted to recruit at any point. During the year the Mexican Government designated as recruitment points, Aguascalientes, Monterrey, and Mexicali. Three other points - Chihuahua, Empalme, and Juarez - were tentatively promised. However, this promise failed to materialize. A number of New Mexico growers actually went to Mexicali prepared to recruit and transport their workers. A considerable number of growers went to El Paso with the intention of recruiting in Juarez which was the last designated point. At the peak of the cotton harvest season, there were 7356 known Mexican Nationals employed in New Mexico. Only 170 of these were employed under contract; the remainder having crossed the border near El Paso where they were recruited through the Texas Employment Commission.

Although every effort is being made to develop other sources of labor, it appears that many Mexican Nationals will again be required during the peak seasons of 1949. Efforts are accordingly under way to develop a more workable plan for recruiting and importing these workers. For this purpose meetings were held at Denver, Colorado; San Francisco, California; and St. Louis, Missouri. In attendance were growers from various parts of the country - members of the Special Farm Labor Committee, members from the Regional and Headquarters offices of the United States Employment Service, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Department of State, the National Farm Labor Advisory Council, etc. Proposed changes in recruitment plans were thoroughly analyzed and special attention was given to such problems as: who should have the responsibility for recruiting and contracting; who should determine the prevailing wage for an area; who should designate and schedule recruitment points; the contract as it concerns the medical clause; transportation; minimum period of employment; guarantee of subsistence; medical examination, workers' responsibility, etc.

EXHIBIT D

STATE SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES
BY MONTHS

Total Personnel in Local Offices in State - 83
Local Offices - 17

| 1948 | Visits | Local | | Applicant-Holding Clearance | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Referrals | Placements | Referrals | Placements |
| Jan. | 61 | 385 | 312 | 263 | 92 |
| Feb. | 330 | 23 | 14 | 313 | 233 |
| March | 307 | 615 | 507 | 60 | 36 |
| April | 526 | 540 | 435 | 541 | 454 |
| May | 804 | 1407 | 1046 | 2001 | 1890 |
| June | 842 | 3439 | 3007 | 549 | 486 |
| July | 925 | 4858 | 4430 | 53 | 35 |
| Aug. | 1327 | 4643 | 4227 | 142 | 112 |
| Sept. | 1434 | 11202 | 10273 | 412 | 295 |
| Oct. | 1222 | 18782 | 18782 | 851 | 688 |
| Nov. | 879 | 8111 | 7745 | 3 | 3 |
| Dec. | 579 | 3368 | 3116 | 4 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 9236 | 57373 | 53893 | 5192 | 4326 |

PML
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1527
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N48
1954

ANNUAL REPORT

# FARM PLACEMENT
# IN
# NEW MEXICO

New Mexico. State Employment Service
Farm placement in New Mexico
PML
Received on: 06-24-02

NEW MEXICO STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Albuquerque, New Mexico

March, 1955

## INTRODUCTION

It is customary at the close of each year to summarize and record developments in the farm labor market. The summary is intended to be broad enough to serve as a reference for individuals and organizations interested in the adequate staffing of the State's farms and to promote a better understanding of the Employment Service Farm Labor Program.

From many viewpoints, 1954 can be considered a good year. While there were several setbacks during the growing stages, a number of crops made record or near record yields. Weather was ideal for maturing and harvesting during the fall months. Frost did not occur in most of the important crop growing counties until late in October.

The shortage of domestic farm workers which has existed for many years continued during 1954. Mexican Nationals were again used to relieve labor deficits. The peak number of foreign workers required in 1954 was about 20 per cdnt less than was needed in 1953. The reduction is due to better utilization of available workers, the return to crop acreage allotments, and increased mechanization of farm jobs. Substantial progress was noted in mechanizing the cotton harvest which currently demands the most hand labor of any New Mexico crop.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the individuals, farm organizations, newspapers, radio broadcasting stations, state and federal agencies whose cooperation and assistance helped us to provide better Farm Placement Service to growers and workers. Constructive criticism and suggestions for an improved program will be welcomed.

## ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PROCESSING REPORT

### I. PLANNING

The organizational structure in effect during recent years remained unchanged in 1954. The farm placement section is responsible to the State Employment Service Director. The local office manager, under the general direction of the District Supervisor, is responsible for the operation of the program at the local level. Local offices serving areas where substantial numbers of hired farm workers are used usually have one or more interviewers assigned to the farm program on a full-time basis. Several local offices have appointed men interested in agricultural problems to serve as volunteer representatives in areas located some distance from the local office. These representatives accept applications for farm work and orders for farm workers. When immediate placement is not possible, the applications and orders are forwarded to the local employment office for action.

Planning for the 1954 season began before the 1953 harvest had been completed. Local offices were asked to ascertain growers' plans with respect to the 1954 plantings and labor demands were computed on the basis of this information. Comparison of labor supply with demand indicated the shortages that might develop. Local office managers and farm placement representatives met with farm groups to plan recruitment campaigns and determine sources from which shortages were to be met. The State Employment Service Director and the Chief of Farm Placement attended the National Farm Placement Conference to exchange information with representatives of other states. Staff members met with Colorado State Employment representatives to arrange the recruitment of workers from the northern part of the state for employment in Colorado and other states to the north. We also met with representatives of other western states to plan and adopt a procedure for scheduling and guiding migratory agricultural workers. This procedure has as its goal inseason and preseason arrangement of work schedules for crews, groups, and families to work for specific periods for specific employers. It assures that the greatest possible number of farm workers are made available to growers and that the workers are provided maximum job opportunities with minimum travel requirements and loss of time. At the close of the year, a survey was planned and commenced to determine why many domestic workers are unwilling to accept available farm jobs. This survey is continuing and the results will be included as a part of next year's report.

### II. EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

The total number of workers employed in major crop activities at the peak showed decline from 38,000 in 1953 to slightly less than 27,000 in 1954. The decrease occurred almost entirely in the cotton harvest and is due to unusually favorable weather prevailing through the harvest, the greater use of mechanical cotton harvesters, the reduced acreage planted to cotton, and the better utilization of workers. The low point in employment for the year was reached about the middle of April at which time approximately 4,400 workers were employed. This compares with a low point of 5,931 workers in 1953. The minimum employment of Mexican Nationals was reached at the same time and was 2,025 workers as compared with 3,073 in May of 1953.

## III. RECRUITMENT AND LABOR SUPPLY

### A. Local Recruitment

All accepted recruiting methods were used in an effort to obtain the best use of local workers. These methods included newspaper and radio publicity, recruitment at points where potential farm workers congregate, announcements in public schools, and door-to-door canvassing. Several local offices open early and on Saturday, during busy seasons, to arrange jobs and transportation for local workers.

### B. Mobilizing Intrastate and Interstate Labor

There was an increased interstate demand for New Mexico workers in 1954 with a corresponding increase in interstate clearance placements. A total of 3,607 workers were referred to other states for farm jobs as compared with 2,823 in 1953. Interstate clearance acceptances totaled 3,108. Intrastate clearance activity resulted in 780 referrals and 598 placements.

A nationwide system for scheduling and guiding migratory agricultural workers was used to some extent in bringing workers and jobs together. It is estimated that about 29 per cent of the non-local workers were covered by planned work schedules. The peak employment of non-locals was 1,673. Schedules on file cover 485 workers. Twenty-three of the schedules were received from other states. They represent 59 families totaling 342 individuals of whom 270 are workers. Nine schedules were prepared in this state representing 47 families of 248 persons with 215 workers. The procedure for scheduling and guiding migratory workers was supplemented through the use of Farm Labor Bulletins which were published weekly during the growing and harvesting seasons.

The Gallup and Farmington local offices each have two vehicles equipped with public address systems which are used to recruit Navajo Indians. These workers are used in carrot fields near Grants, New Mexico and in sugar beets, peaches, and potatoes in Colorado and in sugar beets in Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, and Montana.

### C. Foreign Workers

The use of foreign workers in New Mexico agriculture is limited to Mexican Nationals. This source has been used to supplement the domestic labor force since the beginning of cotton production in the State. At the peak of the cotton harvest in 1954, a total of 19,519 Mexican Nationals were employed. This is about 4,500 less than were employed at the peak in 1953. Some Mexican Nationals were used during every month of 1954. The low point of employment of Mexican Nationals was reached in April when 2,025 were employed. This compares with the 3,073 which were employed at the low point in 1953. Mexican Nationals are used in the production of cotton and to some extent in the production of hay and vegetables.

## D. Community Activities

Community participation in the farm placement program during the year was rather limited. Day-haul points were established in 18 towns and publicized so that potential farm workers would know where the pick-up points were as well as the type of work and wages offered. Nineteen volunteer farm placement representatives were designated in areas where no local office was located to provide a placement service for employers and applicants.

## E. Recruiting Problems

The principal problems in recruiting sufficient farm labor have existed over a period of years and may continue indefinitely. They are as follows:

1. Limited housing facilities for family groups with much of the more desirable housing being reserved for Mexican Nationals;
2. Reluctance of employers to advance transportation funds for out-of-area workers;
3. Wages that are not competitive with other types of work using the same labor supply and with farm wages in some other areas.

It is probable that the greatest progress in overcoming these problems has been made in the direction of housing. The farmers are continuing to build new housing and are improving present facilities; however, it will be at least several years before this problem will be eliminated. The requirement that Mexican Nationals must be paid the prevailing wage in addition to being furnished certain perquisites without charge has an unfavorable effect on domestic recruitment.

## F. Shortages and Surpluses

In the northern and western sections of the State there is a continued surplus of farm workers available for out-of-area employment. These workers have in the past worked as sheep herders, beet field workers, and potato and fruit harvest hands in the states of Colorado, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, and Montana. They continue to restrict their availability generally to the work and localities with which they are familiar. This limits their use in the shortage areas of New Mexico. Some progress has been made the last couple of years, however, in recruiting workers from the Las Vegas area for employment around Portales and Tucumcari. The wages offered farm workers in the latter two areas are higher than are offered in the southern part of the State so these jobs are more attractive to the New Mexico workers. The greatest labor shortage occurs in cotton production. A peak labor deficit of about 3,000 occurred in July in cotton chopping and more than 19,000 in October during the harvest. The shortages were relieved through the use of Mexican Nationals.

### G. Mechanization

The most significant development in the mechanization of agriculture during recent years has been the increased use of mechanical cotton harvesters. During 1948, only 2 mechanical cotton pickers were known to have been used. Approximately 65 mechanical pickers and about the same number of strippers were used in 1949. Their use declined in 1950 to 30 pickers and 23 strippers. The use was up again in 1951 with 78 mechanical pickers and 70 strippers in service. By 1952 New Mexico farmers owned 227 mechanical pickers and 233 strippers. Although 44 of the pickers and 80 of the strippers were not in use during the harvest, about 5 per cent of the 1952 cotton crop was mechanically harvested. The proportion of the crop gathered by machines doubled in 1953 to 10 per cent. It more than doubled in 1954, reaching 23 per cent or a total of 71,390 bales. The use of the mechanical stripper has declined the past two or three years while the use of the mechanical pickers has greatly increased. More than 60,000 bales of the 1954 crop were machine picked as compared to 10,651 bales machine stripped.

It now appears that the practicability of machine harvesting cotton is well established and that the use of mechanical harvesters will continue to increase although perhaps not at the same rapid rates as during the past two years.

## IV. EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The best test for determining the effectiveness of the farm labor program is to examine the crop loss due to lack of labor. Since no such losses were reported in New Mexico during 1954, it appears that the program met the demands imposed upon it. We feel that still further improvement is possible and offer the following recommendations:

1. Provide for a differential in wages paid domestic workers as compared with those paid Mexican Nationals. Farmers have hesitated to offer wage increases because there is no such provision;
2. Continue to emphasize the desirability of offering farm workers housing and employment conditions which compare favorably with those offered by non-farm work;
3. Assign area ceilings for foreign workers based on the labor reports submitted by the concerned employment offices. If adjustments are considered necessary, relate these adjustments to the report so that there is a general understanding as to why and how they are made. If the use of the farm labor report is undesirable for assigning area ceilings, eliminate it from the reporting requirements.

## V. FORECAST FOR NEXT SEASON

It now appears that there will be little change in labor supplies, demand and shortages for the coming year. There will be further reduction in the cotton acreage allotment; however, it is likely that this reduction will be offset by further increases in production as well as some increased truck farming.

**EXHIBIT C**

State Summary – Employment
of seasonal hired workers in agriculture
by month, 1954

| Period 1/ | Agricultural Employment | | | | Food processing employment | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Domestic | | Foreign | Total | Local | Non-local |
| | | Local | Non-local | | | | |
| I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII |
| January | 6772 | 2018 | 346 | 4408 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| February | 5336 | 1637 | 383 | 3316 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| March | 4695 | 1184 | 285 | 3226 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| April | 4399 | 1863 | 511 | 2025 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| May | 4662 | 2229 | 376 | 2057 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| June | 7307 | 3786 | 609 | 2912 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| July | 8080 | 4383 | 658 | 3039 | 100 | 100 | 0 |
| August | 7666 | 3772 | 917 | 2977 | 100 | 100 | 0 |
| September | 19897 | 6118 | 1497 | 12282 | 70 | 20 | 50 |
| October | 26962 | 6593 | 1673 | 18696 | 70 | 20 | 50 |
| November | 21460 | 5467 | 1218 | 14775 | 15 | 5 | 10 |
| December | 7113 | 1995 | 225 | 4893 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

1/ Employment figures shown for each month represent the number of seasonal hired workers employed during the week which includes the 15th of the month.

Local Office Summary – Expected
use of seasonal hired workers in agriculture
by month, 1955

| Period 1/ | Expected employment | | | | | | | Expected surplus for out-of-area migration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agricultural | | | | Food processing | | | |
| | Total | Domestic | | Foreign | Total | local | Non-local | |
| | | Local | Non-local | | | | | |
| I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII | IX |
| January | 6167 | 2010 | 285 | 3872 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1100 |
| February | 5410 | 1520 | 120 | 3770 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1118 |
| March | 4983 | 1353 | 151 | 3479 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1015 |
| April | 4473 | 1605 | 93 | 2775 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 930 |
| May | 5172 | 2005 | 173 | 2994 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2360 |
| June | 8696 | 3968 | 310 | 4418 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 430 |
| July | 8992 | 4107 | 382 | 4503 | 125 | 125 | 0 | 235 |
| August | 9355 | 4179 | 445 | 4731 | 125 | 125 | 0 | 610 |
| September | 21317 | 7232 | 1829 | 12256 | 265 | 165 | 100 | 1710 |
| October | 28741 | 8345 | 2442 | 17954 | 220 | 120 | 100 | 860 |
| November | 23837 | 5482 | 2129 | 16226 | 40 | 15 | 25 | 820 |
| December | 12164 | 3010 | 580 | 8574 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1255 |

1/ Week including 15th of the month.