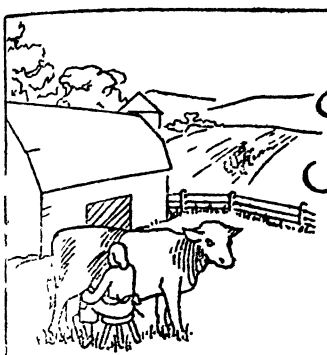

Farm Labor

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Washington, D. C. BAE February 12, 1945

FARM EMPLOYMENT RISES LESS THAN USUAL

Farm employment rose less than 1 percent during January and on February 1 totaled only 8,051,000 workers, 4 percent less than at this time last year and 11 percent below the February 1, 1935-39 average, the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported today. Unfavorable weather was partially responsible for the lowest February level of farm employment in more than two decades of record. During the 20-year period, 1925-44, total farm employment averaged 2 percent higher on February 1 than on January 1. What little increase there was this year was entirely due to a 60,000 advance in the number of hired workers. Farm family labor actually declined in number by 14,000 persons. The number of hired workers totaled 1,494,000 compared with 1,434,000 a month earlier and 1,681,000 on February 1 a year ago. The number of family workers (including farm operators) totaled 6,557,000 compared with 6,571,000 last month and 6,702,000 on February 1, 1944. Both classes of farm workers are at the lowest February level of record.

Farm activity, especially outside operations, was greatly retarded by cold weather, snow, and frozen ground in northern sections of the country. Cold weather and rain were restricting factors in much of the South.

Even the normal amount of activity at this season on New England and Middle Atlantic farms could not be carried on. Necessary travel from farm to market was done under difficulty as most of the roads were covered with ice, sleet, or snow. Farmers in many sections were occupied at digging out of snow drifts and keeping roads open to haul in necessary supplies and to deliver some products to market. Even wood-cutting had to be postponed in many localities. However, farmers were still doing many of the usual winter chores such as repairing machinery, butchering, and tending livestock. New England farms were employing 203,000 persons this February 1 compared with 211,000 last February, while on Middle Atlantic farms there were 486,000 persons doing some farm work compared with 512,000 a year ago.

In the North Central States, most field work was at a standstill because of the deep snow cover or, as in some West North Central States, because of rain. Shock corn remained in the field in many sections. Nebraska reported about 9 percent of its corn crop was unhusked at the end of January. Deep snow prevented many farmers from getting into the wood lots and manure was piling up in many barn yards. It now appears that many winter jobs will have to be completed in competition with spring work. Farm employment in these States totaled 2,523,000 February 1, compared with 2,569,000 a month earlier and 2,596,000 on February 1, 1944.

Total farm employment in the South Atlantic Region remained about the same as a month ago, but at 1,430,000 persons, was 10 percent below the February level last year. Except for the making and seeding of plant beds in the tobacco areas, planting early spring crops, harvesting winter vegetables and citrus fruit picking in Florida, most of the farm activity consisted of caring for livestock, cutting wood, repairing machinery, and general repair work on the farm.

Unfavorable weather conditions reached far into the South Central States and there was much less than the usual farm field work going on there around February 1. In the delta districts, some cotton was still in the fields to be picked. The preparation of land for corn planting in southern areas of Texas was retarded because of excessive rainfall. Fairly good progress was being made in planting truck crops, particularly in southern Mississippi and Louisiana. About 25 percent of the Mississippi cabbage crop had been set in the fields by February 1. There were 2,596,000 workers on South Central farms -- 86,000 more than on January 1 but 65,000 fewer than at this time last year.

The number of hired farm workers in the Mountain States dropped sharply during January, but the decline was slightly more than offset by an increase in the number of family workers. As a result, total farm employment reached 347,000, or 2,000 more than at the first of the year, but 12,000 under a year ago. Farm work was not very active in this region, although planting of carrots and harvesting of other vegetables was making favorable progress in Arizona. Heavy feeding of livestock was required in portions of the range country.

Employment of farm workers in the Pacific Coast States rose 11,000 during January and was even up 6,000 from the February 1 number a year ago. Farm work being carried on in Washington State consisted mainly of preparing for the spring and summer activities, with some plowing being done west of the Cascades. In the fruit areas, the usual pruning was going on. Considerable damage was done to California artichokes and early germinated sugar beets by low temperatures and frosts, and much heating was required to prevent serious damage to citrus groves. Principal farm operations in California that required large numbers of seasonal workers were citrus harvests, vegetable harvest, packing, cultivation in most commercial vegetable areas, pruning of deciduous orchards and vineyards, cotton harvest in the San Joaquin Valley, potato planting, and ground preparation and seeding of the late spring grain and miscellaneous crops.

Farm employment indexes and related data, United States, February 1, 1945, with comparisons

	Annual average 1910-14	Jan. 1, 1944	Feb. 1, 1944	Jan. 1, 1945	Feb. 1, 1945
FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES:					
Total:					
Unadjusted	100	68	70	66	67
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	86	85	85	83
Family labor -					
Unadjusted	100	72	73	72	72
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	86	85	86	84
Hired labor -					
Unadjusted	100	55	58	50	52
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	87	87	79	78
EMPLOYMENT (Thousands of persons):					
Farm	12,052	8,202	8,383	8,005	8,051
Family labor	9,160	6,622	6,702	6,571	6,557
Hired labor	2,892	1,580	1,681	1,434	1,494
RELATED INDEXES:					
Prices received by farmers 1/	100	196	196	200	2/201
Ratio of prices received to farm wage rates	100	71	---	62	---
Average weekly factory earnings 3/	100	409	411	4/423	---

1/ Average of the 15th of the given and the 15th of the previous month.
2/ January 15, 1945 -- latest data available.
3/ Factory payroll per employed worker; average of all weeks during the designated month.
4/ November 1944 -- latest data available.

Based on reports from 19,019 farmers.

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

TOTAL FARM EMPLOYMENT

Geographic division	February 1 average 1935-39	January 1, 1944	February 1, 1944	January 1, 1945	February 1 1945
	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's
United States	9,019	8,202	8,383	8,005	8,051
New England	222	201	211	200	203
Middle Atlantic	538	493	512	491	486
East North Central	1,327	1,223	1,234	1,201	1,178
West North Central	1,439	1,383	1,362	1,368	1,345
South Atlantic	1,697	1,477	1,584	1,435	1,430
East South Central	1,449	1,275	1,317	1,228	1,248
West South Central	1,523	1,366	1,344	1,282	1,348
Mountain	372	348	359	345	347
Pacific	452	436	460	455	466
FAMILY WORKERS 1/					
United States	7,191	6,622	6,702	6,571	6,557
New England	151	153	157	150	155
Middle Atlantic	388	373	373	367	364
East North Central	1,084	1,038	1,038	1,041	1,005
West North Central	1,232	1,200	1,175	1,204	1,184
South Atlantic	1,295	1,156	1,204	1,133	1,115
East South Central	1,244	1,095	1,133	1,069	1,105
West South Central	1,233	1,074	1,065	1,065	1,071
Mountain	276	262	275	261	271
Pacific	288	271	282	281	287
HIRED WORKERS					
United States	1,828	1,580	1,681	1,434	1,494
New England	71	48	54	50	48
Middle Atlantic	150	120	139	124	122
East North Central	243	185	196	160	173
West North Central	207	183	187	164	161
South Atlantic	402	321	380	302	315
East South Central	205	180	184	159	143
West South Central	290	292	279	217	277
Mountain	96	86	84	84	76
Pacific	164	165	178	174	179

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

Based on reports from 19,019 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 employment: Hired, family, and total labor, United States, specified annual averages and by months, February 1943-February 1945 1/

Year and month	Total farm employment	Family workers 2/	Hired workers
	1000's	1000's	1000's
1910-14 av.	12,052	9,160	2,892
1935-39 av.	10,920	8,353	2,567
1939 av.	10,740	8,145	2,595
1940 av.	10,585	8,019	2,566
1941 av.	10,361	7,829	2,532
1942 av.	10,397	7,855	2,542
1943 av.	10,263	7,857	2,406
February 1	8,369	6,638	1,731
March 1	8,730	7,003	1,727
April 1	9,308	7,433	1,875
May 1	10,492	8,248	2,244
June 1	11,659	8,962	2,697
July 1	11,749	8,763	2,986
August 1	11,020	8,058	2,962
September 1	11,502	8,402	3,100
October 1	11,938	8,834	3,104
November 1	10,698	8,064	2,634
December 1	9,519	7,269	2,250
1944 av.	10,037	7,810	2,227
January 1	8,202	6,622	1,580
February 1	8,383	6,702	1,681
March 1	8,562	6,935	1,627
April 1	9,080	7,401	1,679
May 1	10,068	8,079	1,989
June 1	11,285	8,845	2,440
July 1	11,355	8,623	2,732
August 1	10,608	7,914	2,694
September 1	11,040	8,223	2,817
October 1	11,839	8,928	2,911
November 1	10,690	8,168	2,522
December 1	9,337	7,289	2,048
1945	---	---	---
January 1	8,005	6,571	1,434
February 1	8,051	6,557	1,494

1/ Annual averages are straight averages of first of month employment estimates.
2/ Includes farm operators and members of their families working without wages.

Annual Farm Wage Rates and Index Numbers, by States, 1944

State	Per month		Per day		Composite rate per month 1/	Indexes of composite rates
	With board	Without board	With board	Without board		
	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	(1910-14 = 100)
Maine	84.30	120.00	4.59	5.59	105.00	342
N.H.	74.10	114.00	4.02	5.08	97.00	311
Vt.	75.80	103.00	3.82	4.86	91.80	298
Mass.	81.10	122.00	3.93	4.98	102.00	317
R.I.	86.40	124.00	4.06	5.16	106.00	354
Conn.	78.10	119.00	4.05	4.98	98.90	328
N.Y.	76.40	107.00	4.10	5.08	90.80	304
N.J.	81.30	116.00	4.10	5.09	96.20	356
Pa.	56.80	84.30	3.38	4.21	70.70	282
Ohio	55.60	78.70	3.49	4.32	68.40	260
Ind.	60.90	83.00	3.52	4.26	71.90	283
Ill.	73.70	93.40	3.97	4.76	83.10	291
Mich.	68.80	97.80	4.01	4.95	82.90	287
Wis.	70.90	98.50	3.68	4.66	82.50	258
Minn.	77.90	101.00	4.22	5.41	85.40	270
Iowa	84.90	106.00	4.56	5.46	91.80	280
Mo.	55.30	72.20	2.95	3.66	60.40	263
N.Dak.	98.60	124.00	5.62	6.84	109.00	315
S.Dak.	87.10	111.00	4.59	5.54	94.60	288
Nebr.	80.50	103.00	4.50	5.46	88.90	288
Kans.	73.10	96.40	4.55	5.41	83.80	305
Del.	64.70	89.20	4.14	5.11	83.10	366
Md.	55.90	76.80	3.56	4.33	72.70	344
Va.	43.50	59.10	2.58	3.16	54.90	287
W.Va.	44.40	61.50	2.30	2.93	54.00	213
N.C.	41.00	55.60	2.37	2.82	50.90	275
S.C.	29.60	41.20	1.56	1.94	36.30	235
Ga.	30.30	43.00	1.79	2.18	38.90	225
Fla.	48.30	68.70	2.43	3.42	60.50	266
Ky.	43.60	58.90	2.44	3.13	55.60	266
Tenn.	36.50	50.40	1.87	2.34	44.60	237
Ala.	33.60	46.20	1.86	2.33	42.60	237
Miss.	33.30	46.40	1.90	2.45	43.50	240
Ark.	41.60	57.40	2.21	2.79	52.30	241
La.	35.00	49.90	2.06	2.51	46.30	241
Okla.	57.90	80.00	3.55	4.03	74.70	284
Tex.	61.20	82.70	3.30	3.80	74.10	305
Mont.	110.00	137.00	5.48	6.36	116.00	293
Idaho	117.00	149.00	5.45	6.39	120.00	315
Wyo.	96.50	130.00	4.26	5.29	100.00	267
Colo.	84.80	116.00	4.28	5.37	90.80	284
N.Mex.	71.90	94.80	3.59	4.21	75.90	288
Ariz.	94.30	131.00	3.87	4.93	96.50	276
Utah	109.00	137.00	4.33	5.16	109.00	286
Nev.	105.00	133.00	4.72	5.66	101.00	249
Wash.	132.00	173.00	6.45	7.84	149.00	372
Oreg.	125.00	160.00	5.94	7.00	138.00	373
Calif.	133.00	169.00	5.90	7.27	145.00	369
U.S.	74.00	85.70	3.46	3.93	78.00	315

1/ Weighted average of all classes of payments. Daily rates were multiplied by 20 to obtain approximate monthly rates.

Number of Agricultural Workers Transported by the Office of Labor, W.F.A., That Were Employed on January 31, 1945 1/

State	Mexicans	Jamaicans	Bahamians	Newfoundlanders
Maine		12		68
N.H.		3		52
Vt.				89
Mass.				56
R.I.				7
Conn.		706		83
N.Y.		53		299
N.J.		54		55
Pa.		5		75
Ohio	1	134		
Ind. 2/	22	4		
Ill. 2/	14	7		
Mich. 2/		66		
Wis. 2/	2	7		
Minn. 2/	5			
Nebr. 2/	172			
Kans. 2/	10			
Del.		43	11	7
Md.		26	65	
Va.			26	
Fla.		2,862	4,478	
Mont.	20			
Idaho	24			
Wyo.	7			
Colo.	87			
Ariz.	2,197	268		
Utah	14			
Nev.	170			
Wash.	187			
Oreg.	458			
Calif.	26,200			
Total	2/29,590	2/4,250	4,580	791

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

2/ Preliminary.

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