Farm Labor

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Washington, D. C. BAE December 14, 1943

FARM EMPLOYMENT DOWN LESS THAN USUAL

With November weather generally ideal for seasonal farm work, total farm employment declined less than seasonally during the month, the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported today. There were 9,519,000 persons working on farms the first of December -- only slightly below the number of workers on December 1 last year or the average employment during the period December 1, 1938-42. The seasonal decline in total farm employment during November was 11 percent compared with a 13 percent drop during the month in the 5-year period (1938-42).

The 2,250,000 hired workers estimated to be employed on farms December 1 were only 1.3 percent fewer than those hired a year earlier and 1.8 percent less than the December 1, 1938-42 average. The drop in the number of hired hands during November was only about 15 percent compared with the 5-year average decline from November 1 to December 1 of 20 percent.

Although the number of family workers fell off about 10 percent during the past month, it is estimated that there were 7,269,000 such workers on farms December 1 compared with 7,272,000 a year ago and a December 1, 1938-42 average of 7,270,000. The decline during November was slightly smaller than the 11 percent decrease shown for the month as an average from 1938 through 1942.

The first week of December was generally warm and sunny but the shorter daily period of daylight naturally affected the length of the farm workday both for farm operators and hired help. On December 1, farm operators worked an average of 11.1 hours and hired help 9.4 hours compared with 12.4 and 10.2 hours respectively on September 1. Nevertheless, farm operators were working nearly an hour per day longer than the 10.3 average reported on December 1, 1939 while hired hands were working only slightly longer each day than they were four years ago.

In the fall harvest season (September-November) temperatures were generally favorable to farm operations. Deficiencies in precipitation, however, were widespread and in many localities the soil has been too

dry for plowing. Greatest deficiencies in precipitation during November were reported from the far Southwest, the central and southern Plains and the lower Missouri Valley. The driest November for many years occurred in Arkansas, Arizona and Oklahoma. For the entire fall season, the Northeastern States, Mississippi and Louisiana had above normal rainfall with all other sections of the country below normal. Some improvement in the soil moisture situation took place the first week of December in the Mississippi Valley, southeastern Plains, west Gulf area and Atlantic Coast States but at that time there was still a rather general need for moisture, especially in the Southeast and in the western Great Plains.

HARVESTS ABOUT COMPLETED

By December 1, harvesting operations were well in hand, with most of the late crops such as sugar beets, cotton, soybeans and potatoes almost completely gathered, and the bulk of the second largest corn crop in our history already husked. Hemp was moving rapidly to factories in the northern interior, but tobacco-stripping was delayed by too dry weather in Kentucky and Wisconsin. Barn feeding of livestock was increasing especially in northern areas. Despite the widespread expectations of "farm labor shortages" throughout the past year, this factor does not appear to have resulted in any significant damage to the 1943 crops or in more than usual losses through failure to harvest these.

In New England, the approach of winter found little to be done in the fields but there was much logging and wood-cutting and the usual cutting and hauling of Christmas trees. Snow covered the north and west sections of this region.

Outdoor work on mid-Atlantic farms was nearing a standstill on December 1, although considerable acreages of beets and carrots and some cabbage were still in the fields of western New York and not all of the corn was husked, nor all the potatoes dug, in Pennsylvania. Work was nearing completion, however, on the harvest of those crops remaining in the fields.

Corn husking and shredding were the principal farm activities throughout the Middle West with the weather generally favorable for field work. The soybean harvest was completed except in scattered areas. The completion of corn husking and soybean combining was somewhat retarded by the heavy snow cover in extreme southern Minnesota and north and west Iowa and by wet fields in South Dakota. The usual winter chores were occupying a large portion of the workers' time particularly in the midwest dairy sections where cows were mostly being housed, at least at night, and were largely barn fed. Some fall plowing during November was reported but does not appear to have progressed very rapidly in this region.

Farm work was well advanced in the South although in some sections the soil was too dry for plowing. Peanut threshing was nearing completion in Virginia, Oklahoma and Alabama and was making good progress in

Continued on page 3

Farm employment indexes and related data, United States, December 1, 1943, with comparisons

	Annual average 1910-14	Nov. 1, 1942	Dec. 1, 1942	Nov. 1, 1943	Dec. 1, 1943
FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES-					
Total:					
Unadjusted	100	90	79	89	79
Seasonally adjusted	100	85	86	83	86
Family labor-					
Unadjusted	100	88	79	88	79
Seasonally adjusted	100	85	87	85	87
Hired labor-					
Unadjusted	100	98	79	91	78
Seasonally adjusted	100	84	84	78	84
FARM EMPLOYMENT- (Thousands of persons)					
Total	12,052	10,879	9,551	10,698	9,519
Family labor	9,160	8,052	7,272	8,064	7,269
Hired labor	2,892	2,827	2,279	2,634	2,250
NON-AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT	—	43,000	43,000	—	—

North Carolina. Hog butchering was one of the most important activities on farms throughout the South. Picking, packing and shipping citrus fruit was increasing rapidly in Florida. The remnant of the cotton crop was being picked and work on the crop was confined to "scrapping" in northwest and extreme west Texas.

Most of the major crops of the West were harvested by December 1, with much fall plowing being done in many sections. Cotton harvesting increased during November in Arizona and was more than half finished in California on the first of December. During the last of November, cotton picking was interrupted by rain in southern New Mexico. Citrus picking was increasing sharply in Arizona and California, while orchard pruning was getting well under way on the Pacific Coast. The harvest of walnuts, tomatoes, beans and rice in California was about complete. Harvesting of avocados, olives and persimmons was proceeding, while harvesting of winter truck was increasing. Mexican workers who had been assigned to the sugar beet and apple districts of Washington were returned home, while other extra farm workers, there, left the farms and found employment in defense industries.

During 1943, the average number of persons employed on United States farms was estimated at 10,263,000 - one percent fewer than in 1942 and the lowest average in 35 years of record. All of the decline under 1942 occurred in the number of hired workers, whose ranks were somewhat depleted by the lure of relatively higher wages in industrial plants. The average number of hired workers dropped from 2,542,000 in 1942 to 2,406,000 in 1943 while the average number of family workers was practically unchanged at 7,857,000. Despite the record - low total farm employment, total crop production in 1943 will be about 5 percent above that of any year prior to 1942. Federally-inspected slaughter of meat animals averaged about the same as a year ago.

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

TOTAL FARM EMPLOYMENT

Geographic division	Oct. 1, 1942	Nov. 1 1942	Dec. 1, 1942	Oct.1, 1943	Nov.1, 1943	Dec. 1, 1943
	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's
United States	11,921	10,879	9,551	11,938	10,698	9,519
New England	285	242	239	276	238	231
Middle Atlantic	719	626	569	704	630	588
East North Central	1,445	1,451	1,373	1,464	1,460	1,378
West North Central	1,675	1,635	1,512	1,661	1,617	1,512
South Atlantic	2,315	2,086	1,634	2,312	2,045	1,669
East South Central	2,187	1,778	1,467	2,171	1,754	1,534
West South Central	2,155	1,972	1,841	2,190	1,893	1,677
Mountain	477	452	394	486	450	402
Pacific	663	637	522	674	611	528
FAMILY WORKERS 1/						
United States	8,653	8,052	7,272	8,834	8,064	7,269
New England	181	172	172	170	165	162
Middle Atlantic	434	417	402	429	421	394
East North Central	1,140	1,164	1,120	1,152	1,178	1,118
West North Central	1,321	1,317	1,266	1,337	1,323	1,271
South Atlantic	1,695	1,546	1,252	1,713	1,552	1,296
East South Central	1,740	1,452	1,199	1,782	1,438	1,253
West South Central	1,522	1,389	1,296	1,616	1,387	1,205
Mountain	296	290	279	311	298	285
Pacific	324	305	286	324	302	285
HIRED WORKERS						
United States	3,268	2,827	2,279	3,104	2,634	2,250
New England	104	70	67	106	73	69
Middle Atlantic	285	209	167	275	209	194
East North Central	305	287	253	312	282	260
West North Central	354	318	246	324	294	241
South Atlantic	620	540	382	599	493	373
East South Central	447	326	268	389	316	281
West South Central	633	583	545	574	506	472
Mountain	181	162	115	175	132	117
Pacific	339	332	236	350	309	243

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

Based on reports from 21,338 farmers.

Farm employment: Annual averages of number of persons employed, and index numbers, United States, 1909-42 1/

Year	Total employment		Family workers		Hired workers	
	Average number of persons	Index 1910-14 = 100	Average number of persons	Index 1910-14 = 100	Average number of persons	Index 1910-14 = 100
	1,000's		1,000's		1,000's	
909	12,909	101	9,341	102	2,868	99
910	12,146	101	9,269	101	2,877	99
911	12,042	100	9,172	100	2,870	99
912	12,038	100	9,149	100	2,889	100
913	12,033	100	9,128	100	2,905	100
914	12,000	100	9,081	99	2,919	101
915	11,981	99	9,047	99	2,934	101
916	12,016	100	9,050	99	2,966	103
917	11,789	98	8,856	97	2,933	101
918	11,348	94	8,507	93	2,841	98
919	11,106	92	8,322	91	2,784	96
920	11,362	94	8,479	93	2,883	100
921	11,412	95	8,511	93	2,901	100
922	11,443	95	8,528	93	2,915	101
923	11,385	94	8,491	93	2,894	100
924	11,362	94	8,488	93	2,874	99
925	11,448	95	8,577	94	2,871	99
926	11,534	96	8,507	93	3,027	105
927	11,246	93	8,296	91	2,950	102
928	11,379	94	8,340	91	2,956	102
929	11,289	94	8,305	91	2,984	103
930	11,173	93	8,323	91	2,850	99
931	11,159	93	8,469	92	2,690	93
932	11,069	92	8,571	94	2,498	86
933	11,023	91	8,590	94	2,433	84
934	10,852	90	8,506	93	2,346	81
935	11,131	92	8,702	95	2,429	84
936	11,047	92	8,486	93	2,561	89
937	10,892	90	8,261	90	2,631	91
938	10,789	90	8,169	89	2,620	91
939	10,740	89	8,145	89	2,595	90
940	10,585	88	8,019	88	2,566	89
941	10,361	86	7,829	85	2,532	88
942	10,397	86	7,855	86	2,542	88
943	10,263	85	7,857	86	2,406	83

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

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics
Crop Reporting Board

Length of farm workda r operators and hired workers, December 1, 1943
with comparisons

State and division	Farm operator				Hired help			
	Dec. 1, 1939	June 1, 1943	Sept. 1, 1943	Dec. 1, 1943	Dec. 1, 1939	June 1, 1943	Sept. 1, 1943	Dec. 1, 1943
	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours
Maine	12.0	13.1	13.2	12.3	9.5	9.7	9.5	9.5
N.H.	11.0	12.1	12.2	11.8	9.3	9.4	9.6	9.6
Vt.	12.0	13.0	12.9	12.3	10.7	11.6	10.7	10.7
Mass.	11.0	11.9	12.2	11.5	9.9	10.0	9.9	9.3
R.I.	11.0	13.2	11.9	11.9	10.0	10.0	10.5	10.5
Conn.	11.0	12.1	11.9	10.8	10.0	10.1	10.0	9.6
N.Eng.	11.5	12.5	12.5	11.8	9.9	10.0	10.0	9.7
N.Y.	11.0	12.8	12.7	11.9	10.0	11.0	10.7	10.6
N.J.	11.0	12.5	12.5	11.2	9.8	10.6	10.0	9.8
Pa.	11.3	13.3	13.1	12.0	9.7	11.0	10.5	10.2
M.Atl.	11.1	13.0	12.9	11.9	9.8	10.9	10.5	10.3
Ohio	11.3	13.3	12.8	11.7	9.5	10.6	10.2	9.7
Ind.	10.5	13.3	12.5	11.5	9.2	11.1	10.3	9.7
Ill.	10.0	13.5	12.5	11.3	10.0	11.6	10.9	10.2
Mich.	11.3	13.2	13.1	12.0	10.1	10.8	10.8	10.3
Wis.	11.8	13.5	13.3	12.5	10.8	12.1	11.8	11.3
E.N.Cent.	11.0	13.4	12.8	11.8	10.0	11.3	10.9	10.6
Minn.	11.0	13.4	13.2	12.0	10.0	11.7	11.2	10.8
Iowa	11.0	13.7	13.0	11.8	10.0	11.9	11.5	10.6
Mo.	10.7	13.2	12.7	11.3	9.1	11.0	10.2	9.3
N.Dak.	10.1	14.0	13.6	10.9	9.7	12.4	11.5	10.0
S.Dak.	10.0	13.8	13.5	11.3	10.0	12.2	11.4	10.1
Nebr.	10.0	13.5	13.0	11.8	10.0	11.6	11.2	9.9
Kans.	10.0	13.2	13.0	11.4	9.0	10.9	10.8	9.6
W.N.Cent.	10.5	13.5	13.0	11.6	9.7	11.6	11.1	10.1
Del.	10.6	13.5	11.1	11.0	9.2	10.5	10.8	9.5
Md.	11.0	13.0	13.1	11.7	9.5	10.5	10.0	9.8
Va.	10.0	12.6	12.4	11.0	9.0	10.3	9.9	9.3
W.Va.	10.0	12.2	12.4	10.9	9.0	9.5	9.5	8.8
N.C.	10.0	12.0	11.8	10.5	9.0	10.2	9.7	8.6
S.C.	10.0	12.4	11.7	10.2	9.0	10.7	10.0	8.7
Ga.	9.8	12.3	11.7	10.3	8.8	10.8	10.2	8.8
Fla.	10.0	11.5	11.0	10.4	9.0	9.7	9.3	9.0
S.Atl.	10.0	12.3	11.9	10.6	9.0	10.4	9.9	8.9
Ky.	10.0	12.7	12.4	10.9	9.0	10.6	10.2	9.2
Tenn.	9.8	12.6	12.1	11.0	8.9	10.7	10.2	9.1
Ala.	10.0	12.4	11.5	10.3	9.0	10.7	10.0	8.7
Miss.	9.3	12.1	11.5	10.2	8.8	10.6	9.9	8.9
E.S.Cent.	9.8	12.4	11.9	10.6	8.9	10.6	10.1	9.0
Ark.	9.6	12.4	11.6	10.5	8.9	10.3	9.9	8.8
La.	10.0	12.0	11.6	10.6	9.0	10.0	9.9	8.9
Okla.	10.0	13.0	11.7	10.8	9.0	10.4	10.5	9.1
Tex.	10.0	12.8	12.2	11.0	9.0	10.4	10.0	9.3
W.S.Cent.	9.9	12.6	11.9	10.8	9.0	10.3	10.0	9.1
Mont.	10.0	13.3	13.3	10.5	9.0	11.2	10.9	9.1
Idaho	10.0	13.5	13.3	10.7	9.0	10.0	10.0	9.0
Wyo.	10.0	13.2	12.9	11.0	9.0	10.7	10.6	9.2
Colo.	10.0	13.2	13.0	11.0	9.0	11.0	10.5	9.7
N.Mex.	10.0	12.9	12.7	10.8	9.0	10.4	10.6	8.5
Ariz.	10.0	11.7	11.3	11.2	9.0	9.6	9.7	8.9
Utah	10.6	13.2	12.7	11.2	8.6	9.0	8.7	8.6
Nev.	10.4	12.9	12.8	11.2	8.6	9.0	9.0	8.8
Mount.	10.1	13.1	12.9	10.9	9.0	10.3	10.3	9.1
Wash.	10.0	12.7	12.5	11.2	9.0	10.0	10.0	9.3
Oreg.	10.0	12.5	12.4	10.9	9.0	9.6	9.5	8.8
Calif.	9.9	11.6	11.4	10.7	8.9	9.4	9.2	8.8
Pacific	10.0	12.1	11.9	10.9	8.9	9.6	9.4	8.9
U.S.	10.3	12.8	12.4	11.1	9.3	10.7	10.2	9.4

Quarterly farm wage rates, composite by States, Jan. 1942-Oct. 1943 1/

State	1942				1943			
	Jan.	Apr.	July	Oct.	Jan.	Apr.	July	Oct.
	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.
ine	60.00	62.50	66.75	75.50	76.00	79.50	88.50	95.50
w Hampshire	57.75	65.25	72.50	74.00	76.00	82.00	83.75	88.00
rmont	59.00	60.25	64.75	69.00	72.00	77.00	80.75	82.50
ssachusetts	63.50	71.75	75.50	79.50	83.25	87.25	88.25	97.00
ode Island	67.50	71.50	74.00	81.75	83.75	99.00	93.50	96.50
nnecticut	68.75	74.00	74.75	79.75	80.00	85.25	88.75	93.75
w York	52.50	58.50	64.00	69.00	68.25	76.25	79.75	82.75
w Jersey	57.25	61.50	64.00	70.50	71.75	77.00	83.50	84.50
nnsylvania	44.75	48.75	52.75	54.25	58.50	59.25	67.50	69.25
io	42.50	46.00	50.00	54.00	54.25	58.00	62.50	63.50
diana	42.75	46.50	48.50	2/54.25	55.25	60.00	64.00	65.50
linois	47.25	53.25	56.50	61.50	60.75	68.00	73.50	74.00
chigan	48.00	51.50	55.50	60.00	62.75	67.00	71.75	75.50
sconsin	46.50	56.00	59.25	64.25	60.75	68.50	74.25	76.00
nnesota	38.50	51.50	57.00	68.25	55.25	68.00	78.25	83.75
wa	43.75	55.75	60.75	65.00	62.75	76.50	80.00	82.50
ssouri	32.25	35.25	39.25	43.75	44.25	46.75	50.75	54.00
rth Dakota	34.00	51.25	59.00	84.75	54.00	74.00	86.00	110.00
uth Dakota	36.00	50.00	56.00	72.25	60.75	73.50	79.75	88.25
braska	39.00	47.75	53.75	2/61.00	62.50	69.00	74.75	79.50
nsas	39.00	43.00	51.75	57.75	58.75	63.25	73.50	72.25
laware	44.00	49.50	53.25	60.25	64.25	65.50	71.50	72.00
ryland	43.50	46.25	51.25	58.50	57.75	60.25	64.25	67.25
rginia	34.75	36.50	2/38.50	43.75	43.00	44.00	47.50	50.25
st Virginia	33.50	35.50	38.50	42.00	44.00	45.00	48.00	53.00
rth Carolina	28.75	30.00	31.50	36.50	37.75	40.00	43.00	46.50
uth Carolina	20.25	21.75	22.75	24.25	26.25	27.50	29.75	31.00
orgia	20.50	22.50	23.50	26.25	26.75	29.25	31.50	32.75
orida	30.75	33.00	34.75	38.50	43.50	43.25	48.25	52.75
entucky	30.50	32.25	34.75	42.25	41.25	41.50	47.00	50.50
ennessee	26.25	27.75	29.00	33.50	33.25	34.50	38.75	40.75
abama	23.25	25.25	26.50	30.50	31.75	32.75	34.00	37.25
ississippi	23.25	23.50	25.50	28.75	30.25	32.75	33.75	36.50
rkansas	27.50	29.75	32.50	37.50	37.00	39.75	43.25	45.50
uisiana	24.00	25.75	26.50	32.00	32.00	34.00	36.75	40.50
klahoma	36.75	37.75	44.50	51.50	50.75	54.50	63.00	65.00
exas	37.25	37.50	40.25	50.00	51.00	52.25	58.50	65.50
ontana	51.25	62.25	72.25	87.25	74.75	90.25	100.00	112.00
daho	53.25	63.00	71.75	82.00	79.00	89.00	96.75	107.00
yoming	51.00	58.00	64.50	73.50	85.50	76.50	97.50	89.25
olorado	43.00	48.50	55.00	64.50	62.25	70.50	75.25	82.75
ew Mexico	40.50	41.50	43.75	53.25	54.00	56.50	60.50	66.50
rizona	49.00	55.25	2/61.25	77.00	75.50	77.75	84.50	86.50
tah	60.00	65.50	71.00	83.50	79.25	83.50	92.00	93.25
evada	50.00	59.25	60.00	67.75	77.00	80.25	83.75	93.25
ashington	63.75	72.75	89.25	105.75	102.00	119.00	128.00	140.00
regon	61.00	71.50	83.00	101.75	99.50	109.00	119.00	125.00
California	75.00	78.00	89.00	105.25	108.00	117.00	128.00	132.00
United States	41.21	43.77	50.09	54.41	55.28	59.29	67.81	69.27

1/ Composite farm wage rates are weighted averages of the four classes of wage rates (per month with and without board, per day with and without board).

2/ Revised

After five days return to
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

Penalty for private use to avoid payment of postage, $300

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

LIBRARY
N Y STATE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
WARREN HALL
ML-PL ITHACA N Y

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

Mexicans		Jamaicans		Bahamians	
State	No. of workers	State	No. of workers	State	No. of workers
South Dakota	1	Connecticut	226	Delaware	72
Nebraska	219	New Jersey	980	Florida	3,755
Kansas	52	Pennsylvania	87		
Montana	6	Ohio	15		
Idaho	31	Indiana	2		
Wyoming	10	Illinois	7		
Colorado	104	Michigan	26		
Arizona	1,625	Wisconsin	7		
Nevada	146	Florida	1,471		
Washington	165	Idaho	1		
Oregon	328				
California	20,980				
Total	23,667		2,822		3,827