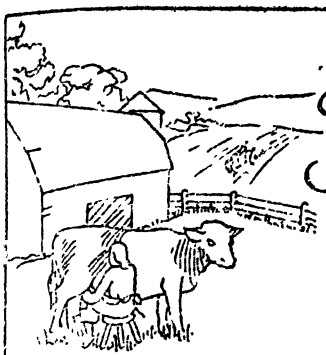


Farm Labor

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Washington, D. C. BAE November 13, 1944

F A R M E M P L O Y M E N T L I T T L E C H A N G E D F R O M L A S T Y E A R

The number of persons working on farms the first of November is estimated at 10,690,000 or practically the same as on the same date last year, the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported today. This represents a decline of about 1,150,000 workers from October 1 -- somewhat less than the usual decrease during this period. In most agricultural areas, weather conditions at the turn of the month were nearly ideal for harvest of crops. This, together with the lateness of the cotton harvest, probably accounts for the less than usual decline in agricultural employment during October. Total farm employment in the U. S. on November 1 was about six percent less than the average for that date during the 1935-39 period.

While the number of unpaid family workers, including farm operators, increased from 8,064,000 on November 1 last year to 8,168,000 on the first of this month, the number of hired workers declined from 2,634,000 to 2,522,000, a drop of about four percent between the two dates. Unpaid family workers thus represented 76.4 percent of total farm employment. This is the largest percentage of record for that month except for 1934, in which year severe drought conditions curtailed crop production and reduced the need for hired labor. The greater reliance on family workers this season is due primarily to high wage rates and the difficulty in obtaining hired workers, especially of the type that farmers consider competent. In many communities, greater than usual use of school children during the fall harvest has also tended to increase the number of family members doing farm work this year. The employment of family workers was not uniform over the entire country; decreases in fact were recorded for New England, Middle Atlantic, and Mountain Regions.

The number of hired workers decreased in all of the geographic regions except the West South Central and Mountain Regions where gains were shown. Elsewhere declines ranging from 16 percent in New England to 2 percent in the Middle Atlantic Region were indicated. The substantial reduction in number of hired workers in New England compared with a year ago is due largely to the early completion of the harvest this year.

This season's farm labor force has had a larger than usual number of workers obtained from sources not normally drawn upon. In addition to increased employment of farm women and children, large numbers of townspeople have aided with the work

on farms. Foreign workers brought in from Mexico, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Barbados, and Newfoundland have been and are at present working on farms throughout the country. The contribution of foreign workers to the production and harvest of crops has been much greater than their numbers might indicate. While they represent only a small percentage of the total farm labor force, they are, for the most part, able-bodied men, capable of doing hard work for long hours at a stretch, and they can be shifted from one job or area to another with a minimum of lost time. As of October 31, the number of foreign workers employed in or available for agricultural work included 52,646 Mexican Nationals, 14,305 Jamaicans, 756 Barbadians, 5,129 Bahamians, and 1,012 Newfoundlanders.

The Provost Marshal General's office of the War Department reports that war prisoners put in 1,375,328 man days of labor in agriculture during the month of October. This is comparable to 52,897 men working full time for 26 days. It should be noted that this report is for man days worked and does not represent the number of prisoners in camps. Further, it does not reflect the time they were available for work but were not able to do so because of bad weather, etc. Corresponding figures for the previous month (September) are 746,452 man days of labor or the equivalent of 28,713 men working full time. The work output of these men, most of whom are Germans, is not, of course, equal to that of free labor in normal times. Nevertheless, their contribution has helped materially in the production and harvest of crops in many areas. Their participation covers a wide range of farm jobs including picking cotton, stacking peanuts, snapping and picking corn, cutting sugar cane, and picking fruit. Where war prisoners are used, the farmer pays the Government the prevailing rate in the community for the particular type of work involved and also hauls the prisoners to and from the camp each day. The Government feeds the prisoners, including their lunch, and, of course, provides a guard.

Cotton Picking Rates - Up to November 1, the average rate paid for picking seed cotton was $1.92 per hundred pounds or about 16 percent higher than the rate of $1.66 at this time last season. The gains over a year ago were not uniform over the Cotton Belt. In general, increases of about 15 percent were shown for the States of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, and Arizona. In the Mississippi Delta and in North Carolina and Florida, rates were up about 20 percent from last year. Elsewhere increases averaged about 8 percent over last season. Wage ceilings have been placed on the rates for picking cotton in specific areas in California and Arizona. Maximum wage rates for picking and snapping American Upland cotton in California are $2.25 for picking and $1.50 for snapping a hundred pounds of seed cotton. In Arizona, the ceiling rate is $2.25 in some counties and $2.00 in certain others for picking Upland cotton and $4.00 for picking American Egyptian cotton.

Farm employment and related data, United States, November 1, 1944 with comparisons

	Annual average 1910-14	Oct. 1, 1943	Nov. 1, 1943	Oct. 1, 1944	Nov. 1, 1944
FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES:					
Total -					
Unadjusted	100	99	89	98	89
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	84	83	84	83
Family labor -					
Unadjusted	100	96	88	97	89
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	87	85	87	86
Hired labor -					
Unadjusted	100	107	91	101	87
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	80	78	75	74
EMPLOYMENT: (thousands of persons)					
Total farm	12,052	11,958	10,698	11,859	10,690
Family labor	9,160	8,854	8,064	8,928	8,168
Hired labor	2,892	3,104	2,634	2,911	2,522
RELATED INDEXES:					
Prices received by farmers 1/	100	194	194	193	2/194
Ratio of prices received to farm wage rates	100	70	---	59	---

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

Farm employment based on reports from 19,255 farmers.

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

TOTAL FARM EMPLOYMENT

Geographic division	November average 1935-39	October 1, 1943	November 1, 1943	October 1, 1944	November 1, 1944
	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's
United States	11,399	11,938	10,698	11,839	10,690
New England	252	276	238	268	216
Middle Atlantic	633	704	630	677	614
East North Central	1,533	1,464	1,460	1,439	1,449
West North Central	1,693	1,661	1,617	1,671	1,593
South Atlantic	2,239	2,312	2,045	2,341	2,066
East South Central	1,907	2,171	1,754	2,207	1,774
West South Central	2,135	2,190	1,893	2,107	1,926
Mountain	453	486	450	462	431
Pacific	554	674	611	667	621
FAMILY WORKERS 1/					
United States	8,543	8,834	8,064	8,928	8,168
New England	160	170	165	173	155
Middle Atlantic	406	429	421	423	410
East North Central	1,145	1,152	1,178	1,165	1,189
West North Central	1,327	1,337	1,323	1,348	1,331
South Atlantic	1,684	1,713	1,552	1,790	1,597
East South Central	1,603	1,782	1,438	1,816	1,475
West South Central	1,621	1,616	1,387	1,591	1,410
Mountain	286	311	298	304	295
Pacific	311	324	302	318	306
HIRED WORKERS					
United States	2,856	3,104	2,634	2,911	2,522
New England	92	106	73	95	61
Middle Atlantic	227	275	209	254	204
East North Central	388	312	282	274	260
West North Central	366	324	294	323	262
South Atlantic	555	599	493	551	469
East South Central	304	389	316	391	299
West South Central	514	574	506	516	516
Mountain	167	175	152	158	136
Pacific	243	350	309	349	315

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

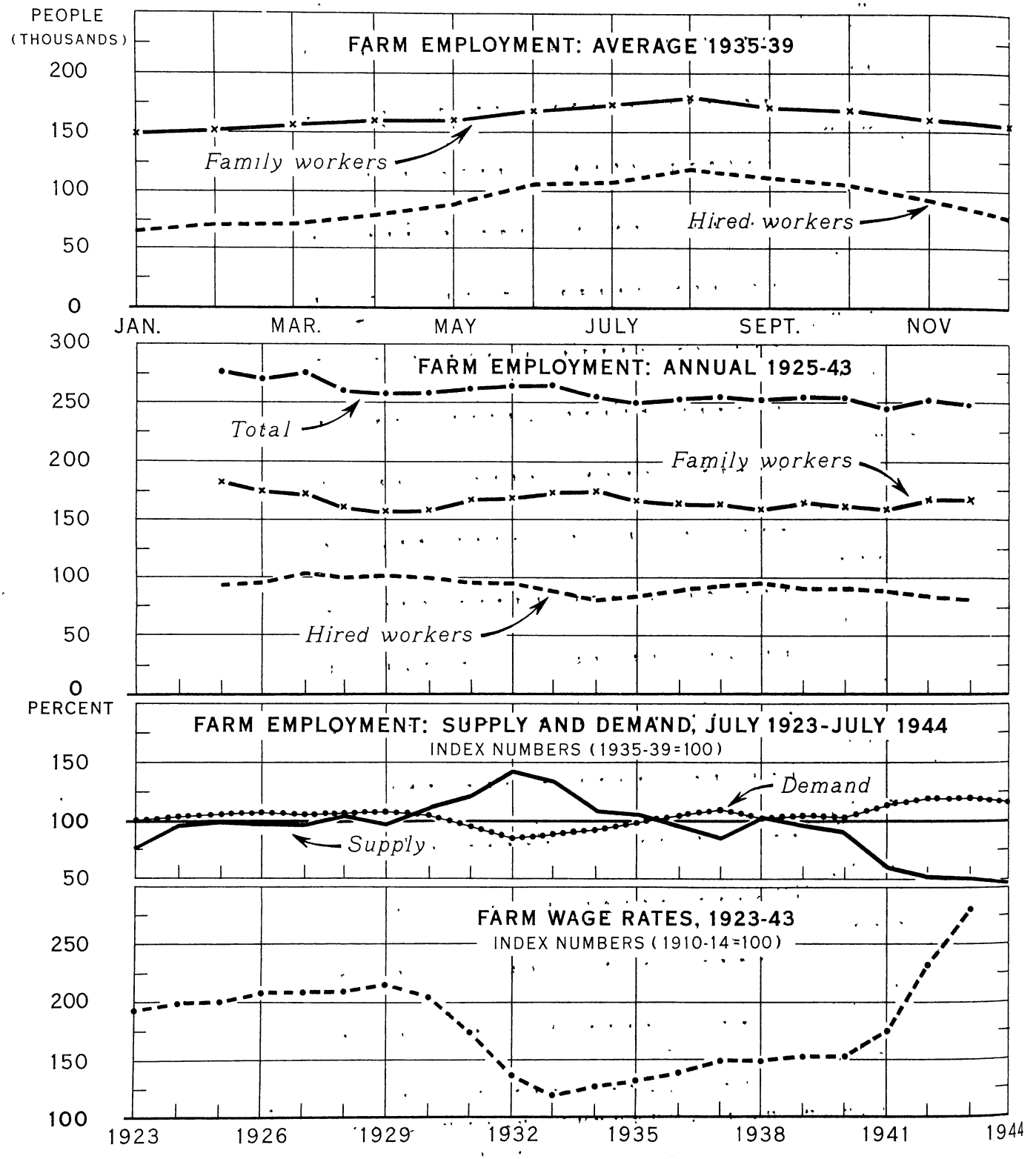
Based on reports from 19,255 farmers who reported for their own farms the number of family and hired workers doing 2 or more days of work during the week of inquiry

Average wage rates for picking 100 pounds of seed cotton, by States, up to November 1, 1925-44

State	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941 1/	1942 1/	1943 1/	1944 1/
	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.	Dol.
Mo.	1.38	1.12	1.14	1.14	1.12	.71	.49	.52	.67	.80	.75	.95	.80	.75	.75	.77	1.40	1.85	2.00	2.40
Va.	1.13	1.00	1.12	1.23	1.15	.75	.45	.34	.45	.65	.65	.70	.75	.65	.60	.70	1.00	1.50	1.80	1.95
N.C.	1.17	1.03	1.07	1.07	1.01	.58	.36	.38	.48	.65	.65	.65	.70	.60	.60	.67	.95	1.40	1.75	2.10
S.C.	.86	.82	.78	.83	.81	.52	.36	.36	.45	.50	.50	.55	.60	.50	.50	.54	.75	1.00	1.25	1.45
Ga.	.94	.90	.88	.85	.90	.57	.35	.33	.45	.50	.50	.55	.60	.50	.50	.53	.75	1.00	1.30	1.50
Fla.	1.13	1.12	.95	1.02	1.07	.76	.41	.39	.48	.55	.55	.60	.65	.60	.60	.67	.85	1.15	1.45	1.75
Tenn.	1.41	1.05	1.08	1.04	1.34	.63	.43	.47	.54	.65	.60	.80	.70	.60	.60	.65	1.20	1.50	1.80	1.95
Ala.	1.08	1.03	.96	.95	.92	.55	.34	.36	.45	.55	.50	.60	.60	.50	.50	.51	.85	1.10	1.40	1.60
Miss.	1.35	1.16	1.08	1.02	1.08	.56	.39	.40	.49	.55	.55	.75	.80	.55	.60	.57	1.10	1.40	1.70	2.10
Ark.	1.27	1.06	1.05	1.03	1.06	.56	.40	.44	.52	.60	.55	.75	.70	.60	.60	.65	1.20	1.50	1.70	2.05
La.	1.25	1.12	1.03	1.03	1.01	.61	.41	.39	.48	.55	.55	.65	.70	.55	.55	.55	.85	1.20	1.50	1.80
Okla.	1.60	1.28	1.40	1.28	1.22	.73	.45	.48	.65	.75	.70	.75	.75	.70	.65	.72	1.20	1.50	2/1.80	1.95
Tex.	1.33	1.20	1.24	1.21	1.11	.71	.44	.45	.55	.60	.60	.65	.65	.55	.55	.58	1.10	1.45	2/1.70	1.95
N.Mex.	1.40	1.15	1.30	1.22	1.25	.68	.43	.44	.55	.65	.65	.70	.70	.60	.65	.68	1.20	1.75	2.00	2.10
Ariz.	1.75	1.45	1.53	1.50	1.50	.89	.58	.50	.67	.90	.90	1.10	.85	.80	.90	.93	1.45	2.45	2.70	2.25
Calif.	1.65	1.55	1.47	1.46	1.45	.89	.50	.45	.65	.90	.90	1.00	.95	.75	.85	.95	1.30	1.90	2.10	2.25
Ill.	--	--	1.20	1.20	1.15	.71	.50	.40	.65	.75	.75	.90	.70	.70	.70	.70	1.35	1.70	2.00	2.20
Kans.	1.54	--	1.50	1.40	1.30	.75	.45	.48	.65	.75	.70	.75	.65	.65	.65	.65	1.10	1.50	1.95	1.80
Ky.	1.48	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.18	.70	.49	.50	.60	.80	.75	.95	.80	.80	.80	.80	1.25	1.80	2.00	2.10
U. S.	1.27	1.11	1.12	1.10	1.06	.63	.41	.42	.53	.60	.58	.69	.69	.57	.58	.62	1.09	1.41	2/1.66	1.92

1/ Includes rates paid for snapping bolls converted to seed cotton equivalent.
2/ Revised.

FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, NEW ENGLAND STATES



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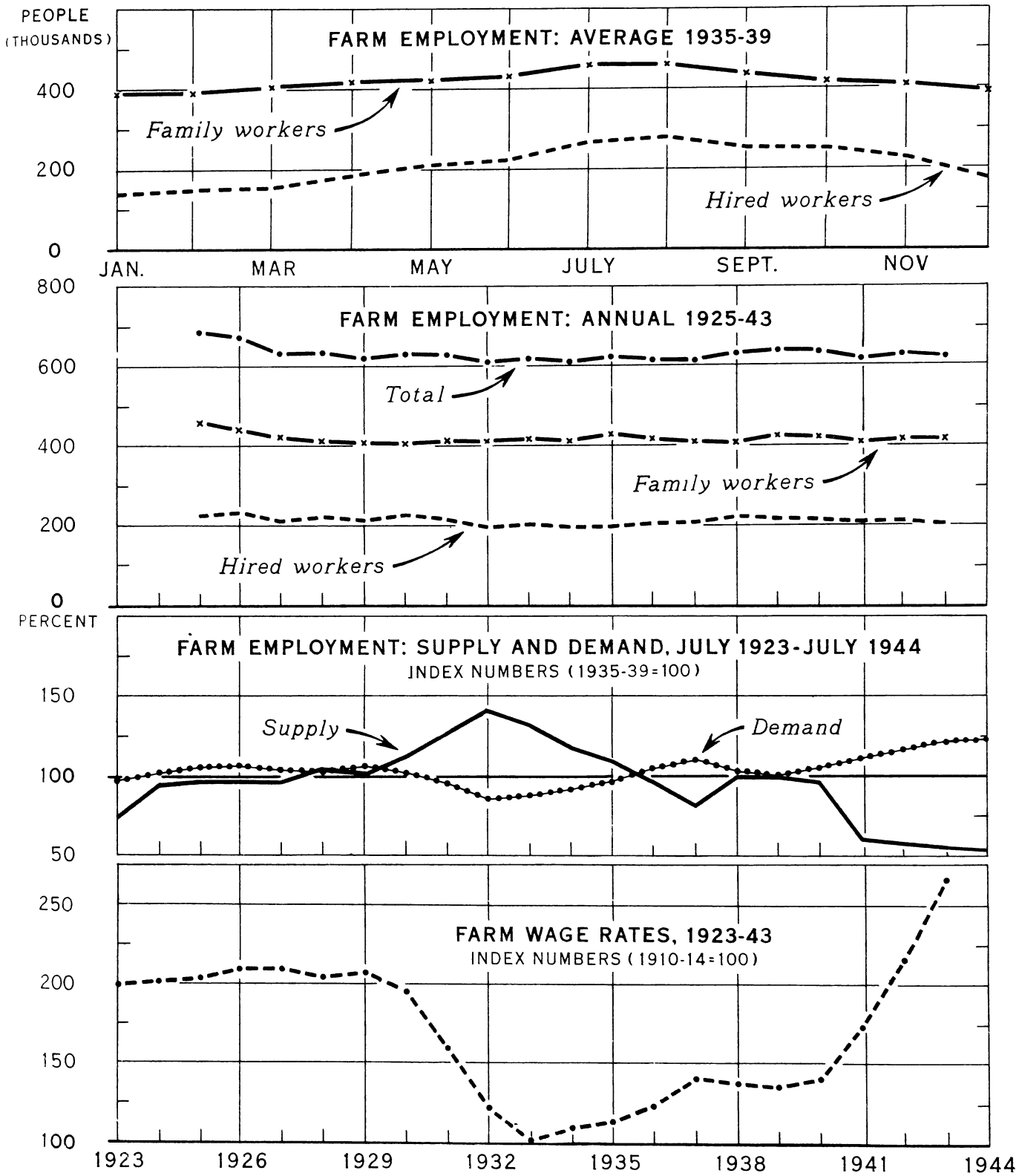
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, MIDDLE ATLANTIC STATES



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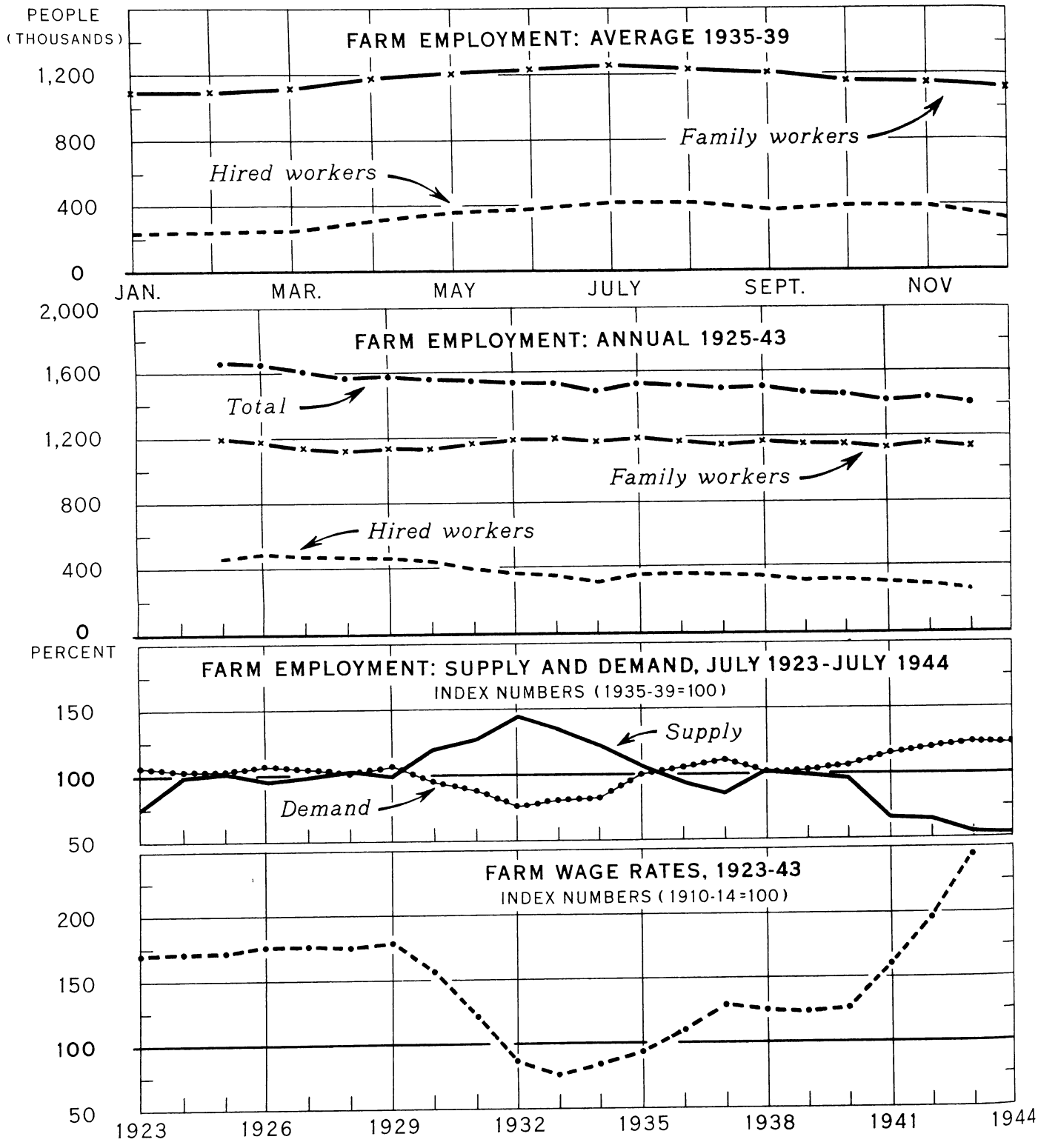
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, EAST NORTH CENTRAL STATES



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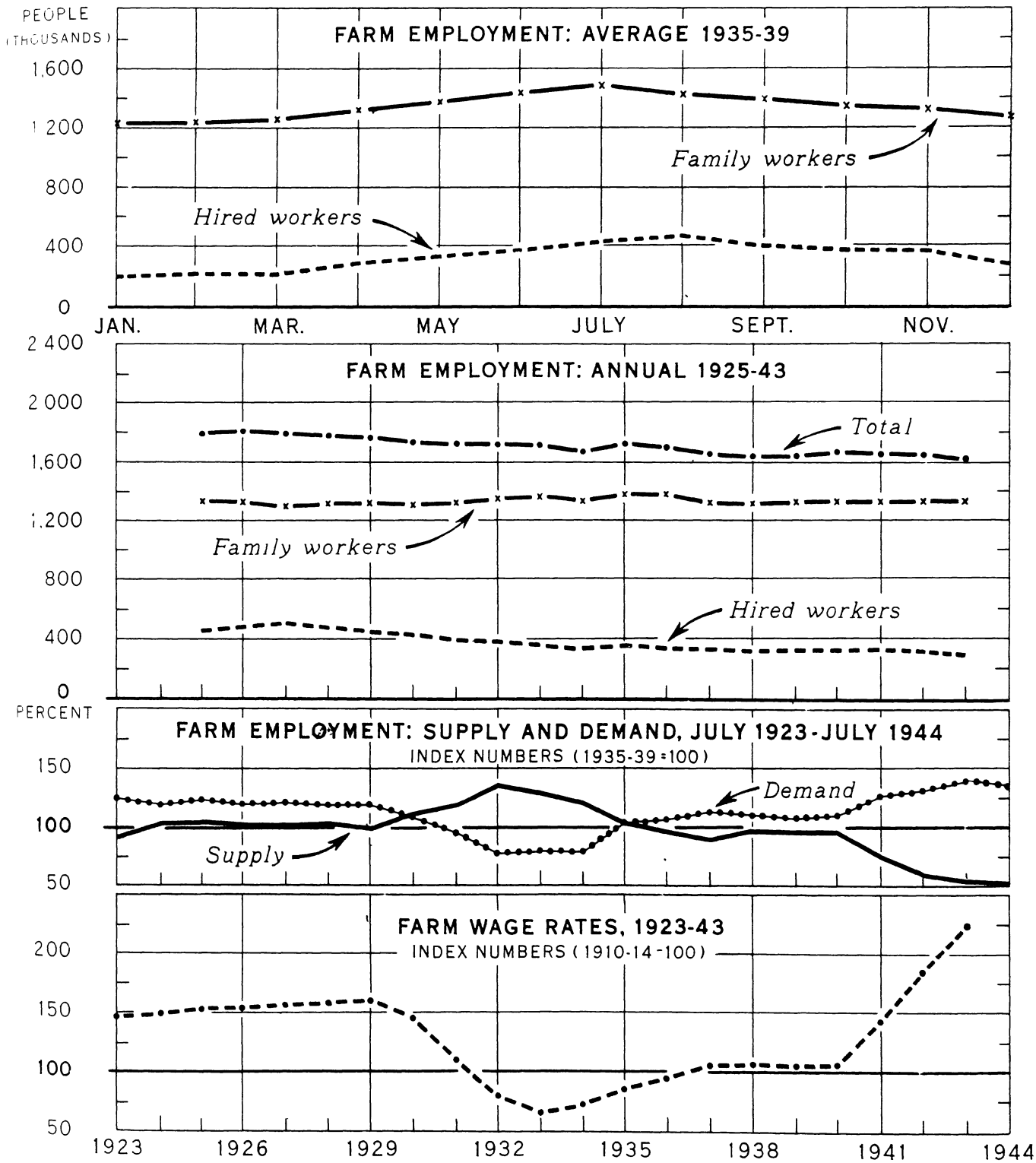
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, WEST NORTH CENTRAL STATES



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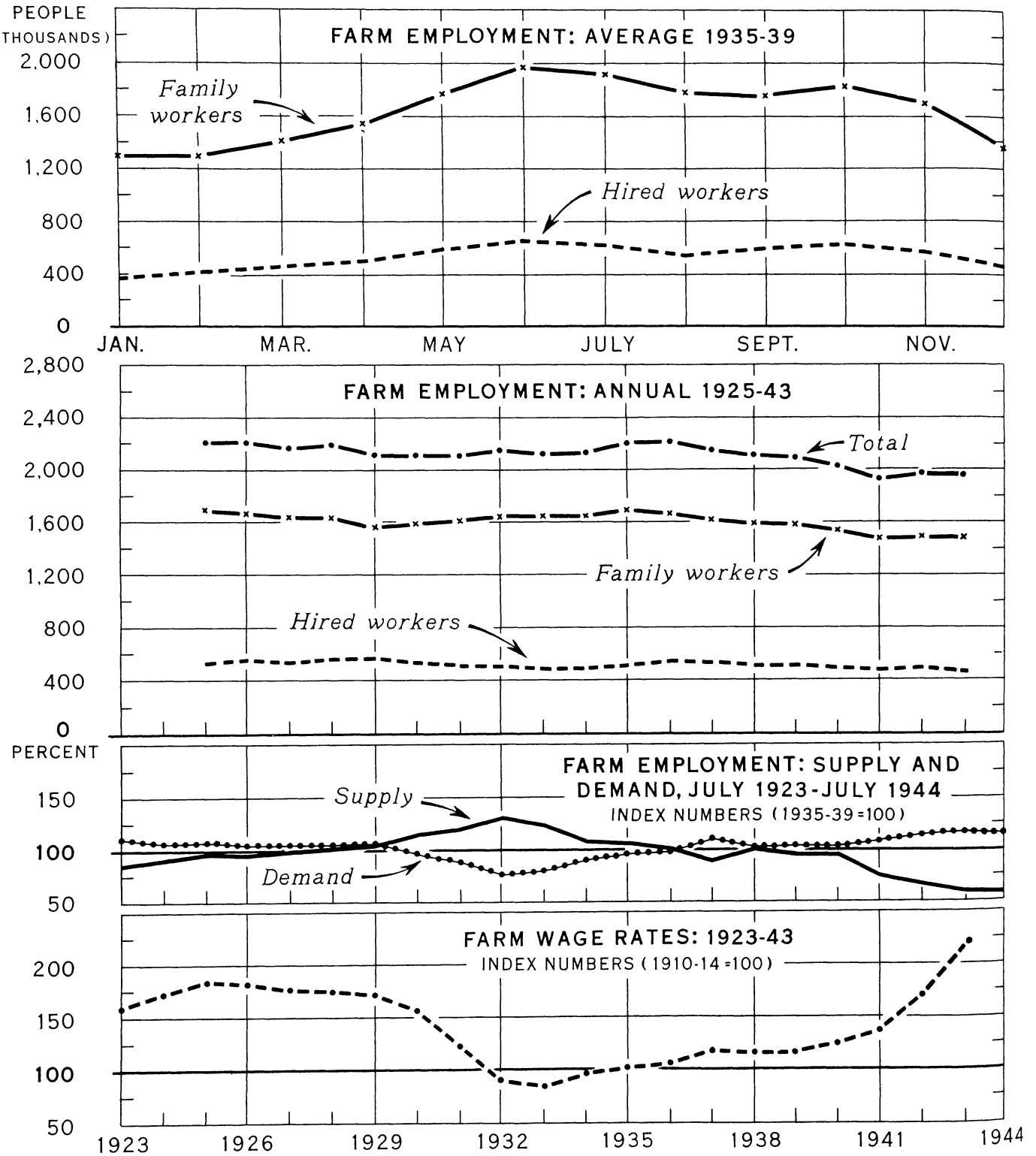
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, SOUTH ATLANTIC STATES



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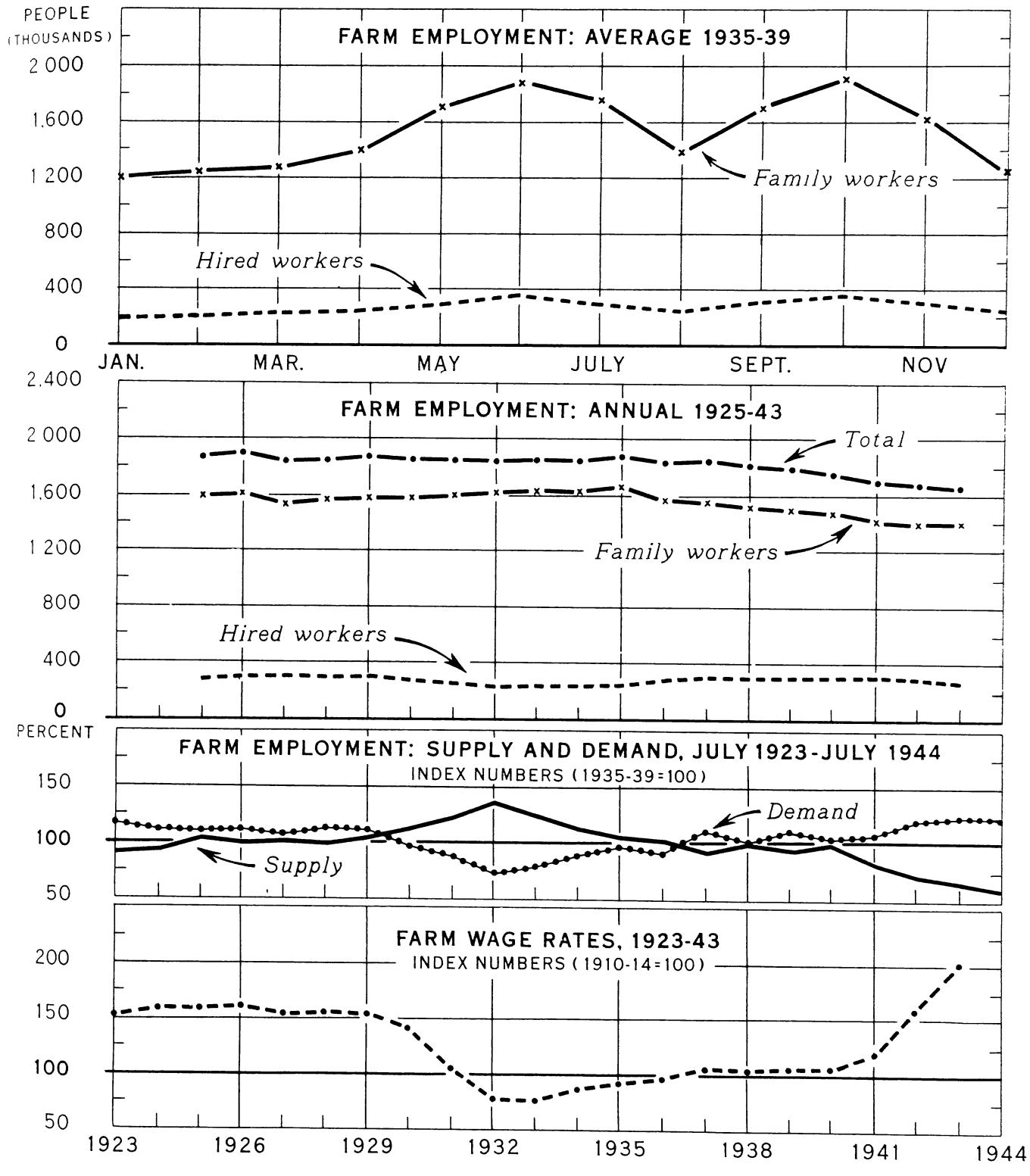
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, EAST SOUTH CENTRAL STATES



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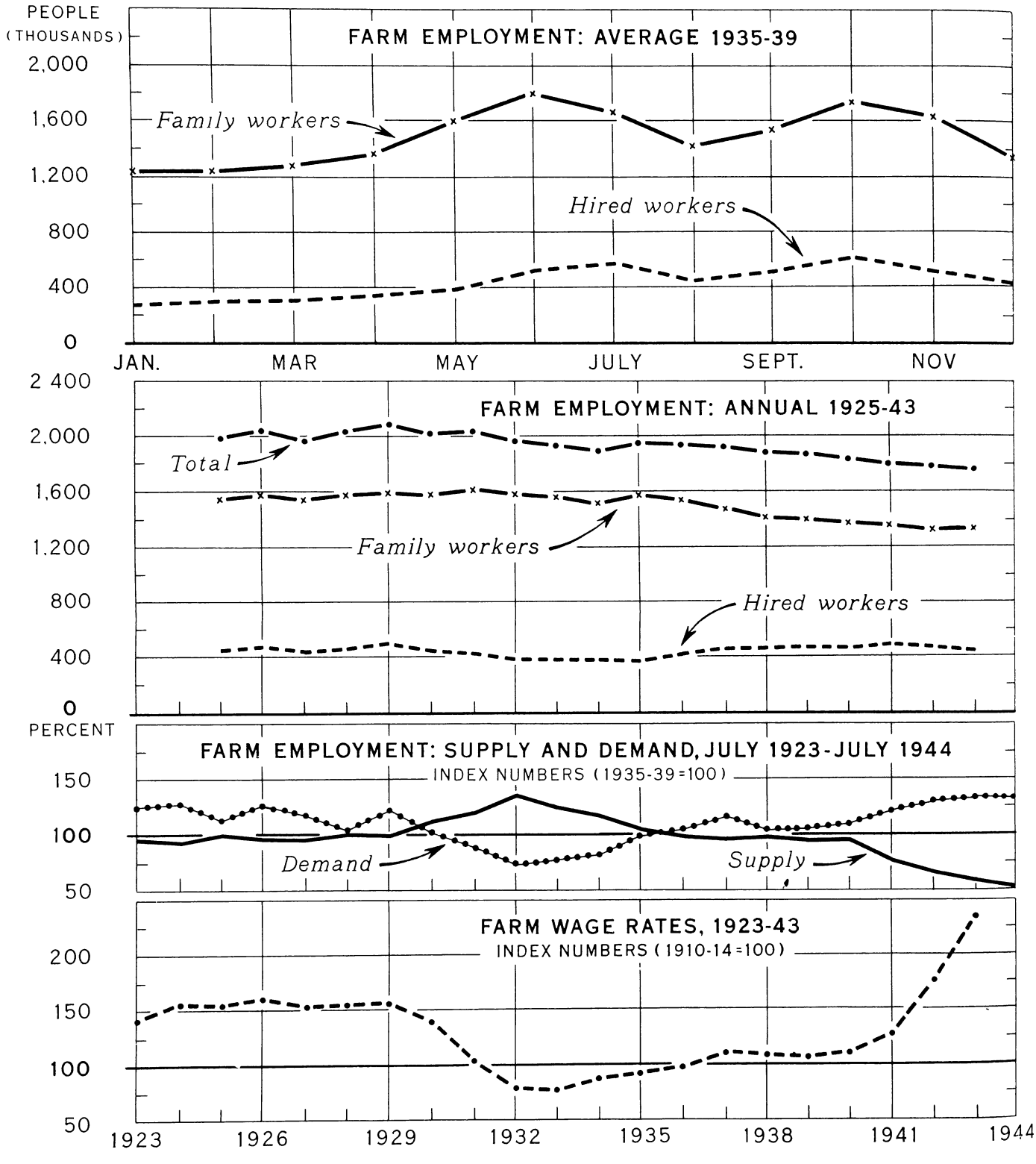
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, WEST SOUTH CENTRAL STATES



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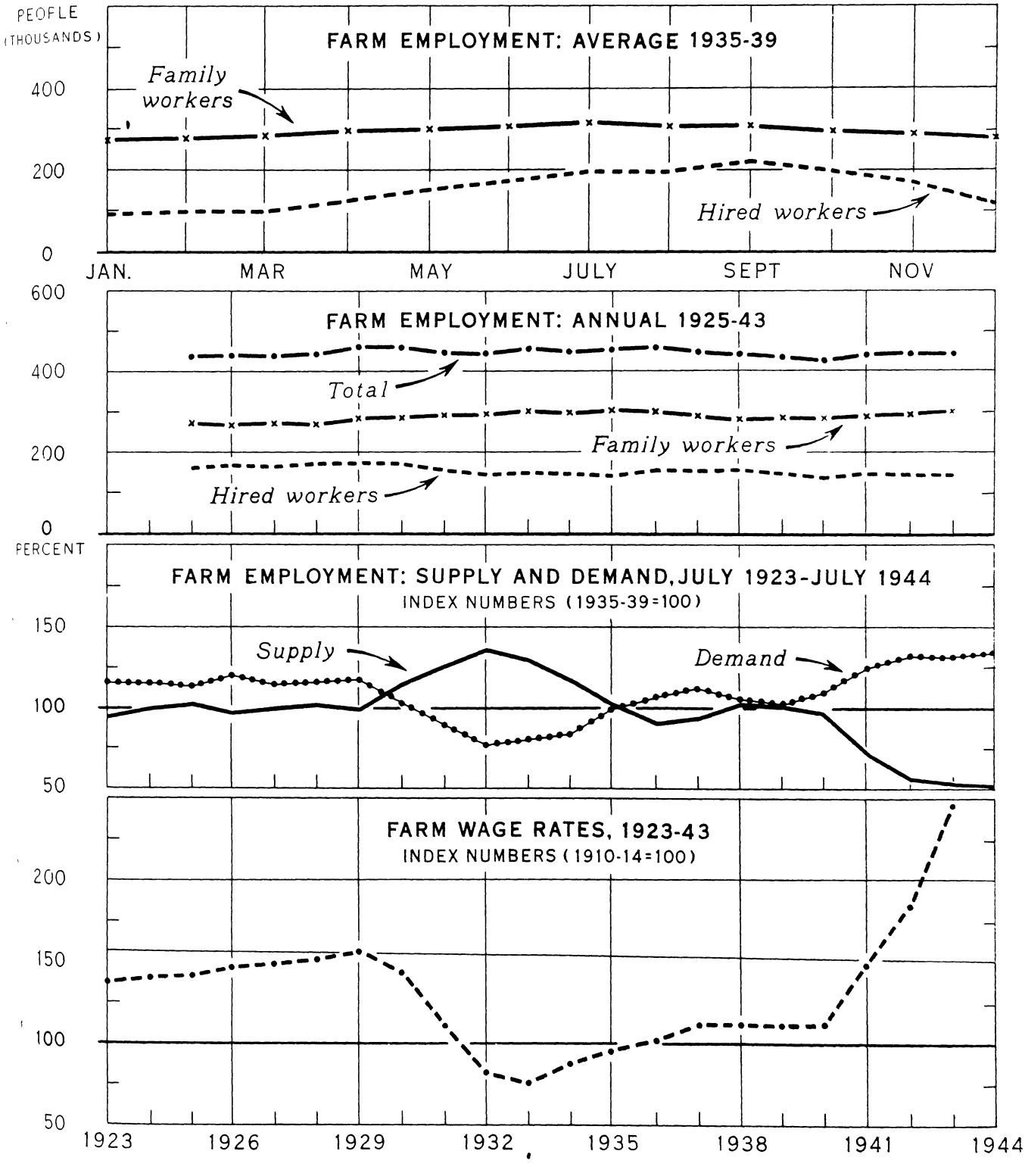
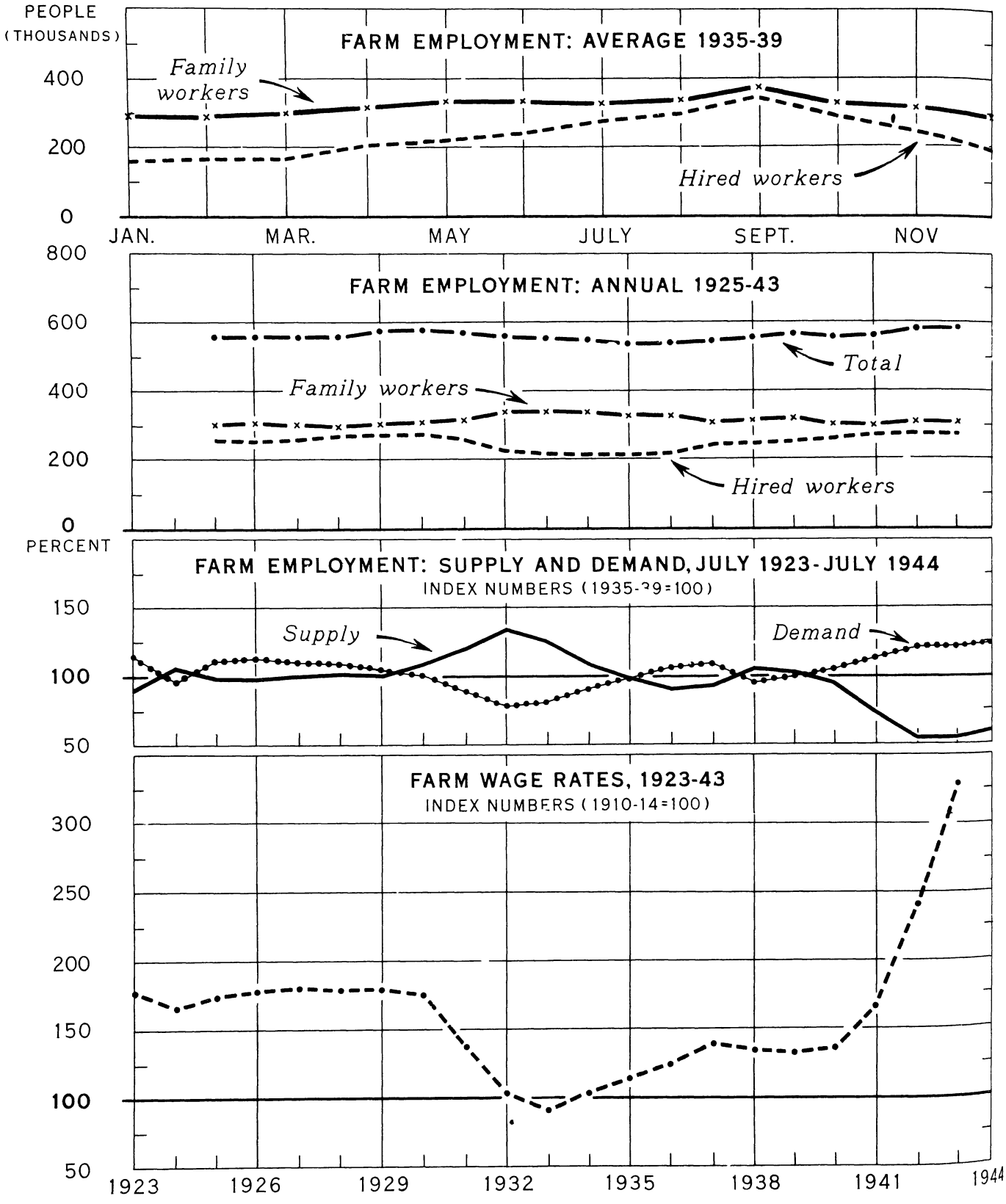
FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, MOUNTAIN STATES



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEG 43232 BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

FARM EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE RATES, PACIFIC STATES



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEG. 43235 BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Farm employment: United States total with unadjusted index numbers, by months, December 1942-November 1944

(1910-14 = 100)

Year and month	Total employed	Index	Family workers 1/	Index	Hired workers	Index
	1000's		1000's		1000's	
1942						
December	9,551	79	7,272	79	2,279	79
1943						
January	8,171	68	6,615	72	1,556	54
February	8,369	69	6,638	72	1,731	60
March	8,730	72	7,003	76	1,727	60
April	9,308	77	7,433	81	1,875	65
May	10,492	87	8,248	90	2,244	78
June	11,659	97	8,962	98	2,697	93
July	11,749	97	8,763	96	2,986	103
August	11,020	91	8,058	88	2,962	102
September	11,502	95	8,402	92	3,100	107
October	11,938	99	8,834	96	3,104	107
November	10,698	89	8,064	88	2,634	91
December	9,519	79	7,269	79	2,250	78
1944						
January	8,202	68	6,622	72	1,580	55
February	8,383	70	6,702	73	1,681	58
March	8,562	71	6,935	76	1,627	56
April	9,080	75	7,401	81	1,679	58
May	10,068	84	8,079	88	1,989	69
June	11,285	94	8,845	97	2,440	84
July	11,355	94	8,623	94	2,732	94
August	10,608	88	7,914	86	2,694	93
September	11,040	92	8,223	90	2,817	97
October	11,839	98	8,928	97	2,911	101
November	10,690	89	8,168	89	2,522	87

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

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

State	Mexicans	Jamaicans	Bahamians	Newfound-landers	Barbadians
Maine		92		82	
N.H.		23		65	
Vt.				89	
Mass.		222		72	
R.I.				8	
Conn.		789		87	
N.Y.		1,596	71	417	
N.J.		1,683		66	
Pa.		638	44	113	
Ohio		1,293			127
Ind.		15			
Ill.	1,997	125			
Mich.		1,269			
Wis.	468	531			131
Minn.	433				
Iowa	6				
N.Dak.	741				
S.Dak.	523				
Nebr.	1,024	14			
Kans.	304				
Del.		190	310	13	
Md.		270	801		
Va.		85	939		133
W.Va.					325
N.C.			122		
Fla.		3,108	2,751		40
Ark.			91		
Mont.	3,641	213			
Idaho	2,909	1,070			
Wyo.	668				
Colo.	2,160	557			
Ariz.	838	526			
Utah	513				
Nev.	447				
Wash.	3,541				
Oreg.	3,105				
Calif.	29,328				
TOTAL	52,646	14,305	5,129	1,012	756

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