Farm Labor

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BAE

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FARM EMPLOYMENT DOWN SLIGHTLY FROM YEAR AGO

There was a total of 11,040,000 people working on farms the first of September, 4 percent less than a year earlier and 8 percent less than the 1935-39 September 1 average, the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported today. Employment was lower this year than last in all the geographic regions but the greatest decline was in the East South Central Region where there were 9 percent fewer workers on farms than on the first of September a year ago. Farm activity is generally greater on September 1 than a month earlier and the 4 percent increase this year was about the same as usual.

The number of unpaid family workers dropped only 2 percent from September 1943 but hired farm employment in the U. S. was off 9 percent from that date. The East South Central Region reported the sharpest reduction; the number of hired workers on September 1 was 22 percent fewer than a year earlier. This curtailment in hired employment in the South is due primarily to the fact that the cotton crop did not mature as rapidly as last season and to rains around the first of the month which prevented most field work in this area. For the country as a whole, paid workers represented 25.5 percent of the total number of farm workers, compared to 27.0 percent at this time last year.

A slightly shorter work day put in by farm operators and hired "hands" indicates that the farm labor situation September 1 was not quite so critical as a year ago. In September last year, it was reported that farm operators were working 12.4 hours per day; now the average is 12.1 hours. The length of the current work day of hired workers is 10.0 hours compared to 10.2 hours a year earlier. Although these declines are small, there are comparable declines in all nine of the geographic regions. Despite these small decreases from last year the working day on farms is still longer than in September 1939.

New England: Farm employment in this area at the turn of the month was down 7 percent from last September, the greatest decline for any region except the East South Central. Experienced, able-bodied farm workers needed for the harvest of cranberries, apples, and potatoes, and for filling silos are very scarce this year. School boys and girls have been widely employed on farms during the summer and, in some cities, school officials have arranged for farm-employed boys and

girls to continue work under certain circumstances. Up to this time, cutbacks in industrial war contracts appear to have had little effect on the supply of labor available for farm employment in New England. Prisoners of war are being used to an increasing extent for some jobs on farms, and plans are progressing for more extensive farm use of this type of labor.

With the hot, dry weather, silage corn is maturing earlier than usual and silo filling is getting under way earlier so the harvest job can be spread over a longer period, thus minimizing the need for additional labor.

The length of work day for farm operators in New England averaged 12.3 hours on September 1, ranging from 11.7 to 12.8 hours per day, by States, and is little changed from previous reports. The length of work day for hired workers varies between 9.5 and 10.0 hours per day for most New England States and averages 9.9 hours for the region as a whole. In Vermont, where dairying predominates, the length of work day of hired workers is longer and averages about 11 hours per day.

Middle Atlantic Region: Family employment remained unchanged from a year ago but the number of hired workers on farms in the Middle Atlantic Region declined 11 percent from September 1, 1943. Lowered yields of a number of crops this year reduced labor requirements in the Middle Atlantic Region with the result that fewer workers were needed at harvest than had been anticipated.

North Central: Total farm employment declined only slightly from last September but the number of hired workers decreased about 10 percent in the West North Central States. Farm activity in the Middle West is usually at somewhat of a lull the first of September, and this situation was accentuated this year because the harvest of truck crops, potatoes, and fruit was later than usual and also because the dry weather in some sections delayed fall plowing. Exchange of work between farms has become a standard practice in many areas and this in some cases obviates the necessity of hiring help, reducing the number of hired workers. The length of work day for both operators and hired "hands" is somewhat more in the North Central States than the U. S. average, and the indications are that farmers in the North Central area, west of the Mississippi River put in a little longer day than do those east of the river.

South Atlantic and South Central States: Total farm employment in the South Atlantic and West South Central Regions sagged slightly the first of September compared to the same date in 1943 but declined more than 9 percent in the East South Central Region. The fall in number of farm workers in the East South Central Region resulted primiarly from a 22-percent reduction in hired help from September 1, 1943. Over much of this area, rains around the first of the month made the ground too wet for plowing for winter cover crops, cotton too wet for picking, and revived the tobacco plants so that very little tobacco was cut. The length of day for hired farm workers has not varied greatly in the South the past few years, and operators are working fewer hours per day than last September and about the same as in 1939.

Mountain States: A 10-percent drop in hired employment from September 1, 1943 to the same date this year highlights the farm labor situation in the Mountain States. There are more farm youths in the army than there were a year ago because of changes in draft regulations and there continues to be some out-movement of farm workers to urban jobs. Wages are reported to be high and farmers are apparently relying on their own efforts and those of their family rather than hire or attempt to hire additional field hands. There were 9,926 Mexican Nationals working on farms in this region on August 31. They are employed primarily in peak harvesting of war essential crops although some are used for general types of farming whenever opportunity permits.

Pacific Region: The farm labor situation on the West Coast appears to be about the same as in September a year ago. Hired employment is down slightly but the number of unpaid family workers is the same as last September. The hours worked per day on farms also remained practically unchanged from a year ago. There were about 41,133 Mexican Nationals on farms in the Pacific Coast States at the turn of the month and, although they represent only a small percentage of the total farm labor force, their mobility makes for efficient and near-maximum utilization of their efforts.

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

	Annual average 1910-14	Aug. 1, 1943	Sept. 1, 1943	Aug. 1, 1944	Sept. 1, 1944
FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES:					
Total -					
Unadjusted	100	91	95	88	92
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	85	86	82	82
Family labor -					
Unadjusted	100	88	92	86	90
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	86	86	84	84
Hired labor -					
Unadjusted	100	102	107	93	97
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	84	86	76	78
EMPLOYMENT: (thousands of persons)					
Farm	12,052	11,020	11,502	10,608	11,040
Family labor	9,160	8,058	8,402	7,914	8,223
Hired labor	2,892	2,962	3,100	2,694	2,817

Farm employment based on reports from 20,620 farmers.

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

Geographic division	Sept. average 1935-39	Aug. 1, 1943	Sept. 1, 1943	Aug. 1, 1944	Sept. 1, 1944
	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's	1,000's
TOTAL FARM EMPLOYMENT					
United States	11,973	11,020	11,502	10,608	11,040
New England	283	306	290	289	271
Middle Atlantic	687	755	723	743	694
East North Central	1,575	1,555	1,541	1,504	1,477
West North Central	1,792	1,842	1,793	1,768	1,766
South Atlantic	2,346	2,083	2,167	1,962	2,099
East South Central	2,011	1,482	1,862	1,432	1,689
West South Central	2,044	1,759	1,757	1,718	1,710
Mountain	525	518	539	491	519
Pacific	710	720	830	701	815
FAMILY WORKERS 1/					
United States	8,860	8,058	8,402	7,914	8,223
New England	173	183	185	169	171
Middle Atlantic	436	467	446	463	448
East North Central	1,202	1,217	1,223	1,202	1,191
West North Central	1,386	1,429	1,380	1,402	1,389
South Atlantic	1,762	1,540	1,629	1,511	1,585
East South Central	1,694	1,264	1,549	1,239	1,445
West South Central	1,528	1,324	1,308	1,298	1,311
Mountain	309	318	326	314	328
Pacific	370	316	356	316	355
HIRED WORKERS					
United States	3,113	2,962	3,100	2,694	2,817
New England	110	123	105	120	100
Middle Atlantic	251	288	277	280	246
East North Central	373	338	318	302	286
West North Central	406	413	413	366	377
South Atlantic	584	543	538	451	514
East South Central	317	218	313	193	244
West South Central	516	435	449	420	399
Mountain	216	200	213	177	191
Pacific	340	404	474	385	460

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

Based on reports from 20,620 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.

Length of workday for farm operators and hired workers, September 1, 1944 with comparisons

State	Farm Operators			Hired Workers		
	Sept. 1, 1939	Sept. 1, 1943	Sept. 1, 1944	Sept. 1, 1939	Sept. 1, 1943	Sept. 1, 1944
	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours
Maine	12.2	13.2	12.8	9.5	9.5	9.5
N.H.	11.9	12.2	12.2	9.3	9.6	10.0
Vt.	12.3	12.9	12.5	10.7	10.7	11.1
Mass.	11.8	12.2	12.2	9.9	9.9	9.5
R.I.	11.6	11.9	12.2	10.2	10.5	9.7
Conn.	11.8	11.9	11.7	10.0	10.0	9.7
N.Eng.	12.0	12.5	12.3	9.9	10.0	9.9
N.Y.	12.4	12.7	12.6	10.6	10.7	10.7
N.J.	11.8	12.5	12.1	9.8	10.0	10.0
Pa.	12.2	13.1	12.8	10.0	10.5	10.3
M.At.I.	12.3	12.9	12.7	10.2	10.5	10.4
Ohio	12.1	12.8	12.4	9.9	10.2	10.1
Ind.	11.7	12.5	12.1	10.0	10.3	10.1
Ill.	11.9	12.5	11.9	10.7	10.9	10.8
Mich.	12.3	13.1	12.7	10.4	10.8	10.4
Wis.	12.7	13.3	13.0	11.4	11.8	11.6
E.N.Cent.	12.1	12.8	12.4	10.5	10.9	10.7
Minn.	12.8	13.2	13.0	11.2	11.2	11.0
Iowa	12.2	13.0	12.6	11.0	11.5	11.0
Mo.	12.0	12.7	12.3	10.2	10.2	10.0
N.Dak.	12.9	13.6	13.5	11.5	11.5	11.1
S.Dak.	12.4	13.5	13.3	11.3	11.4	11.1
Nebr.	12.0	13.0	12.7	10.8	11.2	10.6
Kans.	12.3	13.0	12.7	10.8	10.8	10.5
W.N.Cent.	12.3	13.0	12.7	10.9	11.1	10.8
Del.	12.0	11.1	12.8	10.0	10.8	10.1
Md.	12.0	13.1	12.8	10.0	10.0	10.0
Va.	11.6	12.4	12.2	9.9	9.9	9.8
W.Va.	11.2	12.4	11.9	9.1	9.5	9.3
N.C.	11.4	11.8	11.9	9.8	9.7	9.7
S.C.	11.2	11.7	11.6	9.7	10.0	9.8
Ga.	11.3	11.7	11.6	10.0	10.2	10.1
Fla.	10.3	11.0	10.7	9.3	9.3	9.0
S.At.I.	11.3	11.9	11.8	9.8	9.9	9.8
Ky.	11.0	12.4	11.8	10.0	10.2	10.0
Tenn.	11.4	12.1	11.7	10.0	10.2	10.1
Ala.	11.0	11.5	11.1	10.0	10.0	9.7
Miss.	10.7	11.5	11.2	9.9	9.9	9.5
E.S.Cent.	11.0	11.9	11.4	10.0	10.1	9.8
Ark.	11.2	11.6	11.4	9.9	9.9	9.6
La.	10.7	11.6	10.9	9.7	9.9	9.5
Okla.	11.7	11.7	11.7	10.5	10.5	10.1
Tex.	11.6	12.2	11.8	10.0	10.0	10.0
W.S.Cent.	11.4	11.9	11.5	10.0	10.0	9.9
Mont.	12.4	13.3	12.9	10.5	10.9	10.9
Idaho	12.0	13.3	12.9	10.0	10.0	9.9
Wyo.	12.2	12.9	12.9	9.8	10.6	10.0
Colo.	11.9	13.0	12.7	10.3	10.5	10.0
N.Mex.	11.5	12.7	12.5	10.0	10.6	10.2
Ariz.	10.8	11.3	11.9	9.5	9.7	9.0
Utah	12.0	12.7	12.7	8.7	8.7	8.7
Nev.	12.4	12.8	12.3	8.6	9.0	9.0
Mount.	11.9	12.9	12.7	9.9	10.3	9.9
Wash.	11.8	12.5	12.1	9.8	10.0	9.8
Oreg.	11.8	12.4	12.1	9.5	9.5	9.2
Calif.	10.6	11.4	11.3	9.2	9.2	9.1
Pacific	11.2	11.9	11.7	9.4	9.4	9.3
U.S.	11.7	12.4	12.1	10.1	10.2	10.0

Number of agricultural workers transported by the Office of Labor, W.F.A., that were employed on August 31, 1944 1/

State	Mexicans	Jamaicans	Bahamians	Newfoundlanders	Barbadians
Maine		343		89	
N.H.				76	
Vt.				98	
Mass.		148		70	
R.I.				8	
Conn.		2,072		91	
N.Y.		3,104	495	385	
N.J.		1,775		71	
Pa.		644	82	119	
Ohio	200	1,670			
Ind.	108	588			
Ill.	190	782			127
Mich.	2,252	1,494			
Wis.	673	1,682			494
Minn.	850	322			277
Iowa	76	60			
N.Dak.	2,289				
S.Dak.	415				
Nebr.	633				2
Kansas	182				
Del.		480	468	13	
Md.		575	1,526		
Va.			951		
N.C.			503		
Fla.		1,582	1,000		
Tenn.			322		
Mont.	2,578				
Idaho	2,560				
Wyo.	594				
Colo.	1,890				
Ariz.	998				
Utah	675				
Nev.	631				
Wash.	3,156				
Oreg.	4,156				
Calif.	33,821				
Total	58,927	17,321	5,347	1,020	900

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