

CHAPTER VII

FARM LABOR

(95)

Contents

Farm labor.....	Page 97
Summary.....	97
Value of products under \$400.....	97
Value of products—\$400 to \$9,999.....	97
Value of products—\$10,000 and over.....	97
Farms not reporting labor.....	97
Family and/or hired labor.....	98
Family labor.....	98
Hired labor.....	99
Frequency distribution of hired labor on farms in the value groups under \$10,000, March 1940.....	99
Frequency distribution of hired labor on farms in the \$10,000 and over value group, March 1940.....	100
Farm labor—March 1940 and September 1939.....	100

TABLES

Farm labor (total, family, and hired)—Farms reporting and number of laborers working on farms during weeks of March 24-30, 1940, and September 24-30, 1939, classified by total value of farm products, 1939: For the United States and divisions.....	102
Farm labor—Farms reporting and number of hired laborers by classes, working on farms during weeks of March 24-30, 1940, and September 24-30, 1939, classified by total value of farm products, 1939: For the United States and divisions.....	108
Farm labor (total, family, and hired)—Farms reporting and number of laborers working on farms during weeks of March 24-30, 1940, and September 24-30, 1939, classified by total value of farm products, 1939: By divisions and States.....	114
Hired labor—Farms reporting and number of hired laborers by classes, working on farms during weeks of March 24-30, 1940, and September 24-30, 1939, classified by total value of farm products, 1939: By divisions and States.....	124
Hired labor—Farms reporting hired laborers week of March 24-30, 1940, cross-classified by total number of hired laborers and total value of farm products, 1939, for the United States and divisions.....	134
Hired labor—Farms reporting and number of hired laborers working during week of March 24-30, 1940, by class of labor, classified by total number of hired laborers for farms with \$10,000 and over total value of farm products, 1939: By divisions and States.....	135

Farm Labor

SUMMARY

Farm labor included family laborers—the operator and unpaid members of his family—and hired laborers—persons employed to work on the farm for cash wages regardless of the basis of payment.

VALUE OF PRODUCTS UNDER \$400

One-third of all farms, those with less than \$400 value of products, produced 5.4 percent of the value of products sold, traded, or used by farm households in 1939. Of these farms, more than one-fourth in the \$1 to \$99 value group and one-seventh in the \$250 to \$399 value group did not report using any farm labor the equivalent of 2 days or more during the last week in March 1940. From 71 to 83 percent of the farms in these 3 value groups reported family labor for this date, with an average of 1.3 to 1.5 persons per farm reporting. Hired labor, however, was reported for March 1940 on only 4 to 6 percent of the farms in each of these value groups, with an average of 1.3 to 1.4 persons per farm reporting. These farms used 28 percent of all family laborers and employed 8.4 percent of the hired laborers reported for March 1940. They paid 3.4 percent of the cash-wage expenditures reported for 1939. Cash wages were paid in 1939 by 12 to 20 percent of the farms in these value groups. The farms hiring laborers, in the value group under \$100, paid an average of \$90 cash wages per farm; many of the farms in this value group, particularly rural residences and part-time farms, paid out more for hired labor than they could have received from the sale, trade, or home use of farm products (see chapter VIII, Specified Farm Expenditures). The average wage paid in the 2 other value groups under \$400 was \$80 per farm reporting.

VALUE OF PRODUCTS—\$400 TO \$9,999

The farms in the \$400 to \$9,999 value groups comprised 65 percent of all farms; produced 77 percent of the value of products sold, traded, or used by farm households; employed 72 percent of the hired laborers reported for March 24-30, 1940; and paid 65 percent of the cash-wage expenditures in 1939. About nine-tenths of the farms in these value groups reported either family, or hired, or both classes of labor for March 1940. About seven-eighths of the farms in most of these value groups reported using family labor, with an average of about one and two-thirds persons per farm reporting. A slightly smaller proportion of farms reported family labor for September 24-30, 1939, than for March 24-30, 1940, but the average per farm was slightly larger. The proportion reporting hired labor increased from 8 percent in the \$400 to \$599 value group to 61 percent in the \$6,000 to \$9,999 value group, whereas the average number of persons per farm reporting increased from 1.4 to 2.8 for these same value groups. Cash wages were paid by 27 to 88 percent of the farms in these value groups in 1939. The average cash wages per farm reporting varied from \$93 in the lowest to \$1,128 in the highest of these value groups.

VALUE OF PRODUCTS—\$10,000 AND OVER

Farms with products valued at \$10,000 and over were only 1 percent of all farms and 1 percent of the farms reporting any farm labor, but they accounted for 5 percent of all farms reporting hired labor and 19 percent of hired workers for March 1940. Both these percentages were smaller during September 1939, but the number of persons per farm reporting was higher. These farms reported almost one-third (31 percent) of the total cash expenditures for hired labor in 1939, with an average of \$4,530 per farm reporting. More than one-sixth of the value of products sold, traded, or used by farm households in 1939 was produced on these farms.

One-fifth of the farms hiring farm labor reported only 1 worker in March 1940; more than one-half reported fewer than 4 workers. As the number of laborers hired per farm increased, the dependence upon year-round workers decreased and the relative importance of workers hired by the day or week or on some other basis increased.

Seven out of 10 farms reported the use of family labor, with an average of one and one-third persons per farm.

FARMS NOT REPORTING LABOR

One out of every 8 farms in the United States did not report using any family or hired labor the equivalent of 2 days or more during the week of March 24-30, 1940; on the same dates for September 1939, approximately 1 out of every 7 farms did not report using either of these classes of labor. For some of these farms the enumerators may have failed to obtain the necessary information. Other farms may have used laborers none of whom worked the equivalent of 2 days or more during the specified weeks; therefore, the farms were not reported as using labor, but if they used hired labor during 1939 they may have been included among the farms reporting cash expenditures for labor. Still other farms, such as specialized cash-grain farms, orchards, and the like in certain areas, may not have used any farm labor during one or the other, or both, of these weeks. Farms not reporting livestock were more likely not to report any farm labor than were farms with livestock which needed attention daily. In the lower-value groups, farms not reporting any family or hired labor were frequently rural residences or semiretirement units. More than one-sixth of the operators in the lowest-value group worked 250 days or more off the farm in 1939; more than one-fifth were 65 years of age and over.

The proportion of farms not reporting any farm labor varied from 27 percent for the groups with less than \$100 value of products to 6 percent in the \$4,000 to \$9,999 value groups during March 1940; the corresponding percentages for September 1939 were 30 and 7, respectively. About 8 percent of the farms with products valued at \$10,000 and over did not report any laborers working the equivalent of 2 days or more during March 24-30, 1940; the corresponding figure for September 1939 was 10 percent.

FAMILY AND/OR HIRED LABOR

Of the farms in the United States 7 out of 8 reported using either family, or hired, or both classes of laborers the equivalent of 2 or more days during the week of March 24-30, 1940. The variation among geographic divisions in the proportion reporting farm labor was slight, being 83 percent in the Pacific and 89 percent in both the West North Central and the West South Central Divisions.

The percentage of farms reporting the use of farm labor during the specified week in March generally increased with the increase in the value of products. The percentage varied from 73 in the group with less than \$100 value of products to about 94 in the \$4,000 to \$9,999 value-of-products groups. This same general pattern of distribution was evident in all of the geographic divisions. The proportion of farms reporting the use of labor in the \$10,000 and over value group, however, was slightly less than the proportion in the \$6,000 to \$9,999 value group for all geographic divisions and less than the proportion in the \$4,000 to \$5,999 value group for all the geographic divisions except the East South Central, Mountain, and Pacific Divisions. The farms in the highest-value group frequently were specialized farms, not requiring any hired laborers during this week. These farms also placed less dependence upon family labor, which ordinarily was used the year round on the more general farms in the middle-value groups.

More than four-fifths of all the farms in the United States reported using family labor between March 24-30, 1940, the proportion varying from 78 percent in the Pacific to 86 percent in the West North Central Division. In the lower-value groups, however, the East and West South Central Divisions reported the highest percentages.

The South Atlantic Division had the largest number of family workers per farm in all the value groups except the two lowest and the two highest, where the lead was taken by the East South Central and Middle Atlantic Divisions, respectively, although the difference between the two divisions in the two lowest-value groups was negligible. No single geographic division was consistently low for all value groups.

The lower- and the higher-value groups, which included rural residences and specialized farms requiring relatively little farm labor on this date, ordinarily reported a smaller percentage of farms using family labor than did the middle-value groups. The proportions for the United States varied from 71 percent in the \$1 to \$99 value group to about 87 percent in the \$600 to \$2,499 value groups. For higher-value groups the proportion of farms reporting family labor decreased. In the group with \$10,000 and over value of products the percentage was approximately the same as that in the group with products valued at less than \$100.

All of the value groups reported the use of family labor, but more than two-fifths of the farms reporting family labor were in the \$100 to \$599 value groups; these value groups also included more than two-fifths of all farms.

One-seventh of all farms reported using hired labor during the specified week in March 1940. The percentage varied considerably from one geographic division to another, being 10 percent in the East South Central Division and slightly more than 20 percent in the New England and Middle Atlantic Divisions.

Since some types of analyses can be made more readily by using farms reporting family and/or hired labor as the base of comparison instead of all farms, this new base will be used in subsequent comparisons; few of these percentages appear in the tables.

Of the classified farms reporting labor for March 1940, 1 farm in 8 (12.3 percent) used both classes of labor, family and hired; five-sixths (83.2 percent) used only family labor; while about 1 out of 20 farms (4.5 percent) reported only hired labor.¹ Farms reporting hired labor only are frequently supervised by the owner who spends most of his time at another occupation. The proportion of farms reporting family and/or hired labor and using both family and hired labor varied from 8 percent in the East South Central Division to 20 percent in the Middle Atlantic Division.

The proportion of farms reporting family and/or hired labor and using both classes of labor increased from 3 percent in the groups with less than \$250 value of products to 23 percent in the \$2,000 to \$2,499 value group and to 59 percent in the \$10,000 and over value group. In the lower-value groups family labor was most frequently reported. With the increase in the value of products hired laborers were brought in to supplement the efforts of family workers and a greater percentage of farms reported both classes of labor. In the two highest-value groups more than 50 percent of the farms reporting labor had both classes, family and hired. In the highest-value group more than one-fifth of the farms reporting laborers used hired help exclusively.

FAMILY LABOR

More than 95 percent of the farms reporting family and/or hired labor during the week of March 24-30, 1940, used family labor—the operator and unpaid members of his family. The larger the value of the farm products sold, traded, or used by the farm households, the smaller was the proportion of farms using family labor. In groups with less than \$750 value of products, 97 percent of the farms in each value group reported the use of family labor. Above that point the percentage in each value group gradually decreased to 89 percent in the \$4,000 to \$5,999 value group and to 77 percent in the group with \$10,000 and over value of products.

In the 3 lowest-value groups the number of family workers per farm increased from 1.29 to 1.48. On farms with more than \$400 value of products the number of family workers per farm gradually increased to 1.75 in the \$4,000 to \$5,999 value group, and then decreased to 1.68 persons in the \$10,000 and over value group.

The proportion of farms reporting the use of family labor, but no hired labor, in each of the value groups, followed this same general pattern, decreasing in relationship to all farms reporting family and/or hired labor with an increase in the value of products, except that the decrease was more precipitous. Five-sixths of all farms reporting farm labor used only family labor during the last week in March 1940. In the lower-value groups few farms had any help except that furnished by members of the family. Only when the value of products exceeded \$1,500 did one-fifth of the operators report the use of hired labor. Almost one-half of the \$4,000 to \$5,999 value group used family labor exclusively. Less than one-fifth, however, of the farms with products valued at \$10,000 and over reported complete dependence upon family labor.

The decrease in the proportion of farms depending exclusively upon family labor in each value group was more rapid than the decrease in the relative importance of family workers. The

¹The number of farms reporting both family and hired labor was obtained by subtracting the number of farms using family and/or hired labor from the sum of the farms reporting family labor and those reporting hired labor. The number reporting only family labor (family labor but no hired labor) was obtained by subtracting the number reporting hired labor from the number reporting family and/or hired labor. The number reporting only hired labor (hired labor but no family labor) was obtained by subtracting the number reporting family labor from the number reporting family and/or hired labor.

percentage of farms using family labor exclusively in each value group declined from 94 percent in the \$1 to \$249 value groups to 35 percent in the \$6,000 to \$9,999 value group; the comparable decline in the proportion family laborers were of all farm workers was from 94 percent to 44 percent, respectively. Only 19 percent of the group with \$10,000 and over value of products used family labor exclusively; 17 percent of the working force in this value group were family workers.

Farms reporting the use of family labor exclusively in March 1940 were 83 percent of all farms reporting family and/or hired labor. The East South Central Division, with 89 percent of its farms in this category, depended most completely on family labor. The Middle Atlantic Division was low with only 74 percent of its farms reporting the use of family labor exclusively. The more extensive use of family labor in the South is partly explained by the large number of sharecropper units. For Census purposes the acres operated by each sharecropper was considered a farm. These farms characteristically use family labor with little or no additional hired labor.

HIRED LABOR

Of the farms using family and/or hired labor, 17 percent reported the use of hired labor during March 24-30, 1940. This labor may have been paid for by the month; by the day or week; or on some other basis of calculation, such as, by the hour, acre, pound, number of livestock cared for, or the like. Farm operators with a small annual value of products, however, seldom hired any labor during this period in March. The percentage of farms reporting the use of hired labor in the value groups under \$250 was 6 percent. Not until the value of products reached \$600 or more did as many as 1 out of 10 hire farm work done. Only when the value of products equaled or exceeded \$2,000 did one-fourth of the operators report wage laborers. Not until the value of products exceeded \$4,000 did one-half of the farm operators report hired laborers. Almost two-thirds of the operators in the \$6,000 to \$9,999 value group and more than four-fifths of those in the highest-value group reported hired laborers.

The use of hired labor, but no family labor, was reported by only 3 percent of the farms reporting family and/or hired labor in each of the value groups with products valued at less than \$750. The proportion of farms using only hired labor gradually increased to 14 percent in the \$6,000 to \$9,999 value group. Almost one-fourth (22.8 percent) of the farms with products valued at \$10,000 and over depended entirely upon hired labor during the week of March 24-30, 1940.

The New England and the Pacific Divisions made the most exclusive use of hired labor, with 6.8 and 6.5 percent of the farms, respectively, depending entirely upon this class of labor. New England included a number of farms supervised by managers or by persons who lived on the farms and worked at nonagricultural urban occupations. One-eighth of the Nation's manager-operated farms were in the Pacific Coast States, as well as many other farms overseen by operators spending the major portion of their time at urban occupations. Least dependence was placed upon the exclusive use of hired labor in the West North Central Division, with its diversified crop and livestock activities, where the corresponding percentage was 3.1.

Hired laborers comprised only 18 percent of the entire working force reported in March 1940. This average, however, gave little indication of the range from about 6 percent in the value groups under \$250 to the 83 percent reported by the \$10,000 and over value group. The proportion in the highest-value group was double the percentage in the group with farm products valued at \$4,000 to \$5,999.

The average number of hired laborers working on farms reporting family and/or hired labor for March 1940 was 1.96 for the United States, varying from 1.45 and 1.46 in the West North Central and the East North Central Divisions, respectively, to 2.94 persons in the Pacific Division. Although the average number of hired workers increased with the increase in the value of products for the Nation as a whole, only 2 divisions evidenced such a consistent pattern. An increase in the average number of hired workers with an increase in the value of products was found consistently for all geographic divisions only in the value groups with products valued at \$2,500 and over. The greatest variation among the divisions in the average number of hired workers occurred in the \$10,000 and over value group; the lowest, 3.29 workers, was in the West North Central Division and the highest, 17.56 workers, in the South Atlantic Division. The high average for this latter division was explained in part by the demand for workers to harvest the citrus fruit and early vegetables of this area.

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF HIRED LABOR ON FARMS IN THE VALUE GROUPS UNDER \$10,000, MARCH 1940

Farms with products valued at less than \$10,000 in 1939 included about 99 percent of all farms, but they accounted for only 94 percent of the farms reporting hired labor and 80 percent of the hired workers reported for the last week in March 1940. However, only 1 out of every 7 farms in these value groups reported any hired labor for that period. Approximately two-thirds of the total cash expenditures for hired labor in 1939 was reported by the value groups under \$10,000, with the average expenditure ranging from \$80 in the \$100 to \$399 value groups to \$1,128 in the \$6,000 to \$9,999 value groups.

About three-fourths of all farms hiring labor in the United States reported less than \$4,000 value of products in 1939, yet while only one-eighth of the farms in these value groups reported hired workers, they used 61 percent of the hired labor reported during March 24-30, 1940. For these value groups, almost three-fourths of the farms employing workers reported only 1 hired laborer; 10 percent reported 3 or more hired laborers. The average number per farm reporting was 1.5 persons.

The Middle Atlantic States had the largest proportion of farms in the \$1 to \$3,999 value groups reporting hired labor, but the West South Central and the South Atlantic Divisions had the largest percentage of farms reporting 3 or more hired laborers. Citrus fruits and early vegetables are being harvested in the West South Central and South Atlantic Divisions during this season of the year. The East South Central Division had the smallest proportion of farms hiring labor in the groups with less than \$4,000 value of products, but it was third among the divisions in the proportion of farms reporting 3 or more hired laborers.

More than one-half of the farms in the \$4,000 to \$9,999 value groups reported hired laborers, with an average of 2.4 persons employed during the last week in March 1940. Almost one-fifth of the hired laborers on that date were employed by these farms. More than one-half of these farms employed only 1 laborer; about one-fourth had 3 or more laborers.

One-fourth of the farms reporting hired labor during March 24-30, 1940, were in the \$4,000 to \$9,999 value groups in the New England, the Pacific, and the Mountain Divisions compared to 5 percent in the East South Central States. The farms in these value groups in the South Atlantic and the East South Central Divisions, however, had the highest average per farm, 4.6 and 4.4 persons, respectively.

Farms hiring 1 laborer were most frequently found in the West North Central Division, with 70 percent of the farms in

the \$4,000 to \$9,999 value groups reporting this number, and least frequently in the South Atlantic Division where 20 percent of the farms used 1 hired worker. Three or more workers were most frequently reported in the South Atlantic States and least often in the West North Central States.

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF HIRED LABOR ON FARMS IN THE \$10,000 AND OVER VALUE GROUP, MARCH 1940

Farms with products valued at \$10,000 and over were only 1 percent of all farms reported in the 1940 Census of Agriculture and 1 percent of the farms reporting family and/or hired labor, but they accounted for 5 percent of all the farms reporting hired labor and 19 percent of the hired workers reported for March 1940. However, only three-fourths of the farms in this value group reported any labor hired during the week of March 24-30, 1940.

These farms reported almost one-third (31.1 percent) of the total cash expenditures for hired labor in 1939, with an average of \$4,530 per farm reporting. They accounted for more than one-sixth (17 percent) of the value of products sold, traded, or used by the farm households in the United States.

An average of 7.72 hired workers was reported on the farms in this value group for March 1940. Nevertheless more than one-fifth of the farms reporting hired labor were hiring only 1 worker on that date. Those hiring 3 or less constituted over one-half of the operators using hired labor in this value group, but their working force comprised only about one-eighth of the hired laborers reported. Operators hiring 20 or more workers included less than one-twelfth of the farms in this value group, but they employed one-half of the hired laborers. Those employing 100 or more were less than 1 percent of the farms in the group with products valued at \$10,000 and over, but had more than one-sixth of the laborers; the number of workers per farm was 192. Of the 48 States 17 States had 3 or more farms reporting 100 or more hired laborers; Florida with 76 farms had the greatest number and California with 63 was second.

As the number of laborers hired per farm increased, the dependence upon year-round workers decreased and the relative importance of workers hired by the day or week or on some other basis increased. More than four-fifths (81 percent) of the farms in the \$10,000 and over value group with 1 laborer in the last week of March 1940 reported this person as hired by the month, whereas less than 1 percent reported the worker as "other hired labor." Farms with 20 to 29 laborers reported 28 percent as hired by the month and 12 percent as "other hired labor." Only 10 percent of the laborers on farms reporting 100 or more workers were classified as hired by the month, whereas 31 percent were considered in the "other hired labor" category. Information from several sources indicates that the classification of workers by "hired by the month," "hired by the day or week," or "other hired labor" may refer more to the method of payment than to the stability of employment. It is, therefore, inaccurate to consider the workers hired by the month as the entire year-round or regular working force. In all geographic divisions the regular year-round working force probably included most of the workers reported as being hired by the month and a large share of those hired by the day or week, the exact proportions depending upon whether the report was for March or September and the customary method of payment, whether by the day, the week, the month, or some other basis of calculation. On the other hand, seasonal workers probably included all the laborers reported as "other hired labor" and a portion of those reported as "labor hired by the day or week."

FARM LABOR—MARCH 1940 AND SEPTEMBER 1939

Reports on the number and classes of farm laborers used in the specified weeks in March and September were requested of farm operators for the first time in the 1940 Census of Agriculture to obtain some indication of the farm labor situation during two periods six months apart.

March, in most of the Nation, is the month when the year-round working force, aided by a comparatively few additional laborers, start the farm work for the crop-growing season. In some of the southern States, however, the harvest of the late-fall- and winter-planted truckcrops and of citrus fruit is in progress. In these areas, March may be the season of the year with the greatest demand for farm labor; this statement is particularly true for limited localities in Florida, Texas, and California. Late September and early October, in much of the country, is the harvest period for many crops and fruits. Large numbers of workers are needed for this harvest, but only occasionally is the demand for laborers great enough to place this period as the season of greatest demand for labor, except in a relatively few areas. However, seasonal variations in the demand for labor cannot be measured by the reports for any two weeks during the year, especially in the United States with its wide variations in types of farming and climate.

The data for March 1940 probably were more reliable than those obtained for September 1939. The week of March 24-30, 1940, came just before the beginning of the 1940 Census enumeration; six months had elapsed between September 24-30, 1939, and the beginning of the 1940 Census enumeration.

The number of farms reporting family and/or hired labor for the last week of March 1940 was slightly larger than the number reporting labor for the corresponding week in September 1939, although the total working force was about one-sixth larger in September. The average number of workers per farm reporting any family and/or hired labor was 1.8 for March and 2.2 for September.

The greatest difference between March and September, in the average number of workers on farms reporting family and/or hired labor, was in the Pacific Division; the average being 2.0 and 2.8 workers in March and September, respectively. The difference in the average number of workers was practically as great in the West South Central States, being 1.8 in March and 2.4 in September. The smallest difference was noted in the East and the West North Central Divisions, the average being 1.7 and 1.9 workers in March and September, respectively, for both divisions. Most of these changes were due to the greater number of hired workers employed in September to assist with the harvest. In the \$10,000 and over value group the largest increase in the average number of workers occurred in New England; the South Atlantic Division, however, reported a drop in the number of workers from March to September.

Family labor was reported for March on a slightly larger proportion of all farms than for September; on the other hand, the average number of family workers per farm reporting labor was slightly greater for September than for March. This same general pattern of distribution was noted in all value groups and in all geographic divisions.

For the farms reporting labor, the percentage using both family and hired labor, as well as the percentage using hired labor only, was slightly larger in September than in March because of the extra labor used in harvesting crops. The number of hired workers reported for September was 78 percent greater

than for March. Hired workers comprised more than one-fourth of the total working force in September compared to less than one-fifth in March. For each value group, the proportion of farms reporting hired labor was usually a few percent greater in September than in March, with the exceptions occurring largely in the higher-value groups of the South Atlantic, East South Central, and West South Central Divisions where the first harvest of vegetables and similar crops had been completed and the second not started. For the entire United States the percentage of farms reporting hired labor was higher in September than in March for all the value groups.

The average number of persons working on the farms reporting hired labor, in each value group, was almost always larger in September than in March. The greatest difference numerically was found in the \$10,000 and over value group where the average numbers of persons per farm reporting for March and September were 7.72 and 11.94, respectively, although the percentage increase was just as great among some of the other higher-value groups. The number of hired laborers reported by the \$10,000 and over value group was 53 percent greater in September than in March. Most of these additional laborers were classified as "hired by the day or week" or as "other hired labor."