

CHAPTER II.—SIZE OF FARMS

Introduction.—This chapter presents statistics on number of farms (the term "farms" includes "ranches"), all land in farms, average size of farms, specified uses of farm land, value of land and buildings, and value of farm implements and machinery, classified according to the total acreage in the individual farms. The 1940 census tabulations, by size of farm, were restricted to these items. Available comparative data for earlier years for the United States are presented in tables 5 to 12, inclusive. Size-of-farm tabulations, available for a few additional items in earlier censuses, are not covered in any of the 1940 Census Reports. The geographic division and State tables (13, 14, and 15) present statistics on number of farms, classified by size, for all census enumerations from 1880 to 1940, inclusive; statistics on the average acreage, per farm, for all farms for the census enumerations from 1850 to 1940, inclusive; and other data by size of farms, as follows: Land in farms and specified uses of land for 1940, 1935, and 1930; and value of land and buildings, value of buildings, and value of implements and machinery for 1940 and 1930.

Size-of-farm classification.—The size-of-farm classification has been made for the number of farms in each census year since 1880, while the tabulation of total land in farms by size of farm has been made in each census year beginning with 1900. In 1860 and 1870 a size-of-farm classification for the number of farms was made based upon the area of improved land. The United States figures for these tabulations are shown in table 1. Such a classification is not comparable with that used in subsequent censuses since the acreage of all land in farms used in the present classification includes much land which is not improved.

TABLE 1.—FARMS CLASSIFIED BY ACRES OF IMPROVED LAND, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1870 AND 1860

SIZE GROUP (BASED ON IMPROVED LAND)	NUMBER OF FARMS	
	1870	1860
Total	2,659,985	1,204,077
Under 3 acres	6,875	—
3 to 9	172,021	54,676
10 to 19	294,607	182,178
20 to 49	847,614	616,558
50 to 99	754,221	606,878
100 to 499	565,054	497,041
500 to 999	15,873	20,819
1,000 and over	3,720	5,364

¹ For 1860 the total of the farms classified by acreage of improved land is 89,063 less than the total number of farms.

The number of size-of-farm groups used in the various census enumerations has varied from 7 in 1890 and 8 in 1880 to 19 in 1935 and 20 in 1940. The additional size group for 1940, compared with 1935, covers farming operations with no land owned or leased. This classification is discussed in detail later. Except for the addition of this group, the 1940 classification is the same as that used in 1935 at which time 7 new subgroups were added. These new subgroups used in 1940 and 1935 form the basis for a new classification and at the same time permit comparisons with the size-of-farm tabulations for the 1930 and preceding censuses. The new classification, which is presented in table 4 of this chapter (and in County table III of volume I), was devised to conform as closely as

possible with the Government land survey and thereby avoid bimodal distributions of reports within class intervals. For example, instead of the old group of "100 to 174 acres," the new classification carries two groups, "100 to 139 acres" and "140 to 179 acres," with midpoints of 120 acres and 160 acres, respectively. When the 1940 and 1935 figures are presented in comparison with the 1930 data, as in table 5, it is then necessary to use an additional odd-size group of "175 to 179 acres" in order to secure tabulations which are comparable with the old grouping. The new classification is particularly important in those survey areas where the farms are, to a large extent, made up of fractions—40 acres, 80 acres, 120 acres, 160 acres, etc.—or multiples of the Government survey section of 640 acres. A more detailed discussion of this new grouping, together with an analysis of data for sample survey and nonsurvey counties will be found in the General Report, volume III, chapter II, of the United States Census of Agriculture, 1935.

Other measures of the size-of-farm operations.—The classification by size of farm is only one of several measures of size-of-farm operations made by the 1940 Census of Agriculture. Additional measures of size-of-farm operations which are presented in other chapters of this volume are: Number of farms classified by numbers of various species of livestock (chapter VII); number of farms classified by number of acres of specified crops (chapter VIII); number of farms classified by acreage of land in fruit orchards, vineyards, and planted nut trees, and statistics on apples for farms classified by number of apple trees of bearing age (chapter IX); and the number of farms and value of specified farm products classified by total value of farm products sold, traded, or used by farm households (chapter X).

Number of farms by size.—The classification of number of farms by size is shown for the United States for the years 1880 to 1940, inclusive, in table 5, and for geographic divisions and States for the same years in table 15. In considering the tabulation of number of farms by size, account should be taken of the definition of a farm. The 1940 Census definition has been discussed in chapter I.

Farms under 3 acres in size.—The definition of a farm is particularly important from the standpoint of the enumeration of farms of less than 3 acres. In the 1940 Census, tracts of land of less than 3 acres were to be enumerated only when the value of agricultural products in 1939 amounted to \$250 or more. However, tracts of 3 acres or more were to be enumerated even though the value of the agricultural products was less than \$250, provided such tracts had agricultural operations in 1939 or agricultural operations were contemplated in 1940. The number of enumerated farms under 3 acres in size is relatively unimportant, amounting to only 35,977 farms, or 0.6 percent of all farms in 1940, which compares with a maximum of 43,007 farms, or 0.7 percent of all farms in 1930. The number of farms with less than 3 acres of land enumerated in the various censuses since 1880 has been influenced by the minimum value of products used in defining a farm and, to some extent, by changes in unit prices for agricultural products. Table 2 shows the number and proportion of farms under 3 acres in size for each census from 1880 to 1940, inclusive, with comparisons of the minimum values of products used in each census, and with a comparison of index numbers of prices received by farmers as published by the United States Department of Agriculture. The effect of varying definitions of a farm upon the enumeration of small farms is also discussed in chapter I.