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VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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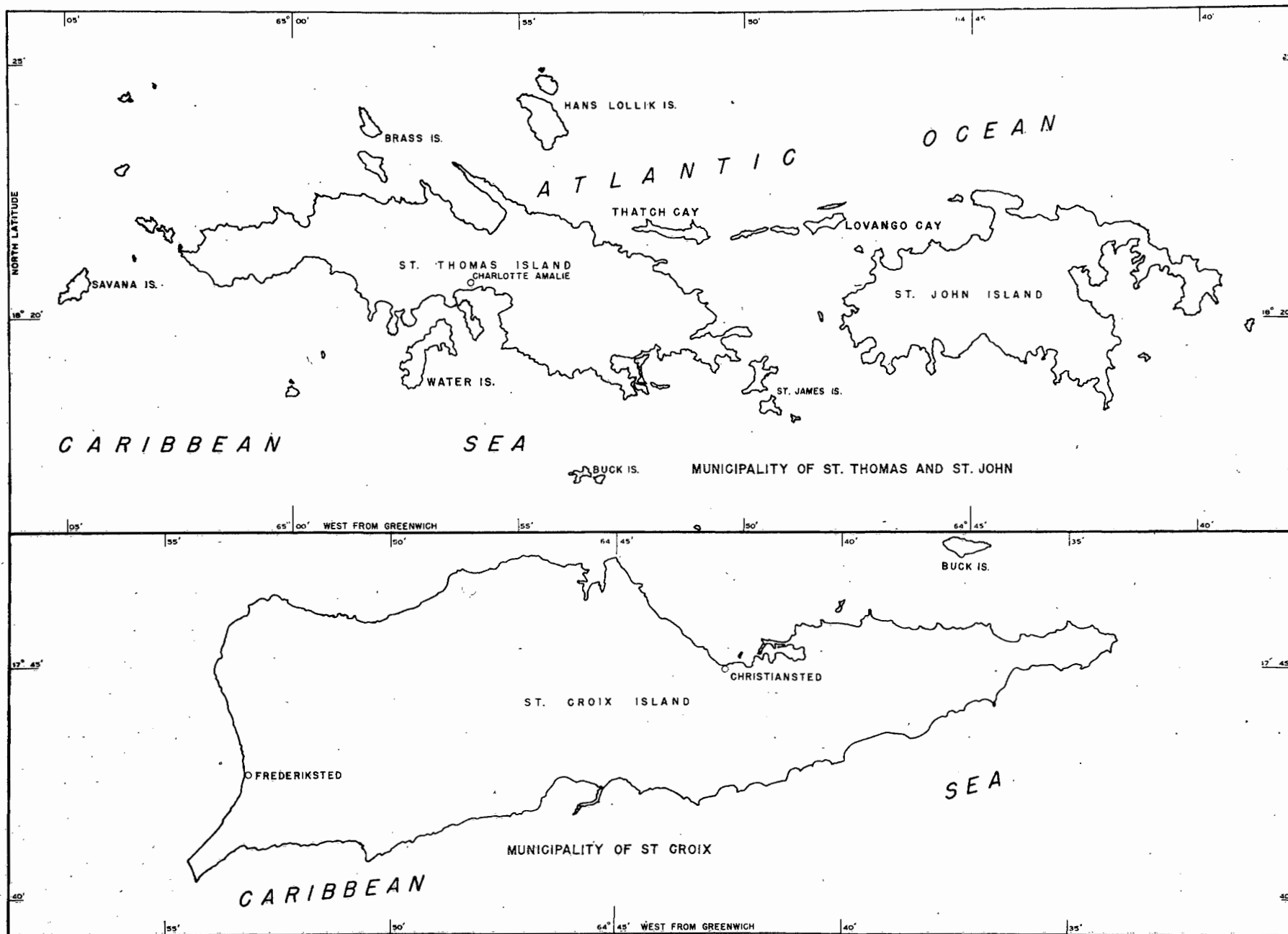
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# VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

## MUNICIPALITIES AND CITIES



# CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE: 1940

**Introduction.**—This report presents, for the Virgin Islands of the United States, statistics on agriculture which were collected in 1940 as a part of the Sixteenth Decennial Census of the United States. Presentation also is made of all available comparative data on agriculture as collected by the Fifteenth Decennial Census in 1930 and by the special census of the Virgin Islands of the United States taken as of November 1, 1917.

The Census of Agriculture for each of these 3 years was taken in conjunction with the Census of Population which is the source of the figures given herein for the number of inhabitants of these possessions. The Census of 1917 for both agriculture and population was the first taken in this area by the United States. However, data for 11 earlier censuses of population, taken by the Danish Government, from 1835 to 1911 are given in the Population Reports for 1940.<sup>1</sup>

Administratively, there are two major units for the group of islands. One is the Municipality of St. Croix which includes the island of that name and several adjacent islands, and the other is the Municipality of St. Thomas and St. John which includes the islands of those names and adjacent islands. However, information is usually given for St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas, the three principal islands, as well as for the Virgin Islands of the United States as a whole. Figures for these islands include any information for the smaller adjacent islands, or cays (keys), of which there are 65, ranging in size from less than one square mile in area to outcropping ledges of rock. Many of the small islands are rocky or sandy and barren, and most are uninhabited.

**Authority for the censuses.**—Legal provision for the 1940 and 1930 Censuses of the Virgin Islands of the United States was made in the Act providing for the Fifteenth Decennial Census of the United States which was approved on June 18, 1929. In part, this Act provided:

That a census of population, agriculture, irrigation, drainage, distribution, unemployment, and mines shall be taken by the Director of the Census in the year 1930 and every ten years thereafter. The census herein provided for shall include each State, the District of Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, and Porto Rico. A census of Guam, Samoa, and the Virgin Islands shall be taken in the same year by the respective governors of said islands and a census of the Panama Canal Zone by the Governor of the Canal Zone, all in accordance with plans prescribed or approved by the Director of the Census.

The field work of these two censuses was performed under the supervision of the governor, or acting governor, in accordance with plans prescribed by the Director of the Census. Robert M. Lovett, Acting Governor in April 1940, was in charge of the Sixteenth Census canvass of the Virgin Islands.

In 1917, the Secretary of Commerce, at the request of the Secretary of the Navy and with the approval of the President of the United States, directed that a census be taken of the Virgin Islands of the United States. That order, as promulgated, provided that the census should (1) refer to population and to the products of agriculture, manufactures, and the fisheries and (2) be taken as of November 1, 1917. This census was made under the supervision of the Bureau of the Census, and the actual enumeration was carried on between December 24, 1917 and January 12, 1918.

**Brief history, geography, and climate.**<sup>1</sup>—The Virgin Islands group, in its entirety, consists of about 100 small islands and cays, with many outcropping rock ledges, in the West Indies. Geologically the islands are of volcanic formation. The limestone, serpentine, and igneous outcrops, with

coral accretions, rest on a mass of hard, bluish, granite porphyry. St. Thomas Harbor is an ancient crater. The climate is warm, equable, agreeable, healthful, and characterized by two wet and two dry seasons. The islands, however, lie directly in the hurricane track.

The group was discovered by Columbus on his second voyage of exploration in 1493. "The long line of bold hilltops northward, as they emerged over the horizon, would convey the impression of innumerable little islands, while 'the long procession of white, surf-beaten, fringing reefs appears to have suggested a fanciful resemblance to the 11,000 British maidens of the St. Ursula legend.' Hence the Spanish name 'Las Islas de las Virgenes,' or simply 'Las Virgenes\*\*\*.'"<sup>2</sup>

The northeast half of the group has belonged to the British since 1666 when they colonized Tortola. All of the remainder of the group belongs to the United States. The former Spanish Virgin Islands were acquired in 1898, and the former Danish Virgin Islands in 1917. Virgin Passage separates the former Danish Virgin Islands, including St. Thomas and St. John, with 62 smaller cays, from the former Spanish Virgin Islands on the west, including Culebra and Vieques, administratively attached to Puerto Rico.

The name "Virgin Islands of the United States" is an arbitrary, administrative name. It excludes certain of the Virgin Islands belonging to the United States which with Puerto Rico were acquired from Spain in 1898, while, on the other hand, the name includes St. Croix (Santa Cruz) to the south, though this last is geographically no part of the Virgin Islands group.

For 50 years, the United States contemplated the acquisition of the Danish West Indies. Negotiations with Denmark looking to the cession were inaugurated 1865-1867 and resumed in 1901-1903; finally, a treaty was ratified by Denmark December 22, 1916, by the United States January 16, 1917, and proclaimed January 25, 1917. In full consideration of the cession of all territory, dominion, and sovereignty, including the Islands of St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas, together with adjacent islands and rocks, \$25,000,000 in United States gold coin was paid to Denmark. On March 31, 1917, the Dannebrog was lowered and the Stars and Stripes were hoisted which completed the formal transfer of possession of the territory. At that time Commander Edwin T. Pollock of the U.S.S. *Hancock* read the proclamation of President Wilson, announcing that these islands would thereafter be known as the "Virgin Islands of the United States of America." In June 1917, naval government letterheads bore the legend "The Virgin Islands of the United States." In April 1922, the Acting Chief of Naval Operations stated that the governor's proper title is "Governor, Virgin Islands of the United States." Navy Department usage of the name was thus established.

Under an Act of Congress, approved March 3, 1917, a temporary government for the Virgin Islands was provided. Under this Act, all military, civil, and judicial powers necessary to govern the islands were vested in a Governor, appointed by the President of the United States, by and with the advice of the Senate. On March 18, 1931, Navy Department personnel turned over the government of the Virgin Islands to the new civil administration under the Department of the Interior. "The change of administration was made for the purpose of undertaking a rehabilitation program which would remedy the desperate economic condition of the Virgin Islands, help its citizens to earn a livelihood, and gradually decrease the annual deficit which the islands had incurred and which Congress each year has been forced to make up."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Most of the information under this heading was taken from the Geographic Dictionary of the Virgin Islands of the United States, published as Special Bulletin No. 105 of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Department of Commerce.

<sup>2</sup>From the Geographic Dictionary of the Virgin Islands of the United States (see footnote 1).

<sup>3</sup>From the Annual Report of the Governor of the Virgin Islands for the Fiscal Year ended June 30, 1931.

The land area of the islands is 132 square miles or slightly more than double that of the District of Columbia. The language spoken by the inhabitants of the islands is English. The largest city and capital of the Virgin Islands is Charlotte Amalie which had a population of 9,801 in 1940.

**Homesteads.**—One of the reforms initiated was the subdivision of some of the estates into homesteads. To explain the increase in the number of farms between 1930 and 1940 and to explain factors, such as average size of farms, years on farm, mortgage indebtedness, etc., the following notes from the Annual Reports of the Governors of the Virgin Islands are presented:

The homestead plan had been suggested by the Chief of the United States Bureau of Efficiency in his recommendation for appropriations for the Virgin Islands for the fiscal year 1931. The original plan contemplated the acquisition of more than 3,000 acres of land, some of which was for horticultural purposes and some for grazing. It was expected to enable more than 300 families to grow their own food and sufficient surplus to pay for their other needs.

The homestead plan called for subdivisions small enough to be worked by a single family and for their development under the direct supervision of trained agriculturists. Plots were to be laid out and developed to provide garden produce and fruits for home consumption and local sale, pasturage for cows or milk goats, and certain areas for pay crops, such as cane, cotton, and other marketable production.

By June 1933, 60 families had been allotted small homestead plots provided by the Federal Government for that purpose on St. Thomas Island. This land was purchased in October 1932, and was allotted in January 1933. Under the homestead plan, these plots varied from 3 to 8 acres and were sold on a 20-year plan which amortized principal and 4 percent interest. An additional 145 homesteads, of slightly varying size, were laid out on 850 acres in the southwest portion of St. Croix. By February 1, 1933, most of these plots were in the hands of the homesteaders. The cost of this land, its surveys, roads, plowing, cane tops, seedlings, and implements which had also been supplied, averaged less than \$240 per 6-acre plot, and the amortization of that amount at 4 percent required an annual payment of only \$18.26. Also, by the close of the fiscal year 1933, another 712-acre estate, located in the northeast section of St. Croix Island, had been purchased, of which about 500 acres were found suitable for homestead allotment.

By June 30, 1935, Federal homesteaders in St. Croix had increased to 255, and of these all but 34 were the original allottees. Their plots comprised 1,400 acres of which 1,010 were under cultivation for the 1936 crop. The average homesteader was cultivating 50 percent more land than he had as a renter.

By June 1, 1940, a total of 3,552 acres had been purchased in the Islands of St. Croix and St. Thomas for subdivision. This land was then being operated by 328 small holders. "The original subdivision of St. Croix provided plots which averaged 6.37 acres. This acreage has proved to be too small to provide adequate family income as well as amortization. A policy has therefore been adopted of dividing among adjacent homesteaders plots reverting to the government in case of death or cancellation of contracts. This procedure has resulted in increasing the average size of homesteads to 7.75 acres. With the assistance furnished homesteaders by the government, they can successfully operate farms of even larger size."

**Census dates and periods covered.**—The censuses of 1940 and 1930 were taken as of April 1, while that of 1917 was taken as of November 1. The inventory numbers for all three years relate to the date of the census. Productions of livestock and crops for the last two censuses were secured for the previous calendar year, with the exception that the production of sugarcane for the Census of 1930 was to be that harvested during the period October 1, 1928 to September 30, 1929, and not to include any cane cut from October 1, 1929 to the day of enumeration. For the canvass made as of November 1, 1917 (actual enumeration conducted December 24, 1917 to January 12, 1918) the schedule inquiries called for quantities harvested

in 1917 and instructions to enumerators mentioned the coverage of agricultural operations on farms in 1917 with one exception, namely, sugarcane. For this crop, the instructions were:

In all cases the information procured in answer to the several inquiries under this heading should pertain to the sugar crop of 1916-17; that is, cover the crop period for 12 months, which was approximately from October 1, 1916 to September 30, 1917, inclusive.

The text for the publication of that year recites that the returns for livestock products and farm crops relate to the activities for the year ended October 31, 1917. The tables with 1917 data, therefore, are footnoted to the effect that the information for livestock products and for crop production are for the year ended October 31, 1917.

**The scope and method of canvass.**—The following instruction appeared in the handbook for the Census of 1940 entitled "Instructions to Enumerators":

Every enumerator must fill out a Farm schedule for each tract of land in his enumeration district that might be classified as a "farm" under the Census definition appearing on the back of the schedule, giving ALL the requested information. This information should be obtained by a personal visit.

Reproductions of the "General Schedule for Farms and Plantations" and of the "Instructions to Enumerators" are given in the Appendix of this report. These reproductions, in part, present the definition of a farm and a listing of the types of activities that were to be covered in the Federal Census of Agriculture which had been prepared for the guidance of enumerators. The term "farm" as hereinafter used is sufficiently elastic to include ranching and plantation operations.

**Farm operator.**—Some of the data are presented for the farm operator rather than for the farm itself. A "farm operator," according to the census definition, is a person who operates a farm, either performing the labor himself or directly supervising it. Thus, for all practical purposes, the number of farm operators is identical with the number of farms.

Farm operators are classified as "white" and "nonwhite." The "nonwhite" group includes mixtures of white and nonwhite races.

**Tenure of operator.**—Farm operators are also classified according to the tenure under which they operate their farms:

**Full owners** own all the land they operate.

**Part owners** own a part and rent from others the rest of the land they operate.

**Managers** operate farms for others and receive wages or salaries for their services. Persons acting merely as caretakers or hired as laborers are not classified as managers.

**Tenants** operate hired or rented land only. The schedule for the Virgin Islands made no provision for ascertaining the nature of the tenant-landlord relationships, that is, whether a tenant was paying cash, a share of the products, or was operating under some other form of rental payment.

**Age of operator.**—Farm operators have been classified by age. For 1940, in addition to the distribution of the number of operators by age, data are given for their average age and for the acreage and value of their farms. Additional age data for full owners and part owners, by mortgage status, are given in table 9.

**Year of occupancy.**—The question on the 1940 General Schedule for Farms and Plantations, "Year when operator began to operate this farm.... (Year)....." reflects, in part, the stability or instability of operators on a particular farm. No account was taken as to whether the operator was a recent arrival from another area or whether he had ever had previous farm experience. Exact comparison of the 1940 data with those of 1929 and 1917 cannot be made as the question in the two former censuses obtained the years and months the operator had been operating his farm. In making comparisons of the data for the different years, recognition must be taken of the influx of new operators which came about through the division of some large plantations into smaller tracts now operated as separate farms. This increase in farms appears to have taken place during 1933 and 1934.

Additional figures for full owners and part owners by year of occupancy and mortgage status, for 1940, appear in table 9.

**Farms reporting.**—The term "farms reporting" as used in the tables indicates the number of farms for which the specified items shown in the particular tables were reported. Thus, of the 828 farms recorded for the islands in 1940, cattle were reported on 190 of these. Hence, the number of farms reporting cattle is given as 190.

**Land in farms.**—The acreage designated as "all land in farms" includes considerable areas of land not actually under cultivation and some land not even used for pasture or grazing. Land used only for pasture or grazing or to supply wood or timber, even though detached from the land on which the major portion of the farming operations are conducted, was to be included. Also, where a farm was rented from others and a definite rental was paid only for the land cropped, any woodland or waste land belonging to the farm was to be included. A farm thus comprised not only the land from which crops were actually harvested, land planted but not harvested, cropland lying idle, and land which was pastured or grazed, but also considerable areas of woodland or waste land lying within the boundaries of the farm which were being put to little or no agricultural use.

In 1940, data were secured for 8 classes of land based on the use made of the land in the year 1939, as follows:

**Cropland harvested.**—The land from which cultivated crops (including fruits, nuts, and gardens) and forage were harvested. If any of the land produced more than one crop during the year, such acreage was to be included only once under this question. Land used for growing crops not actually harvested in 1939 was to be reported under "crop failure" if the crop matured and was not harvested for any reason and under "cropland for future harvest" if the crop did not mature in 1939 but was intended for harvest at a later date.

**Cropland planted but not harvested.**—Two separate categories of land make up the reported totals for this item:

(a) **Crop failure.**—Land occupied at any time in 1939 by crops intended for harvest within the year, but from which no crop was harvested because of failure; destruction by drought, storms, floods, insects, disease, fire, etc.; quota restrictions; low prices; labor shortage; or for other reasons. If a crop intended for harvest in 1939 failed and another crop was planted on the same land and harvested within that year, the acreage was to be reported under "cropland harvested" and not under crop failure. Likewise, if after one crop was harvested in 1939, another was planted for harvest in that year, but failed, the land was to be counted only once under "cropland harvested."

(b) **Cropland for future harvest.**—Land from which no crop was harvested in 1939, but which was occupied by crops for future harvest. This applied particularly to sugarcane, pineapple plants, fruit groves, berry plants and bushes, etc., intended for harvest after the close of 1939. No land was to be included under this item which had a crop harvested from it in 1939 and which was later planted to a crop intended for future harvest. Likewise, no land was to be included here which had a crop harvested from it in 1939 and would be expected to bear recurring crops in succeeding years.

**Cropland idle.**—Cropland which was neither in crops in 1939 nor used for pasture or grazing during that year; also any land occupied exclusively by soil-improvement crops which were turned under and not harvested.

**Pasture land.**—The data for this item, as shown in the tables, represent a summarization of the recorded figures for "clear pasture" and "woodland and brushland pasture."

(a) **Clear pasture.**—Land other than woodland and brushland used for pasture or grazing in 1939. Caution was given that land planted to grasses or other forage crops and cut during the year should not be included here, but rather under "cropland harvested." Also, land in sparse woods, brush, or bushes on which animals were grazed during the year, was to be reported under "woodland and brushland pasture" and not under this question.

(b) **Woodland and brushland pasture.**—As indicated by the terminology, this inquiry was to cover all woodland and brushland in the farm on which animals were pastured or grazed in 1939.

**All other land in farms.**—Here again, the data represent a total for two sets of figures, viz, "woodland not pastured" and another subclass as a catch-all for all other remaining land in the farm:

- (a) **Woodland not pastured.**—All woodland and brushland in the farm on which no animals were pastured or grazed in 1939, regardless of whether it had carrying capacity.
- (b) **Other land (waste land; also house yards, barnyards, lanes, roads, etc.).**—The type of land which should have been classified in this category is self-evident from the wording of this question.

It is emphasized that the total acreage in a farm was to be recorded as of the census date and the distribution as to utilization was to be made according to the use made of the land in 1939. The sum of the acreages recorded for the eight classes according to use was required to equal the total acreage in the farm; in other words, no land could be reported twice in the land-use classification.

An entirely different land-use classification was followed in 1930 and 1917. In the presentation of the figures, some comparisons are shown for the different years, but caution is given, in the nature of footnotes, to indicate that the data are not strictly comparable.

**Farm values.**—The enumerators were instructed to obtain from each farm operator the total value of the farm (land and buildings) regardless of whether the land was operated as full owner, part owner, manager, or tenant. This total value was to be reported in accordance with the market value, that is, it was to represent the amount which a willing seller would receive from a willing buyer and not the amount involved at a forced sale. For institutional farms, the values were to cover only the farm land and farm buildings.

The operator was also asked to give the value of all buildings on the farm used for agricultural and domiciliary purposes. These values were necessarily the nearest approximation a farm operator could give, and the values obtained are probably somewhat less satisfactory than the figures for the total real-estate value. In any case, the value of buildings should not be subtracted from the total value of the real estate and the difference assumed to represent accurately the market value of the land alone.

Another question called for the value of all farm implements and machinery belonging on the farm. The instruction to enumerators was that they should report the estimated present value of all farm implements, machinery, etc., used in operating the farm and usually kept on the farm. They were to include the value of all farm implements, tools, wagons, carts, carriages, harnesses, and dairy equipment; and of all engines, electric motors, automobiles, motortrucks, and other farm machinery.

No values are available for inventories of livestock for the years 1940 or 1930. For livestock and crop productions the following values of sales were secured for 1939 viz, eggs, poultry, vegetables, and fruits and nuts; while for 1929, the only values for these productions were for vegetables grown for home use, vegetables sold, and all tropical fruits and coconuts sold. In 1917, the values of the inventories of livestock and of a few of their products and of the production for crops were secured. These 1917 values appear in the report entitled "Census of the Virgin Islands of the United States, 1917."

**Farm mortgage debt.**—The farm mortgage inquiries on the 1940 and 1930 farm schedules were to be answered by operating owners only. Tenants and managers, in many cases, did not know whether the farms which they were operating were mortgaged and if so, would be even less likely to know the amount of the debt outstanding. For 1940, in the case of part owners, the mortgage indebtedness figure represents the encumbrance on the owned portion of the farm only. The acreage owned in such part-owner farms was given separately, but the total value of the farm was not apportioned between the owned and rented portions.

The 1930 schedule inquiry specified "Total amount of mortgage debt...." and in the report of that year mortgage data were shown for all owners, no separation between full and part owners being made. In 1930 only the one inquiry relating to farm mortgage indebtedness was provided. This question required an answer for the total amount of mortgage debt on land and buildings of the farm and instructions accompanying the inquiry were to write in "None" if there was no debt. This

type of inquiry does not prove as satisfactory as the form used in 1940 when the first question ascertained the fact of whether there was any indebtedness on the farm by a direct answer of "Yes" or "No" with a succeeding question designed to secure the total amount of any outstanding mortgage indebtedness. In 1940 the amount of mortgage indebtedness was ascertained in every case for the farms which had an affirmative answer for the question on mortgage status.

In 1917 no mortgage inquiries were carried on the schedule for the Census of Agriculture.

**Farm expenditures.**—Only three items of farm expenditures were secured for the Virgin Islands in the most recent census, viz, amount expended in cash for agricultural labor (exclusive of housework), the amount expended for feed for animals and poultry, and the amount expended for manure and fertilizer. Nearly identical inquiries were carried in the census of 1930. For both censuses the expenditures related to the previous calendar year. Again, for the census of 1917 the expenditure inquiries were similar to those carried in the two later censuses with this exception, an estimated value of house rent and board furnished farm laborers was secured as well as the amount expended in cash. In the publication for 1917 only one figure is given as the expense for labor and the amount was \$572,046. The inference was that this total included both the cash paid and the estimated value of rent and board furnished. The text mentioned that the expenditures were for the year ending October 31, 1917.

**Farm machinery and facilities.**—In both 1940 and 1930 an inventory record was made for the number of automobiles, motortrucks, and tractors on farms. No such information was secured in the census of 1917. For the most recent census, the year of latest model for these types of equipment was required. The averages given for the year of latest model were obtained by adding the years reported for the individual models and dividing that sum by the total number of farms reporting that item. The resulting quotient is shown as a whole number; for example, a quotient of 1935 (with or without a decimal) is given in the tables as 1935.

On the 1940 schedule an inquiry was carried for the number of engines and electric motors with their total rated horsepower. Also, an inquiry was carried as to whether the farm was situated on an improved road and, if it was so located, whether the road was paved with macadam or tar. Finally, if the farm was not located on an improved road a request was made to learn how far the farm was from such a road. As there were no improved roads on St. John Island, this question was not answered in the reports from that island.

**Livestock and livestock products.**—For convenience, the term, "livestock" in the census reports is made to include not only domestic animals, such as horses, mules, asses and burros, cattle, hogs, sheep, and goats, but also poultry and bees. It follows then, that the term "livestock products" should include products from the above classes. The inquiries for 1940 were so worded that, when considering young animals

and poultry, inclusions were made for colts and calves over 3 months of age, pigs and kids (goat) over 4 months of age, lambs over 6 months of age, and poultry over 4 months of age on the date of the census. Because of the varying age groups included in the different census years, the different age groups to which the numerical data refer are shown in the livestock table. The inventories of livestock were to be reported on the schedule for the farm where the animals were kept on the date of the census. This applied whether the animals belonged to the operator, to members of his family, to hired help, or to others.

Table 14 presents data for cows and heifers kept mainly for milk production for the years 1940 and 1930. For 1940 the schedule inquiry for this type and sex group made no mention of age other than that the animals must have been included under total cattle. In other words, since the total for cattle was restricted to animals over 3 months of age it is possible that some enumerators may have reported all immature she-stock over 3 months of age under one of two subclasses of cows and heifers, viz, cows and heifers kept mainly for milk production or cows and heifers kept mainly for beef production.

The census schedule for 1940 provided an inquiry for reporting other poultry such as turkeys, ducks, etc., with the instruction that the kind of poultry was to be specified. No similar inquiry was carried in 1930.

In the censuses of 1930 and 1917 inventories of livestock not on farms and plantations were enumerated. For their recordation, a separate schedule was used in 1930 but not in 1917. The data collected for the enclosures or other types of nonfarm establishments having livestock in those years are shown in table 16.

**Crops.**—The 1940 General Schedule for Farms and Plantations was prepared in such manner that all crops grown on tracts of land listed as farms should be enumerated. Several "catch-all" questions were used to record crops for which separate inquiries were not carried. The enumerator was instructed to specify the name of the crops for which he listed information under these "catch-all" questions. In presenting the data for crops, a separation has been made, in most cases, of such crops as though a separate question had been provided.

The production of crops for the censuses of 1940 and 1930, in general, were for the calendar year preceding the census date. However, the schedule itself for 1930 carried this instruction:

**Sugarcane.**—In all cases the information secured for this inquiry will refer to the sugarcane harvest of 1928-1929, that is, it will cover the harvest period for 12 months which began approximately October 1, 1928, to September 30, 1929. Do not include any of the cane belonging to the 1929-1930 crop; that is, cane cut from October 1, 1929, to the day of the enumeration.

No restriction of this kind was made for the census of 1940. See "Census dates and periods covered" for the season to which the 1917 Census data relate.