



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEG. 46364 BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Constantly improving techniques of farming have permitted a decreasing number, as well as a decreasing proportion, of the people to produce the Nation's food and fiber. With this reduced need for employment in agriculture, accompanied by an expanded acreage of land in farms, the average acreage per farm was one-third higher in 1945 than at the beginning of the century. Since 1900, the average size of full-owner farms has decreased slightly; that of tenant farms has increased by about 41 percent; and that of part-owner farms has more than doubled.

In the Northeast, the average acreage of all operations has remained practically constant since 1900. Tenant farms have remained almost constant in size, while full-owner farms, which include most of the part-time farms, have decreased by about 3 acres in average size. Part-owner operators, whose rented lands are often used for hay and pasture, have increased their average acreages by more than one-fourth.

The long-time trend in the size of farms in the North Central Region and in the West has been upward. Since 1935, the change in average size in each of these areas has been particularly marked. These variations have been due mainly to increasing

acres for tenant and part-owner farms. The spectacular increases in size of part-owner farms reflect an attempt to provide economical sized farms in areas where small uneconomical ownership units were established originally by the homestead laws. Considerable acreages of lands of absentee owners, grants to railroads, grants for educational purposes, Indian lands, and lands held by the Federal Government are operated under lease by both owners and tenants. Previously these lands often were used without payment of rent. In each of these areas the increased use of machinery has made it possible for both owners and tenants to operate additional acres.

In the South, the widespread adoption of the system of farming with croppers, following the Civil War, materially reduced the average size of farms. Since 1900, tenant farms have increased in average size by one-fifth, or 14 acres. Cropper farms, classified separately for the first time in 1920, have increased by about 2 acres since that date. With some increase in part-time farming among full owners, the size of farms for this tenure group in 1945 was 30 acres below that in 1900. Part-owner farms have increased rapidly in size in recent years.