

CHAPTER II—SIZE OF FARMS

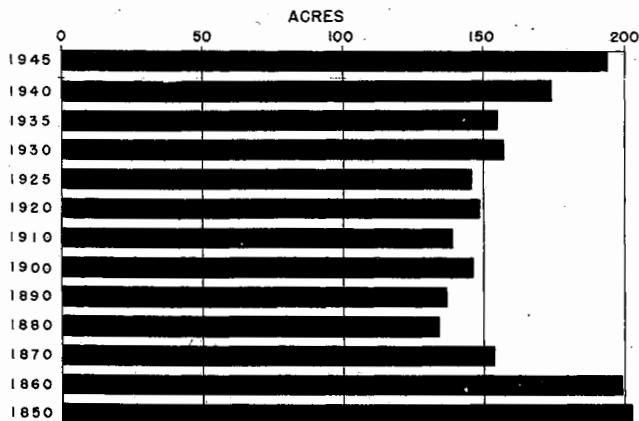
Introduction.—Statistics are given in this chapter on the number of farms, land in farms, land uses, and value of farms (land and buildings), classified on the basis of the total land area in each farm. Farms, under the Census definition, include operations which are conducted on areas varying in size from a few thousand square feet or less to hundreds of thousands of acres. The small farms include such places as village lots on which gardening, poultry-keeping, or other activity, barely meet the minimum requirements to be classified as farms. They also include highly specialized agricultural operations such as greenhouses, mushroom cellars, broiler plants, and feed lots. Typical of the extremely large holdings are stock ranches in the West and Southwest.

The statistics presented herein represent one approach for measuring the relative importance and characteristics of farms of varying sizes. Other measures of the size of operations, for which data are presented in this volume, include: the number of farms arrayed according to the total value of gross farm income (see chapter X, Value of Farm Products, and Type of Farm); number of farms by acres of cropland harvested (included in this chapter and in chapter I); number of farms by value of farm implements and machinery (see chapters I and VI); number of farms by amount of cash wages paid (see chapter V); and number of farms by number of tractors (see chapter VI). Additional items have been classified, by size of farm, for a sample of the farms enumerated in the 1945 Census. These data are included in a separate report.

The size-of-farm data shown in this chapter represent totals for the United States, regions, divisions, and States. Overall totals for the number, acreage, and value of farms, as of the census date, and the farm acreage classified according to use for the preceding calendar year are presented in chapter I. Data for these items, by color and tenure of farm operator, are presented in chapter III. This latter chapter also presents similar statistics for farms of various sizes in each color and tenure class.

Statistics collected in the 1945 Census are given, for counties, in volume I for number of farms, land in farms, cropland harvested, and value of farms (land and buildings) classified by size of farm. This volume also presents comparable data for 1940 for the number of farms. No data by size of farm, other than the average size of farm, are available for minor civil divisions (townships, precincts, etc.).

**AVERAGE SIZE OF FARMS, FOR THE UNITED STATES:
1850-1945**



Size-of-farm classification.—The size classification used in the 1945 Census tabulations takes into account the measurements commonly established by government land surveys.

It avoids, to a great extent, bimodal distributions of acreages within the established class intervals. This classification is particularly appropriate in those survey areas where the farms are made up of fractions or multiples of the government survey section of 340 acres. Thus, in the present classifications, farms of 20, 40, 60, 120, 160 acres, etc., fall at midpoints of the class intervals. This classification was introduced in 1935. A more detailed discussion of this grouping, in comparison with the grouping used in prior censuses, together with an analysis of data for representative survey and nonsurvey counties, is found in chapter II, volume III of the 1935 Census of Agriculture Reports.

The size classification established in 1935 provided for 17 principal size groups with a further division of two of the groups to provide exact comparisons with the classifications used in prior censuses. Thus, the 10-to-29-acre group was subdivided to show farms of 10 to 19 acres and 20 to 29 acres and the 140-to-179-acre group was subdivided to show farms of 140 to 174 acres and 175 to 179 acres.

The use of these subgroups was repeated in 1940, thus providing comparability with the old grouping for another census. These subgroups were not used in the 1945 Census tabulations. When 1930 and earlier figures are presented in comparison with the 1945 data, the 1940 and 1935 figures are shown for both the old and the new groupings.

In the 1935 classification, the largest farms were tabulated in the group "10,000 acres and over." This group, although representing less than 0.1 percent of the number of farms, accounted for approximately 12 percent of the total land in farms. To provide further information as to the range in size of the large farms, the "10,000 and over" group was further classified into seven subgroups in the 1945 Census tabulations. A supplementary tabulation of the 1940 returns for farms of 10,000 acres and over, published for the first time in the reports of the 1945 Census, provides comparable data for that year.

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 ¹
Total.....	2,659,985	2,044,077
Under 3 acres.....	6,875	(*)
3 to 9.....	172,021	54,876
10 to 19.....	294,607	162,178
20 to 49.....	847,614	616,558
50 to 99.....	754,221	608,878
100 to 499.....	565,054	487,041
500 to 999.....	15,873	20,319
1,000 and over.....	3,720	5,364

¹Not available.
²For 1860, the classification by acreage of improved land is for "Farms containing 3 acres and more." The number of farms in the various classes adds to 1,955,014 which is 89,063 less than the total number of farms.

Tabulations of farms classified on the basis of the total land area in the farm have been made for each census beginning with 1880. The classification used in 1880 consisted of eight size groups. Tabulations of farms by size were also made in the Censuses of 1860 and 1870, but the classification was based on the acres of "improved" land in the farm rather than on the total acres. Such a classification is not comparable with that used in subsequent censuses. The United States figures for the number of farms by size (based on improved land) are shown in table 1 for 1860 and 1870.

For each census beginning with 1900, the size-of-farm classification has included, in addition to a count of farms, a tabulation of all land in farms, the more important classes of land according to use, and the value of farms, with the exception of the value of farms for the 1935 Census. For both the