

## FARMS REPORTING TRACTORS

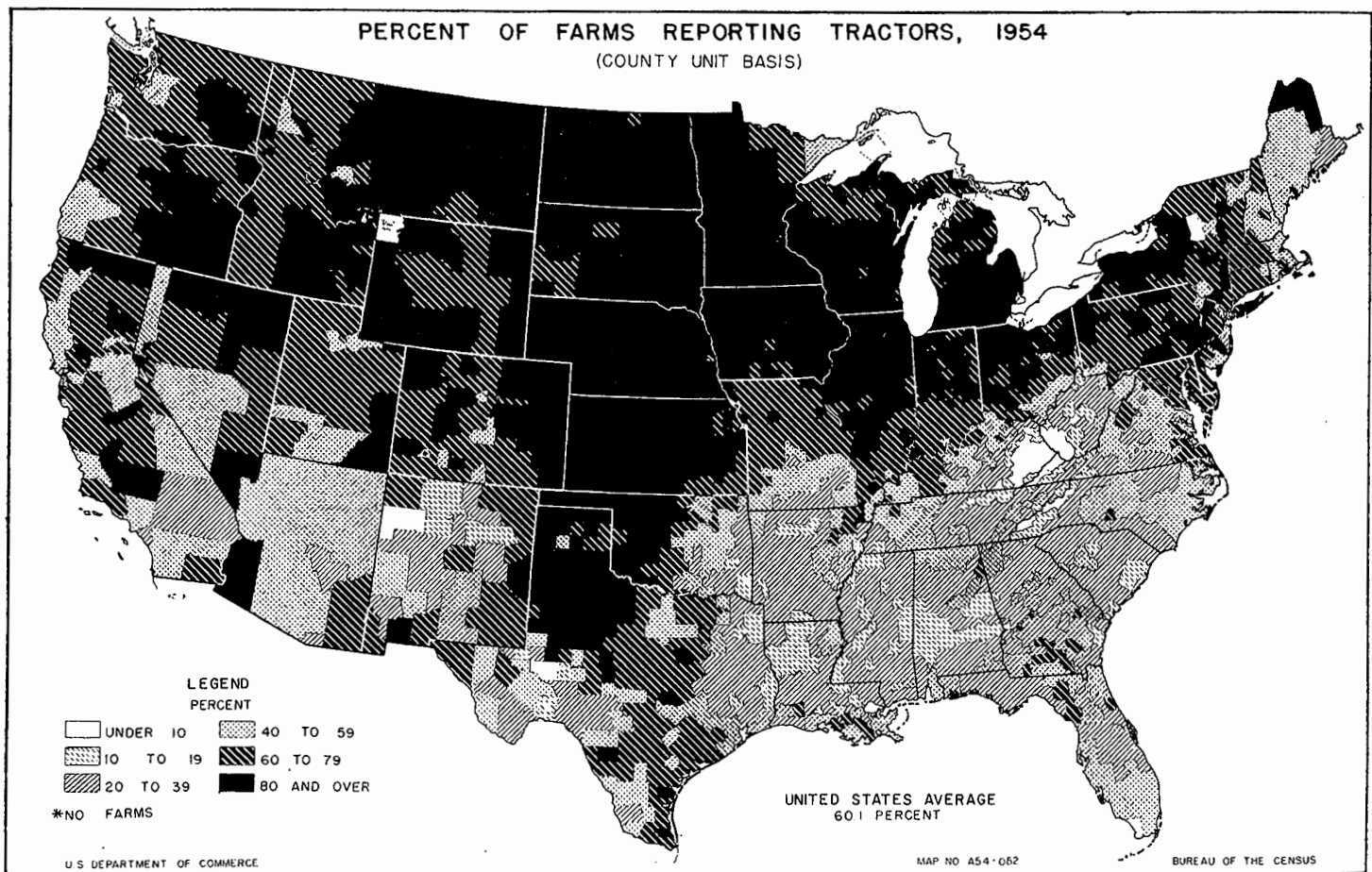
Although agriculture in the United States is highly mechanized, only about 60 percent of our 4.8 million farms reported tractors in November 1954. For the most part, those reporting tractors are the farms that are most suitable for some degree of modern mechanization and that actually need mechanical field power. They are the farms that produce a very large part of total agricultural production. The actual agricultural output on farms not having tractors is not available. Census data for 1954 do show, however, that 40 percent of all farms produced less than \$1,200 worth of products for sale in 1954. As a group, this 40 percent of the farms produced only 3.4 percent of the total value of products sold in that year. Less than one-third of these low production farms reported tractors in 1954.

The largest percentage of farms that reported tractors in 1954 is in the northern and central farming areas, and the smallest percentage is in the Southeastern States. From 60 to 80 percent

houses and some commercial poultry enterprises who cultivate no land may have no reason to own field tractors. On many such farms, motortrucks may represent the important motive power unit.

## GROWTH OF TRACTOR POWER

It is not surprising that in the beginning, farmers' unqualified acceptance of the farm tractor was slow to develop. The limited capacity of the early tractor to do various types of farmwork meant that few work animals were disposed of when a tractor was bought. Even after tractor models and tractor-drawn equipment were greatly improved, many jobs still were done by horses and mules. In the severe depression of the 1930's, cash with which to buy gasoline, oil, and repairs was very limited. But farmers could produce their own power in the form of corn, oats, and hay, at little cash cost. In many instances, jobs which had been done with tractor power were again done with animal power



of the farm units in most of the northern and central areas apparently are of a size and type suitable for some degree of mechanization, and, therefore, suitable for individual ownership of tractor power and equipment. In the Southeastern States less than 40 percent of the farms in many of the counties reported tractors.

The fact that a farmer does not have a tractor does not mean that he does not use tractor power. Custom operators, many of whom are farmers, are available in all sections for preparing land, tending crops, and for performing harvesting operations. Sharecropper farms in the South are operated with equipment owned by the "home farm." Many fruit farmers in some areas hire all or a part of their field work done. Operators of green-

and equipment and the tractors remained idle. Even after more versatile tractors were developed and farm economic conditions began to improve, many farmers felt obliged to keep a well-shod team or two for work in icy and muddy places. Pioneering farmers led the way in complete displacement of work stock with tractors. The movement grew rapidly from the beginning of World War II. Few commercial farmers now depend on work stock for doing field work.

The increase between 1920 and 1954 in number of farms reporting tractors was 2,648,000. About 24 percent of this increase occurred between 1920 and 1930, 21 percent occurred between 1930 and 1940, 42 percent occurred between 1940 and 1950, and 13 percent since 1950.