

ELECTRIC POWER ON FARMS

Extension of electric distribution lines to almost every farm in the United States is one of the outstanding achievements incident to rural progress and farm mechanization. According to estimates made by Edison Electric Institute, only about 100,000 farmers had central-station electric service in 1920, and these made little use of the power outside of their homes. During the next 15 years electric service was extended to about 644,000 more farms which meant that about 11 percent of the farms had such service. In 1936, the Rural Electrification Administration was formed and distribution systems were extended in rural areas much more rapidly.

By 1945 almost half of our farms were electrified and during the next 5 years, electric power suppliers were busy constructing additional facilities to serve the people in rural areas. Almost 1.5 million more farms were connected during these 5 years making a total of 77 percent of the farms with electric service.

From 1950 to the present time effort to extend electric service to all farms has continued. Distribution systems have been extended across the Great Plains where the density of consumers is low. The service has been expanded in low-income areas so that electric power would be available to all people for electric lights and refrigeration, and other kinds of modern equipment. According to estimates made by Rural Electrification Administration more than 4.5 million farms, or 94.2 percent of the total had central-station electric service on June 30, 1956. In addition to these there were some farms with home generating plants.

Electricity on the farm is used almost exclusively at the farmstead but it is used for three very important purposes, namely, lights, heat, and motive power. It has revolutionized the farm home and made it possible for the farm family to have as modern a home as urban families. For farmwork it is applied to a wide variety of jobs, especially on dairy and poultry farms. Push-button farming still is a long way off, but electric power has done much to reduce costs and increase labor efficiency in farming and in the home.

Electricity is now generally used by farms of all types, sizes, economic classes, and tenures of operator. Almost 90 percent

of the share tenants and croppers and about 83 percent of the farms of Economic Class VI reported electric service in 1954. Most of the farms that remain unserved are in parts of the Southern States and in some of the sparsely settled sections of the Mountain area.

By 1950 about 90 percent of all the farms in the Northeast, Lake States, Corn Belt, and Pacific States were receiving electric service. In the Great Plains and Southern States farms receiving electric service continued to increase substantially after 1950. On a county basis, decreases after 1950 in number of farms receiving electric service occurred in widely distributed counties, which were largely concentrated in the Northeast and Central States. These reductions were caused by reductions in the number of farms between the two Census dates, and not by the discontinuance of service by farmers. In some localities the number of rural consumers has actually increased while the number of farm consumers has decreased. This has come about because many urban workers and others have moved to small rural places in the country which, by definition, are not classified as farms.

