Estimates by the United States Department of Agriculture show the extent to which mechanical harvesting of hay has replaced old hay harvesting methods. In 1944, for example, about 27 percent of the entire hay tonnage was baled, 2 percent was chopped, and 71 percent was handled as long loose hay. Pick-up baling and field chopping increased markedly during the next 10 years. In 1954, about 73 percent of the hay was baled, 7 percent was chopped, and only 20 percent was handled in long loose form. Much of the present long loose hay is in the low rainfall areas of the Great Plains and some Western States where large quantities of wild hay and alfalfa are stacked for cattle and sheep feeding. Only in a few areas is much of the hay chopped. The field forage harvester is used primarily for harvesting forage crops for silage.

PERCENTAGE OF HAY HARVESTED BY DIFFERENT METHODS, UNITED STATES FOR SPECIFIED YEARS[1]

Year	Percentage of specified hay crop that was—		
	Baled	Chopped	Stored as loose long hay
Crop of 1944	26.8	1.7	71.5
Crop of 1948	47.5	5.6	46.9
Crop of 1951	61.7	7.5	30.8
Crop of 1954	72.5	7.2	20.3

[1] "Harvesting Hay and Straw and Use of Balers" F. M. 107, United States Department of Agriculture, June 1953, and "Harvesting Hay and Straw" ARS 43-27, United States Department of Agriculture, May 1956.

COMBINATIONS OF HARVEST MACHINES

The larger, specialized harvest machines, like pick-up balers, forage harvesters, etc., require a considerable investment, especially on farms where more than one kind of a machine is necessary. High investment and the operating costs for such machines undoubtedly influence many farmers to contract for their use or to arrange with neighbors for exchange of machine work. In 1954, for example, only 157,000 farmers reported having one or more of each kind of the 3 harvest machines, grain combine, corn picker, and pick-up baler, although many hundreds of thousands of farmers harvested crops which could be harvested by these machines. Nearly all of the farmers (96 percent) who had all 3 kinds of these machines were in 4 type-of-farming groups, namely cash-grain, livestock other than dairy or poultry, dairy, and general farming. These are the types of farms growing relatively large acreages of small grains, corn, and hay. For the most part, the farms of these types are in the higher economic class groups. Seventy percent of all farmers reporting all 3 harvest machines, and 60 percent of those reporting 2 of the 3 machines were located in the important grain and livestock areas of the Corn Belt and Lake States. Most of these farms were in Economic Classes I, II, III, and IV.

In all economic classes of farms, in all 5 areas, some farmers did not have any of the 3 machines, grain combines, corn pickers, or pick-up balers. For the United States as a whole, nearly 63 percent of the farmers had none of the machines. These farmers were especially numerous in the Southern area where 90 percent of all farms did not have a grain combine, a corn picker, or a pick-up baler in 1954. Of course, some farms do not have these machines because they are not needed for the type of farming followed. In many other cases, however, the farmer has so little work for them that he cannot afford them. This does not mean necessarily that combines, corn pickers, and pick-up balers are not used on the smaller farms. Operators of small farms frequently engage a neighboring farmer to combine his small grain, machine pick his corn, or bale his hay.