



Figure 14.

Farm tenancy.—No agricultural Census since 1880 has reported as few tenants as the 1,167,885 reported in 1954; this number is 1.7 million less than the peak number in 1935. Operators who own none of the land they cultivate represented, in 1954, a smaller proportion of all farm operators than at any time in the history of the Nation. However, one-fourth of the farms and one-fourth of the cropland are still farmed by tenants.

One of the important features of tenancy in agricultural production is that owners of resources (land, capital, and labor) may combine these resources without the necessity of a permanent transfer. Tenancy is a means for a skilled manager to operate a farm even with limited capital and land. Conversely, it is a convenient arrangement for the owner of resources who cannot, or prefers not to, participate in the actual farming operation. Tenancy has frequently been viewed as part of the course toward ownership through successive steps of farm laborer, tenant, part owner, owner operator, and landlord. It is recognized, however, that several of these rungs of the so-called agricultural ladder might be bypassed. Census data indicate that many tenants become owners. In 1954, 70.5 percent of the farm operators under 25 years of age were tenants, whereas only 9.3 percent of the operators 65 years or older were tenants. The percentage of tenants was consistently lower as the age of the operator increased.

The concentration of tenant farms, while traditionally great in the South, has made certain notable shifts since Census data became available. One of the principal reasons for the relatively large number of tenant farms in the South was the sharecropping system and its association with cotton and tobacco. Since many of these tenant farms in the South are very small, they account for a higher proportion of the farms than the land in farms.

In the Plains there is a heavier concentration of land under lease than of the number of tenant farms because of the large

acres operated by tenants and the large leased acreages of part owners. In the high risk Plains area the number of counties in which at least half of the farms are operated by tenants has varied from Census to Census. The Corn Belt has had a relatively heavy concentration of both number of tenant farms and rented land in farms ever since shortly after the beginning of this century.

Considerable variation exists in the method of leasing as between different areas and types of farming. Croppers, of course, are reported only in the South. Crop-share rent is found in varying degrees throughout the country, and is common on commercial farms. Crop-share arrangements may also be combined with a fixed cash rental—for example, for buildings, pasture, or hayland—to form the share-cash combination frequently reported by operators in the Eastern Great Plains and Corn Belt. Cash leasing is used less frequently than the other methods of rental except for livestock-share. It is important in many of the grazing areas of the West, in the South, and in New England.

TABLE 4.—PERCENT OF ALL FARMS OPERATED BY TENANTS, FOR THE UNITED STATES AND REGIONS: 1880 TO 1954

Year	United States	North-east	North Central	South	West
1954	24.0	6.0	23.3	29.4	12.1
1950	26.8	6.8	24.2	34.1	12.9
1945	31.7	8.6	29.1	40.4	14.5
1940	38.7	12.6	35.4	48.2	21.3
1935	42.1	13.8	36.3	53.5	23.8
1930	42.4	12.5	34.1	55.5	20.9
1925	38.6	13.0	32.0	51.1	18.7
1920	38.1	17.2	31.1	49.6	17.7
1910	37.0	18.2	28.9	49.6	14.0
1900	35.3	20.8	27.9	47.0	16.6
1890	28.4	18.4	23.4	38.5	12.1
1880	25.6	16.0	20.5	36.2	14.0