

COTTON ACREAGE HARVESTED IN MULTIPLE UNITS AS A PERCENT
OF TOTAL COTTON ACREAGE HARVESTED, 1954
(ECONOMIC AREA UNIT BASIS)

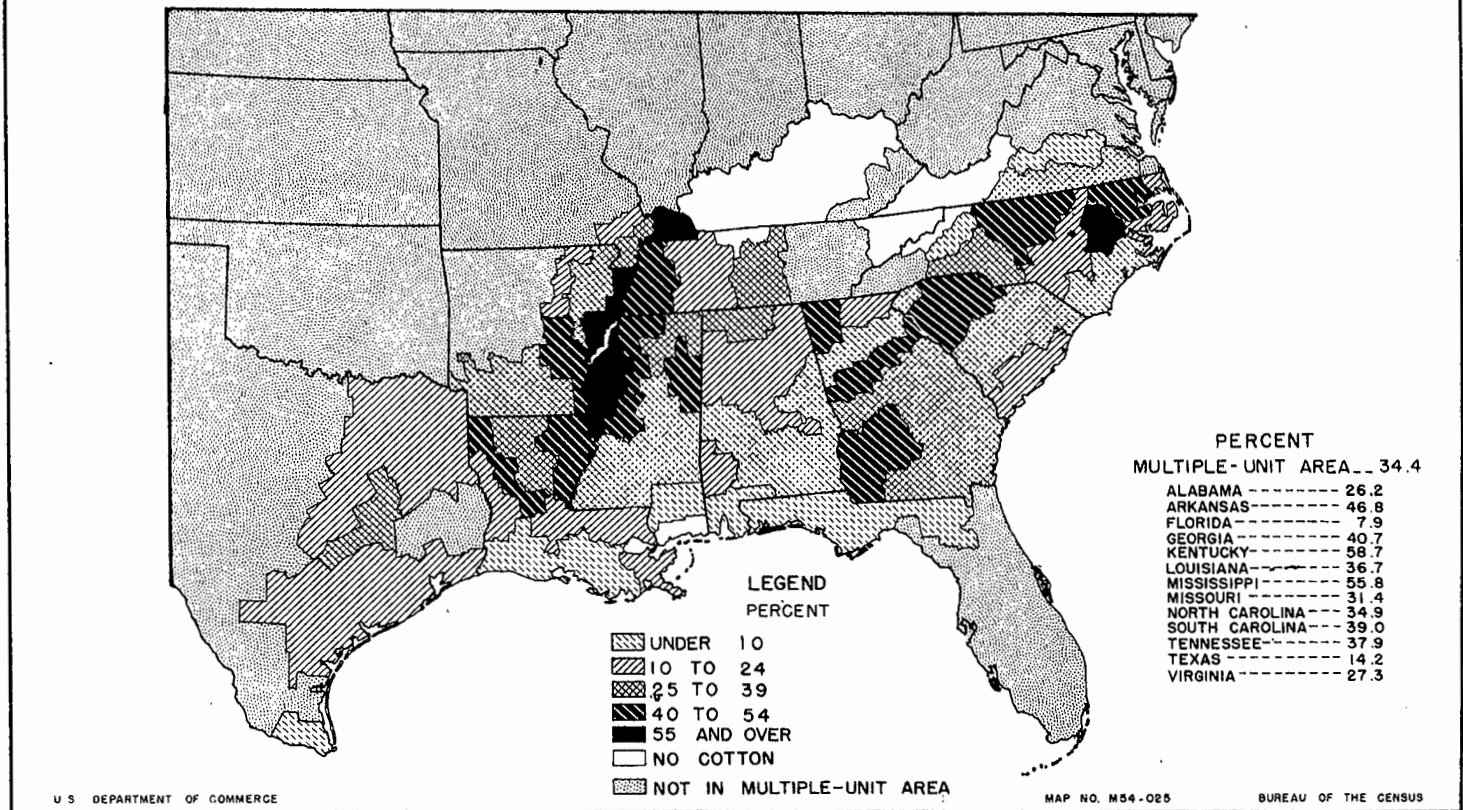


Figure 22.

in need of labor to produce these labor-intensive crops, but few had the cash for paying wage hands; and ex-slaves had virtually no alternative but to return to working the land of their former owners. The "furnish" system and the sharing of the crop developed to meet the needs of these groups.

Sharecropping and the multiple-unit operations associated with sharecropping, however, have been undergoing rather fundamental changes for the past several decades. The reasons for these declines are many and varied. Probably the most important force at work is the migration of croppers into nonfarm jobs in response to the relative attractiveness of industrial employment. Reinforcing this factor have been the shift westward of our cotton areas, the mechanization of cotton production, and the relatively low income condition of many of the cotton farmers.

Perhaps the most basic development has been the rapid and continuous decline in the total number of sharecroppers, noted earlier in this report. The total has dropped from 783,459 in 1930 to 276,029 in 1954, a decrease of nearly two-thirds. As a consequence of the decrease in the number of sharecroppers, during this same period there was a substantial decline in the number of farms in multiple-unit operations. Between 1950 and 1954, the two years for which we have comparable statistics, the number of farms in multiple units (in the 1954 multiple-unit area) decreased from 466,273 to 403,186.

The decline in the number of multiple-unit farms between 1950 and 1954 has been largely in those farms producing cotton rather than tobacco.