



Figure 24.

TYPE OF FARMING

The vast differences in types of farming in the United States have resulted from a number of important natural economic and cultural conditions. These diverse conditions, through a varied agriculture, have been reflected in the tenure pattern.

A complex agriculture.—Such factors as variations in temperature, soil, rainfall, and the availability of land for agriculture determine the type of farming in the several areas. The wide variation in temperature has caused such areas as the Dakotas to specialize in spring wheat, barley, and flax to suit their short growing season and, in contrast, permitted the Deep South to become the world's largest cotton-producing area. The high, rugged mountain terrain of the West and the low rainfall have mostly excluded agriculture or confined it to grazing and special crops in a few restricted areas. The western mountain ranges have also been largely responsible for the lack of rainfall in much of the Great Plains area. Rainfall in the eastern one-half of the Nation, however, has been adequate to accommodate whatever the other physical and economic conditions required. Soils vary from the relatively infertile podzols of the Lakes region to the rich alluvium of the Mississippi. These and other physical and biological factors have combined with many important cultural conditions to form a complex agriculture.

No less important are the economic forces that have called for increases or decreases in production of particular types and at certain locations. Costs and returns, both in money and in gratification, have been basic in the development of agricultural production and in the ways that people work together to attain this production.

Types of farms.—In 1954, farms were classified by type on the basis of the sales of a particular product or group of products that accounted for 50 percent or more of the total value of products sold. If the sales from a product or a group of products did not represent 50 percent of the value of all products sold, the farm was called "general." Tenants operated a greater proportion of the field-crop farms than of the livestock farms. Owners and part owners operated most of the livestock farms and almost all of the poultry and fruit-and-nut farms. The "general" farms were divided tenurwise in roughly the same proportions as all commercial farms.

Cash-grain farms are found in northern and south-central Plains States and in the region of northeastern Washington. Of course, large quantities of small grains and corn are grown in the Corn Belt region, but much of the grain in this area is marketed through livestock. Of the 537,838 commercial cash-grain farms in 1954, 35.6 percent were operated by owners, 31.5 percent by part owners, and 32.7 percent by tenants. Since 1950, the number of commercial cash-grain farms had increased by 107,449. Fifty-two percent of this increased number were operated by full owners, 36 percent by part owners, and only 13 percent by tenants.

Cotton farms, which are traditionally labor-intensive (but are rapidly becoming more mechanized in the commercial areas), are operated mainly under rental arrangements. In 1954, the 525,208 commercial cotton farms were 24.3 percent full owner operated, 16.2 percent part owner operated and 59.3 percent tenant operated. Twenty-eight percent of the commercial cotton farm operators were croppers. There were 84,099 fewer commercial cotton farms in 1954 than in 1950. During this period there was an increase in the mechanization of cotton farming and a heavy migration of labor out of agriculture.