

# **CHAPTER XI – ECONOMIC CLASS OF FARM**

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## CHAPTER XI.—ECONOMIC CLASS OF FARM

**Introduction.**—This chapter presents data showing characteristics of farms and farm operators by economic class of farm. A classification of farms by economic class was made for the purpose of segregating groups of farms that are somewhat alike in their characteristics and size of operation. The segregating of farms into mutually exclusive economic class groups makes it possible to provide basic data for an analysis of the organization of agriculture from the viewpoint of amount and source (farm or nonfarm) of income.

The data for farms grouped by economic class supplement those for other classifications which were made on the basis of size of farm (as measured by total area in the farm), given in Chapter V; tenure of farm operator, given in Chapter X; and type of farm, given in Chapter XII.

**Source of data.**—All data presented in this chapter are from the 1954 and 1950 Censuses of Agriculture. There are no comparative figures by economic class of farm for earlier Census years. A classification of this nature was made for the 1945 enumeration, but the criteria used were not the same as in 1950 and 1954.

Only farms comprising a sample of approximately 20 percent of the farms were classified by economic class. All figures in this chapter represent estimates for all farms based on tabulations of the data for the farms included in the sample. The Introduction to this volume gives a description of the sampling plan and the method used in expanding the data to represent all farms, and provides data regarding the reliability of estimates based on reports for only a sample of farms.

**Presentation of statistics.**—This chapter presents statistics for 1954 and 1950 for the United States, for the North, the South, the West, and for each of the States. An outline map showing these geographic areas appears in the Introduction to this volume.

Table 2 of this chapter presents a summary for the United States of nearly all available basic data relating to economic class of farm. In addition, Table 2 shows, by percentages, the relationship between classes for each item, and for many items, the proportion in each class. Tables 3 through 13 contain State, region, and United States totals for the more important items segregated by economic class of farm. Data for most of these same items, as well as many other items, are presented at the State and economic area levels in Volume I, Economic Area Tables 1, 2, and 3. Data showing the general characteristics for principal types of farms by economic class are shown for major subregions in Part 3 of Volume III of the reports for the 1954 Census of Agriculture.

The maps accompanying this text show the geographic distribution of each class of farm and also of commercial and other farms as groups. These maps serve the purpose of giving a quick visual picture of the distribution of the various classes of farms.

### DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

**Definitions.**—Definitions having a general application, such as those for "a farm," "farm operator," "farms reporting," etc., are given in the Introduction to this volume.

**Basis of classification.**—The basic criteria for making the classification of farms by economic class were the same for the 1954 and 1950 Censuses of Agriculture. The three factors upon which the classification of farms by economic class was based were: Total value of all farm products sold; number of days the farm operator worked off the farm; and relationship of the income received from nonfarm sources by the operator and members of his family to the value of all farm products sold. Farms were classified into two economic groups, namely, "commercial farms" and "other farms." Each of these major groups was further classified.

**Commercial farms.**—The "commercial farms" were classified into six groups—Classes I through V, solely on the basis of the value of farm products sold, and in the case of Class VI, on the additional basis of the days of off-farm work, and the relationship of income of the operator and members of his family from nonfarm sources, to the value of all agricultural products sold. "Other farms" were classified into three groups, as follows:

**Part-time farms.**—Farms with a value of sales of farm products of \$250 to \$1,199 were classified as part-time when the farm operator reported (a) 100 or more days of work off the farm in 1954, or (b) the nonfarm income received by him and members of his family was greater than the value of farm products sold.

**Residential farms.**—Residential farms include all farms except abnormal farms with a total value of sales of farm products of less than \$250. Some of these represent farms on which the operator worked off the farm more than 100 days in 1954. Some represent farms on which the income from nonfarm sources was greater than the value of sales of agricultural products. Others represent subsistence and marginal farms of various kinds. Some farms are included here which, if the classification was based on farm production for more than 1 year, might have qualified as commercial farms.

**Abnormal farms.**—Insofar as it was possible to identify them, abnormal farms include public and private institutional farms, community enterprises, experiment-station farms, grazing associations, etc. Abnormal farms were excluded from the "commercial" group regardless of the value of farm products sold.

**Value of farm products sold.**—The data on the value of farm products sold represent estimates based upon the tabulation of data for only a sample of approximately 20 percent of the farms. For the sale of livestock and livestock products, the estimates are based upon the tabulation of data for all livestock and livestock products sold. For field crops, the estimates are based upon the tabulation of data by economic class of farm for field crops representing 98.2 percent of all field crops sold and upon estimates by economic class of the value of field crops sold for the other field crops sold. For fruits and nuts, the estimates of the value are based upon the tabulation of data by economic class of farm for fruits and nuts representing 79.8 percent of the value of all fruits and nuts sold and upon estimates of the value of fruits and nuts sold by economic class of farm for the other fruit and nut crops sold. (For an explanation of the methods used for computing the value of farm products sold and a statement of the reliability of the data, see Chapter IX of this volume.)