

TABLE 9.—CHANGES IN NUMBER OF FARMS BY SIZE AND PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF COMMERCIAL FARMS BY SIZE, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1950 to 1954

Acreage size	Number		Increase or decrease (-) from 1950 to 1954		Percent of farms	
	1950	1954	Number	Percent	1950	1954
Commercial farms.....	3,706,412	3,327,889	-378,523	-10.2	100.0	100.0
Under 10 acres.....	136,835	145,400	8,565	6.3	3.7	4.4
10 to 49 acres.....	762,326	622,921	-139,405	-18.3	20.6	18.7
50 to 99 acres.....	710,876	580,860	-130,216	-18.3	19.2	17.4
100 to 219 acres.....	1,162,419	1,026,664	-135,755	-11.7	31.3	30.9
220 to 499 acres.....	642,018	642,333	315	0.5	17.3	19.3
500 to 999 acres.....	174,380	182,550	8,170	4.7	4.7	5.5
1,000 acres and over.....	117,558	127,361	9,803	8.3	3.2	3.8

Farms of less than 10 acres are not numerous in commercial agriculture. They are much more common in the noncommercial farming sector where many part-time and residential farmers have small acreages. Of the 484,000 farms that are under 10 acres, 70 percent (339,000) were classified as part-time or residential farms. Among commercial farmers, less than 5 percent (145,000) had farms of less than 10 acres. These farms increased in number by 6 percent during a period in which commercial farms as a group declined by 10 percent.

The increase in the number of farms in the larger acreage size groups between 1950 and 1954 is but a continuation of a trend toward larger acreage units. Farms between 220 and 500 acres remained about the same numerically, but increased as a proportion of the commercial farms. These farms comprised a fifth of all commercial farms in 1954. Farms with more than 500 acres account for less than 10 percent of all farms. These farms increased numerically by 18,000. The greatest increase came among farms of 1,000 acres and more—an increase of 8 percent.

Change in acreage by economic class.—There was a substantial increase in the number of larger farms between 1949 and 1954 as measured by gross sales of farm products. Also, the larger acreage units increased in number. These parallel increases in size, measured by both volume of market sales and acreage, portray a much closer relationship between the two measures of size than actually exists.

The increase in the number of Class I farms between 1949 and 1954 was accompanied by increases in each of the acreage size groups (see table 10). There was an increase of nearly a fifth even in the few small units of less than 10 acres that sold farm products valued at \$25,000 or more. The bulk of the increase in the number of Class I farms was among farms of less than 500 acres. The greatest proportionate increase was among farms of 100 to 219 acres. There was an increase of 60 percent in the number of farms in this acreage-size group that grossed \$25,000 or more from sales of farm products. Numerically, the greatest increase was among farms between 220 and 500 acres. These accounted for half of the increase in Class I farms.

The number of farms in Economic Class II also increased between 1950 and 1954, an increase of 67,696. This increase took place among all acreage-size groups of farms. Most of the increase in Class II farms (over three-fourths) came among farms of 100 to 500 acres. Less than 5 percent of the increase was among farms of 500 or more acres.

Farms in each economic class below Class II (sales of less than \$10,000) decreased in number. These decreases were mostly among the intermediate acreage groups. Among these classes,

farms below 10 acres and those above 500 acres increased in number.

The decrease of nearly 400,000 farms in Economic Classes V and VI (sales of less than \$2,500) was almost entirely among farms between 10 and 220 acres. For these classes taken together, farms of less than 10 acres and farms larger than 500 acres increased in number.

TABLE 10.—NUMBER AND PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF FARMS, 1954, AND CHANGE IN NUMBER OF FARMS, 1950 TO 1954; BY SIZE AND ECONOMIC CLASS, FOR THE UNITED STATES

Item and economic class of farm	Total	Farms by size					
		Under 10 acres	10 to 99 acres	100 to 219 acres	220 to 499 acres	500 to 999 acres	1,000 acres and over
Number of farms, 1954:							
Commercial farms.....	3,327,889	145,400	1,203,581	1,026,664	642,333	182,550	127,361
Class I.....	134,064	4,340	14,817	19,127	40,199	24,807	30,774
Class II.....	448,847	9,873	49,346	132,108	169,829	48,875	38,816
Class III.....	706,852	11,843	136,738	287,915	191,131	49,087	30,138
Class IV.....	812,108	19,735	319,005	285,790	134,865	35,805	16,908
Class V.....	763,515	46,801	410,680	203,345	76,266	18,049	8,374
Class VI.....	462,503	52,808	272,995	98,379	30,043	5,927	2,351
Percent distribution, 1954:							
Commercial farms.....	100.0	4.4	36.2	30.9	19.3	5.5	3.8
Class I.....	100.0	3.2	11.1	14.3	30.0	18.5	23.0
Class II.....	100.0	2.2	11.0	29.4	37.8	10.9	8.6
Class III.....	100.0	1.7	19.3	40.7	27.0	6.9	4.3
Class IV.....	100.0	2.4	39.3	35.2	16.6	4.4	2.1
Class V.....	100.0	6.1	53.8	26.6	10.0	2.4	1.1
Class VI.....	100.0	11.4	59.0	21.3	6.5	1.3	0.5
Increase or decrease, 1950 to 1954:							
Commercial farms.....	-378,523	8,565	-209,621	-135,755	315	8,170	9,803
Class I.....	30,833	661	4,271	5,891	13,119	5,986	905
Class II.....	67,696	1,278	10,323	27,350	25,399	2,489	857
Class III.....	-14,359	213	13,893	-22,866	-6,836	-1,512	2,749
Class IV.....	-70,194	1,439	-6,036	-52,451	-16,359	373	2,840
Class V.....	-137,801	9,429	-95,872	-46,327	-8,500	1,268	2,201
Class VI.....	-254,698	-4,455	-196,200	-47,352	-6,508	-434	251
1954 as percent of 1950:							
Commercial farms.....	89.8	106.3	81.7	88.3	100.0	104.7	108.3
Class I.....	129.9	118.0	140.5	144.5	148.4	131.8	103.0
Class II.....	117.8	114.9	126.5	126.1	117.6	105.4	102.3
Class III.....	98.0	101.8	111.3	92.6	96.5	97.0	110.0
Class IV.....	92.0	107.9	98.1	84.5	89.2	101.1	120.2
Class V.....	84.7	125.2	81.1	81.4	90.0	107.6	135.7
Class VI.....	64.5	92.2	58.2	67.5	82.2	93.2	112.0

The changes in acreage as related to economic class show that among Class I farms there has been an increase in the proportion of smaller acreage units and a decrease in the larger acreage units. On the farms with less than \$25,000 of farm products sold, the trend has been toward fewer medium-size acreage units and an increasing proportion of farms below 10 acres and above 220 acres.

Changes in the number of farms include substantial shifting of farms between economic classes and acreage-size groups. The total number of commercial farms decreased by 376,000. Most land in those farms was consolidated with other farms. The increase in production from the larger farmed acreage resulted in many farms being classified in groups of higher value of sales. At the same time, increased yields per acre and per animal unit served to increase market sales per farm. This also caused farms to shift into groups of higher value of sales. Shifts between economic classes also resulted from reorganizations of farming systems toward enterprises that were yielding a greater return per acre of land.

The increase in the number of units of smaller acreage with sales of \$25,000 or more is indication of the greater possibilities for developing fairly sizable business operations on modest acreages.