

Change in acreage by type of farm.—Among most types of farms there were fewer small farms (measured in acres) and more of the larger ones. The exception was found among cash-grain farms which was the only type to grow in number during the period 1950 to 1954. While the number of farms increased in each acreage-size group for cash-grain farms, there was a greater proportionate increase in the smaller farms. This came from the shifts to cash-grain of many midwestern livestock and general farms,

TABLE 11.—NUMBER AND PERCENT DISTRIBUTION, 1954, AND CHANGE IN NUMBER OF FARMS, 1950 TO 1954; BY SIZE AND TYPE OF FARM, FOR THE UNITED STATES

Item and type 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
<b>Number of farms:</b>							
Commercial farms.....	3,327,889	145,400	1,203,581	1,026,064	642,333	182,550	127,361
Cash-grain.....	537,974	1,015	92,890	170,801	174,119	63,933	35,216
Cotton.....	525,463	29,104	335,840	97,360	44,144	13,120	5,895
Other field-crop.....	367,733	31,721	233,823	74,553	22,100	4,091	1,445
Vegetable.....	32,581	2,880	20,146	5,752	2,412	822	500
Fruit-and-nut.....	82,096	10,660	53,804	10,535	4,623	1,510	964
Dairy.....	548,787	5,664	159,315	255,593	109,857	15,116	3,222
Poultry.....	154,251	40,633	76,290	26,607	8,562	1,577	582
Livestock other than dairy and poultry.....	604,888	11,232	130,057	237,889	186,476	60,101	69,133
General.....	347,079	1,285	90,395	140,860	85,479	20,452	8,599
Primarily crop.....	80,039	265	29,178	27,136	15,634	5,021	2,805
Primarily livestock.....	63,197	560	18,151	30,006	12,211	1,781	488
Crop and livestock.....	203,843	460	43,066	83,727	57,634	13,650	5,306
Miscellaneous.....	37,057	11,206	11,021	6,705	4,561	1,828	1,736
<b>Percent distribution, 1954:</b>							
Commercial farms.....	100.0	4.4	36.2	30.9	19.3	5.5	3.8
Cash-grain.....	100.0	0.2	17.3	31.7	32.4	11.9	6.5
Cotton.....	100.0	5.5	63.9	18.5	8.4	2.5	1.1
Other field-crop.....	100.0	8.6	63.6	20.3	6.0	1.1	0.4
Vegetable.....	100.0	8.8	61.8	17.7	7.4	2.5	1.7
Fruit-and-nut.....	100.0	13.0	65.5	12.8	5.6	1.8	1.2
Dairy.....	100.0	1.0	29.0	46.6	20.0	2.8	0.6
Poultry.....	100.0	26.3	49.5	17.2	5.6	1.0	0.4
Livestock other than dairy and poultry.....	100.0	1.6	18.7	34.2	26.8	8.6	9.9
General.....	100.0	0.4	26.0	40.6	24.6	5.9	2.5
Primarily crop.....	100.0	0.3	36.5	33.9	19.5	6.3	3.5
Primarily livestock.....	100.0	0.9	28.7	47.5	19.3	2.8	0.8
Crop and livestock.....	100.0	0.2	21.1	41.1	28.3	6.7	2.6
Miscellaneous.....	100.0	30.2	29.7	18.1	12.3	4.9	4.7
<b>Increase or decrease, 1950 to 1954:</b>							
Commercial farms.....	-378,523	8,565	-269,621	-135,755	315	8,170	9,803
Cash-grain.....	107,585	480	30,067	34,276	30,209	7,923	4,570
Cotton.....	-83,844	6,539	-74,838	-17,048	-990	1,450	1,049
Other field-crop.....	-41,688	12,201	-37,983	-12,688	-2,902	-383	-23
Vegetable.....	-13,834	-1,360	-10,425	-2,105	-18	54	20
Fruit-and-nut.....	-82	710	-1,321	-582	723	197	191
Dairy.....	-53,326	-699	-43,219	-20,232	8,389	1,822	613
Poultry.....	-21,625	-2,030	-16,190	-3,851	169	117	170
Livestock other than dairy and poultry.....	-111,192	-1,305	-46,513	-52,192	-13,163	-939	2,920
General.....	-147,206	-2,000	-64,115	-58,341	-21,057	-1,759	66
Primarily crop.....	-4,530	-305	-6,480	-73	1,458	641	229
Primarily livestock.....	-71,469	-1,110	-26,799	-31,046	-11,308	-1,095	-111
Crop and livestock.....	-71,207	-685	-30,836	-27,222	-11,207	-1,305	-62
Miscellaneous.....	-13,311	-4,061	-5,084	-2,992	-1,089	-312	227
<b>1954 as percent of 1950:</b>							
Commercial farms.....	90	106	82	88	100	105	108
Cash-grain.....	125	190	148	125	121	114	115
Cotton.....	86	129	82	85	98	112	122
Other field-crop.....	90	163	86	85	88	91	98
Vegetable.....	70	68	66	73	99	107	104
Fruit-and-nut.....	100	107	98	95	119	115	125
Dairy.....	91	89	79	93	108	114	123
Poultry.....	88	95	82	87	102	108	141
Livestock other than dairy and poultry.....	86	90	74	82	93	98	104
General.....	88	39	59	71	80	92	101
Primarily crop.....	95	46	82	100	110	115	109
Primarily livestock.....	47	34	40	49	52	62	81
Crop and livestock.....	74	44	58	75	84	91	99
Miscellaneous.....	74	73	68	69	81	85	115

types that are typically smaller in acreage than the wheat farms in the Plains and western areas.

Less than a tenth of the cash-grain farms have 500 or more acres. (See table 11.) The number of cash-grain farms with more than 500 acres increased by 15 percent. This increase, however, accounted for virtually all of the increase that took place in commercial farms of 500 to 1,000 acres and nearly half of the increase in farms of 1,000 acres and over.

Farms of less than 10 acres decreased for most types of farms but increased substantially for cotton and other field-crop farms. This increase was probably due to the reduction in acreage allotments of cotton and tobacco. Many of these farms are operated by croppers. A reduction in the allotment on a multiple-unit operation, unless accompanied by a corresponding decrease in the number of croppers, usually means that fewer acres of land are assigned to each cropper. On other field-crop farms this was the only acreage-size group that increased in number.

All of the net decrease in the number of commercial farms took place among farms that had between 10 and 220 acres. Decreases occurred in each type except cash-grain farms.

Farms of 500 acres or more increased in number for most types. The exceptions are other field-crop, livestock, and general farms. Two-thirds of the increase was among cash-grain farms. Sizable increases also occurred for cotton, dairy, and other livestock farms.

To summarize, changes in the distribution of farms by type and size show a trend toward increasing acreage in farms, for most types. This is to be expected during a period in which modern machinery has enabled a given labor force to handle a greater acreage. Cash-grain farms appear to be an exception, but this is mainly because of shifts to cash-grain from livestock and general farms in the Midwest.

CHANGES IN FARM OPERATOR CHARACTERISTICS

Along with changes in types and sizes of farms, there have been noticeable changes in the characteristics of the farm operators. These changes are shown for types and economic classes of farms in table 12. The changes in operator characteristics are interrelated with the shifts that have taken place between types, economic classes, and acreage-size groups of farms as well as the overall reduction in commercial farm numbers and the substantial migration from agriculture to nonfarm occupations. The data are more adequate for describing the characteristics in each year than for making precise estimates of changes in each particular type or economic class.

Age of operator.—By economic class of farm, the median age of farm operators increased between 1950 and 1954 for all except Class I and Class II farms. On Class VI farms (which decreased in number by 236,000), the median age increased from 53 to 58 years.

These changes reflect the movement of young men out of agriculture to part-time or full-time nonfarm jobs and fewer young men taking up farming on the smaller farms. The incomes from these smaller farms probably do not compare favorably with earnings from wages and salaries in nonfarm occupations. The decrease in median age for Class I farms (along with an identical age on Class II farms) indicates that some of the younger farmers have taken advantage of opportunities for increasing their volume of farm sales.

By type of farm, the median age of operators increased for each type except poultry farms. As each type of farm has a large proportion of the farms in the smaller economic classes, the effect of decreasing age among Class I and II farmers does not become apparent. Decreasing age among poultry farmers is related to the increasing specialization in broiler and egg production. It is probable that many younger farmers, having small acreage, have reorganized the farms for specialized poultry production.