

CHANGES IN FARM RESOURCES

Tractors on farms.—Mechanization of farms continued between 1950 and 1954. Whereas 58 percent of the commercial farms reported a tractor (excluding garden tractors) in 1950, the proportion had increased to 71 percent in 1954. Approximately 90 percent or more of Economic Classes I, II, and III reported tractors. On the smaller economic classes, fewer farms have a tractor. The proportion of the smaller farms reporting a tractor, however, increased substantially between 1950 and 1954.

Increasing mechanization (as indicated by tractor numbers) took place for all types of farms. The increase was less for cash-grain farms than for other types because these farms were already highly mechanized. More than 90 percent reported a tractor in 1954. In general, the greatest rate of increase was among types that are comparatively low in the proportion of farms reporting tractors, such as cotton and other field-crop farms.

Noticeable also, between 1950 and 1954, was the sharp increase in the number of farms that depend upon tractors alone as a source of work power. The proportion of all commercial farms that reported a tractor and no workstock increased from 27 percent to 45 percent. The trend toward complete dependency on tractors as a source of work power is evident on each economic class and each type of farm. "Horseless farming" is more common, however, to Economic Classes II and III and among cash-grain, fruit-and-nut, vegetable, dairy, and general farms.

Land resources and market output.—Between 1949 and 1954, the value of farm products sold by commercial farmers increased by 12 percent (see table 13). This increase was accomplished on approximately the same land acreage in farms. The total land in commercial farms increased by only 1 percent. There was a slight decrease in the land that was in harvested crops and an increase in the land that was pastured. More of the land was irrigated, an increase of 16 percent. Irrigated land, however, accounted for only 3 percent of the total land in farms. In 1954, farmers valued their farmland and buildings 29 percent higher than in 1950.

The larger economic classes of farms accounted for an increasing amount of land resources and of market sales. The value of farm products sold was a third greater for Class I farms and a fifth greater for Class II farms. On Class I farms, the land in harvested crops was a fifth greater. This increase in harvested cropland among Class I farms was due largely to the greater number of cash-grain farms that were included in Class I in 1954. The acreage of land pastured on Class I farms did not change, but the acreage of land irrigated increased by nearly two-fifths.

The greatest increase in total land was among Class II farms, an increase of 12 percent. Among farms in this class, the cropland harvested, land pastured, and land irrigated each increased by more than 10 percent. The land pastured increased on the smaller economic classes of farms whereas there were decreases in both total land and land in harvested crops. The value of farm products sold was approximately the same for Economic Class III and decreased on Classes IV, V, and VI.

By type of farm, there was an increasing concentration of land resources and market sales on cash-grain farms. The value of farm products sold on cash-grain farms increased by more than two-fifths. The land in farms and the harvested cropland increased substantially, but the greatest change was in land pastured—an increase of a fourth in acreage. This increase was influenced by the shift into the cash-grain category of many farms classified in 1950 as livestock and general. A higher proportion of the cash-grain farms in 1954 were in the Midwest. These farms have a larger proportion of the land in pasture than the cash-grain farms in the Plains area farther west. There was a decrease of nearly half in the land resources contained in general livestock farms between 1950 and 1954.

By far the greatest increase in land irrigated was on cotton farms—an increase of 60 percent. This came about mostly in the western cotton-producing areas.

TABLE 13.—SPECIFIED FARM RESOURCES, PERCENT 1954 IS OF 1950, BY ECONOMIC CLASS AND BY TYPE OF FARM, FOR THE UNITED STATES

Economic class and type of farm	Number of farms (percent)	Land in farms (percent)	Crop-land harvested (percent)	All land pastured (percent)	Land irrigated (percent)	Value of land and buildings (percent)	Value of all farm products sold (percent)
Economic class of farm:							
All commercial farms.....	90	101	98	105	116	120	112
Class I.....	130	104	119	100	139	167	134
Class II.....	118	112	113	112	115	145	121
Class III.....	98	103	96	110	94	119	101
Class IV.....	92	97	89	106	86	111	94
Class V.....	85	93	81	106	86	108	87
Class VI.....	64	74	58	90	75	84	68
Type of farm:							
All types.....	90	101	98	105	116	120	112
Cash-grain.....	125	119	116	124	122	153	143
Cotton.....	86	99	94	116	159	135	118
Other field-crop.....	90	88	85	99	106	120	108
Vegetable.....	70	88	90	98	102	126	104
Fruit-and-nut.....	100	124	102	117	97	149	160
Dairy.....	91	100	100	101	113	122	107
Poultry.....	88	94	85	106	82	116	124
Livestock other than dairy and poultry.....	86	101	91	104	106	125	98
General:							
Primarily crop.....	95	103	112	99	122	145	134
Primarily livestock.....	47	52	51	55	64	65	60
Crop and livestock.....	74	84	84	88	96	105	96
Miscellaneous.....	74	102	85	120	120	127	103

Notwithstanding decreases in the number of farms for most types of farms, there was an increase in irrigated land among all types except fruit-and-nut, poultry, general livestock, and general crop and livestock farms.

The value of land and buildings for commercial farms increased by 29 percent between 1950 and 1954. Part of this increase is due to improvements, such as improved pastures and new and better houses and farm buildings, made to the land. The increases also reflect increases in land values.

Between 1950 and 1954, land values rose much more than market sales for each economic class and type of farm. The increase of two-thirds in the value of land and buildings on Class I farms is associated with an increase of only a third in gross farm sales and an increase of but a fifth in the number of farms. On Class II farms, land value increased more than two-fifths; sales of farm products increased by one-fifth. On the smaller economic classes as well, there was an increase in value relative to the volume of farm sales.

Increasing land values relative to market sales took place on each type of farm with the exception of fruit-and-nut farms and poultry farms. Prices received by farmers for fruits were 12 percent higher in 1954 than in 1949; poultry and egg prices, however, were 20 percent lower. The increase in market sales relative to land value probably relates to shifts in the geographic concentration of poultry production and to developments that have encouraged more intensive production of broilers and eggs on fairly small acreages.

The increase in land values between 1950 and 1954 can be explained partly by the strong demand for land by farmers who wanted to enlarge their farms, for the increasing mechanization of farms means that more land can be handled with the same or a smaller labor force. Farmers that bought tractors and related equipment have frequently been faced with the need to enlarge their farms in order to utilize their machinery more efficiently, and provide full employment for their labor force. It is also probable that increasing land values have resulted from the growth of towns and cities and the increasing demand for land for residential and other purposes.