

FARMERS AND FARM PRODUCTION

A particularly important change taking place in dairy farming is the reduction in the number of very small farms and small herds, and the increase in the number of the larger units. Dairy farms with fewer than 50 acres of land have decreased during this 5-year period from 11 percent of all dairy farms to 9 percent (Table 4). The percentage of dairy farms with more than 180 acres increased from 28.9 percent of all dairy farms in 1949 to 33.8 percent in 1954.

Table 4.—NUMBER OF DAIRY FARMS BY SIZE OF FARM, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1950 AND 1954

| Size of farm | 1950 | | 1954 | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| | Number of farms | Percent distribution | Number of farms | Percent distribution |
| Total..... | 602,003 | 100.0 | 548,767 | 100.0 |
| 1 to 9 acres..... | 6,363 | 1.1 | 5,604 | 1.0 |
| 10 to 29 acres..... | 22,068 | 3.7 | 16,123 | 3.0 |
| 30 to 49 acres..... | 37,562 | 6.2 | 28,087 | 5.1 |
| 50 to 69 acres..... | 30,415 | 6.5 | 30,937 | 5.6 |
| 70 to 99 acres..... | 103,489 | 17.1 | 84,168 | 15.3 |
| 100 to 139 acres..... | 120,905 | 20.1 | 105,291 | 19.2 |
| 140 to 179 acres..... | 98,516 | 16.4 | 93,010 | 17.0 |
| 180 to 219 acres..... | 56,404 | 9.4 | 57,202 | 10.4 |
| 220 to 259 acres..... | 37,926 | 6.3 | 38,422 | 7.0 |
| 260 to 499 acres..... | 63,542 | 10.6 | 71,435 | 13.0 |
| 500 to 999 acres..... | 13,204 | 2.2 | 15,116 | 2.8 |
| 1,000 acres or more..... | 2,009 | .4 | 3,222 | .6 |

Small herds are decreasing as rapidly as small farms (Table 5). In 1950, 82 percent of the farms with milk cows had fewer than 10 cows per herd. By 4 years later this number had been reduced to 78 percent of all farms. Forty-three percent of all milk cows were on these small farms in 1950, but by 1954 the number was 33 percent. On the other hand, there were 60 percent more farms with 20 or more cows in 1954 than in 1950, and they have 39 percent of all milk cows in comparison with 28 percent 4 years earlier. This kind of change makes for a more effective use of resources and for better living conditions for those operators who continue as dairymen.

Another comparison of the change in size of farms is brought out in the classification of dairy farms by economic class. In 1950, 32.8 percent of all dairy farms had gross incomes of less than \$2,500 per farm and 11.9 percent showed gross incomes in excess of \$10,000 per farm (Table 6). In 1954, the percentage of small-income farms had decreased to 27.4 percent of all dairy farms, whereas the number of large-income farms was increased to 16 percent. This type of change can also be beneficial to the remaining dairy farmers.

Table 5.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF MILK COWS AND MILK PRODUCTION BY SIZE OF HERD, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1954 AND 1950

| Size of herd (number of milk cows) | Farms with milk cows | | Number of milk cows | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------|
| | 1954 | 1950 | 1954 | 1950 |
| Total number..... | 2,956,900 | 3,648,257 | 20,365,460 | 21,232,573 |
| Percent distribution | | | | |
| Total..... | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| 1 to 4..... | 60.9 | 62.5 | 16.3 | 20.7 |
| 5 to 9..... | 18.7 | 19.4 | 16.9 | 22.3 |
| 10 to 19..... | 14.1 | 13.1 | 27.6 | 29.6 |
| 20 to 29..... | 5.1 | 3.3 | 17.0 | 12.9 |
| 30 to 49..... | 2.4 | 1.3 | 12.4 | 7.9 |
| 50 or more..... | .8 | .5 | 9.8 | 6.7 |

Table 6.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DAIRY FARMS BY ECONOMIC CLASS OF FARM, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1954 AND 1950

| Year | Number of farms | Percent distribution by economic class of farm | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------------|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | I | II | III | IV | V | VI |
| 1954..... | 548,767 | 2.1 | 13.9 | 28.5 | 28.0 | 18.7 | 8.7 |
| 1950..... | 602,003 | 1.7 | 10.2 | 25.6 | 29.9 | 22.2 | 10.6 |

The average size of the dairy farm when measured by total acres of land in the farm compares favorably with most other farms of the country (fig. 4). Only wheat farms and ranches are conspicuously larger. It is only from the standpoint of amount of harvested cropland that the size appears smaller than many other types of farming (fig. 5).

The average dairy farm in both the Lake and the Northeastern Dairy Areas is between 100 and 199 acres. Most of the counties in the Corn Belt show the same total acreage per farm. When the acreage of these farms is expressed as cropland harvested, it is found that the dairy areas use around 30 percent of their total farm acreage for this purpose while the Corn Belt uses more than twice that, or approximately 70 percent.

Total milk equivalent of milk and cream sold from all farms in 1954 was 95,409 million pounds. The sale of cream accounted for 13 percent of this amount; the remainder was used for fluid-milk consumption and manufacture (Table 7). Slightly less than 2 percent of the total milk-equivalent sales was from noncommercial farms which had 8 percent of all milk cows. Commercial farms accounted for the remaining 98 percent. The nondairy farms within the commercial group had 39 percent of all milk cows and sold 19 percent of the whole milk sold, and 76 percent of the cream.

Table 7.—NUMBER OF MILK COWS AND SALE OF MILK AND CREAM FOR DAIRY, COMMERCIAL, AND OTHER FARMS, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1954

| Item | Dairy farms | | United States | | All commercial farms | | Other farms | |
|----------------------|----------------|---------|----------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------|---------|
| | Total | Percent | Total | Percent | Total | Percent | Total | Percent |
| Milk cows..... | 10,748,440 | 52.8 | 20,365,450 | 100.0 | 18,671,093 | 91.7 | 1,694,357 | 8.3 |
| Whole milk sold..... | 66,170,764,744 | 79.8 | 82,915,775,259 | 100.0 | 81,676,993,611 | 98.5 | 1,238,805,648 | 1.5 |
| Cream sold..... | 92,591,197 | 20.0 | 463,025,820 | 100.0 | 444,634,420 | 96.0 | 18,391,391 | 4.0 |
| Milk equivalent..... | 68,670,612,534 | 72.0 | 95,408,549,628 | 100.0 | 93,697,698,123 | 98.2 | 1,710,851,505 | 1.8 |