

All remaining population was classified as rural.

Although the rural population data shown for 1954 are based upon the population residing in areas not classed as urban in the 1950 Census, the figures are not fully comparable with those shown for 1950 because many of the areas classed as rural in 1950 would have qualified, under the 1950 definition, as urban in 1954.

Prior to 1950, the urban population comprised all persons living in incorporated places of 2,500 inhabitants or more and in areas (usually minor civil divisions) classed as urban under special rules relating to population size and density.

To provide a basis for comparison of the 1950 figures with those for earlier Censuses, the 1950 rural population is shown for both the 1950 and 1940 definitions. The areas classed as urban, under the 1950 definition which did not qualify as urban under the 1940 definition, accounted for 8,052,628 persons in the 1950 Census. The change in definition resulted in a 13.0 percent decrease in the number of persons classed as rural.

Farm population.—The farm population includes all persons living on farms, as determined by the question, "Is this house on a farm (a ranch)?" Persons in rural areas were classed as nonfarm if they paid cash rent for their homes and yards only. Persons in institutions, summer camps, "motels," and tourist camps were also classed as nonfarm. The data for farm population relate to the civilian population living on farms regardless of their occupation.

The figures shown for farm population are estimates roughly comparable with the current estimates of the farm population obtained from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.

TABLE 8.—AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS PER FARM, WITH PER CAPITA DATA FOR LAND IN FARMS, CROPLAND HARVESTED, AND VALUE OF FARM PRODUCTS SOLD, FOR THE UNITED STATES: CENSUSES OF 1850 TO 1954

Item and year	Average number of persons per farm	Average per capita		
		Land in farms (acres)	Cropland harvested ¹ (acres)	Value of farm products sold (dollars)
Total population.....1954..	33.82	7.2	2.1	152
.....1950..	28.08	7.7	2.3	146
.....1945..	23.82	8.2	2.5	116
.....1940..	21.62	8.0	2.4	51
.....1935..	18.65	8.3	2.3	(NA)
.....1930..	19.52	8.0	2.9	78
.....1925..	18.11	8.0	3.0	(NA)
.....1920..	16.45	9.0	3.3	(NA)
.....1910..	14.44	9.6	3.4	(NA)
.....1900..	13.25	11.0	3.7	(NA)
.....1890..	13.79	9.9	3.5	(NA)
.....1880..	12.51	10.7	3.3	(NA)
.....1870..	14.97	10.2	(NA)	(NA)
.....1860..	15.38	13.0	(NA)	(NA)
.....1850..	16.00	12.7	(NA)	(NA)
Farm population.....1954..	4.58	52.9	15.2	1,126
.....1950..	4.66	46.2	13.7	880
.....1945..	4.32	45.1	14.0	642
.....1940..	5.01	34.7	10.5	219
.....1935..	4.72	32.8	9.2	(NA)
.....1930..	4.85	32.3	11.8	315
.....1925..	4.90	29.6	11.0	(NA)
.....1920..	4.96	29.9	10.9	(NA)
.....1910..	5.04	27.4	9.7	(NA)

NA Not available.

¹ Prior to 1924, based on total acreage of crops. See Table 4.

CHANGES IN FARMS AND LAND IN FARMS

Change in the number of farms.—In 1954, there were nearly 600,000 fewer farms than in 1950. The 4,782,416 farms in 1954 was the lowest number recorded at any Census since 1890. In 1850, the first Census for which a count of farms was taken, there were 1,449,073 farms, or one farm for each 16 persons living in the United States. With the growth of population and westward migration, the number of farms increased along with the growth in population. By 1880, the number of farms had increased to over 4 million, and by 1910, the number was more than 6½ million, or one farm for each 14.5 persons. In this period from 1880 to

1910, the number of farms increased with the settlement of new lands.

During the next two decades, 1910 to 1930, the number of farms and land in farms remained relatively stationary. From 1910 to 1920, the number of farms increased only 1.4 percent, as compared with a 10.9 percent increase during the preceding decade. Land in farms increased by only 4.8 percent between 1910 and 1920, as compared with 34.6 percent increase between 1900 and 1910. In 1920, there were nearly 6½ million farms in the United States, and by 1930, the number of farms had dropped to a level slightly below that of 1910.

Since 1920, the trend in number of farms has been downward, except for a brief increase during the depression years when many people turned to the land for subsistence. The 1935 Census recorded an alltime high of 6.8 million farms. The back-to-the-land movement, however, was short lived. By 1940, there were 3.1 percent fewer farms than in 1930. This downward trend in the number of farms has continued at an accelerated rate, with a decline of nearly 4 percent between 1940 and 1945, slightly more than 8 percent between 1945 and 1950, and over 11 percent from 1950 to 1954. By 1954, the number of farms was 1½ million less than in 1920 and more than 2 million less than the peak reached in 1935. In 1954, the number of farms relative to the total population was only about one-half that of 1920—one farm per 33.8 persons in 1954 as compared with one farm per 16.4 persons in 1920.

In the East, abandonment of some of the poorer agricultural lands, particularly in the more mountainous and hilly areas, and the diversion of farm lands to other uses, have resulted in a substantial decline in the number of farms. In the Northeast, consistent decreases in the number of farms have occurred since 1880. The growth of cities, suburban development, factory sites, new highways, and the like, have eliminated numerous farms. By 1954, there were about 42 million fewer acres of land in farms east of the Mississippi River than in 1900. Between 1950 and 1954, the net loss in this area was 13 million acres.

Although the trend in total number of farms generally has been down since 1920 there have been some increases because of the development of new lands and shifts in some areas to more intensive types of farming. Many of the increases in the West are associated with the development of irrigation projects. In the 17 Western States, there were 279,896 irrigated farms in 1954, or 30.1 percent more than the 215,152 irrigated farms reported in the 1920 Census. The clearing and draining of land continued to be a factor in scattered areas, particularly in parts of the South.

Consolidation of smaller farms into larger operating units has been an important factor contributing to the large net decrease in the number of farms since 1920. In 1920, the average farm was 148 acres in size with 54 acres of cropland harvested. By 1954, the average size of farm had increased to 242 acres with 70 acres of cropland harvested. From 1950 to 1954, the average size of farm increased by 27 acres and for each 5-year intercensal period from 1935 to 1950 by approximately 20 acres, or a total gain of 87 acres, or 56 percent in the 20-year period, 1935 to 1954.

Mechanization of farming has made it possible for farm operators to handle increasingly larger acreages with the same labor. Also, the full and efficient utilization of modern farm machinery and equipment favors larger farm units. This combination of farms has been encouraged by more attractive opportunities of employment at nonfarm jobs in cities and in industry. Many farmers have discontinued or curtailed their farming operations to work at nonfarm jobs, thus providing additional land for those farmers who desired or were able to increase the size of their operations.

Farmers and farm families have been leaving the farm in large numbers. The farm population, except for brief periods, has been declining since 1910. By 1954, the farm population was down to 21,890,000 persons and represented only 13.5 percent of the total population. In 1910, more than one-third of the total population