

nonagricultural land in excess of the number of acres used for agricultural purposes was excluded from the farm area. In applying this rule, land used for crops, for pasture or grazing, and land rented to others was considered to be land for agricultural purposes. Non-agricultural land included all woodland not pastured and wasteland.

The procedure used in 1950 for excluding unusually large acreages of nonagricultural land differed slightly from the one used for the 1954 Census. In 1950, adjustments were made in places of 1,000 or more acres (5,000 or more acres in the 17 Western States) if less than 10 percent of the total acreage was used for agricultural purposes.

In 1954, all grazing land was to be included as land in farms except for open range and grazing land used under Government permit. Grazing lands operated by grazing associations were to be reported in the name of the manager in charge. Land used rent free was to be included as land rented from others. All land in Indian reservations not reported by individual Indian farm operators or not rented to non-Indian farm operators was to be reported in the name of the cooperative group using the land. Thus, in some instances, the entire Indian reservation was reported as one farm.

Classification of farms by size.—In both the 1954 and 1950 Censuses, all size-of-farm tabulations were classified into 12 size groups based on the total acres of land in farms. However, for the under 10-acre group a separate count is shown for farms under 3 acres and farms 3 to 9 acres.

The size groups used in both the 1954 and 1950 Censuses are based on size-of-farm groups established in 1935. These size groups were based primarily on class intervals of the natural groupings which have resulted from the Government land-survey system, along with certain natural farm groupings in other areas. Most of the land in the western part of the United States was surveyed by the Government and initially divided into sections of approximately 640 acres. Transfers of this land have been made for the most part on the basis of these initial Government surveys. A classification of these farms according to size, therefore, will reflect approximate class interval midpoints of 20, 40, 60, 80, 120, 160, etc. acres. These natural groupings were considered in determining the size groups used in the 1935 Census. The classification avoids some of the bimodal distributions of farms that occurred under the classification used for prior Censuses. It provides midpoints for each size group (except for the extremely small or the extremely large farms) that reflect the most common frequency or mode for these survey groupings.

In the Southern States, where relatively small allotments of land are made to croppers or other classes of tenants, the concentration of farms in certain reported size groups may be due in part to the plantation system of farming. Under this system, the tenant generally farms only cropland and the size of farm tends to be smaller than other farms having a similar acreage of crops. The pastureland, woodland, and wasteland which normally would be associated with the cropland may be retained by the landlord. In such cases, the

landlord's farm has a higher proportion of pastureland, woodland, and wasteland than other farms of similar size in the area.

History of classification of farms by size.—The first tabulation of farms by size was made in the Census of 1860. However, for that year and also for 1870, the classification was based on the acres of improved land rather than on the total acres in the farm. Data for the number of farms by size (based on improved land) for these two Censuses are shown for the United States in Table 1.

The first classification of farms by size, based on the total farm area, was made in 1880. In that year, farms were classified by size into 8 groups. In 1890, the classification provided for only 7 groups, no breakdown having been made that year for farms under 10 acres in size. From 1900 to 1930, the classification was the same as that used in 1880 except that, beginning with 1920, farms of 1,000 acres and over were further classified by size. In 1920 and 1925, a separate classification was shown for farms of 5,000 acres and over; and in 1930, farms of 10,000 acres and over comprised an additional group.

In 1935, a revised size classification was established to conform more closely with the Government land-survey system. A total of 17 size groups were provided; some of these groups were provided largely to facilitate comparisons with data for prior Censuses.

These 17 size-of-farm groups were continued in the Censuses of 1940 and 1945 to provide comparative data for earlier Censuses. In both the 1945 and 1950 Censuses, these 17 groups were combined to form 12 size groups for use in classifying most of the major items covered by the Census of Agriculture. Basic summary data were listed for most of the combined size groups to provide comparative information for Censuses for earlier years. The combined groups were eliminated in 1954, however, and brackets were used to indicate comparable data from previous Censuses.

Prior to 1900, a count only is available for farms classified by size. Beginning with 1900, the size-of-farm classification has included a count of farms, data for all land in farms, and the more important classes of land according to use. Beginning with 1940, data for the entire land-use classification have been tabulated by size of farm.

Changes in size of farm.—In 1954, the average size of farm in the United States was 242.2 acres, the largest at any time during the last century (see Table 14). This average represents an increase of 26.9 acres, or 12.5 percent, since 1950. During this period, the number of farms in the United States dropped 11.1 percent and the total amount of land in farms remained unchanged. Since 1910, the average size of farm has increased 104 acres; with an increase for each Census, except 1925 and 1935. Even though the average size of farm varies considerably by States and geographic areas, an increase in size of farm was shown for every State in the United States from 1950 to 1954. The average size of farm in 1954 varied from 68 acres in North Carolina to 4,483 acres per farm in Arizona.

TABLE 1.—FARMS CLASSIFIED BY ACRES OF IMPROVED LAND, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1870 AND 1860

| Size group (based on improved land) | Number of farms | |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|
| | 1870 | 1860 ¹ |
| Total..... | 2,659,985 | 2,044,077 |
| Under 3 acres..... | 6,875 | (NA) |
| 3 to 9..... | 172,021 | 54,676 |
| 10 to 19..... | 294,607 | 162,178 |
| 20 to 49..... | 847,614 | 616,558 |
| 50 to 99..... | 754,221 | 608,878 |
| 100 to 499..... | 565,054 | 487,041 |
| 500 to 999..... | 15,873 | 20,319 |
| 1,000 or more..... | 3,720 | 5,364 |

NA Not available.

¹ For 1860, the classification by acreage of improved land is for "Farms containing 3 acres or more." The number of farms in the various classes adds to 1,955,014, which is 89,063 less than the total number of farms.

AVERAGE SIZE OF FARM, FOR THE UNITED STATES;
1850 - 1954

