

Section 2.—THE PRODUCING UNITS OR FARMS

Agricultural production takes place mainly on producing units called farms (including ranches) where the various farm resources or resource services are transformed into agricultural products. There are many sizes, types, and classes of farms. Some are mainly places of residence for persons who work off the farm or are retired. Some involve large expanses of land, while others involve only a few acres. The acres of land in a farm do not always indicate the importance of a farm in terms of value of products produced. A multiple-storied broiler house on one acre of land, for example, may produce products worth more than a several-section livestock ranch in the arid West. This part of the Graphic Summary of Agricultural Resources and Production, 1959, presents briefly the nature of the producing units or farms which produce agricultural products, with consideration given to their size, type, and economic class.

SIZE OF FARM

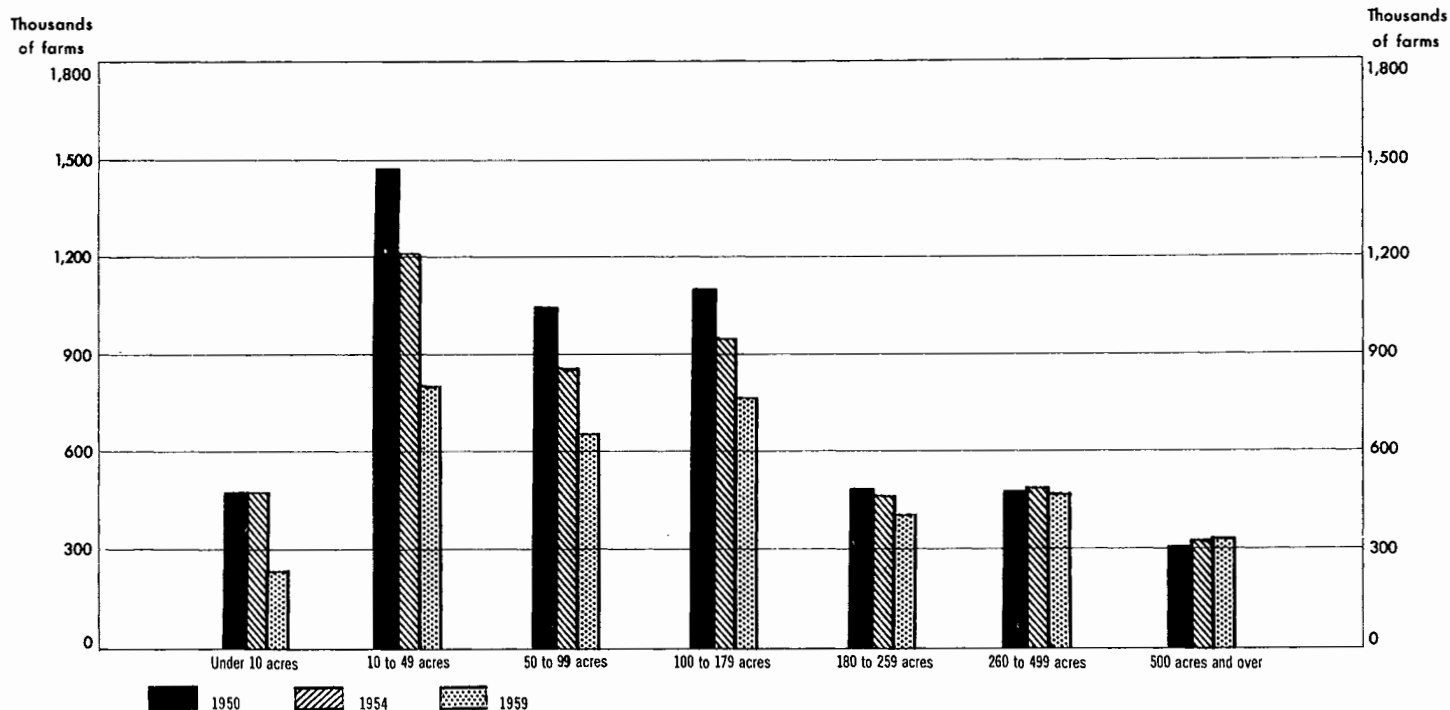
There are many ways of measuring the size of farms. Total acreage in the farm is the measure most commonly used. Farms

in the United States vary in size from less than 1 acre to more than 100,000 acres. In 1959 there were 79,000 farms of less than 3 acres and 136,000 farms of 1,000 acres or more. Although almost half, or 46.3 percent, of the farms were under 100 acres in size in 1959, these farms accounted for only 6 percent of all land in farms. Farms of 500 acres or more comprised only 9 percent of all farms, yet they contained 61.6 percent of all land in farms.

In the predominantly arid and semiarid West, most of the land in these large farms consisted of grazing land of very low productivity, while in the South, much of the land in the farms of 1,000 acres or more consisted of woodland and brushland used for grazing.

One of the outstanding characteristics of 20th century agriculture in the United States has been the growth in physical farm size. The total acreage of land in farms has changed little in this period and most of the increase in average size of farm has come from the reduction in farm numbers.

NUMBER OF FARMS BY SIZE OF FARM, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1959, 1954, AND 1950



FARMS CLASSIFIED BY ACRES OF TOTAL LAND IN FARMS, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1880 TO 1959

Year	Number of farms by acres of total land in farms								
	Total	Under 3 acres	3 to 9 acres	10 to 29 acres	30 to 49 acres	50 to 99 acres	100 to 499 acres	500 to 999 acres	1,000 or more acres
1959	3,710,503	79,083	165,245	(813,216)		657,990	1,658,530	200,012	136,427
1954 ¹	4,782,416	99,806	384,395	713,335	499,496	864,063	1,899,053	191,697	130,481
1950	5,388,437	78,110	410,420	855,000	624,596	1,048,075	² 2,068,466	182,297	121,473
1945 ¹	5,859,169	98,966	495,595	945,608	708,796	1,157,320	2,166,208	173,777	112,899
1940	6,102,417	37,022	472,325	(1,782,061)		1,291,328	² 2,255,396	163,711	100,574
1935 ¹	6,812,350	35,573	535,258	1,241,431	882,164	1,444,007	2,417,803	167,452	88,662
1930	6,295,103	44,244	317,755	(2,002,115)		1,375,198	² 2,315,403	159,723	80,665
1925 ¹	6,371,640	15,151	363,384	(2,038,692)		1,421,078	2,326,155	143,852	63,328
1920	6,453,991	³ 21,158	³ 270,348	(⁴ 2,013,516)		1,475,005	² 2,456,729	149,826	67,409
1910 ¹	6,361,502	18,033	317,010	(1,918,499)		1,438,069	2,494,461	125,295	50,135
1900	5,739,657	41,882	226,564	(1,664,797)		1,366,167	² 2,290,561	102,526	47,160
1890	4,564,641	(150,194)		(1,168,327)		1,121,485	2,008,694	84,395	31,546
1880	4,008,907	4,352	134,889	(1,036,323)		1,032,810	1,695,983	75,972	28,578

¹ Data for Alaska and Hawaii not included.

² Includes farms of 100 acres or more for Hawaii.

³ Data for Alaska not available.

⁴ Includes 62 farms for Alaska, in the under 50 acres size group.