Table 1.—Relation of Labor Force in Agriculture to Total Labor Force and to Total Population of the United States: 1820 to 1959

Year	Labor force			Total population of United States	
	All occupations (number)	Agricultural pursuits (number)	Percentage farm labor force is of total (percent)	Total (number)	Percentage farm labor force is of total population (percent)
	Persons 14 years old and older				
1960	67,990,069	4,085,431	6.0	179,323,175	2.3
1954	[2] 63,924,000	[2] 6,027,000	9.4	161,763,000	3.7
1950	59,015,464	6,860,302	11.6	151,325,798	4.5
1940	51,742,023	8,833,324	17.1	131,669,275	6.7
1930	48,594,592	10,161,212	20.9	122,775,046	8.3
	Persons 10 years old and older				
1930	48,829,920	10,471,998	21.4	122,775,046	8.5
1920	42,433,535	11,448,770	27.0	105,710,620	10.8
1910	37,370,794	11,591,767	31.0	91,972,266	12.6
1900	29,073,233	10,911,998	37.5	75,994,575	14.4
1890	23,318,183	9,938,373	42.6	62,947,714	15.8
1880	17,392,099	8,584,810	49.4	50,155,783	17.1
1870	12,924,951	6,849,772	53.0	39,818,449	17.2
1860	10,532,750	6,207,634	58.9	31,443,321	19.7
1850	7,697,196	4,901,882	63.7	23,191,876	21.1
1840	5,420,000	3,719,951	68.6	17,069,453	21.8
1830	3,931,537	2,772,453	70.5	12,866,020	21.5
1820	2,881,000	2,068,958	71.8	9,638,453	21.5

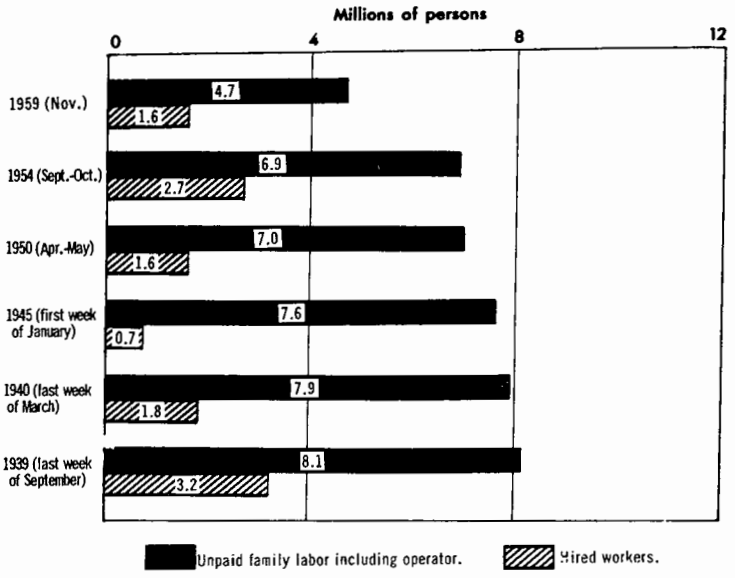
[1] Data for 1959 and 1950 pertain to the United States, for other years to the conterminous United States.
[2] Not strictly comparable to decennial census data. Experienced civilian labor force as of April 1, 1954.

The proportion of the labor force engaged in agricultural pursuits declined gradually as improved farming techniques and new and improved farm equipment were invented and placed in general use. The horse-drawn mowing machine replaced the scythe and grain cradle; the fanning mill for cleaning grain gave way to threshing machines; hoes gave way to shovel cultivators and the steel walking plows; and the application of steam and gasoline engines to portable uses in farming enabled the agricultural worker to increase his output. The mechanization of farm operation had advanced to a point, by 1910, where the total number of persons engaged in agriculture began decreasing even though the total population was growing. Since 1910, new machines, electricity, and biological techniques have enabled the farm labor force to produce more and more. Since 1910, a remarkable amount of labor has been transferred out of agriculture. Since 1920, the agricultural labor force has been reduced by more than one-half. It has declined about 40 percent since 1950.

The growing use of labor-saving equipment on the farm, the development of varied sizes of power units to meet the needs of most sizes of farm operations, the elimination of many small-scale enterprises on farms, the use of more fertilizer, better and hybrid seeds, increased irrigation, better pest and insect control, increased use of herbicides, better feeding, increasing size of farm business, increased use of farm custom work, better farm management, and a significant increase in the agricultural services performed by nonfarm groups have resulted in a remarkable decrease in the farm labor force and an increase in output per agricultural worker, and have enabled a rapidly declining farm labor force to provide for a growing population and to furnish food for the people of other countries.

Farm Labor Force, 1959.—The number of persons working on farms includes farm operators, unpaid members of the farm operators' families, and hired farm workers. Because of the seasonality of farm operations, there is considerable fluctuation during the year in the size of the farm work force and in the hours of work by farm workers. At some seasons, particularly at harvest

FARM LABOR—NUMBER OF UNPAID FAMILY AND HIRED WORKERS: 1935 TO 1959



time, the farm work force may be increased by half. The following estimates taken from the special Labor Force Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor provide an indication of the fluctuation in the number of agricultural workers from month to month in 1959:

Week ending—	Number of workers (1,000)			
	Total	Self-employed workers	Unpaid family members	Wage and salary workers
January 17	4,693	2,834	632	1,227
February 14	4,692	2,920	662	1,111
March 14	5,203	2,992	835	1,375
April 18	5,848	3,161	1,095	1,594
May 16	6,408	3,239	1,451	1,720
June 13	7,231	3,285	1,786	2,160
July 18	6,825	3,137	1,544	2,142
August 15	6,357	3,042	1,355	1,960
September 12	6,242	2,995	1,246	2,001
October 17	6,124	2,997	1,121	2,006
November 14	5,601	2,971	1,004	1,626
December 12	4,811	2,749	723	1,342

Because of this variability in the size of the farm work force, an attempt is made to count the number of farm workers during only one week of the year covered by the census of agriculture. This procedure of counting the farm labor force affects the number of persons reported as farm labor.

Even though machines and electricity perform much of the work on farms, farm labor is needed to manage the farm operations, care for livestock and poultry, and for harvesting the crops. The size of the farm labor force cannot be indicated accurately by a single figure. The number of persons working on farms changes from year to year and from month to month in the same year. Farm operators and unpaid members of their families comprised 75 percent of the 6.3 million persons working on farms the week preceding the census in 1959. Farm operators working one or more hours totaled 3.0 million, or 48.1 percent of the total; unpaid family workers working 15 hours or more during the week preceding the census numbered 1.7 million, or 26.9 percent of the total; and hired workers amounted to 1.6 million, or 25.0 percent of the total. Farm operators made up the only farm labor on 1.6 million, or 44 percent, of all farms and the operator and/or members of his family comprised the farm labor