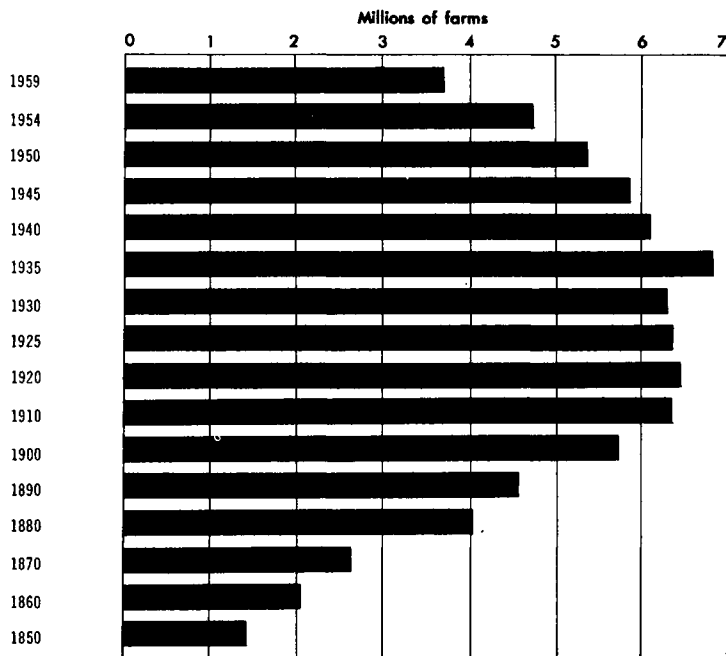


**NUMBER OF FARMS IN THE UNITED STATES: 1850 TO 1959**



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 1.4 percent, as compared with a 10.9 percent increase during the preceding decade. Land in farms increased 8.8 percent between 1910 and 1920, as compared with 4.8 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, over 11 percent from 1950 to 1954, and 22.6 percent from 1954 to 1959. By 1959 the number of farms was 2.7 million fewer than in 1920 and more than 3.1 million fewer than the peak reached in 1935. In 1959 the number of farms relative to the total population was only about one-third that of 1920—one farm per 48.3 persons in 1959 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 farmlands 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 1959 there were about 76 million fewer acres of land in farms east of the Mississippi River than in 1900. Between 1954 and 1959, the net loss of land in farms in this area was 34 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 262,614 irrigated farms in 1959, or 22.1 percent more than the 215,152 irrigated farms reported in the 1920 census. The clearing and draining of land continued to be factors in scattered areas, particularly in parts of the South.