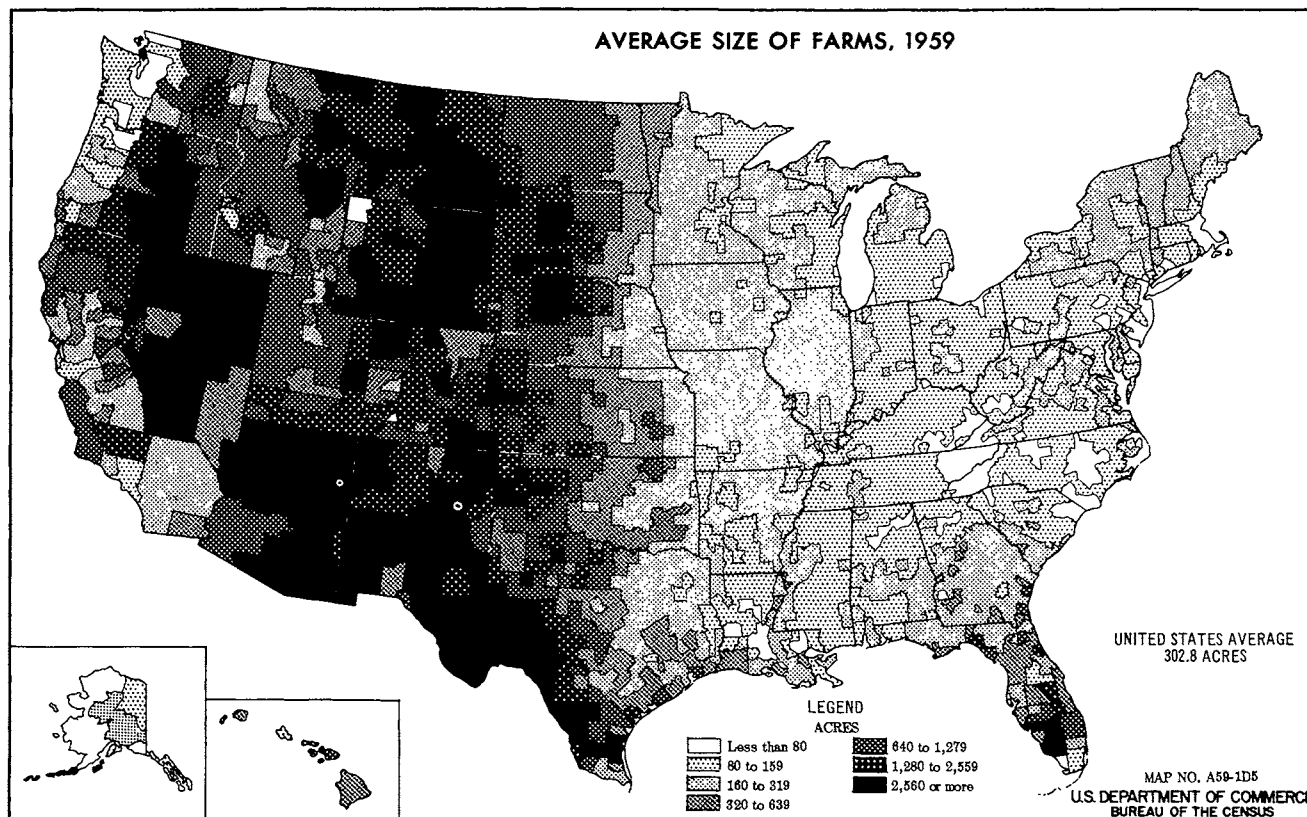


Consolidation of smaller farms into larger operating units has been an important factor contributing to the large net decrease in the number of farms since 1920. In 1920, the average farm was 148 acres in size with 54 acres of cropland harvested. By 1959, the average size of farm had increased to 303 acres with 84 acres of cropland harvested. From 1954 to 1959 the average size of farm increased by 61 acres, for each 5-year intercensal period from 1935 to 1950, by approximately 20 acres, and about 27 acres from 1950 to 1954 or a total gain of 148 acres, or 95 percent in the 25-year period, 1935 to 1959.

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. Combination of farms has been encouraged by more attractive opportunities of employment at nonfarm jobs in cities and in industry. Many farmers discontinued or curtailed their farming operations and provided additional land for those farmers who desired and 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 1960, the farm population was down to 13,445,000 persons and represented only 7.5 percent of the total population. In 1910, more than one-third of the total population lived on farms. From 1935 to 1960, the farm population decreased by nearly three-fifths. A significant part of this decrease resulted from a change in definition.

This decrease in farm population was accompanied by an increase in both the rural nonfarm and the urban populations. All net losses in the farm population are not due to actual movement of persons from rural to urban areas.

But not all farmers who accept employment at nonfarm jobs give up their farm operations entirely. The number of part-time farms has been increasing. In 1929, farm operators working off their farms 100 or more days accounted for 11.5 percent of all farm operators. By 1939, this ratio had increased to 15.5 percent; by 1949, to 23.3 percent; by 1954, to 27.9 percent; and by 1959 to 29.9 percent. In addition to farm operators who were formerly full-time farmers, these part-time farmers include persons engaged primarily in nonfarm activities, who have moved into rural areas and engaged in agriculture sufficiently for their places to qualify as farms under the census definition.

This development has been stimulated by the automobile, better roads, and the widespread availability of facilities such as electricity and the telephone. There is an increasing number of non-

farm rural population relative to the farm population and the large number of part-time and of part-retirement farms relative to the number of commercial farms. These part-time and part-retirement farms comprised 34.8 percent of all farms in 1959. Although large in number, these part-time and part-retirement farms contribute only a negligible portion of the total agricultural production.

These part-time and part-retirement farms are generally small in size. More than one-half are under 50 acres (51.3 percent in 1959). They account for two-thirds of the farms under 10 acres and more than three-fifths of the farms 10 to 49 acres.

From 1954 to 1959, the number of farms decreased in all conterminous States, and in all except 42 of the 3,067 counties in the 48 conterminous States.

The largest decreases in number of farms from 1954 to 1959 were in the South, with two-thirds million fewer farms in 1959 than in 1954, a loss of more than one-fourth of the farms in the South. Much of the loss was attributable to the disappearance of share-tenant and cropper farms with the land absorbed into larger operating units. In 1959, there were 315,216 fewer tenants in the South than in 1954. There were 146,625 fewer croppers and 101,984 fewer share tenants in 1959 than in 1954.

The largest percentage losses in number of farms were in the South Atlantic and New England areas. In those areas, there