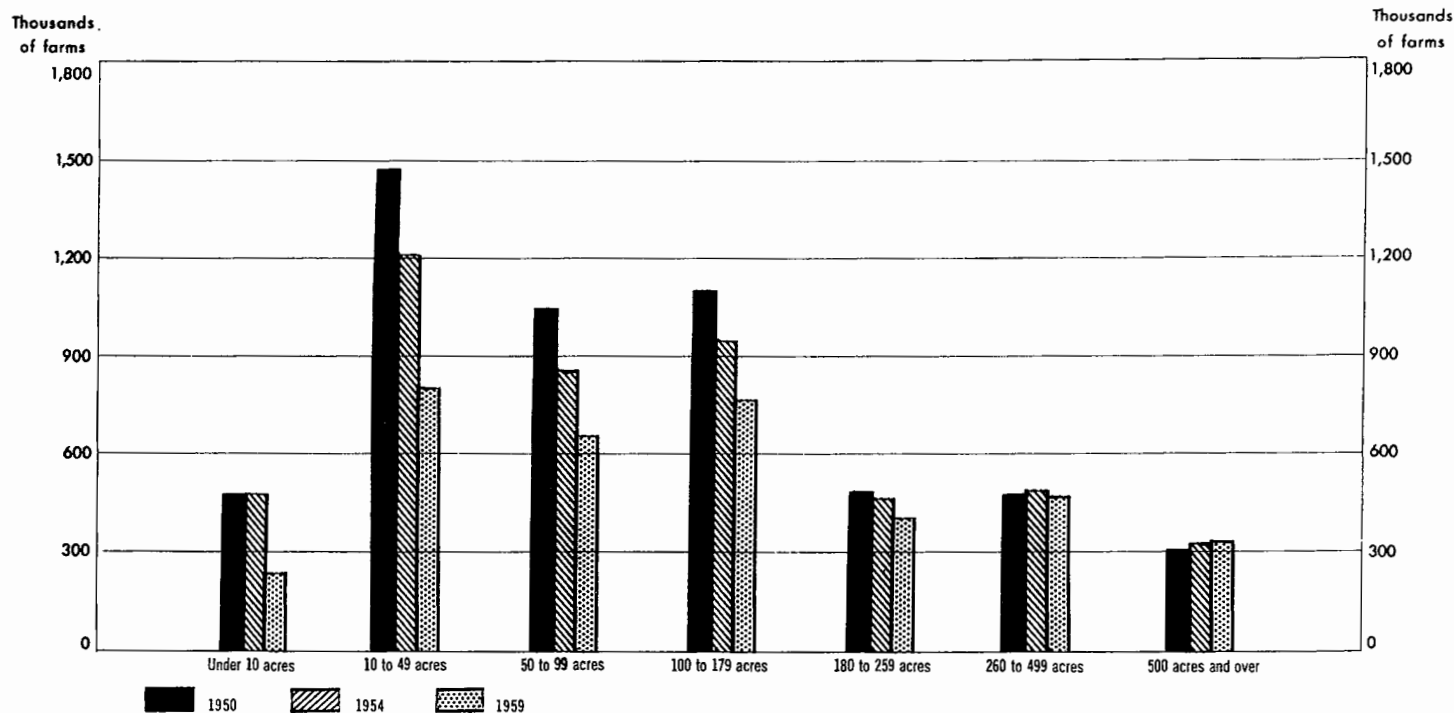


NUMBER OF FARMS BY SIZE OF FARM, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1959, 1954, AND 1950



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 eight groups. In 1890, the classification provided for only seven 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 was 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. For 1959, a separate tabulation includes data for number of farms and all land in farms classified by use for farms of 2,000 acres or more by size of farm (by 1,000-acre intervals, ranging from 2,000 to 2,999 acres to 10,000 acres or more).

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.—An outstanding characteristic of twentieth century agriculture in the United States has been the growth in 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. In 1959, the average size of farm in the United States was 302.8 acres, an increase of 60.6 acres, or 25 percent, since 1954. This was the largest average size reported at any time during the last century and more than double the average size of 145.1 acres reported only 35 years ago (table 2).

Table 2.—NUMBER OF FARMS, ALL LAND IN FARMS, AVERAGE SIZE OF FARM, AVERAGE VALUE OF LAND AND BUILDINGS PER FARM AND PER ACRE, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1850 TO 1959

[Data for value of farms for 1959, 1954, and 1950 are based on reports for only a sample of farms. See text.]

Year	Number of farms		All land in farms		Average size of farm (acres)	Value of land and buildings		Percent of land area in farms
	Total	Percent change from preceding Census ¹	Acres	Percent change from preceding Census ¹		Average per farm (dollars)	Average per acre (dollars)	
1959...	3,710,503	-22.6	1,123,507,574	-3.3	302.8	² 34,825	² 115.15	49.5
1954 ¹ ...	4,782,416	-11.1	1,158,191,511	(Z)	242.2	20,405	84.25	60.8
1950...	5,388,437	-8.1	1,162,642,888	1.5	215.8	14,005	64.97	51.1
1945 ² ...	5,859,169	-3.9	1,141,615,364	7.6	194.8	7,917	40.63	59.9
1940...	6,102,417	-10.5	1,065,113,774	0.6	174.5	5,532	31.69	46.8
1935 ³ ...	6,812,350	8.3	1,054,515,111	6.9	154.8	4,823	31.16	55.4
1930...	6,295,103	-1.3	990,111,984	6.8	157.3	7,624	48.47	43.6
1925 ³ ...	6,371,640	-1.2	924,319,352	-3.3	145.1	7,764	53.52	48.6
1920...	6,453,991	1.4	958,676,612	8.8	148.5	10,295	69.31	42.2
1910...	6,366,044	10.9	881,431,469	4.8	138.5	5,480	39.58	38.8
1900...	5,739,657	25.7	841,201,546	34.6	146.6	2,905	19.82	44.1
1890...	4,564,641	13.9	623,218,619	16.3	136.5	2,909	21.31	32.7
1880...	4,008,907	50.7	536,081,835	31.5	133.7	2,544	19.02	28.2
1870...	2,659,985	30.1	407,735,041	0.1	153.3	2,799	18.26	21.4
1860...	2,044,077	41.1	407,212,538	38.7	199.2	3,251	16.32	21.4
1850...	1,449,073	...	293,560,614	...	202.6	2,258	11.14	15.6

¹ Less than 0.05 percent.

² Data for Alaska and Hawaii not included.

³ Value of land and buildings in Hawaii not included for 1959.

Since 1910, the average size of farm has increased 164 acres, with an increase for each census, except 1925 and 1935. Between 1954 and 1959, the number of farms in the 48 States comprising the conterminous United States declined from 4,782,416 to 3,703,894, or 23 percent. The number of farms in 1959 was the