The change in number of tractors on farms may be somewhat misleading. The trend toward larger farming units does not necessarily require more tractors; usually the work is accomplished with larger tractors, used more intensively. Recent trends toward larger and more versatile tractors, and higher investment costs have been justified by increased efficiency per tractor.

Wheel tractors—Data were collected for wheel tractors on all farms for 1974, but not for 1969. For farms with sales of $2,500 and over, the number of farms reporting wheel tractors, the total number of wheel tractors and the number of new wheel tractors, all declined between 1969 and 1974. The percent of relatively new tractors on farms and those manufactured in the last 5 years, also declined from 32.0 percent in 1969 to 21.5 percent in 1974. However, the number of tractors per farm increased from 2.3 in 1969 to 2.6 in 1974.

Crawler tractors—The number of crawler tractors has varied significantly from one census to another. From 1969 to 1974, the number of crawler tractors on farms with sales of $2,500 and over decreased from 159,000 to 135,000, a decline of 15 percent.

Contributing to the decline has been the increased capabilities of today's rubber-tired tractors. Wheel tractors, available with four-wheel drive and/or higher horsepower, can perform certain tasks that previously could only be accomplished by crawler tractors.

Self-propelled grain and bean combines—As in 1969, both the number of farms reporting combines and the number of combines on farms increased. The increase was most dramatic in the North Central region of the Nation where almost two-thirds of the combines are located.

Between 1964 and 1969, the number of combines on farms increased by 37 percent. Between 1969 and 1974, the increase continued but slowed to a rate of 12 percent. Yet, in the North Central region, the 1969 to 1974 increase of over 50,000 self-propelled combines represented a 16 percent gain.

Combines, like wheel tractors, showed a decreasing proportion having been manufactured in the last 5 years. In 1969, 46.6 percent of combines on farms were manufactured in the last 5 years. In 1974, that percentage declined to 30.3.

Technical advancements continue to boost the capabilities of today's new combines. Improvements in platform leveling techniques have made the use of larger combines possible. Some manufacturers now sell combines with head sizes as large as 24 feet. Many combines used primarily for soybean harvesting now have new cutter bars designed to reduce harvesting loss. Improvements such as these, coupled with larger and more powerful engines, have made possible larger combine heads. These advancements, along with the increasing number of grain farms large enough in size to use larger machines efficiently, have resulted in larger and larger units being manufactured.

Corn heads for combines, other cornpickers, and picker-shellers—The declining role of cornpickers and picker-shellers as separately operating equipment was again shown in the 1974 census results. On farms with sales of $2,500 and over, the number of cornpickers and picker-shellers declined from 404,000 in 1969 to

Table 5. Tractors, Cropland Harvested, and Acres Harvested Per Tractor, by Value of Sales: 1974

	Total farms	Tractors			Harvested cropland			Average acres of harvested cropland per tractor
		Farms	Number	Average per farm	Farms	Acres	Average acres per farm	
All farms	2,314,013	1,916,207	4,467,378	2.3	1,954,700	303,001,943	155	68
Farms with sales of $2,500 and over	1,695,047	1,452,880	3,829,941	2.6	1,541,849	296,133,940	192	77
$500,000 and over	11,412	10,862	90,977	8.4	9,208	15,287,287	1,660	168
$200,000 to $499,999	40,034	38,578	185,971	4.8	36,059	30,033,885	833	161
$100,000 to $199,999	101,153	97,663	374,986	3.8	94,029	48,757,227	519	130
$40,000 to $99,999	324,310	311,070	1,013,388	3.3	308,039	95,118,383	309	94
$20,000 to $39,999	321,771	290,328	799,876	2.8	307,097	55,141,576	180	69
$10,000 to $19,999	310,011	262,254	583,910	2.2	288,710	29,288,775	101	50
$5,000 to $9,999	296,373	230,697	433,944	1.9	263,147	14,624,845	56	34
$2,500 to $4,999	289,983	211,428	346,889	1.6	235,560	7,881,962	33	23

Table 6. Tractors, Cropland Harvested, and Acres Harvested Per Tractor, by Standard Industrial Classification of Farms: 1974

Farms With Sales of $2,500 and Over

	Total farms	Tractors			Harvested cropland			Average acres of harvested cropland per tractor
		Farms	Number	Average per farm	Farms	Acres	Average acres per farm	
Total farms	1,695,047	1,452,880	3,829,941	2.6	1,541,849	296,133,940	192	77
Cash grain farms (011)	580,254	508,389	1,388,934	2.7	580,254	159,292,797	275	115
Cotton farms (0131)	30,725	26,388	84,292	3.2	30,725	9,901,288	322	117
Tobacco farms (0132)	95,493	70,287	132,254	1.9	95,492	3,153,003	33	24
Sugar crop, Irish potato, hay, peanut and other field crop farms (0133, 0134, 0139)	81,415	68,098	195,866	2.9	81,415	16,966,375	208	87
Vegetable and melon farms (016)	19,548	17,573	66,007	3.8	19,548	2,967,091	152	45
Fruit and tree nut farms (017)	51,270	41,076	104,901	2.6	51,270	3,882,822	76	37
Horticultural specialty farms (018)	19,678	12,948	33,777	2.6	19,606	457,525	23	14
General farms, primarily crop (0191)	44,659	40,934	118,068	2.9	44,659	10,517,547	236	89
Livestock farms, except dairy, poultry, and animal specialty (021)	493,816	414,377	977,069	2.4	381,820	57,303,500	150	59
Dairy farms (024)	196,057	184,903	586,393	3.2	186,128	26,486,922	142	45
Poultry and egg farms (025)	42,690	35,668	66,153	1.9	22,014	1,425,611	65	22
Animal specialty farms (027)	11,167	7,362	13,119	1.8	3,833	188,802	49	14
General farms, primarily livestock (0291)	14,995	13,866	41,536	3.0	14,908	2,963,178	199	71
Farms not classified by SIC	13,280	11,011	21,572	2.0	10,177	627,479	62	29