

DESCRIPTION OF THE CENSUS Continued

Places of 10 or more acres in the census year were counted as farms if the estimated sales of agricultural products for the year amounted to at least \$50. Places having less than the \$50 or \$250 minimum estimated sales in the census year were also counted as farms if they could normally be expected to produce agricultural products in sufficient quantity to meet the requirements of the definition.

Using the 1959 definition, the 1969 census reported about 571,000 farms in the United States having sales of less than \$1,000; these farms comprised 20.9 percent of all farms but contributed less than 1 percent of total sales. In 1974 there were only about 152,000 such farms, accounting for less than one-tenth of 1 percent of total sales. Between censuses many of these small farms had ceased operations, while many others had sales of \$1,000 or more in the census year, either because of increased agricultural activity or because of increases in the

per-unit value of agricultural products sold.

In view of increases in price levels and other changes in the structure of agricultural operations, various individuals and organizations, including members of the Census Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics, the Office of Management and Budget, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, agreed that a change in the definition of a farm was justified. With the concurrence of the Office of Management and Budget, the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Commerce announced in simultaneous press releases on August 12, 1975, that the census definition of a farm, for purposes of publishing the 1974 census data, was any establishment which during the census year had or normally would have had sales of agricultural products of \$1,000 or more.

In the next 10 months, Congress held four hearings on the appropriateness of

changing the definition. During this time, Public Law 94-229, enacted March 15, 1976, included a provision requiring the statistical classification of farms in effect on January 1, 1975, to be continued in effect through June 30, 1976. It also required that any statistical report issued on or before June 30, 1976, should reflect such classification, but could also include additional classifications as deemed appropriate by the Secretary of Commerce.

Definition for preliminary reports—Publication of the preliminary county reports began in April 1976, while the definition clause imposed by Public Law 94-229 was in effect. These reports for all counties and States, the four regions, and the United States were tabulated and published in accordance with the same farm definition used for the 1959, 1964, and 1969 censuses.

