

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Agricultural Marketing Service

FARM LABOR REPORT

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June 13, 1941

FARM EMPLOYMENT DOWN  
SLIGHTLY FROM YEAR AGO

Employment on farms throughout the United States increased a little more than usual during May, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported today. But the total number of persons so employed on the first of June was nearly a quarter of a million fewer than on June 1 last year. Unusual weather contributed in part to this situation, according to the Department, with longer hours and increased efficiency also playing a role in the distribution and utilization of agricultural workers throughout the country.

Reports from 22,509 correspondents indicated that 11,642,000 persons were working on farms on June 1, 1941. This was an increase of 890,000 farm workers over a month earlier but 247,000 less than a year ago. The decline from June 1, 1940 was confined entirely to family workers (unpaid family workers and farm operators), confirming earlier indications that hired hands lost to the draft and nonagricultural industries had been replaced, in part, from the ranks of unpaid family workers. The number of hired workers employed on June 1 was 96 percent of the 1910-14 average, compared with 84 a month earlier and 96 a year ago.

WET WEST: DRY EAST

The weather pattern for the nation materially altered farm labor requirements and the general character of farm operations during the week including June 1. Heavy rains fell rather generally in the West Central States with from 2 to 4 inches of precipitation recorded in many parts of these regions. Rains delayed the harvesting of wheat, oats, and barley in many areas throughout the West South Central States. "Lodging" of small grains was reported in some

SPECIAL TO THIS ISSUE

|                                                                                                                                        | <u>Pag</u> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Farm labor supply as percentage of normal, April 1, and March 1 index of employment in all manufacturing industries, U.S. 1919-41..... | 6-7        |
| East North Central States: Annual average wage rates, by classes, 1910-41.....                                                         | 8-9        |
| Demand for farm labor, percentage of normal, and cash income from marketings and Government payments, 1924 to date.....                | 10-11      |

sections, necessitating the use of binders in localities where a large part of the grain usually is cut and threshed with combines. Excessive rainfall in the Texas-Oklahoma Panhandle delayed cotton planting and necessitated much replanting.

In the West North Central States, corn planting had been completed in most areas by June 1, but much replanting will be required in flooded fields in the extremely wet northeastern Iowa. Rain delayed spring planting somewhat in parts of Minnesota, as well as haying and the cultivation of row crops. Soybeans were being planted in the Corn Belt on June 1; sorghum seeding was under way in the Plains States; and alfalfa was being cut in Nebraska. Farm employment increased to the June 1, 1940 level during May of this year in the West North Central States, but, in view of heavy rains around the first of the month, failed to reach June 1940 levels in the West South Central region.

Rains also came to the East North Central States during the week ended June 3, but drought hampered field work to some extent farther east and south, and especially from Virginia to Alabama. Corn was being cultivated and soybeans planted in the East North Central region, with barley being cut in southern Indiana. In the Northeast, farm work was about normal, with peaches being thinned and tobacco transplanted in Pennsylvania; row crop cultivation was under way in Maryland and pea-picking started. Farther south, however, the drought had delayed spring planting in Virginia; while cotton-chopping was slowed in the Southeast. In parts of Kentucky and Tennessee, cotton-chopping was progressing satisfactorily, however, with tobacco transplanting handicapped a little by dry weather, and the barley harvest getting under way.

Farm work progressed rather satisfactorily in the Rocky Mountain States, and in Southern California, but the continued rains delayed field work somewhat in the Upper Sacramento Valley and the Pacific Northwest. Sheep shearing was progressing favorably in Wyoming. Farmers had started to plant corn, sorghums, and beans in Colorado, where haymaking also was under way. Rain generally delayed farm work in New Mexico, but citrus shipments continued from some sections of Arizona and the cantaloup harvest had started. Beet thinning and fruit spraying engaged farm workers in Utah.

Rains hindered farm work in Idaho and Washington, with field work being delayed as far south as Northern California. The strawberry harvest continued in Oregon, and raspberry picking also began in the first week of June. Increases in farm employment in Southern California pushed June 1 Pacific Coast totals somewhat above a year earlier, however, with corn, beans, rice, and sugar beets being planted; cotton-chopping continued; and cherries, berries, oranges, grain, hay, and truck crops were being harvested.

#### Labor Supply Down, Production Maintained

Farmers have not been asked since April 1 to report specifically on the supply of labor available for farm work, but the general picture of crop prospects and agricultural output, together with available employment data and an appraisal of the situation by State officials, indicates that, the drastic reduction in the available supply has not created a shortage sufficiently great to hamper production. Farmers have responded to the task of maintaining production in the face of a labor scarcity, and the necessity of paying higher wage rates to hold hands on the farm.

In New England, drought had parched pastures somewhat by June 1, but milk production continued to exceed the 10-year average for that date although there was a slight reduction in the number of people actually employed on farms. The same situation prevailed in the Middle Atlantic States, with the labor supply cut sharply, employment down slightly, and milk production above average. Similar situations are reported in the Corn Belt and other sections of the country, but milk production is up rather generally, and egg production per 100 hens has reached new high levels. Current marketings of fruits and vegetables, as indicated by market movement during the 2 weeks ended June 7, were up about 3 percent over a year ago. This is especially significant since the labor requirements for the harvesting of these crops are high.

#### Total Employment in All Industries Higher

There can be little doubt that the supply of workers in rural areas has declined during recent months, as reports of increases in industrial employment continue. The latest figures available are for April with a total of 37,617,000 persons reported for nonagricultural industries by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, exclusive of those employed on Work Projects Administration or National Youth Administration projects, enrollees in Civilian Conservation Corps camps, and members of the military and naval forces. Total nonagricultural employment was up nearly two and three-quarter million workers from April 1940. Total employment in the United States was estimated at 47,853,000 persons for April, or about 2,600,000 higher than a year earlier, after allowing for the slight decline in persons working on farms.

The effect that increased employment in manufacturing industries has had on lessening the supply of farm labor in the past is shown by the chart on page 7. This presents the data collected from crop reporters in April of each year since 1919 without adjustment for changes in demand. If past relationships again hold, farmers will be faced with a still shorter labor supply as the harvest of small grain gets into full swing. Farmers probably will find it necessary to work longer hours to offset the scarcity of labor available for the agricultural phase of the national defense effort.

Continued on page 12

Farm employment, June 1, 1941, with comparisons

FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES (1910-14 = 100)

| Item                          | Apr. 1<br>1940 | May 1<br>1940 | June 1<br>1940 | Apr. 1<br>1941 | May 1<br>1941 | June 1<br>1941 |
|-------------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| All farm workers-             |                |               |                |                |               |                |
| Unadjusted.....               | 81             | 91            | 99             | 81             | 89            | 97             |
| Adjusted for seasonality..... | 84             | 85            | 85             | 84             | 83            | 84             |
| Family labor-                 |                |               |                |                |               |                |
| Unadjusted.....               | 84             | 92            | 100            | 83             | 91            | 97             |
| Adjusted for seasonality..... | 86             | 86            | 87             | 85             | 85            | 84             |
| Hired labor-                  |                |               |                |                |               |                |
| Unadjusted.....               | 73             | 87            | 96             | 74             | 84            | 96             |
| Adjusted for seasonality..... | 78             | 81            | 81             | 79             | 78            | 81             |

Persons employed in the United States, May 1941, with comparisons

| Item                                       | March<br>1940 | April<br>1940 | May<br>1940 | March<br>1941 | April<br>1941 | May<br>1941 |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
|                                            | 1,000's       | 1,000's       | 1,000's     | 1,000's       | 1,000's       | 1,000's     |
| Farm employment <u>1</u> /.....            | 9,435         | 10,370        | 11,419      | 9,341         | 10,236        | 11,204      |
| Family workers.....                        | 7,457         | 8,048         | 8,771       | 7,348         | 7,958         | 8,003       |
| Hired workers.....                         | 1,978         | 2,322         | 2,648       | 1,993         | 2,278         | 2,601       |
| Nonagricultural employment <u>2</u> /..... | 34,852        | 34,882        | 35,163      | 37,227        | 37,617        | --          |
| Total employment .....                     | 44,287        | 45,252        | 46,582      | 46,568        | 47,853        | --          |

1/Average of estimates of farm employment as of the first of the given and the following month.

2/Estimates of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Labor. Excludes persons employed on W.P.A. or N.Y.A. projects, enrollees in C.C.C. camps, and military and naval forces.

Farm employment, United States and geographic divisions,  
June 1, 1941, with comparisons

TOTAL FARM EMPLOYMENT

| Geographic division   | Apr. 1, 1940 | May 1, 1940 | June 1, 1940 | Apr. 1, 1941 | May 1, 1941 | June 1, 1941 |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
|                       | 1,000's      | 1,000's     | 1,000's      | 1,000's      | 1,000's     | 1,000's      |
| United States.....    | 9,797        | 10,941      | 11,896       | 9,714        | 10,759      | 11,649       |
| New England.....      | 242          | 253         | 268          | 245          | 248         | 261          |
| Middle Atlantic.....  | 583          | 622         | 625          | 578          | 608         | 611          |
| East North Central... | 1,418        | 1,514       | 1,560        | 1,417        | 1,489       | 1,506        |
| West North Central... | 1,590        | 1,713       | 1,810        | 1,586        | 1,701       | 1,812        |
| South Atlantic.....   | 1,875        | 2,157       | 2,398        | 1,804        | 2,091       | 2,361        |
| East South Central... | 1,575        | 1,871       | 2,072        | 1,521        | 1,815       | 1,959        |
| West South Central... | 1,599        | 1,848       | 2,139        | 1,640        | 1,813       | 2,092        |
| Mountain.....         | 412          | 427         | 479          | 429          | 463         | 475          |
| Pacific.....          | 503          | 536         | 545          | 494          | 531         | 561          |

FAMILY WORKERS 1/

|                       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| United States.....    | 7,684 | 8,411 | 9,131 | 7,585 | 8,332 | 8,874 |
| New England.....      | 168   | 164   | 166   | 165   | 166   | 173   |
| Middle Atlantic.....  | 414   | 420   | 413   | 408   | 411   | 411   |
| East North Central... | 1,136 | 1,167 | 1,192 | 1,128 | 1,169 | 1,180 |
| West North Central... | 1,286 | 1,337 | 1,407 | 1,276 | 1,330 | 1,391 |
| South Atlantic.....   | 1,430 | 1,630 | 1,834 | 1,377 | 1,582 | 1,815 |
| East South Central... | 1,378 | 1,630 | 1,799 | 1,321 | 1,587 | 1,694 |
| West South Central... | 1,285 | 1,469 | 1,714 | 1,309 | 1,479 | 1,598 |
| Mountain.....         | 286   | 285   | 293   | 300   | 300   | 302   |
| Pacific.....          | 301   | 309   | 313   | 301   | 308   | 310   |

HIRED WORKERS

|                       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| United States.....    | 2,113 | 2,530 | 2,765 | 2,129 | 2,427 | 2,775 |
| New England.....      | 74    | 89    | 102   | 80    | 82    | 88    |
| Middle Atlantic.....  | 169   | 202   | 212   | 170   | 197   | 200   |
| East North Central... | 282   | 347   | 368   | 289   | 320   | 326   |
| West North Central... | 304   | 376   | 403   | 310   | 371   | 421   |
| South Atlantic.....   | 445   | 527   | 564   | 427   | 509   | 546   |
| East South Central... | 197   | 241   | 273   | 200   | 228   | 275   |
| West South Central... | 314   | 379   | 425   | 331   | 334   | 494   |
| Mountain.....         | 126   | 142   | 136   | 129   | 163   | 174   |
| Pacific.....          | 202   | 227   | 232   | 193   | 223   | 251   |

1/ Including farm operators.

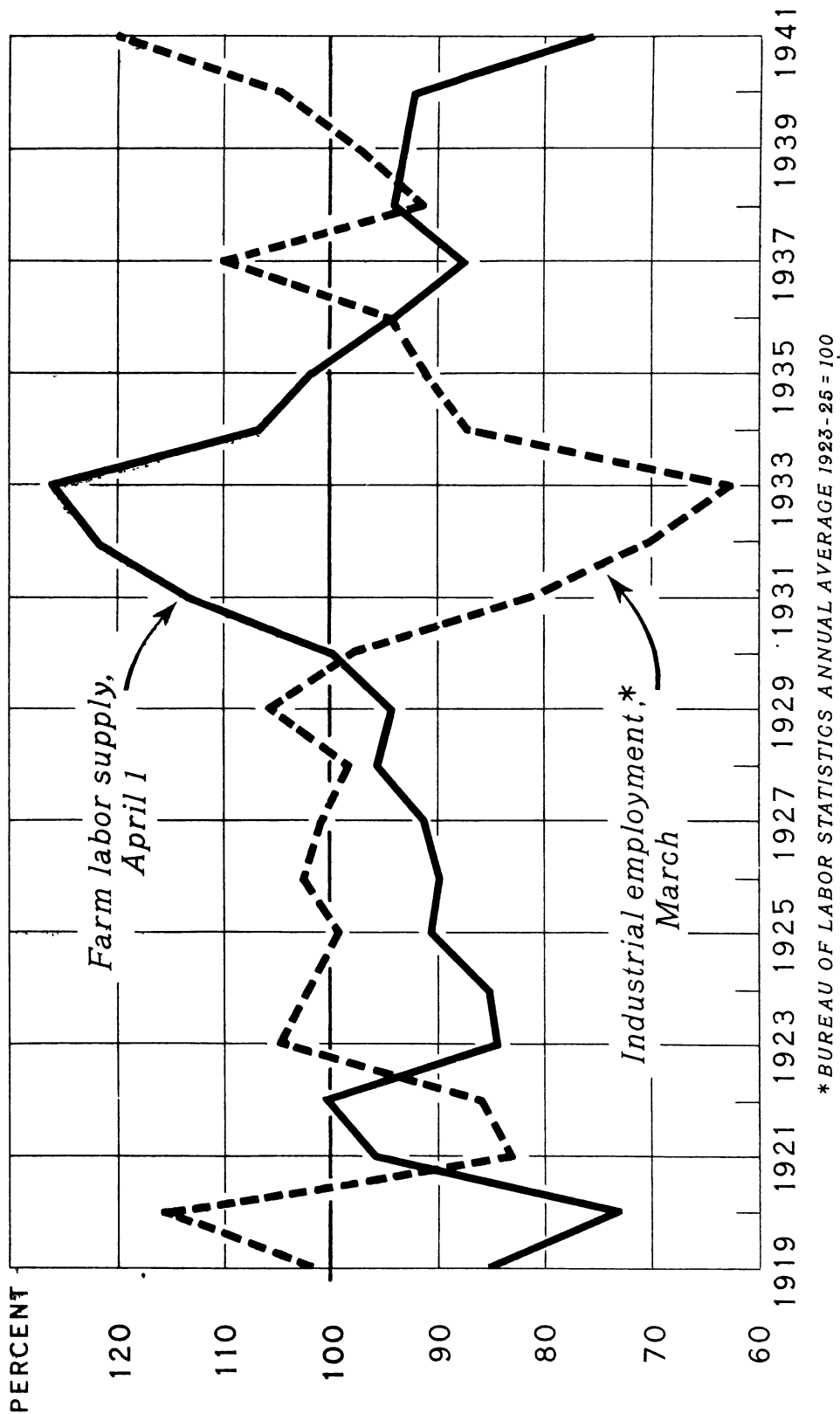
Based on reports from 22,509 farmers.

Farm labor supply as percentage of normal April 1, and  
 March index of employment in all manufacturing industries,  
 United States, 1919-41

| Year      | Supply<br>April 1<br>Percent | Industrial<br>employment <sup>1/</sup><br>March<br>Percent |
|-----------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1919..... | 84.9                         | 101.7                                                      |
| 1920..... | 72.9                         | 115.6                                                      |
| 1921..... | 95.8                         | 82.9                                                       |
| 1922..... | 100.2                        | 85.8                                                       |
| 1923..... | 84.3                         | 104.6                                                      |
| 1924..... | 85.0                         | 101.9                                                      |
| 1925..... | 90.5                         | 99.2                                                       |
| 1926..... | 89.7                         | 102.5                                                      |
| 1927..... | 91.2                         | 100.9                                                      |
| 1928..... | 95.8                         | 98.2                                                       |
| 1929..... | 94.2                         | 105.4                                                      |
| 1930..... | 99.7                         | 97.9                                                       |
| 1931..... | 113.6                        | 81.2                                                       |
| 1932..... | 122.4                        | 70.1                                                       |
| 1933..... | 126.3                        | 62.3                                                       |
| 1934..... | 106.8                        | 87.2                                                       |
| 1935..... | 101.8                        | 91.0                                                       |
| 1936..... | 93.2                         | 93.9                                                       |
| 1937..... | 87.4                         | 110.1                                                      |
| 1938..... | 93.9                         | 91.2                                                       |
| 1939..... | 93.0                         | 97.0                                                       |
| 1940..... | 92.0                         | 104.4                                                      |
| 1941..... | 75.6                         | 119.9                                                      |

<sup>1/</sup>Annual average 1923-25 = 100 Bureau of Labor  
 Statistics.

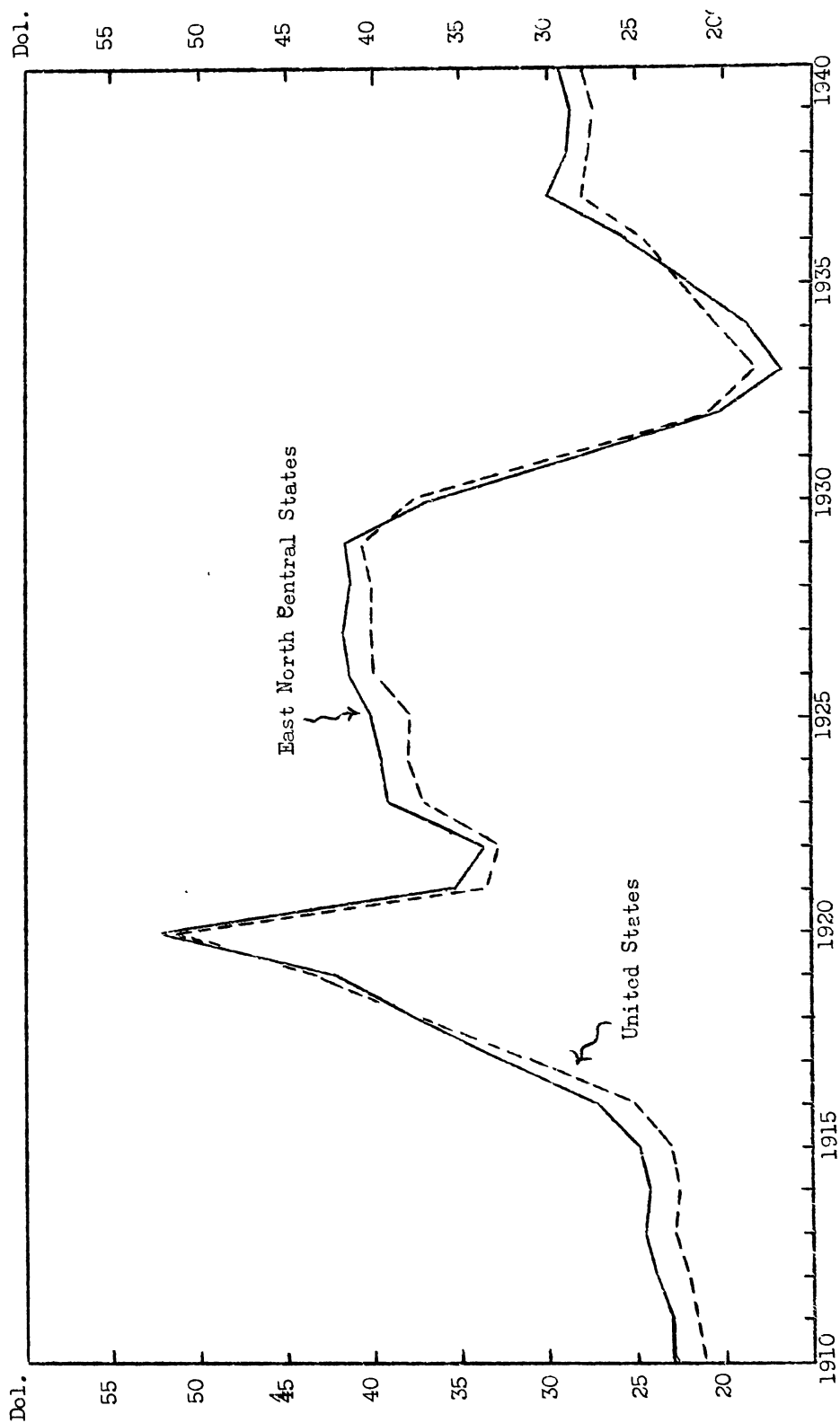
# FARM LABOR SUPPLY AS PERCENTAGE OF NORMAL, APRIL 1, AND MARCH INDEX OF EMPLOYMENT IN ALL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES, UNITED STATES, 1919-41



East North Central States: Annual average wage rates, by classes,  
1910-41

| Year          | Per month<br>with<br>board<br>Dollars | Per month<br>without<br>board<br>Dollars | Per day<br>with<br>board<br>Dollars | Per day<br>without<br>board<br>Dollars |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1910.....     | 22.95                                 | 31.88                                    | 1.24                                | 1.61                                   |
| 1911.....     | 22.97                                 | 31.79                                    | 1.27                                | 1.62                                   |
| 1912.....     | 23.93                                 | 32.86                                    | 1.34                                | 1.71                                   |
| 1913.....     | 24.57                                 | 33.83                                    | 1.37                                | 1.75                                   |
| 1914.....     | 24.32                                 | 33.63                                    | 1.33                                | 1.71                                   |
| 1915.....     | 24.87                                 | 34.20                                    | 1.35                                | 1.72                                   |
| 1916.....     | 27.24                                 | 37.73                                    | 1.52                                | 1.93                                   |
| 1917.....     | 32.54                                 | 45.11                                    | 1.87                                | 2.36                                   |
| 1918.....     | 37.72                                 | 52.17                                    | 2.38                                | 2.99                                   |
| 1919.....     | 42.41                                 | 59.25                                    | 2.72                                | 3.44                                   |
| 1920.....     | 52.01                                 | 70.64                                    | 3.23                                | 4.03                                   |
| 1921.....     | 35.27                                 | 49.22                                    | 2.05                                | 2.62                                   |
| 1922.....     | 33.59                                 | 47.08                                    | 2.01                                | 2.60                                   |
| 1923.....     | 39.23                                 | 54.13                                    | 2.26                                | 2.96                                   |
| 1924.....     | 39.61                                 | 54.37                                    | 2.33                                | 3.04                                   |
| 1925.....     | 39.98                                 | 54.37                                    | 2.31                                | 3.00                                   |
| 1926.....     | 41.40                                 | 56.04                                    | 2.35                                | 3.03                                   |
| 1927.....     | 41.78                                 | 56.50                                    | 2.35                                | 3.02                                   |
| 1928.....     | 41.31                                 | 55.78                                    | 2.33                                | 2.96                                   |
| 1929.....     | 41.73                                 | 56.87                                    | 2.36                                | 2.99                                   |
| 1930.....     | 36.76                                 | 50.98                                    | 2.03                                | 2.64                                   |
| 1931.....     | 27.97                                 | 40.52                                    | 1.49                                | 2.01                                   |
| 1932.....     | 20.07                                 | 27.75                                    | 1.06                                | 1.45                                   |
| 1933.....     | 16.60                                 | 25.75                                    | .94                                 | 1.29                                   |
| 1934.....     | 18.64                                 | 28.11                                    | 1.06                                | 1.47                                   |
| 1935.....     | 21.98                                 | 29.14                                    | 1.21                                | 1.62                                   |
| 1936.....     | 25.50                                 | 36.41                                    | 1.33                                | 1.85                                   |
| 1937.....     | 29.99                                 | 42.04                                    | 1.65                                | 2.16                                   |
| 1938.....     | 28.93                                 | 41.00                                    | 1.59                                | 2.10                                   |
| 1939.....     | 28.68                                 | 40.90                                    | 1.59                                | 2.09                                   |
| 1940.....     | 29.40                                 | 41.64                                    | 1.63                                | 2.12                                   |
| 1940 Jan..... | 25.80                                 | 37.94                                    | 1.48                                | 1.97                                   |
| Apr.....      | 28.73                                 | 41.27                                    | 1.52                                | 2.02                                   |
| July.....     | 30.35                                 | 42.25                                    | 1.68                                | 2.17                                   |
| Oct.....      | 30.54                                 | 42.95                                    | 1.72                                | 2.23                                   |
| 1941 Jan..... | 28.22                                 | 40.52                                    | 1.57                                | 2.05                                   |
| Apr.....      | 34.20                                 | 47.01                                    | 1.75                                | 2.27                                   |

Farm wage rates: Per month with board, East North Central States and United States, 1910-40



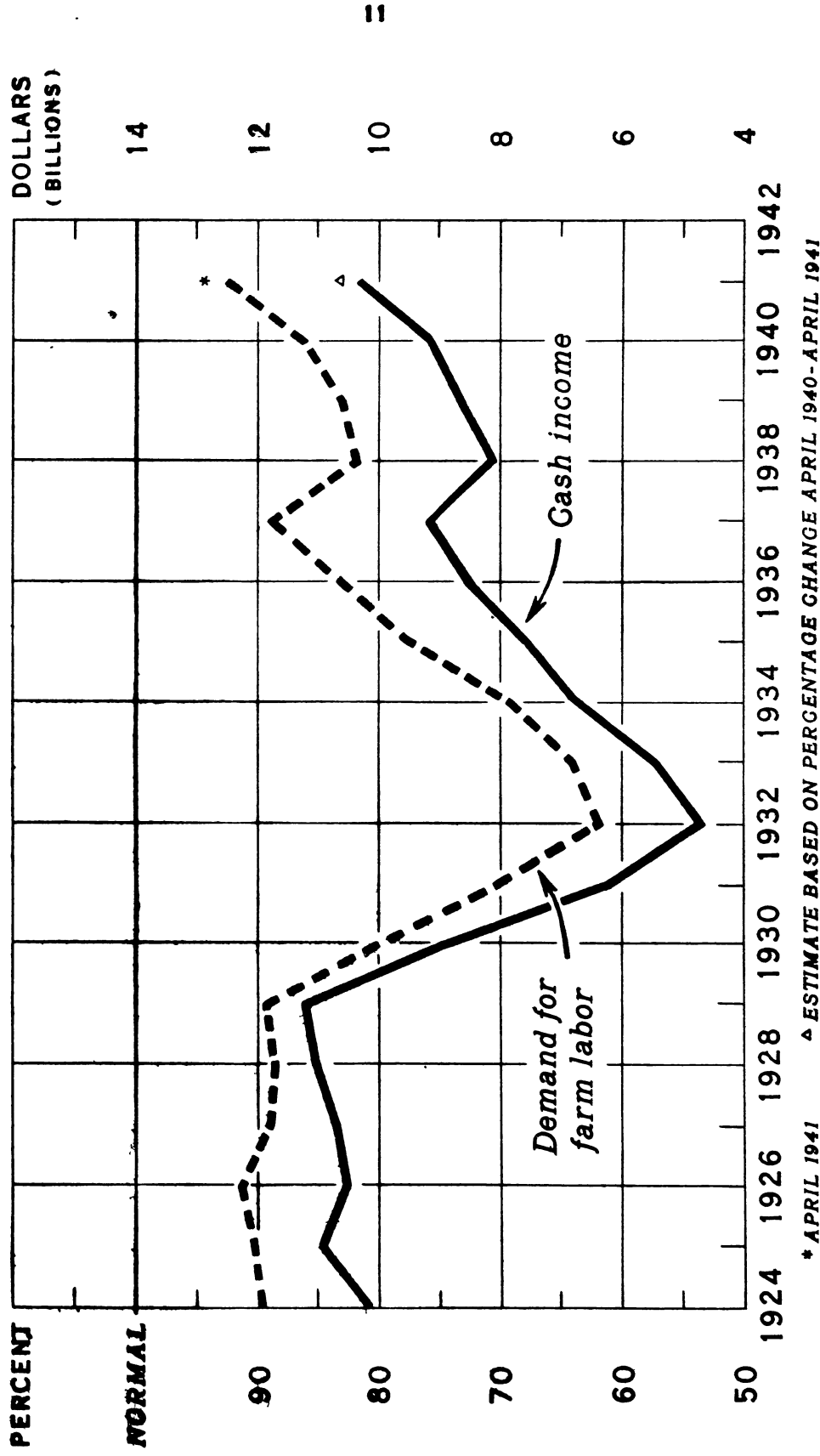
Demand for farm labor, percentage of normal, and cash  
income from marketing and Government payments,  
United States, 1924 to date

| Year                 | Demand for farm<br>labor, percent-<br>age of normal | Cash income from<br>marketing and<br>Government payments |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
|                      | <u>Percent</u>                                      | <u>Million<br/>dollars</u>                               |
| 1924.....            | 89.7                                                | 10,150                                                   |
| 1925.....            | 90.2                                                | 10,930                                                   |
| 1926.....            | 91.3                                                | 10,530                                                   |
| 1927.....            | 82.9                                                | 10,700                                                   |
| 1928.....            | 82.5                                                | 11,020                                                   |
| 1929.....            | 89.2                                                | 11,220                                                   |
| 1930.....            | 79.8                                                | 3,880                                                    |
| 1931.....            | 70.7                                                | 6,280                                                    |
| 1932.....            | 61.2                                                | 4,680                                                    |
| 1933.....            | 64.0                                                | 5,410                                                    |
| 1934.....            | 69.1                                                | 6,720                                                    |
| 1935.....            | 77.5                                                | 7,540                                                    |
| 1936.....            | 83.2                                                | 8,500                                                    |
| 1937.....            | 88.6                                                | 9,160                                                    |
| 1938.....            | 81.8                                                | 9,130                                                    |
| 1939.....            | 83.0                                                | 8,630                                                    |
| 1940.....            | 86.0                                                | 9,120                                                    |
| 1941 <u>1</u> /..... | <u>1</u> / 92.4                                     | <u>2</u> /10,300                                         |

1/April 1941.

2/Estimate based on percentage change April 1940-41.

# DEMAND FOR FARM LABOR PERCENTAGE OF NORMAL AND CASH INCOME FROM FARM MARKETING AND GOVERNMENT PAYMENTS, UNITED STATES, 1924 TO DATE



Continued from page 4.

#### Demand for Farm Labor Closely Related to Farm Income

Data available in April also indicated a substantial increase in the demand for farm labor as compared with a year ago. Examination of these data since 1924 indicates a rather close relationship with cash farm income. The two series are shown graphically on page 11. Both farm income and the demand for farm labor were comparatively stable from 1924 to 1929, but sharp declines are shown for each series during the following 3 years. Income and farm labor demand stepped up side by side from 1933 to 1937 and after a sharp relapse in 1938 resumed a gradual upward climb. Apparently crop correspondents take into consideration in reporting the demand for farm labor, the ability to hire as well as labor requirements.

#### East North Central Wage Rates Fairly Typical of the Nation

The Department also presents in this month's labor report the historical series of farm wage rates from 1910 to date for the East North Central States. Throughout the past 30 years, the rates in this region have been fairly typical of those in the Nation as a whole. The East North Central rate with board was a little higher than the national average from 1910 to 1917 and again from 1921 to 1929. It declined with the national average from 1930 to 1932, but ~~was~~ somewhat lower in 1933 and 1934. Since 1936, East North Central wage rates have again been slightly higher than the national average. This relationship does not seem unusual at this time, however, with the available labor supply in that region now sharply below normal.