UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Agricultural Marketing Service

FARM LABOR REPORT

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May 16, 1941

# FARM EMPLOYMENT SHOWS INCREASE BUT LESS THAN USUAL FOR APRIL

The number of persons working on farms increased a little less than sual from April 1 to May 1, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported today. t 89 percent of the 1910-14 average, the Department's May 1 index of farm nployment was up 8 points from a month earlier, or 1 point less than the usual easonal rise.

Weather conditions retarded farm activity in some areas. Dry soil lowed up preparations for planting and actual planting of corn and others pring-planted crops from Ohio south to Georgia, while heavy precipitation topped field work in many sections of the West South Central States. Curilment in the supply of workers may also have been a factor in reducing the umber of persons actually employed on farms in some areas, but few data are vailable to indicate that there has been much, if any, reduction in farm opertions to date on this account. Reports from crop correspondents suggest that igher wage rates are encouraging increased purchases of farm machinery and erhaps a limited shift to crops with lower labor requirements.

Reports received by the Agricultural Marketing Service from about 2,500 crop correspondents indicate that approximately 10,759,000 persons ere working on farms throughout the country as of the first of this month. his was an increase of better than a million workers over April 1, but about 80,000 short of the number employed a year ago. Increases in farm employment ere general during April, but only in the Rocky Mountain States did these upurns lift the level of farm employment above May 1, 1940.

Farm employment, May 1, 1941, with comparisons

FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES (1910-14 = 100)

| | Mar.1, 1940 | Apr.1, 1940 | May 1, 1940 | Mar.1, 1941 | Apr.1, 1941 | May 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All farm workers- | | | | | | |
| Unadjusted | 75 | 81 | 91 | 74 | 81 | |
| Adjusted for seasonality | 85 | 84 | 85 | 84 | 84 | |
| Family labor- | | | | | | |
| Unadjusted | 79 | 84 | 92 | 78 | 83 | |
| Adjusted for seasonality | 88 | 86 | 86 | 87 | 85 | |
| Hired labor- | | | | | | |
| Unadjusted | 64 | 73 | 87 | 64 | 74 | |
| Adjusted for seasonality | 80 | 78 | 81 | 80 | 79 | |

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

| | Feb. 1940 | Mar. 1940 | Apr. 1940 | Feb. 1941 | Mar. 1941 | Apr. 1941 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1,000's | 1,000's | 1,000's | 1,000's | 1,000's | 1,000's |
| Farm employment 1/ | 8,927 | 9,435 | 10,370 | 8,875 | 9,341 | 10,23[illegible] |
| Family workers | 7,159 | 7,457 | 8,048 | 7,050 | 7,348 | 7,3[illegible] |
| Hired workers | 1,768 | 1,978 | 2,322 | 1,825 | 1,993 | 2,2[illegible] |
| Nonagricultural employment 2/3/ | 34,656 | 34,852 | 34,882 | 36,928 | 37,218 | -- |
| Total employment 3/ | 43,583 | 44,287 | 45,252 | 45,803 | 46,559 | -- |

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.

3/Revised.

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

TOTAL FARM EMPLOYMENT

| Geographic division | Mar.1, 1940 | Apr.1, 1940 | May 1, 1940 | Mar.1, 1941 | Apr.1, 1941 | May 1, 1941 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1,000's | 1,000's | 1,000's | 1,000's | 1,000's | 1,000's |
| United States | 9,073 | 9,797 | 10,941 | 8,968 | 9,714 | 10,759 |
| New England | 233 | 242 | 253 | 242 | 245 | 248 |
| Middle Atlantic | 556 | 583 | 622 | 546 | 578 | 608 |
| East North Central | 1,350 | 1,418 | 1,514 | 1,339 | 1,417 | 1,489 |
| West North Central | 1,482 | 1,590 | 1,713 | 1,490 | 1,586 | 1,701 |
| South Atlantic | 1,717 | 1,875 | 2,157 | 1,675 | 1,804 | 2,091 |
| East South Central | 1,422 | 1,575 | 1,871 | 1,375 | 1,521 | 1,815 |
| West South Central | 1,474 | 1,599 | 1,848 | 1,460 | 1,640 | 1,813 |
| Mountain | 379 | 412 | 427 | 382 | 429 | 463 |
| Pacific | 460 | 503 | 536 | 459 | 494 | 531 |

FAMILY WORKERS 1/

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| United States | 7,230 | 7,684 | 8,411 | 7,111 | 7,585 | 8,332 |
| New England | 164 | 168 | 164 | 165 | 165 | 166 |
| Middle Atlantic | 404 | 414 | 420 | 400 | 408 | 411 |
| East North Central | 1,105 | 1,136 | 1,167 | 1,104 | 1,128 | 1,169 |
| West North Central | 1,234 | 1,286 | 1,337 | 1,224 | 1,276 | 1,330 |
| South Atlantic | 1,309 | 1,430 | 1,630 | 1,291 | 1,377 | 1,582 |
| East South Central | 1,248 | 1,378 | 1,630 | 1,186 | 1,321 | 1,587 |
| West South Central | 1,187 | 1,285 | 1,469 | 1,163 | 1,309 | 1,479 |
| Mountain | 278 | 286 | 285 | 277 | 300 | 300 |
| Pacific | 301 | 301 | 309 | 301 | 301 | 308 |

HIRED WORKERS

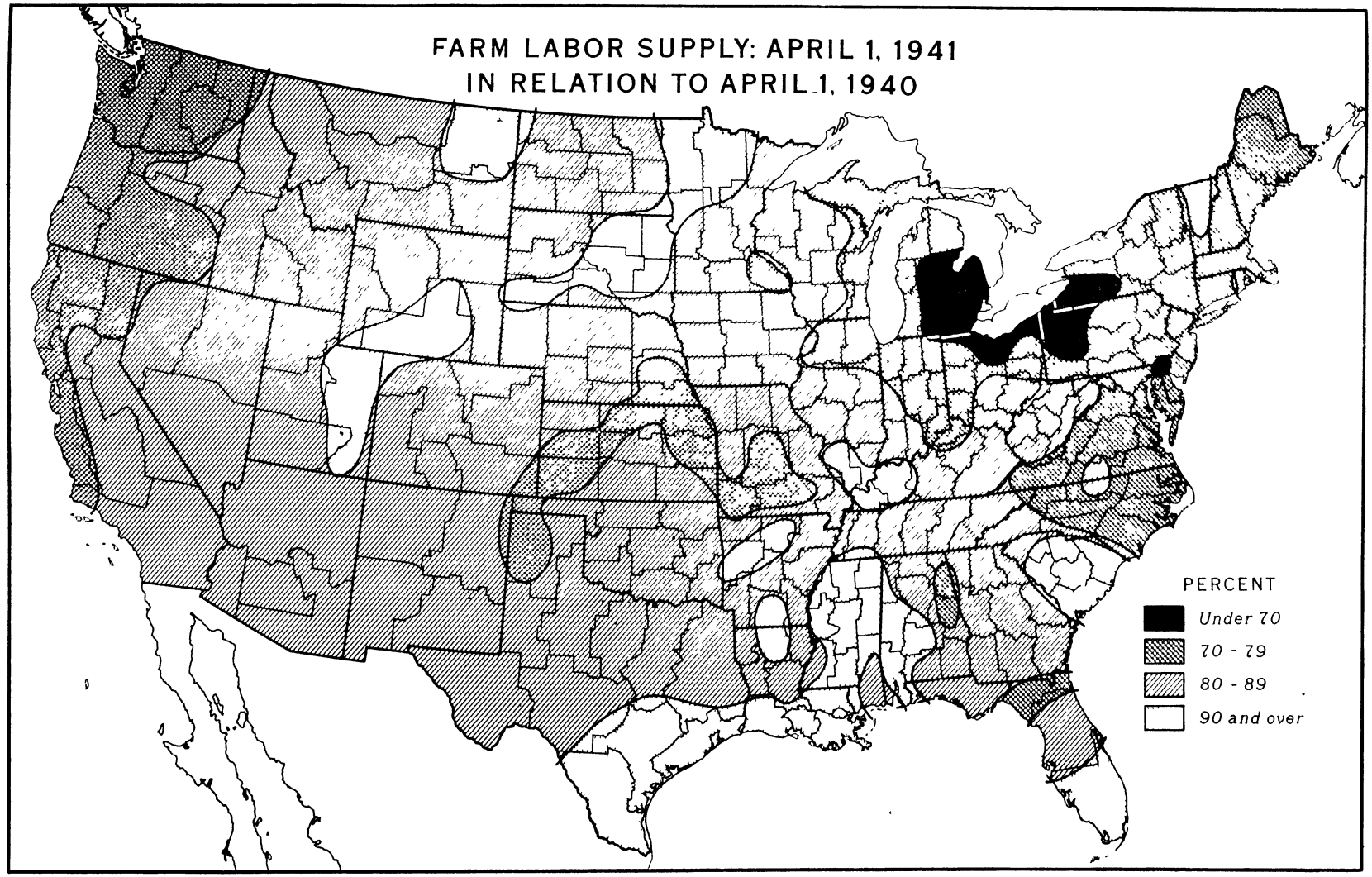
| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| United States | 1,843 | 2,113 | 2,530 | 1,857 | 2,129 | 2,427 |
| New England | 69 | 74 | 89 | 77 | 80 | 82 |
| Middle Atlantic | 152 | 169 | 202 | 146 | 170 | 197 |
| East North Central | 245 | 282 | 347 | 235 | 289 | 320 |
| West North Central | 248 | 304 | 376 | 266 | 310 | 371 |
| South Atlantic | 408 | 445 | 527 | 384 | 427 | 509 |
| East South Central | 174 | 197 | 241 | 189 | 200 | 228 |
| West South Central | 287 | 314 | 379 | 297 | 331 | 374 |
| Mountain | 101 | 126 | 142 | 105 | 129 | 163 |
| Pacific | 159 | 202 | 227 | 158 | 193 | 223 |

1/Including farm operators.

Based on reports from 22,515 farmers.

Farm Labor Supply: April 1, 1941 in relation to April 1, 1940
by crop-reporting districts

| State | Crop-reporting districts | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | State |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 1-N | 1-S | 2 | 2-A | 3 | 4 | 4-A | 5 | 5-A | 6 | 6-A | 7 | 8 | 9 | 9-A | 10 | |
| Me. | 73 | - | - | 75 | - | 73 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| N.H. | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 72 |
| Vt. | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 80 |
| Mass. | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 72 |
| R.I. | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 85 |
| Conn. | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 76 |
| N.Y. | - | - | - | 74 | - | 73 | 72 | - | 70 | - | 79 | - | 66 | 72 | 76 | 84 | - | - |
| N.J. | - | - | - | 70 | - | - | - | - | 73 | - | - | - | - | 78 | - | - | - | - |
| Pa. | 63 | - | - | 79 | - | 79 | 68 | - | 75 | - | 73 | - | 70 | 79 | 79 | - | - | - |
| Ohio | 77 | - | - | 66 | - | 70 | 75 | - | 80 | - | 73 | - | 72 | 85 | 82 | - | - | - |
| Ind. | 71 | - | - | 75 | - | 79 | 80 | - | 75 | - | 73 | - | 87 | 81 | 71 | - | - | - |
| Ill. | 75 | - | - | - | - | 74 | 86 | 88 | 84 | - | 85 | 84 | 97 | - | 87 | - | - | - |
| Mich. | 73 | - | - | 76 | - | 77 | 77 | - | 66 | - | 61 | - | 73 | 65 | 68 | - | - | - |
| Wis. | 86 | - | - | 89 | - | 81 | 83 | - | 81 | - | 75 | - | 82 | 81 | 72 | - | - | - |
| Minn. | 90 | - | - | 91 | - | 84 | 87 | - | 82 | - | 85 | - | 82 | 87 | 75 | - | - | - |
| Iowa | 85 | - | - | 83 | - | 89 | 87 | - | 84 | - | 84 | - | 83 | 88 | 83 | - | - | - |
| Mo. | 88 | - | - | 82 | - | 80 | 85 | - | 78 | - | 82 | - | 77 | 77 | 89 | - | - | - |
| N.Dak. | 84 | - | - | 79 | - | 85 | 80 | - | 83 | - | 85 | - | 88 | 89 | 85 | - | - | - |
| S.Dak. | 84 | - | - | 93 | - | 90 | 86 | - | 91 | - | 91 | - | 94 | 88 | 84 | - | - | - |
| Nebr. | 85 | - | - | 86 | - | 87 | - | - | 86 | - | 79 | - | 89 | 83 | 78 | - | - | - |
| Kans. | 84 | - | - | 79 | - | 79 | 79 | - | 84 | - | 79 | - | 76 | 80 | 81 | - | - | - |
| Del. | - | - | - | 58 | - | - | - | - | 79 | - | - | - | - | 74 | - | - | - | - |
| Md. | 84 | - | - | 75 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 77 | 79 | - | - | - |
| Va. | - | - | - | 76 | - | - | 70 | - | 78 | - | 73 | - | 73 | 81 | 72 | - | - | - |
| W.Va. | 88 | - | - | 87 | - | 82 | 86 | - | 81 | - | 80 | - | - | 85 | - | - | - | - |
| N.C. | 77 | - | - | 80 | - | 76 | 81 | - | 70 | - | 70 | - | - | 79 | 84 | - | - | - |
| S.C. | 89 | - | - | 94 | - | 90 | 90 | - | 96 | - | - | - | - | 95 | - | - | - | - |
| Ga. | 80 | - | - | 85 | - | 84 | 85 | - | 88 | - | 86 | - | 93 | 87 | 86 | - | - | - |
| Fla. | 87 | - | - | - | - | 70 | - | - | 83 | - | - | - | - | 95 | - | - | - | - |
| Ky. | 92 | - | - | 95 | - | 89 | 78 | - | 88 | - | 87 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Tenn. | 85 | - | - | 87 | - | 84 | 85 | - | 86 | - | 83 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Ala. | 88 | - | - | 89 | 88 | 76 | 96 | - | 96 | - | 79 | - | 93 | 85 | 82 | - | - | - |
| Miss. | 97 | - | - | 95 | - | 93 | 97 | - | 90 | - | 98 | - | 89 | 90 | 84 | - | - | - |
| Ark. | 84 | - | - | 100 | - | 88 | 94 | - | 80 | - | 83 | - | 82 | 90 | 83 | - | - | - |
| La. | 86 | - | - | 92 | - | 84 | 80 | - | 81 | - | 91 | - | 94 | 96 | 96 | - | - | - |
| Okla. | 87 | - | - | 82 | - | 88 | 84 | - | 86 | - | 89 | - | 80 | 85 | 81 | - | - | - |
| Tex. | - | 79 | 85 | 82 | - | 80 | 87 | - | 83 | - | 88 | - | 87 | 90 | 92 | - | 96 | - |
| Mont. | 84 | - | - | 82 | - | 91 | - | - | 81 | - | - | - | 89 | 84 | 80 | - | - | - |
| Idaho | 84 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 85 | 87 | 85 | - | - | - |
| Wyo. | 83 | - | - | 84 | - | 82 | 97 | - | 85 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Colo. | 85 | - | - | 85 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 82 | - | 80 | 80 | 87 | - | - | - |
| N.Mex. | 84 | - | - | - | - | 81 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 89 | - | 89 | - | - | - |
| Ariz. | - | - | - | 82 | - | - | - | - | 85 | - | - | - | 81 | - | 84 | - | - | - |
| Utah | 84 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 88 | - | 92 | - | 78 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Nev. | 86 | - | - | - | - | 86 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 86 | - | - | - | - |
| Wash. | 74 | - | - | 76 | - | 70 | - | - | 79 | - | - | - | - | - | 80 | - | - | - |
| Oreg. | 76 | - | - | 80 | - | 82 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 73 | 74 | - | - | - | - |
| Calif. | 81 | - | - | 79 | - | 69 | 79 | - | 85 | 85 | 84 | - | - | 84 | - | - | - | - |




U S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

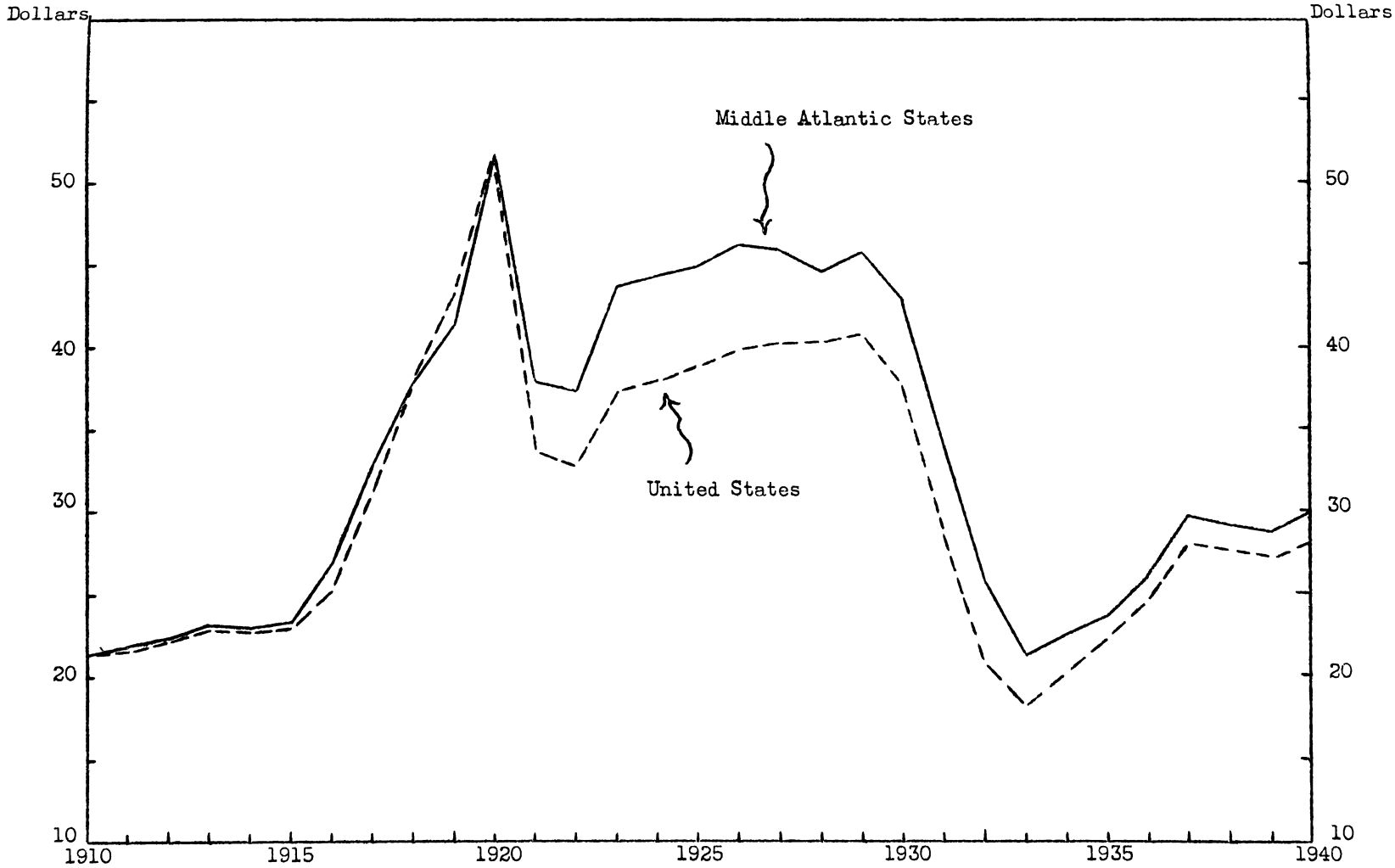
NEG 434 AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

THE SUPPLY OF FARM LABOR ON APRIL 1 WAS REPORTED LOWER THAN A YEAR EARLIER IN ALL SECTIONS OF THE COUNTRY. THE GREATEST DECREASES OCCURRED IN AREAS IN WHICH MILITARY ACTIVITIES OR DEFENSE INDUSTRIES WERE CONCENTRATED.

Middle Atlantic States: Annual average wage rates, by classes, 1910-41

| Year | Per month with board | Per month without board | Per day with board | Per day without board |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Dollars | Dollars | Dollars | Dollars |
| 1910 | 21.19 | 32.27 | 1.17 | 1.57 |
| 1911 | 21.74 | 33.12 | 1.20 | 1.58 |
| 1912 | 22.24 | 33.31 | 1.24 | 1.63 |
| 1913 | 23.11 | 34.54 | 1.30 | 1.71 |
| 1914 | 22.96 | 33.81 | 1.28 | 1.66 |
| 1915 | 23.30 | 34.29 | 1.28 | 1.68 |
| 1916 | 26.94 | 39.05 | 1.53 | 1.96 |
| 1917 | 32.77 | 46.64 | 1.89 | 2.42 |
| 1918 | 37.92 | 55.52 | 2.35 | 3.02 |
| 1919 | 41.45 | 61.90 | 2.59 | 3.31 |
| 1920 | 51.60 | 74.74 | 3.25 | 4.06 |
| 1921 | 37.80 | 56.34 | 2.25 | 2.91 |
| 1922 | 37.34 | 55.29 | 2.30 | 2.97 |
| 1923 | 43.56 | 62.76 | 2.67 | 3.48 |
| 1924 | 44.28 | 64.22 | 2.71 | 3.53 |
| 1925 | 44.91 | 65.12 | 2.72 | 3.54 |
| 1926 | 46.21 | 66.58 | 2.77 | 3.56 |
| 1927 | 45.86 | 67.19 | 2.79 | 3.58 |
| 1928 | 44.54 | 65.72 | 2.71 | 3.48 |
| 1929 | 45.72 | 67.11 | 2.74 | 3.52 |
| 1930 | 42.77 | 63.53 | 2.54 | 3.29 |
| 1931 | 34.10 | 52.85 | 2.02 | 2.71 |
| 1932 | 25.58 | 41.78 | 1.48 | 2.06 |
| 1933 | 21.07 | 35.00 | 1.24 | 1.74 |
| 1934 | 22.49 | 36.95 | 1.37 | 1.90 |
| 1935 | 23.58 | 38.36 | 1.41 | 1.96 |
| 1936 | 25.99 | 41.52 | 1.52 | 2.10 |
| 1937 | 29.71 | 46.63 | 1.79 | 2.39 |
| 1938 | 29.18 | 45.82 | 1.74 | 2.34 |
| 1939 | 28.70 | 45.20 | 1.70 | 2.29 |
| 1940 | 30.00 | 46.61 | 1.77 | 2.37 |
| 1940, Jan. | 27.46 | 43.56 | 1.61 | 2.21 |
| Apr. | 29.05 | 46.22 | 1.68 | 2.29 |
| July | 30.73 | 47.13 | 1.79 | 2.38 |
| Oct. | 30.92 | 47.35 | 1.86 | 2.45 |
| 1941, Jan. | 29.74 | 46.70 | 1.78 | 2.41 |
| Apr. | 33.72 | 52.31 | 1.88 | 2.53 |

Farm wage rates: Per month with board, Middle Atlantic States and United States, 1910-40




Although farm wage rates have shown marked improvement during the first few months of 1941, the general level of farm wage rates is still well below that prevailing during the twenties. In the Middle Atlantic States, wage rates per month with board have been above the level for the country as a whole since 1920. This reflects, among other things, the keener competition for labor in industrialized areas.

SPECIAL TO THIS ISSUE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Of the total number of persons employed on farms May 1, approximately 2,427,000 were hired workers. This estimate was up nearly 300,000 over April 1, but a little more than 100,000 down from a year earlier. This was the first month since January, however, that the number of hired workers failed to equal the number a year earlier.

Compared with May 1, 1940, the decrease in the number of hired hands more than offset minor increases in family workers in New England, East North and West South Central, and Mountain States. Despite these increases, the national total of family workers stayed well below the level of a year ago. This was the sixth consecutive month when the number of family laborers was smaller than a year earlier. The number of family workers employed on May 1 (including farm operators) was estimated at 8,332,000. This was approximately 750,000 workers up from a month earlier, but 79,000 fewer than on May 1 last year. Apparently, the curtailment in the labor supply has not made it necessary to withdraw an unusual number of children from school to assist with spring planting operations.

For the country as a whole, it is difficult to detect any curtailment in agricultural production resulting from the reduction in the farm labor supply. The March prospective planting report showed only mixed changes in the intended total crop acreage. The cows continued to give more milk and the hens continued to lay more eggs on May 1 than on the same date at any time previous in the Nation's history. In the past, farmers have found it possible, in the face of reductions in the supply of farm labor and increasing wage rates, to cut production costs by working longer hours and by calling upon additional members of their families to help with work that had previously been done with hired help.

## Total Employment Up in March

Data now available for March indicate that the total employment of workers in all industries in the United States continued to increase. The rise from February to March amounted to about 750,000 employees, to which agriculture contributed over 450,000 and other industries nearly 300,000 persons. Total employment on farms and in nonagricultural industries was

indicated to be 46,559,000 people, compared with 45,803,000 in February and 44,287,000 in March 1940. These estimates exclude personnel on Work Projects Administration and National Youth Administration projects, enrollees in Civilian Conservation Corps camps, and the military and naval forces. Though employment on farms in March was down somewhat from a year earlier, this decline did not begin to equal the sharp increase in persons working in other industries.

## Farm Labor Supply Sharply Lower

Additional detail is presented this month regarding the sharp reduction in the number of persons in rural areas that were available April 1 for work on farms. (see chart, p.5.) The shift in rural labor supplies to urban employment is reflected in bold relief by geographic areas. Compared with a year ago, the farm labor supply on April 1 was down in about every section of the country. Declines amounted to 30 percent or more in southeastern Michigan and along the Lake Shore eastward to Buffalo. Another sharp decline occurred in the Philadelphia-Wilmington area. The declines were 10 percent or less in western Alabama, Mississippi, and along the Gulf Coast westward to Brownsville. The drop in the farm labor supply also was small in South Carolina, south Florida, and a few other areas scattered throughout the central portion of the country. The average reduction on April 1 compared with a year earlier, as reported by crop correspondents, amounted to 18 percent for the Nation as a whole.

Data regarding the supply of farm labor were not reported by crop correspondents on May 1. Except for the effect of the coal strike in farming areas adjacent to mine fields, the comparisons with a year ago probably differed little from those on April 1. General comments on the labor situation submitted this month by crop correspondents on returned questionnaires indicated that despite the reduction in persons available for hire, ideal weather permitted New England farmers to proceed with their early spring work with a minimum amount of help. May 1 reports from New York State stated that some farms were being abandoned in a few areas where operators had been able to find more renumerative employment elsewhere. With supply down and wage rates up, Jersey asparagus growers were finding it more difficult to obtain labor to handle their crop properly. Scattered reports from Pennsylvania farmers indicate that they are working longer hours this spring. In the North Atlantic States as a whole, however, reports on current farm output indicated that milk production again reached a new seasonal high on May 1.

Correspondents in the East North Central States indicate that further increases in mechanization are enabling farmers to solve the problem of obtaining enough help to handle their spring planting operations. In Ohio, dry soil is the chief cause of the delay in field work. Some Illinois asparagus canners appeared to have been having some difficulty in obtaining help at prevailing wage rates, but growers have been able to get their "grass" to the plant by employing high school boys before and after school. Despite the sharp cut in the Michigan farm labor supply, farmers generally are not behind in their farm work and migrant workers from the South already are appearing in the fruit area. In the beet area, dry soil has slowed preparations and planting of sugar beets.

In the West North Central States, as in the South, the decline in the labor supply has not seriously inconvenienced farmers in their spring planting operations. Spring work has been delayed in many parts of Kansas, but reports indicate that the delay has been due to wet weather rather than to any acute shortage in the labor supply.

Farmers in Maryland and Delaware are facing keen competition for workers in areas adjacent to cantonments and defense industries. Despite a sharp cut in the labor supply, the increase in broiler production on the Eastern Shore appears to have continued with no difficulty experienced in holding labor for this and other profitable farm enterprises. In Virginia, farmers seemed to have been little pressed to date in obtaining sufficient help to plant corn, cotton, peanuts, and soybeans. Orchardists in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia have not shown much concern over the reduction in the labor supply. As the strawberry harvest started in North Carolina, the supply of pickers appeared ample. In Georgia, it was possible to obtain extra workers to assist in thinning the large peach crop anticipated this year. Labor was available in Florida during the week ended May 3 to roll much larger shipments of citrus than occurred a year ago. In the Sanford celery area, correspondents reported the supply of labor as adequate.

In the East South Central States, favorable weather enabled farmers to make rapid progress with their spring work and little difficulty was experienced in obtaining an adequate supply of farm help. Ample labor appeared to be available in Mississippi to harvest early vegetable crops. From Louisiana came scattered reports of a shortage of strawberry pickers, but shipments during the week ended May 3 were more than twice as large as on the same date last year. The demand for labor has been depressed somewhat in Oklahoma and Texas by continuous rainy weather and the resultant delay in spring work.

Reports from the Rocky Mountain States indicate that the reduction in the labor supply has not interfered to any appreciable extent with the planting of spring grains and sheep shearing. Enough labor was obtained to complete the asparagus harvest in southeastern Washington despite the drift of many workers from agricultural communities to shipyards and aircraft factories in the western part of the State. In California, the reduction in the farm labor supply neiher hindered the planting of sugar beets, rice, sorghums, and beans, nor prevented a substantial increase over a year ago in shipments from the large lemon crop.