UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics

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FARM EMPLOYMENT UP SHARPLY DURING MAY; HIGHER THAN A YEAR AGO

More than a million workers were added to the total number of persons employed on farms during May of this year, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics reported today. This increase, of nearly 9 percent, was slightly more than usual. It raised the farm employment total to 12,372,000 persons on June 1, compared with 12,305,000 people estimated to have been working on farms a year earlier.

Sizeable gains in the number of hired hands on farm payrolls largely accounted for the boost in employment totals as of the first of this month. The number of hired workers on farms increased 13 percent during May as compared with a usual seasonal upturn of about 10 percent. More hired hands were working on June 1 than on May 1 in all sections of the country except the Middle Atlantic States. These increases were particularly marked in the South, With cotton chopping rather general, and the oat harvest under way. Early potatoes were being dug in the South Atlantic States. Strawberries were being picked in Kentucky.

Relatively sharp increases in the number of hired workers also were reported for the Rocky Mountain area where beet thinning was in progress on June 1. Upturns were more moderate in the Corn Belt where some late fields were still being planted. Corn was being cultivated, however, over a large part of this area. Soybeans were being planted in many sections. For the country as a whole, the total number of hired hands employed on farms was estimated at 2,929,000 on June 1 as compared with 2,587,000 a month earlier and 2,821,000 a year ago.

Farm Employment: June 1, 1939, with Comparisons

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT

Geographic division	April 1, 1938	May 1, 1938	June 1, 1938	April 1, 1939	May 1, 1939	June 1939
	1,000 persons	1,000 persons	1,000 persons	1,000 persons	1,000 persons	1,000 persons
United States	10,131	11,399	12,305	9,960	11,362	12,372
New England	253	253	266	241	245	269
Middle Atlantic	605	638	641	594	628	628
East.No.Central	1,469	1,587	1,597	1,451	1,551	1,572
West No.Central	1,590	1,711	1,808	1,582	1,751	1,820
South Atlantic	1,988	2,331	2,553	1,975	2,347	2,633
East So.Central	1,665	1,975	2,236	1,603	1,957	2,201
West So.Central	1,630	1,929	2,186	1,573	1,895	2,200
Mountain	404	436	475	415	454	483
Pacific	527	539	543	526	534	566
	FAMILY WORKERS					
United States	7,844	8,783	9,484	7,773	8,775	9,443
New England	163	163	168	161	161	166
Middle Atlantic	412	419	419	410	418	418
East No.Central	1,156	1,223	1,227	1,148	1,207	1,200
West No.Central	1,278	1,357	1,426	1,286	1,373	1,431
South Atlantic	1,511	1,765	1,979	1,496	1,764	1,983
East So.Central	1,441	1,712	1,931	1,386	1,705	1,880
West So.Central	1,298	1,550	1,730	1,268	1,521	1,725
Mountain	286	289	298	290	297	303
Pacific	299	305	306	328	329	329
	HIRED WORKERS					
United States	2,287	2,616	2,821	2,187	2,587	2,929
New England	90	90	98	80	84	103
Middle Atlantic	193	219	222	184	210	210
East No.Central	313	364	370	303	344	364
West No.Central	312	354	382	296	378	389
South Atlantic	477	566	574	479	583	650
East So.Central	224	263	305	217	252	321
West So.Central	332	379	456	305	374	475
Mountain	118	147	177	125	157	180
Pacific	228	234	237	198	205	237

Based on reports from 20,860 persons.

Farm Employment: Numbers of persons employed on the first of each month, South Atlantic States, 1930-38 1/

Date	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
	1,000 persons	1,000 persons	1,000 persons	1,000 persons	1,000 persons	1,000 persons	1,000 persons	1,000 persons	1,000 persons
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT									
Jan. 1	1,613	1,615	1,631	1,616	1,641	1,712	1,695	1,658	1,613
Feb. 1	1,643	1,694	1,749	1,737	1,715	1,731	1,755	1,719	1,669
Mar. 1	1,808	1,841	1,920	1,875	1,803	1,848	1,893	1,807	1,812
Apr. 1	2,057	2,048	2,095	2,093	2,158	2,055	2,124	1,981	1,988
May 1	2,405	2,287	2,353	2,293	2,396	2,336	2,378	2,312	2,331
June 1	2,592	2,531	2,517	2,523	2,638	2,761	2,586	2,639	2,553
July 1	2,496	2,403	2,410	2,418	2,613	2,614	2,474	2,489	2,574
Aug. 1	2,160	2,179	2,235	2,282	2,161	2,421	2,304	2,187	2,240
Sept. 1	2,204	2,223	2,293	2,246	2,197	2,362	2,443	2,287	2,271
Oct. 1	2,428	2,431	2,457	2,430	2,414	2,526	2,464	2,459	2,380
Nov. 1	2,138	2,286	2,221	2,192	2,126	2,495	2,295	2,275	2,144
Dec. 1	1,802	1,791	1,912	1,751	1,739	1,835	1,948	1,805	1,711
Average	2,112	2,111	2,150	2,121	2,133	2,225	2,197	2,135	2,107
FAMILY WORKERS									
Jan. 1	1,230	1,252	1,285	1,274	1,306	1,347	1,355	1,312	1,253
Feb. 1	1,280	1,336	1,356	1,354	1,339	1,349	1,369	1,316	1,276
Mar. 1	1,359	1,383	1,469	1,442	1,408	1,423	1,462	1,374	1,387
Apr. 1	1,551	1,513	1,600	1,613	1,660	1,582	1,603	1,486	1,511
May 1	1,762	1,694	1,780	1,762	1,865	1,783	1,796	1,724	1,765
June 1	1,937	1,895	1,902	1,917	2,019	2,074	1,944	1,989	1,979
July 1	1,858	1,817	1,816	1,870	1,995	1,987	1,896	1,920	1,970
Aug. 1	1,612	1,657	1,740	1,792	1,703	1,887	1,759	1,678	1,711
Sept. 1	1,648	1,701	1,761	1,744	1,720	1,805	1,818	1,722	1,695
Oct. 1	1,791	1,798	1,842	1,855	1,805	1,912	1,836	1,819	1,784
Nov. 1	1,619	1,779	1,680	1,692	1,611	1,899	1,703	1,706	1,626
Dec. 1	1,389	1,415	1,517	1,372	1,360	1,372	1,463	1,349	1,313
Average	1,586	1,603	1,646	1,640	1,649	1,702	1,667	1,616	1,606
HIRED WORKERS									
Jan. 1	383	363	346	342	335	365	340	346	360
Feb. 1	363	358	393	383	376	382	386	403	393
Mar. 1	449	458	451	433	395	425	431	433	425
Apr. 1	506	535	495	480	498	473	521	495	477
May 1	643	593	573	531	531	553	582	588	566
June 1	655	636	615	606	619	687	642	650	574
July 1	638	586	594	548	618	627	578	569	604
Aug. 1	548	522	495	490	458	534	545	509	529
Sept. 1	556	522	532	502	477	557	625	565	576
Oct. 1	637	633	615	575	609	614	628	640	596
Nov. 1	519	507	541	500	515	596	592	569	518
Dec. 1	413	376	395	379	379	463	485	456	398
Average	526	508	504	481	484	523	530	519	501

1/Data from 1930 to 1936 based on estimates of Shaw, E.E., and Hopkins, J.A., Trends in Employment in Agriculture, 1909-36, Works Progress Administration, National Research Project Report No. A-8, Philadelphia, Pa., 1938.

The number of family workers on farms also increased rather sharply fr May 1 to June 1, although the rise this year was not materially different fro the usual seasonal change. The ending of school terms in many sections of th country during May had released considerable number of persons for farm work. Approximately 9,443,000 family workers (including farm operators) are estimat to have been working on farms June 1 as compared with 8,775,000 on the first May. This was 41,000 less than the estimate for June 1, 1938. Only in the South Atlantic, West North Central, and the Far Western States were the June 1 estimates of employment of family workers larger than a year ago.

FARM EMPLOYMENT DOWN LAST YEAR IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC STATES

Employment on farms in the South Atlantic States averaged 2,107,000 persons in 1938, according to a regional study made by the Bureau. This was 28,000 persons, or a little over 1 percent less than a year earlier.

Total farm employment tended to increase in this area from 1930 to 193 but has declined slightly each year since that time. This trend was determin primarily by changes in the number of family workers actively employed. Cens figures indicate that the number of farms increased rapidly in States along t Atlantic Seaboard during the first half of the present decade when activity i the mining and manufacturing industries was depressed seriously. Miners and other industrial workers living on the land began to till the soil more assid ously as their income from usual occupational sources decreased. This brough many new properties into farm operations and in almost every year during the early thirties, the total number of farm family workers (including operators) increased. This trend was reversed after 1935, the average number of family workers declining from 1,702,000 in that year to 1,606,000 persons in 1938.

Changes in the number of hired hands in this area, however, apparentl have followed more closely the shifts in the fortunes of commercial agricult Beginning with an estimated average of 526,000 hired workers on South Atlanti farms in 1930, the number dwindled to only 481,000 in 1933. A rather sharp recovery from this low point was experienced during the next 3 years, but em ployment of hired labor on farms again tended downward in 1937 and 1938. Las year, the number of hired farm workers in this area averaged only 501,000 as compared with 530,000 in 1936.