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FARM POPULATION - ESTIMATES FOR 1965

JUN 1 - 1966

Human Resources Branch
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Economic Research Service

CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

The population living on farms in the United States numbered about 12,363,000 in April 1965 (table 1). From a statistical standpoint, this figure is not significantly different from the estimate of 12,954,000 for 1964. The chances are about one out of five that a decline of this magnitude or greater would have been obtained from the sample on which the annual estimates are based, even if no actual change had occurred in the farm population between 1964 and 1965. However, the annual surveys have shown declines in every year since 1955. Although a decline was estimated for all the major geographic regions and divisions of the Nation in 1964-65, their relative position has remained about the same as in 1960. Among the regions, the South, with 45 percent of the total, has the largest farm population. The North Central Region contains 38 percent, and the Northeast and West have less than 10 percent each. 1/

Nearly 1 million farm people of all ages either moved away from farms during 1964-65 or lived on places that were removed from the farm category during the year because agricultural production ceased. Actual migration is the larger of these two components, although the exact proportion is not known. Population loss through outmigration and cessation of farming was partly offset by the 275,000 persons who moved to farms or were on places that became farms during the year. Thus, the estimated net loss to the farm population from migration and reclassification of residence was 703,000 persons. Natural increase (the excess of births over deaths) partly countered this net loss by 112,000.

Because the estimated farm population change from one year to another fluctuates in part from sampling variation, averages for a period of several years are deemed more reliable than those from one year to the next. For the 5-year period 1960-65, the average annual net loss to the farm population through migration and reclassification of residence was 794,000, or an annual rate of 5.7 percent of the base population (table 2). The absolute annual amount of net farm migration was smaller than it was in the 1950's when the farm population was larger. However, the annual rate for 1960-65 was very high. It was almost equal to the 5.8 percent rate during 1940-45, when military service and high employment following a period of economic depression fostered rapid migration off the farm.

The annual rate of net loss through outmigration and reclassification for 1960-65 ranged from a low of 4.6 percent in the East North Central States to 7.1 in the Mountain States and 8.1 in New England.

Definitions.--The estimates presented in this report relate to the rural civilian population living on farms, regardless of occupation. According to the definition adopted for the 1960 Census of Population, farm population consists of persons residing on places of 10 acres or more from which at least \$50 worth of farm products were sold in the preceding year, and on places of less than 10 acres from which

1/ States in geographic divisions are listed at bottom of table 2.

Table 1.--Farm population and components of farm population change for the United States, regions, and divisions, April 1964-65 ^{1/}

Area	Farm population, April 1965		Natural increase		Change through migration and reclassification of residence ^{2/}		Farm population, April 1964	
	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.
United States	12,363	112	234	-121	-703	-703	0	12,954
Regions: ^{4/}								
Northeast	883	7	17	-10	-54	-54	4	925
North Central	4,682	41	87	-46	-235	-235	3	4,873
South	5,622	51	106	-55	-338	-338	-14	5,923
West	1,176	13	23	-10	-75	-75	7	1,233
Divisions: ^{4/}								
New England	160	1	3	-2	-17	-17	2	173
Middle Atlantic	723	6	14	-8	-37	-37	2	752
East North Central	2,345	18	41	-23	-105	-105	2	2,430
West North Central	2,337	23	46	-23	-130	-130	1	2,443
South Atlantic	2,248	22	44	-22	-130	-130	-8	2,364
East South Central	1,994	17	37	-20	-118	-118	-1	2,096
West South Central	1,380	12	25	-13	-90	-90	-5	1,463
Mountain	511	7	11	-4	-36	-36	4	537
Pacific	665	6	12	-6	-39	-39	3	696

^{1/} Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand without being adjusted to group totals.

^{2/} Includes persons who have not moved but who were in or out of the farm population because agricultural operations on the places where they were living either ceased or were begun.

^{3/} Net change in farm population of regions or divisions due to farm-to-farm movement.

^{4/} Similar estimates for States are not available. For States included in each region and division, see table 2.

Table 2.--Annual averages of components of farm population change and rate of net migration for the United States, regions, and divisions, April 1960-65 ^{1/}

Area	Natural increase			Change through migration and reclassification			Annual rate of net migration ^{4/}
	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	
United States	139	272	-133	-794	301	-1,095	0
Regions: ^{2/}							
Northeast	9	20	-11	-59	25	-83	3
North Central	52	102	-50	-284	99	-383	1
South	64	124	-60	-371	132	-492	-12
West	15	27	-12	-84	45	-137	8
Divisions: ^{5/}							
New England	1	4	-2	-17	7	-24	1
Middle Atlantic	7	16	-9	-41	18	-59	1
East North Central	23	47	-25	-119	48	-167	1
West North Central	29	55	-26	-165	51	-216	0
South Atlantic	27	51	-24	-133	46	-179	-12
East South Central	21	43	-22	-115	43	-158	-5
West South Central	16	30	-14	-111	43	-154	5
Mountain	8	13	-5	-44	20	-64	3
Pacific	7	14	-7	-47	25	-73	5

^{1/}, ^{2/}, and ^{3/} same as table 1. ^{4/} Based on annual average net change in population through migration per 100 persons in the average April farm population for the period indicated. ^{5/} Similar estimates for States are not available.

States in the geographic areas are: NORTHEAST: New England: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut; Middle Atlantic: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania; NORTH CENTRAL: East North Central: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin; West North Central: Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas; SOUTH: South Atlantic: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida; East South Central: Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi; West South Central: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas; WEST: Mountain: Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada; Pacific: Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii.

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at least \$250 worth of products were sold. Persons living on what might be considered farmland are classed as nonfarm if they rent for cash a house and yard only. Likewise, persons in institutions, summer camps, motels, and tourist camps located in the open country are also classed as nonfarm. Unmarried persons attending college away from home, and whose usual place of residence is a farm, are treated as farm residents in the surveys, although this procedure is different from that used in the decennial census.

Sources and limitations.--Annual estimates of the number of people living on farms in the United States as a whole are obtained from the Current Population Survey of the Bureau of the Census. As these estimates are based on sample data, they are subject to sampling variability. The relative degree of sampling error of the estimated farm population of the United States is about 3 percent. The chances are about 68 out of 100 that an estimate of the total farm population from the sample would differ from a complete census by less than 3 percent. The chances are about 95 out of 100 that the difference would be less than twice this percentage, and about 99 out of 100 that it would be less than 2-1/2 times the percentage.

Data for geographic areas and for components of farm population change are based on a mail-questionnaire survey conducted for

the Economic Research Service by the Statistical Reporting Service. This survey was conducted in every State except Hawaii. Information was obtained from 22,722 respondents in 1965, reporting on 89,920 farms. ^{2/}Area estimates are tied to benchmark figures for decennial census years and adjusted to conform to the total farm population estimate obtained annually by the Bureau of the Census.

The reliability of any geographic area estimate depends on the reliability of both the U.S. estimate discussed above and the mail survey data. The reliability of data from the mail survey alone cannot be assessed in terms of sampling error. It depends in part upon State-to-State variations in the size and representativeness of the mailing list, as well as upon variations in rate, representativeness, and accuracy of returns.

Earlier comparable reports.--Estimates for earlier years on number, migration, and natural increase of farm people were published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Farm Population Estimates for 1910-62, ERS-130, October 1963; Farm Population Estimates for 1963, ERS-177, July 1964; and Farm Population Estimates for 1964, ERS-233, June 1967.

^{2/} Each respondent reported for his own farm and for adjoining farms.