Labor - wages, Agricultural

Various

1975

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL LABOR MANAGEMENT AMONG GEORGIA FARMERS

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Introduction

For several years adjustments in the farm labor input have been highly sensitive to proliferations of technological innovations, justifying rapid substitutions of capital for labor. This trend has characterized restructuring of agricultural production throughout the United States, but it is particularly true of Georgia and Southeastern agriculture over the past decade. Although farm industry restructuring made it economically feasible for Georgia farmers to release large quantities of hired farm labor, the state still remains heavily labor intensive. In addition, increased mechanization of various row crops has altered the type of farm worker needed. Technically skilled workers are needed to operate massive and complicated motorized units for which opportunity-cost compensation must be assured.

Most labor has become highly mobile in response to higher wage incentives, cutting sharply into available reservoirs of workers for the farm industry. Only the more successful farm operators have been able to make appropriate resource shifts and retain needed labor resources. Other farm operators have drastically cut their input of hired labor, become part-time farmers, submitting to the lure of steady off-farm jobs themselves, or completely exited their occupations.

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Paper presented at AAEA annual meeting, Columbus, Aug. 10-13, 1975.

In the midst of this scene, Georgia farmers, like their counterparts across the country, are encountering new pressures in their acquisition and management of labor. This study investigates current problems in the use of labor on Georgia farms.

Objective

The objective of this paper is to highlight farm labor management relationships from a recent survey of Georgia farmers. In particular, the study (1) describes labor use and management practices by economic class of farm, (2) measures perceived labor scarcity, and (3) appraises factors which would contribute to acquisition and retention of labor.

Data

A total of 123 responses were obtained from questionnaires mailed to 400 Georgia farmers randomly distributed across the state. The questionnaire addressed farm operator experiences in the acquisition, use, and overall management of hired and family labor inputs for 1974 and current farm labor problems. The 31 percent response represents a well-dispersed allocation of farmers among the seven selected economic classes (Table 1). All but 12 respondents were willing to identify their category of gross farm proceeds, which greatly facilitated cross-classification of economic classes with variables pertaining to acquisition and utilization of labor inputs. The following section identifies available labor and labor requirements by focusing on characteristics of sample operators and their farming practices.

Farm Structural Characteristics

Total sales reported by Georgia farmers in 1974 appeared directly related to acreage operated and value of assets. Average acreage farmed by large commercial farmers (those reporting sales over $20,000)

Table 1. Assets and Land Owne ship, by Economic Class of Farms, Georgia, 1974

Economic Class of Farms (Value of Sales)	Number Identifying Sales	Value of ssets	Acres (Average)			
			Owned	Rented In	Rented Out	Total
Under 2,500	25	97,542	140.3	13.2	6.7	160.2
2,500-5,000	13	76,778	224.7	14.0	6.9	245.6
5,000-10,000	14	47,784	219.0	9.3	43.9	272.2
10,000-20,000	11	03,000	201.8	97.5	0	299.3
20,000-40,000	13	21,667	440.3	156.8	7.7	604.8
40,000-100,000	24	70,869	476.7	192.3	4.3	673.2
Over 100,000	11	68,500	761.9	217.3	0	979.2
No Sales Response	12	08,333	235.0	14.7	0	249.7
Total (or average)	123	30,428	327.2	89.6	8.7	425.5

were more than double that of the next lowest sales category (Table 1). Farmers in economic classes with over $20,000 of gross farm sales rent-in approximately one-fourth of their farmland and own the other three-fourths. Very little land was rented-out by farmers in these categories, the incidence increasing with amount of part-time and part-retirement farming, i.e., in the lower sales categories. Average assets ranged from about $77,000 to $148,000 for farms with up to $20,000 in sales. Average assets increased abruptly for each sales category above $20,000, to well over a half million dollars for farms with proceeds exceeding $100,000. Assets across all respondents averaged almost a quarter million dollars in 1974. Georgia farms averaged almost a hundred acres greater in 1974 than that reported in the 1969 agricultural census (327 vs. 234 acres).

Ninety-two farm operators reported beef cattle enterprises in 1974, by far the most frequently produced commodity (Table 2). Sixty-six operators produced corn during the year and approximately a third produced hogs, soybeans, peanuts and other grain. These were the more popular enterprises among both small and large farms. Farmers were also asked to identify their principal enterprise in 1974 and beef cattle again emerged at the top, followed by peanuts and tobacco. Smaller farms tended to specialize in one or two commodities, generally those requiring low labor input. The data implied much heavier diversification of enterprises, however, as value of sales increased. This allows, of course, the spreading and more efficient use of labor and equipment supplies over more activities on a year-round basis, reducing total fixed cost per unit of production.

Table 2. Commodities Produced and Principal Enterprise, by Economic Class of Farms, Georgia, 1974

COMMODITY	Economic Class of Farms (Value of Sales)[a]																	
	Under 2,500		2,500 to 5,000		5,000 to 10,000		10,000 to 20,000		20,000 to 40,000		40,000 to 100,000		Over 100,000		No Sales Response		Total	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Beef Cattle	20	9	10	3	12	7	10	1	12	0	17	1	6	0	5	1	92	22
Hogs	1	0	2	1	2	0	5	2	7	2	11	2	2	0	2	1	32	8
Soybeans	1	0	3	1	3	1	5	2	6	2	11	2	5	0	1	0	35	8
Peanuts	0	0	2	0	1	0	3	1	7	2	13	2	6	4	1	1	33	14
Cotton	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	3	0	3	1	1	0	11	2
Tobacco	0	0	3	3	1	0	2	1	4	2	9	5	2	1	0	0	21	12
Corn	5	0	9	1	4	1	7	2	11	1	18	3	8	0	4	0	66	8
Dairy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	4	4	0	0	8	6
Grain	0	0	3	1	3	0	2	0	6	0	10	1	8	0	1	0	33	2
Vegetables	4	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	4	0	1	0	2	0	17	0
Broilers	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	0	8	3
Eggs	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	7	3
Fruit	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
Pecans	3	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	4	0	7	0	6	0	0	0	23	1
Hay	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	8	0
Timber	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
Sheep	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

[a]First column in each class represents commodities produced in 1974. The second column represents principal enterprises.

Operators in the Georgia farm survey averaged 57 years of age, 10.8 years of formal schooling, 18 hours per week of off-farm work in 1974, and 45 hours per week on-farm (Table 3). Operators worked an average of 48 weeks per year compared to approximately 40 for other family workers. Hours per week steadily increased with size of farm but weeks per year were generally uniform across all classes. Small farmers in Georgia tended to be the oldest, averaging over 60 years -- some 10 years older than the average for larger commercial farmers. Larger farmers also tended to be better educated with at least a high school education. These patterns are consistent with national socio-economic characteristics of farm operators, reflecting the willingness and ability of larger operators to build businesses involving large sums of financial and natural resources. Hours of off-farm work are predictably greater among smaller farm operators, steadily diminishing to zero off-farm work in the largest size farms. Hours and weeks of labor input by other family members also appear directly related to economic class of farms in Georgia.

Labor Scarcity

Operators were asked to identify special worker skills which were in shortest supply in their geographic area (Table 4). Operatives -- tractor drivers and combine-harvester operators -- emerged as the greatest skill need, particularly by large commercial farms on which heavy mechanization predominates. Workers for common labor chores were the next most cited need. Interestingly, these skills were also in shortest supply, apparently reflecting a growing need for

Table 3. Work Experiences and Demographic Characteristics of Georgia Farm Operators and Families By Economic Class of Farms, 1974

CHARACTERISTIC	Economic Class of Farms (Value of Sales)							
	Under 2,500	2,500 to 5,000	5,000 to 10,000	10,000 to 20,000	20,000 to 40,000	40,000 to 100,000	Over 100,000	No Sales Response
Operator:								
Hrs./Wk.	33.6	34.8	31	51	49.7	50	67	45.3
Wks./Yr.	50.7	45	48	47.7	45	47	51	44.8
Age	61.5	61	60	53	56	52	50	59.9
Education	10.3	10	10.8	9.8	11	11.6	13.2	10
Hrs./Wk. off Farm	25.9	20	24	8.75	19	11	0	15
Other Family Members								
1. Hrs./Wk.	22.7	15.5	7	18	31	31	52	13.3
Wks./Yr.	42.16	31	31	29.5	47.3	46	45	40
2. Hrs./Wk.	--	21	--	20	28	20	35	60
Wks./Yr.	--	52	--	26	48	43	40	18
3. Hrs./Wk.	--	--	--	20	40	33	36	5
Wks./Yr.	--	--	--	26	45	50	52	50

Table 4. Skills Posessed and In Shortest Supply by Full-Time Hired Workers, by Economic Class of Farm, Georgia, 1974.

SKILLS POSESSED BY FULL-TIME WORKERS	Economic Class of Farms (Value of Sales) Under 2,500	2,500 to 5,000	5,000 to 10,000	10,000 to 20,000	20,000 to 40,000	40,000 to 100,000	Over 100,000	No Sales Response	Total
1. Mechanics		1				2	1		4
2. Welders					1	1			2
3. Tractor Drivers		2	3	1	5	6	4	3	24
4. Herdsmen					1		1		2
5. Combine & Harvester Operators			1		4	4	4	3	16
6. Overseers of Planting						2			2
7. Common Laborers	1		1	1	4	6	1	1	15
8. Misc. Skilled Laborers		1	1	1	1	2	2		8
9. Carpenters						1			1
10. Other Machine Operators							1		1
11. Timber Operations					1				1
12. Chemical Applicators									0
LABOR SKILLS IN SHORT SUPPLY									
1. Mechanics	1				1	1	1	1	5
2. Welders						2			2
3. Tractor Drivers	2		1		3	2	5	2	15
4. Herdsmen				1		1		1	3
5. Combine & Harvester Operators						2			2
6. Overseers of Planting									0
7. Common Laborers	1		2	3	2	3		1	12
8. Misc. Skilled Laborers	4	2		1	3	4	1		15
9. Carpenters						1			1
10. Other Machine Operators	1		1		2	3	1		8
11. Timber Operations									0
12. Chemical Applicators						1			1

competence in the operation of large expansive machinery. The tone of these answers definitely reflected a need for development of technical operative skills in various farming areas of the state. Few responses on skill needs were offered by smaller farmers, reflecting their relatively low need for specific skills.

To further identify the extent of labor scarcity, farmers were asked how additional labor would be utilized. Only one-third of the operators indicated a desire to expand their operations by adding more of the same type of labor if it was available (Table 5). Except for six in the lowest economic class, nearly all were farmers grossing over $20,000 in sales. Since their current use of hired labor was predominantly in technically skilled areas, this may reflect restrictive use of larger, more technical machinery because of the non-availability of worker skills. If current hired labor costs were to increase, over three-fourths of the operators indicated they would cut back production. Well over half of these, however, were smaller farmers whose labor needs are less complimentary to machinery used than on larger, mechanized farms. A few of the larger farmers planned to shift to less labor intensive crops and/or the use of larger equipment.

Operators were asked to specify enterprises they would alter production of if more labor were available at current compensation rates (Table 6). Essentially all respondents were farmers producing over $20,000 of gross sales, who indicated probable shifts to livestock enterprises, particularly beef cattle and hogs. Expected alterations in crop enterprises were mainly soybeans, tobacco and grains. Four small operators indicated a probable shift into beef cattle production, reflecting the complimentarity between this enterprise and off-farm work.

Table 5. Labor Availability and Effects on Production, by Economic Class of Farms, Georgia, 1974

QUESTION & RESPONSE	Economic Class of Farms (Value of Sales)								
Do you try to pay competitive wages?	Under 2,500	2,500 to 5,000	5,000 to 10,000	10,000 to 20,000	20,000 to 40,000	40,000 to 100,000	Over 100,000	No Sales Response	Total
Yes	7	3	8	4	6	9	10	5	52
No	8	5	0	5	5	8	1	0	32
Is Labor Available at Current Wages?									
Yes	1	0	2	1	2	5	5	2	18
No	14	11	5	6	10	18	5	4	73
Would you expand if more of same labor were available?									
Yes	6	0	1	1	5	13	5	1	32
No	11	11	7	7	7	9	4	4	60
Production Effects of Scarce and/or Higher-Cost Labor									
1. Cut back product; can't afford labor	7	2	3	3	4	6	2	0	27
2. Avoid high labor-type crops	1		1			3		0	5
3. More equipment (instead of hiring labor)					1			0	1
4. Don't expand					1		1	0	2

Table 6. Probable Enterprise Expansions With Increases in Farm Labor Supply by Economic Class of Farms, Georgia

ENTERPRISES	Economic Class of Farms (Value of Sales)							No Sales Response	Total
	Under 2,500	2,500 to 5,000	5,000 to 10,000	10,000 to 20,000	20,000 to 40,000	40,000 to 100,000	Over 100,000		
Beef Cattle	3	0	1	0	1	4	0	0	9
Hogs	0	0	0	0	2	4	1	0	7
Soybeans	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	5
Peanuts	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Cotton	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Tobacco	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	5
Corn	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
Dairy	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Grain	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	4
Vegetables	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Broilers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eggs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fruit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pecans	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hay	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Timber	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sheep	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Labor Management Practices

A major objective of this study was to survey current farm operator experiences in acquisition and management of labor. Farm-related programs over the past two or three decades have focused heavily on broad price and income support schemes, benefiting commercial farmers with large asset bases. Low farm income problems have often been rationalized as an over-abundance of labor resources competing for limited marketing proceeds. Thus, smaller farmers have been forced into part-time farming, out of farming, or to relinquish most or all of their hired labor. Employment opportunities in farming have thus become fragmented and seasonal. These survey results identify further dimensions of these labor problems.

Over two-thirds of the survey respondents indicated a strong feeling of family farm security, with most future labor needs being met by family members, provided strong economic and social incentives can be maintained. Current farming practices in Georgia bear this out, with 62 percent of all labor contributed by family workers. Farms grossing up to $10,000 sales in 1974 drew three-fourths of their labor needs from family members, compared to family worker contributions of approximately one-half in the large commercial farm categories (exceeding $20,000 gross sales). Almost 90 percent of the labor input was supplied by family members in the middle sales category, reflecting perhaps the minimum proceeds necessary to sustain a farm family. Heavier non-family labor inputs in the large commercial sales categories followed predictable patterns (Table 7).

Table 7. Work Experience and Compensation of Hired and Family Labor, by Economic Class of Farms, Georgia, 1974

USAGE AND COMPENSATION	Economic Class of Farms (Value of Sales)								
	Under 2,500	2,500 to 5,000	5,000 to 10,000	10,000 to 20,000	20,000 to 40,000	40,000 to 100,000	Over 100,000	No Sales Response	Total
Labor (Hours)									
Family	1547	1374	1128	3066	2667	3816	5810	1134	2535
Full-Time Hired	535	336	297	88	1054	1454	5152	954	1128
Part-Time Hired	54	31	0	324	1845	391	1056	78	419
Total	2136	1740	1425	3478	5566	5661	12,017	2166	4082
Percent Family	72	79	79	88	48	67	48	52	62
Wages (Hourly)									
Full-Time Hired	3.00	2.00	3.00	1.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	4.00
Part-Time Hired	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Perquisites	0.24	0.14	0.22	0.12	0.31	0.17	0.47	0.54	0.37
Wages (Weekly)									
Full-Time Hired	92.50	85.00	60.00	40.00	88.33	84.38	110.00	80.00	81.30
Perquisites	12.00	.96	4.64	4.06	10.09	24.04	20.77	23.86	13.21
Total	104.50	85.96	64.64	44.06	98.42	108.42	130.77	103.86	94.51

Compensation

Reflecting knowledge of labor demand and supply conditions, over 60 percent of the operators indicated an attempt to pay hired workers a competitive wage, while 32 of the 84 responding to this question said they made no attempt to offer a competitive rate. Over half of the latter respondents were operators in the four lower class farms. Over 80 percent of respondents indicated a lack of labor at their current rate of compensation, with this response uniformly spread across all farm sizes.

Hours compensation for full-time hired workers varied considerably across economic classes, with wages exceeding $2.00 per hour in all but the middle category. In two of the three lowest sales classes, full-time workers were paid over $3.00 per hour. Hourly wages for part-time workers were also highest in the lower sales categories, averaging approximately $2.00 per hour across all respondents. The value of perrequisites furnished, on an hourly basis, appeared directly related to size of farming operation, reaching almost fifty cents per hour on the larger farms. Weekly compensation was highest on the larger farms, but no definite pattern evolved across the sales categories. The smaller farmers enumerated may be employed full-time elsewhere in relatively high paying jobs and are able to pay a full-time worker to maintain their farming activities. Average total wages across all respondents were slightly under one hundred dollars per week, considerably less than opportunity-cost wages earned by comparable workers in non-farm occupations.

Forces Affecting Labor Acquisition and Retention

Farm operators were asked to identify major problems in hiring and keeping farm labor, to which over one hundred responded. Eight categories of hiring responses and four categories of labor retention problems were identified (Table 8). The most frequently cited problem in hiring farm labor was finding competent workers at wages manageable for the operator. Twenty respondents indicated a general scarcity of labor for farm work, apparently at any wage rate. Competitive problems from business and industry were cited by a few farmers, particularly those in the lower economic classes. Large commercial farmers appeared to have difficulty in finding competent labor at "reasonable" wages, and a few farmers also indicated problems in finding any labor. Loss of work incentives because of the national welfare system was identified as an important problem by all farmers.

Retention problems appeared directly related to hiring problems, with hard work at low pay the most frequently cited problem. Respondents apparently realized the wage discrepancy between farm and non-farm workers. A large number have undoubtedly participated in other occupations and know their non-farm competition.

Although welfare system effects were considered significant by farm operators, manufacturing and textile employments were by far the most frequently cited competitors for farm labor (Table 9). Larger farm operators cited these two competitors almost exclusive of others. Tertiary industries, i.e., various government jobs, utilities and food processing, apparently require much higher skill levels than those by farm operators and therefore offer little competition to Georgia farmers. In fact, the paucity of tertiary industries in some towns

Table 8. Problems in Hiring and Keeping Farm Labor, by Economic Class of Farms, Georgia, 1974

PROBLEMS IN HIRING LABOR	Economic Class of Farms (Value of Sales)								
	Under 2,500	2,500 to 5,000	5,000 to 10,000	10,000 to 20,000	20,000 to 40,000	40,000 to 100,000	Over 100,000	No Sales Response	Total
1. Keeping Records		1		1					2
2. Finding Competent Labor	7	2	1	5	4	9	4		32
3. Labor Wants More Than I Can Pay	7	6	2	3	3	4	2	2	29
4. Welfare Payments Exceed My Wages	1		3	2	1	4			11
5. Competition From Business & Industry	4				1	3	1		9
6. General Scarcity	7	2	3		3	2	1	2	20
7. Need Labor for Long Hours in Peak Season	1		1			2	1		5
8. Labor Wants Part-Time Work				1					1
PROBLEMS IN KEEPING LABOR									
1. Competition From Business & Industry	1		3	2	1	4	2	1	14
2. Wages are Less Than Welfare	1			3	2	7	2		15
3. Hardwork at Low Pay	8	3	2	2	5	5	2	1	28
4. Can't Afford Full-Time Worker	5	3	1		2	3	2		16

Table 9. Major Industries Competing for Farm Labor, by Economic Class of Farms, Georgia, 1974

	Economic Class of Farms (Value of Sales)								
COMPETING EMPLOYMENTS	Under 2,500	2,500 to 5,000	5,000 to 10,000	10,000 to 20,000	20,000 to 40,000	40,000 to 100,000	Over 100,000	No Sales Response	Total
1. Government Facilities			1		1	1	1		4
2. Manufacturing	5	2	2	3	5	13	4	2	36
3. Utilities							1		1
4. Agri-business	3		1		1	1	1		7
5. Textile	7	2	2	3	3	6	3	3	29
6. Food Processing					1	1			2
7. Pulpwood		2	1	2		1			6
8. Milking	2	1		2		1	3		9
9. Welfare		1					2		3

and cities of the state may well be related to their inability to use-low skilled labor released from farming.

A large variety of responses were given by farm operators when asked their advice on how best to retain full-time workers (Table 10). An overwhelming number indicated good year-round wages and generous non-cash benefits as the best appeasements. Several of the larger farmers indicated equitable treatment of workers, in all respects, as a very important retention factor. Even the smaller farmers recognized these three forces as most important. Responses appeared to reflect a strong desire by workers for humane treatment and competitive compensation for their input.

Incentive Plans

Only a fourth of the respondents indicated the use of any type plan for paying hired labor based partially on incentive arrangements (Table 11). Responses by smaller farmers indicated tenant-type arrangements. Farmers grossing over $20,000 sales, representing over three-fourths of the incentive arrangements reported, appeared to be using bonuses and percentage shares of output as main incentive-type contracts. All answers to this question are given in Table 11, since only eighteen farmers reported the use of incentive contracts. In view of difficulties reflected earlier in obtaining and holding needed farm labor at current wage rates, this hodge-podge of answers seems to partially reflect the need for uniform incentive contract alternatives which larger operators might use as supplementary compensation to reward worker efficiency.

Table 10. Advice Offered by Farmers in Retention of Hired Workers, by Economic Class of Farms, Georgia, 1974

ADVICE	Economic Class of Farms (Value of Sales)							No Sales Response	Total
	Under 2,500	2,500 to 5,000	5,000 to 10,000	10,000 to 20,000	20,000 to 40,000	40,000 to 100,000	Over 100,000		
Explain reasons for doing things	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3
Allow some latitude production	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Salary based on production and efficiency	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	0	6
Treat as equals, fairly, etc.	2	1	0	1	5	4	2	1	16
Good pay	5	1	4	1	3	8	3	3	28
Benefits (house, land, time off etc.)	6	2	1	2	3	7	4	2	27
Good pay all year	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Strict instructions, often	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
Make them feel needed (ask advice, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Work with workers	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Work as conditions permit	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Get settled workers	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Keep him away from welfare	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
"Live-in" - takes more interest	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Table 11. Labor Incentive Plans Reported by Georgia Farmers, by Economic Class of Farms, 1974.

Economic Class of Farms (Value of Sales)	No.	LABOR INCENTIVE PLANS
Under 2,500	1	Pay cash on farm products (last year's cash plus a feeder calf)
2,500-5,000	1	One Half of Crop
5,000-10,000	1	Answered yes, no particulars
10,000-20,000	1	Use of Equipment
20,000-40,000	1	Percent of Product
	2	Bonus - Based Somewhat on Income of Crops
	3	Bonus - At End; Based on Profit
	4	Answered Yes, No Particulars
	5	Bonus
40,000-100,000	1	Contracts by Job
	2	Answered yes, No particulars
Over 100,000	1	Percent Crop for Doing Work Equal to Family Members
	2	50¢/head, Hog; 50¢/Head Cattle; $1/Ton Peanuts
	3	5 Acres with Land; Equipment and Pay While Working
	4	Fair Salary; 3% of Milk Over Last Year's Average
	5	Percent of Profits [Undefined to Worker; if Profit Up, Bonus Up ($1,000 Last Year)]
	6	5 Acres of Peanuts - Rent Free
No Sales Response	1	Percent of Turpentine
No. of Respondents	18	

Summary and Implications

Results of this survey of Georgia farm operators indicate a growing frustration with both the market conditions gauging availability of skilled and unskilled farm labor and the unwillingness of unskilled people to take farm work, even when their alternative appears to be welfare assistance. Based on these responses, representing a cross-section of commercial farmers in Georgia, an acute shortage of all types of farm labor appears eminent. A major problem is the inability of farmers to pay potential workers their opportunity cost in competitive non-farm employment. With the steady movement of secondary and tertiary industries into rural areas, farm labor problems appear to be worsening rather than subsiding.

Disappearance of the dual farm- nonfarm economy of bygone years will result in all workers demanding equitable employment conditions and amenities, including conventional fringe benefits, e.g., vacation time, insurance packages, and unemployment benefits. Imposition of federal mandates on farm operations in some of these areas will undoubtedly assure such coverages in the near future. In the meantime, larger operators will continue to make year-by-year resource adjustments to assure capital-labor ratios consistent with product prices and production costs.

Summary and Implications

Results of this survey of Georgia farm operators indicate a growing frustration with both the market conditions gauging availability of skilled and unskilled farm labor and the unwillingness of unskilled people to take farm work, even when their alternative appears to be welfare assistance. Based on these responses, representing a cross-section of commercial farmers in Georgia, an acute shortage of all types of farm labor appears eminent. A major problem is the inability of farmers to pay potential workers their opportunity cost in competitive non-farm employment. With the steady movement of secondary and tertiary industries into rural areas, farm labor problems appear to be worsening rather than subsiding.

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