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SEASONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR LABOR IN AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

Agriculture in the United States is a highly seasonal occupation and the requirements for labor on farms vary greatly according to the farming operations performed during each period of the year. This seasonal variation in the amount of labor required is significant on the majority of farms even though agriculture has a large labor force directly attached to it which is for the most part resident on the farm and available throughout the year. Seasonal increases in the amount of labor needed are met by a more intensive application of effort by the family and hired labor already on farms and by the employment of additional hired labor.

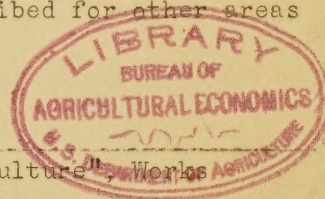
The type of farming practiced determines for each geographic region of the United States the seasonality of agricultural operations and, therefore, both the degree of variation in labor requirements and the particular months of heaviest needs. Types of farming, described according to the principal crops grown or livestock products produced, have been regionalized and mapped by the Department of Agriculture. For nine of the major regions a calendar of operations has been prepared and is given in Figure 1.

The United States total of seasonal labor needs is shown in the first chart of Figure 2. Also given in Figure 2, as an illustration of the differences between regions, are the patterns for the corn, cotton, and small grain regions. There are two periods of peak seasonal requirements in the United States as a whole, one in May-June-July during the planting and cultivating seasons, and a second in September-October during the harvest season. For the cotton region there appear two greatly accentuated peaks representing the chopping and the picking periods in cotton growing; for the wheat and small grain region there is a single peak occurring during harvest; in the Corn Belt, a double peak prevails with the heaviest labor requirements in the earlier, mid-summer period.

The accompanying map, "Periods of Peak Seasonal Labor Requirements in Agriculture in the United States," presents a generalized description of seasonal labor needs, regionalized according to type-of-farming areas. For purposes of simplification the detailed type-of-farming areas have been classified into nine labor-peak regions, each of which the pattern of labor requirements is fairly uniform. The third region, for example, has a May-June and September-October divided peak and comprises the Cotton Belt and the field bean, sugar beet, and Ozark fruit areas.

In each area there are individual farms which differ from the prevailing type of farming and therefore from the prevailing pattern of labor requirements. Such farms have labor peaks similar to those which are described for other areas in which their type of farming is generally followed.

Note: Figures 1 and 2 are from "Seasonal Employment in Agriculture," *U. S. Department of Agriculture*, Progress Administration, 1938



Articles in the Bill of Rights in a right manner... regulations for the service of the army... the service of the army... the service of the army...

The object of these regulations is to provide for the... the service of the army... the service of the army...

The regulations are intended to provide for the... the service of the army... the service of the army...

The regulations are intended to provide for the... the service of the army... the service of the army...

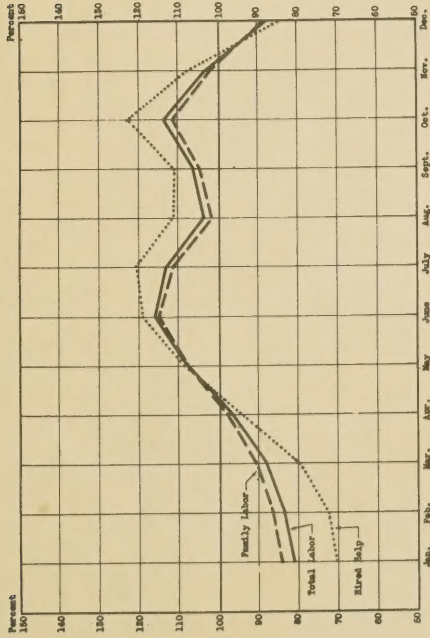
In the event of any emergency... the service of the army... the service of the army...

FIGURE 1 - MAJOR AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES DURING EACH MONTH OF THE YEAR, BY CROP AREAS ^{A/}

Month	Crop Area									
	United States	Corn	Cotton	Wheat, small grains	Dairying	Range live-stock	Truck	Fruit	Special crop areas	General mixed farming
Jan.	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull
Feb.	Slight rise	Slight rise	Some plowing	Seeding extreme south	Slight rise	No rise	Harvest in south	Picking extreme south	No rise	No rise
March	Spring work starts	Plowing	Planting, extreme south	Seeding	Plowing and seeding	Plowing and seeding	Planting early crops	Clearing orchards	Plowing, some planting	Slight rise
April	Spring work is extensive	Preparing soil for planting	Planting	Seeding	Seeding	Work on irrigated land	Spring planting and seeding	Pruning	Planting	Spring work
May	Spring work continues	Planting	Chopping	Haying	Planting and haying	Haying and planting	Picking early crops, planting	Picking berries, pruning	Planting, thinning, beets, etc.	Haying, planting corn, etc.
June	Harvest	Planting and cultivating	Chopping	Harvest	Harvest	Harvest	Picking and planting	Picking	Picking and planting	Harvest
July	Harvest	Cultivating	Chopping	Harvest	Harvest and haying	Harvest decline second half	Harvest green vegetables	Summer low	Picking early crops	Harvest
Aug.	Summer decline	Summer decline	Summer decline	Summer decline	Summer decline	Summer decline	Canning season	Summer decline	Summer decline	Summer decline
Sept.	Fall rise	Cutting, silo-filling	Picking	Seeding winter wheat	Silo-filling, haying	Fall rise	Fall harvest of vegetables	Picking	Harvest sugar beets, tobacco, etc.	Corn cutting
Oct.	Fall peak	Shocking, husking, fall plowing	Picking	Seeding winter wheat	Fall decline	Harvest special crops	Picking	Picking	Harvest of late crops	Fall decline
Nov.	Winter decline	Husking	Picking followed by winter decline	Winter decline	Winter decline	Winter decline	Winter decline	Winter decline	Winter decline	Winter decline
Dec.	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull	Winter lull

^{A/} The table indicates the major farm activity in each crop area. It does not take into consideration other activities in these areas that require additional hired labor.

SEASONAL VARIATION IN FARM EMPLOYMENT
IN THE UNITED STATES, 1925-1936*

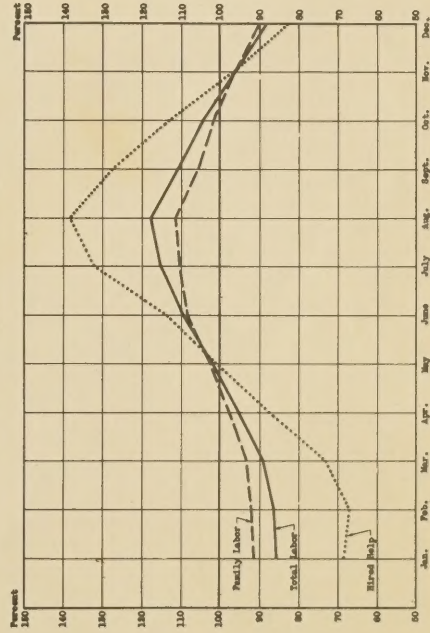


* The index of seasonal employment has been computed by representing the figure for the first of each month as a percentage of the seasonal twelve month moving average.

Source: National Research Project, World Progress Administration.

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SEASONAL VARIATION IN FARM EMPLOYMENT
IN THE SMALL GRAIN AREA, 1925-1936*

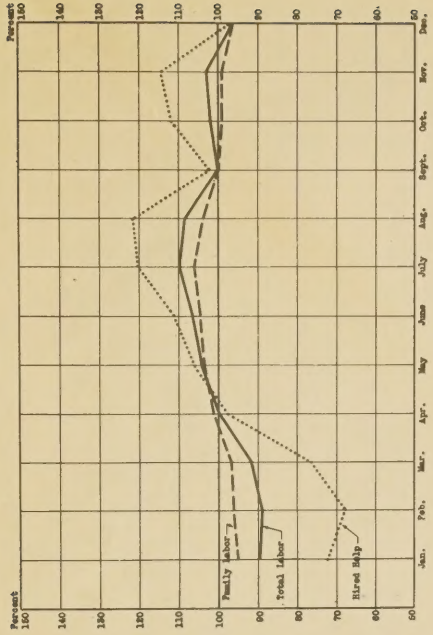


* The index of seasonal employment has been computed by representing the figure for the first of each month as a percentage of the seasonal twelve month moving average.

Source: National Research Project, World Progress Administration.

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SEASONAL VARIATION IN FARM EMPLOYMENT
IN THE CORN AREA, 1925-1936*

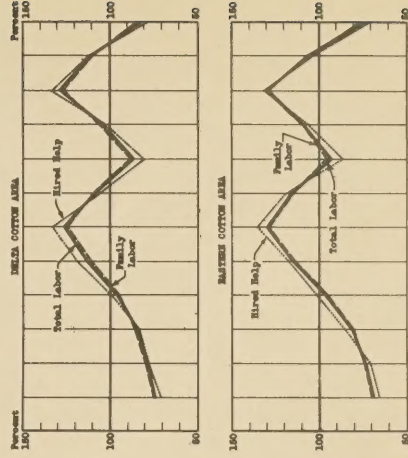


* The index of seasonal employment has been computed by representing the figure for the first of each month as a percentage of the seasonal twelve month moving average.

Source: National Research Project, World Progress Administration.

WPA 2586

SEASONAL VARIATION IN FARM EMPLOYMENT
IN THE COTTON AREAS, 1925-1936*



* The index of seasonal employment has been computed by representing the figure for the first of each month as a percentage of the seasonal twelve month moving average.

Source: National Research Project, World Progress Administration.

WPA 2589

PERIODS OF PEAK SEASONAL LABOR REQUIREMENTS IN AGRICULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES
 GENERALIZED DESCRIPTION, ACCORDING TO TYPE-OF-FARMING AREAS*



*Peak seasonal labor requirements as determined for the various regions of the United States according to the nature of the requirements for the major crop grown or livestock products produced.

Labor peaks as described are most applicable to the farms in the area which correspond to the general type of farming. In every area there are many farms that differ from the general types. For example, cotton farms are found in the central Georgia peach area and fruit farms in the New England dairy area. These individual farms of course have labor peaks resembling those found in other areas where such types of farming are generally followed.

- Months and Type-of-Farming Regions
- July or Aug. to Oct. General and mixed farming; self-sufficing; dairying.
 - July or August. Wheat.
 - May-June and Sept.-Oct. The cotton belt; field beans; sugar beets; and Ozark fruit.
 - June-July and Sept.-Oct. The Corn Belt; fruit in the North and Northwest; late potatoes; sugar cane; peanuts; California rice.
 - May-June and Aug.-Sept. Tobacco.
 - July to Sept. The northern range; Ga. peach area; southern livestock-and-cotton; N. Mex.-Ariz. cotton; Ark.-Texas-La. rice; central Calif. fruit area; New Jersey-Md. truck.
 - April to June or July. Spring fruit and truck; intermediate potatoes; southern coastal flatwoods; southwestern range; Ga.-Fla. tobacco.
 - Nov. to May. Winter fruit and truck; early potatoes.
 - Chiefly non-agricultural.

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