

Farm Labor

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APRIL SLOW FOR FARM WORK WORKER NUMBERS CONTINUE DECLINE

April was a cold or wet month in most areas of the Nation and work on many farms fell behind the usual schedule. The work force of 6.9 million persons active during the survey week of April 23-29 was 4 percent smaller than a year earlier and the smallest of record for the April survey week. The number of farm operators and other family workers was estimated at 5.3 million --4 percent less than in the April 1960 period. The number of hired workers, at 1.6 million, was also 4 percent less than a year earlier. The family worker total was a new low point for the April survey week in this series of farm employment estimates, as was the estimate of hired workers, except for April 1957.

The decreases indicated from the 1960 level may result partially from the direct effects of weather in the two survey weeks compared. The April survey week of last year was more favorable in some sections, although in both 1960 and 1961 much of April was cold or wet. For the first four months, January through April, total workers during the four survey weeks of this year averaged 2 percent below last year's level. Family workers averaged 3 percent below last year while hired workers showed almost no change in numbers.

Most Regions Show Fewer Workers Than Last Year

The decline in farm worker numbers was shared by most parts of the Nation as is shown by comparison of regional totals for April 1961 and 1960. Only in the Mountain region did total farm workers exceed April 1960. The decreases in other regions ranged from 1 percent in the South Atlantic to 6 percent in the Middle Atlantic, East North Central, and West South Central regions. The number of hired workers in the East South Central region exceeded a year earlier by 7 percent. Good weather in this region during the week favored a big push in planting cotton and other crops. The New England total was virtually at last year's low level but other regions fell below the April 1960 level for hired workers by from 2 percent in the Mountain and West North Central regions to 12 percent in the East North Central region.

Slow Weather Influences Planting Choices

As April rains and cold weather delayed plantings for important crops in much of the central and northern parts of the Nation, many farmers had time to weigh the advantages of the 1961 feed grain program. This important phase of

farm work, cropping decision, may have had an April assist to swell participation in the "sign-up." The effects on work requirements later in the season will be more clearly indicated in the July acreage report of the Department after most plantings of principal crops have been completed.

Slow Beginning; Good Ending?

The many details of seasonal lag in farm work that could be cited by no means forecloses the possibility of rapid progress in May and June and of bountiful crops to harvest in summer and fall. Last year's planting also was late for corn and other crops in important sections, yet total crop and livestock production reached a new record.

During the last week of April the intense activity in large parts of the West Central States typifies the work peaks that will be general as fields dry and warm with sunny days. Kansas farmers were finishing a few spring oats and barley seedings and planting corn in south central and southeastern counties. Oklahoma corn planting reached 80 percent complete and almost a tenth of the State's cotton and sorghum acreage had been planted. Texas corn planting reached about 90 percent completion and cotton and sorghum reached the one-third mark. Rice seeding was active and harvest of earliest flax in south central Texas was starting.

Cotton planting has been behind usual timing in most of the South. In Mississippi, about one-fourth of the expected acreage had been planted by the end of April. About half of the cotton acreage was planted in Alabama, about a fifth in Louisiana, about a half finished in Georgia and South Carolina. Only a small start had been made in Tennessee and Missouri and somewhat more in Arkansas and Oklahoma. Texas farmers still had two-thirds of their cotton to plant. In New Mexico much progress had been made and in Arizona less than a tenth remained to be planted. California cotton planting was about over and thinning operations were active on early planted stands.

Only a sampling of the many other phases of crop and livestock development during April which will affect the amount and success of farm work yet to be expended in 1961 can be mentioned here. The Northeast with the most backward season in 4 or 5 years had an unusually good season for maple sirup. Fruit crop damage from cold in the east has been minor in extent; large sets of fruit are reported in the south which required heavy thinning and prospects reportedly appear promising in northern areas as the prolonged dormancy ends.

Oats seeding was held back by wet weather in most of the principal North Central oat area but was nearly finished in Iowa and Illinois. Lateness in seeding may have caused some acreage diversion to other crops or to the feed grain reduction program. Tobacco beds in North Carolina, Kentucky, and other leading producing States are coming along well although some are late. A hard freeze April 21 forced heavy resetting of Virginia "Eastern Shore" tomato plantings.

In the Mountain States, precipitation generally failed to overcome poor prospects for irrigation water. Cool weather delayed progress in planting sugar beets and frosts damaged fruit crops in some areas. Calving and lambing made good progress. Shearing of Wyoming farm flocks was about completed but much range lambing and shearing still remained.

Fruit crops in central Washington were threatened and possibly damaged by late April frost, and wet, cool weather slowed all crop development in Washington and Oregon. Central and northern California shared some of these cold invasions with limited damage. Barley is being harvested in the Imperial Valley of California and is maturing rapidly in the Central Valley. Sugar beet thinning is active and alfalfa hay harvest is moving ahead rapidly. New machines are being developed for work that formerly required hand labor but much remains for both men and machines.

Farm employment and indexes, April 1961, with comparisons, United States

	: Annual : average : 1960	: Annual : average : 1959	: Annual : average : 1955-59	: April : average : 1/1955-59	: April : average : 1/1955-59	: April : 17-23, : 1960	: April : 23-29, : 1961
FARM EMPLOYMENT (Thousands)							
Total	7,118	7,384	7,734	7,665	7,151	6,881	
Family labor ..	5,249	5,459	5,791	6,055	5,507	5,297	
Hired labor ...	1,869	1,925	1,943	1,610	1,644	1,584	
INDEXES <u>2/</u> (1910-14=100)							
Total	52	54	57	57	53	51	
Family labor ..	52	54	57	57	52	50	
Hired labor ...	55	57	57	58	60	58	

1/ Employment during the last full calendar week ending at least one day before the end of the month.

2/ Monthly indexes are adjusted for seasonal variation.

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Farm Wage Rates and Indexes, April 1, 1961, United States

	: Annual : average : 1960	: April : average : 1955-59	: April : average : 1960	: April 1, : 1961
FARM WAGE RATES				
Composite rate per hour <u>1/</u>	\$ 0.818	\$ 0.645	\$ 0.751	\$ 0.757
Per month with house	\$192.00	\$160.00	\$186.00	\$188.00
Per month with board and room	149.00	128.00	145.00	148.00
Per week with board and room	35.50	31.50	34.75	35.00
Per week without board or room ...	45.75	40.75	45.75	46.25
Per day with house	5.30	4.50	5.20	5.20
Per day with board and room	6.50	5.20	5.90	6.00
Per day without board or room	6.60	5.60	6.40	6.50
Per hour with house88	.67	.77	.80
Per hour without board or room97	.92	1.03	1.04
INDEXES (1910-14=100)				
Farm wage rates	629	561	649	647
(Adjusted for seasonal variation).				
Prices received by farmers <u>2/</u>	238	239	240	243

1/ Weighted average of all rates on a per hour basis.

2/ Index for 15th of previous month.

Workers on Farms, April 1961

(Thousands of persons)

Region and State	April average			April 1960			April 1961		
	1955-59 1/			Week of 17-23			Week of 23-29		
	Total	Family	Hired	Total	Family	Hired	Total	Family	Hired
New England	172	114	58	144	93	51	141	89	52
New York	170	115	55	154	100	54	147	96	51
New Jersey	49	30	19	45	28	17	42	27	15
Pennsylvania	217	181	36	191	160	31	178	151	27
Middle Atlantic	436	326	110	390	288	102	367	274	93
Ohio	287	252	35	267	232	35	251	221	30
Indiana	254	227	27	235	207	28	211	190	21
Illinois	295	242	53	279	226	53	256	211	45
Michigan	234	204	30	212	182	30	210	179	31
Wisconsin	323	295	28	291	264	27	278	253	25
East North Central ..	1,393	1,220	173	1,284	1,111	173	1,206	1,054	152
Minnesota	307	277	30	277	249	28	275	248	27
Iowa	305	280	25	294	269	25	293	270	23
Missouri	283	253	30	262	237	25	256	231	25
North Dakota	105	89	16	89	75	14	90	76	14
South Dakota	107	97	10	94	87	7	94	86	8
Nebraska	164	141	23	164	139	25	157	132	25
Kansas	171	154	17	161	143	18	153	136	17
West North Central ..	1,442	1,291	151	1,341	1,199	142	1,318	1,179	139
Delaware-Maryland..	74	50	24	70	47	23	69	48	21
Virginia	215	171	44	202	160	42	205	164	41
West Virginia	82	66	16	77	60	17	71	56	15
North Carolina	391	327	64	349	292	57	358	299	59
South Carolina	198	135	63	176	118	58	173	112	61
Georgia	221	174	47	197	150	47	180	138	42
Florida	127	66	61	127	53	74	127	58	69
South Atlantic	1,308	989	319	1,198	880	318	1,183	875	308
Kentucky	231	192	39	221	182	39	203	168	35
Tennessee	224	188	36	218	182	36	207	175	32
Alabama	166	135	31	136	112	24	139	107	32
Mississippi	305	249	56	273	207	66	255	177	78
East South Central ..	926	764	162	848	683	165	804	627	177
Arkansas	245	157	88	238	136	102	211	125	86
Louisiana	165	105	60	175	108	67	170	100	70
Oklahoma	209	181	28	183	158	25	178	150	28
Texas	477	353	124	480	329	151	456	304	152
West South Central ..	1,096	796	300	1,076	731	345	1,015	679	336
Montana	62	47	15	54	43	11	53	42	11
Idaho	69	53	16	69	51	18	71	53	18
Colorado	75	66	9	71	61	10	71	62	9
N.Mex.-Ariz.	73	35	38	69	31	38	68	31	37
Wyo.-Utah-Nev.	63	47	16	57	41	16	59	43	16
Mountain	342	248	94	320	227	93	322	231	91
Washington	117	84	33	121	77	44	106	73	33
Oregon	102	74	28	92	70	22	95	71	24
California	331	149	182	337	148	189	324	145	179
Pacific	550	307	243	550	295	255	525	289	236
UNITED STATES	7,665	6,055	1,610	7,151	5,507	1,644	6,881	5,297	1,584

1/ Persons employed during the last full calendar week ending at least one day before the end of the month.

Workers on farms: Comparative estimates, annual average 1960,
February and March 1961

(Thousands of persons)

Region and State	Annual average			February 1961			March 1961		
	1960			Week of 19-25			Week of 19-25		
	Total	Family	Hired	Total	Family	Hired	Total	Family	Hired
New England	150	91	59	112	78	34	130	86	44
New York	163	107	56	134	97	37	139	99	40
New Jersey	47	28	19	35	26	9	36	27	9
Pennsylvania	194	159	35	162	141	21	170	146	24
Middle Atlantic	404	294	110	331	264	67	345	272	73
Ohio	250	214	36	215	197	18	233	208	25
Indiana	219	192	27	181	169	12	197	183	14
Illinois	249	201	48	188	158	30	221	180	41
Michigan	220	178	42	189	169	20	190	165	25
Wisconsin	282	253	29	253	232	21	264	239	25
East North Central	1,220	1,038	182	1,026	925	101	1,105	975	130
Minnesota	266	228	38	206	188	18	227	207	20
Iowa	289	252	37	229	214	15	249	230	19
Missouri	276	237	39	217	202	15	230	209	21
North Dakota	92	71	21	60	53	7	78	69	9
South Dakota	92	81	11	71	65	6	87	81	6
Nebraska	160	135	25	128	117	11	139	121	18
Kansas	159	134	25	122	112	10	135	123	12
West North Central	1,334	1,138	196	1,033	951	82	1,145	1,040	105
Delaware-Maryland	70	45	25	48	36	12	58	42	16
Virginia	203	149	54	151	126	25	175	144	31
West Virginia	73	60	13	54	45	9	59	49	10
North Carolina	416	317	99	245	212	33	261	224	37
South Carolina	195	133	62	119	85	34	143	95	48
Georgia	185	135	50	129	96	33	156	114	42
Florida	98	46	52	130	45	85	137	50	87
South Atlantic	1,240	885	355	876	645	231	989	718	271
Kentucky	235	188	47	179	160	19	198	168	30
Tennessee	246	195	51	157	134	23	181	150	31
Alabama	149	116	33	82	69	13	109	86	23
Mississippi	252	195	57	132	106	26	198	150	48
East South Central	882	694	188	550	469	81	686	554	132
Arkansas	212	126	86	137	98	39	170	111	59
Louisiana	153	95	58	98	70	28	139	84	55
Oklahoma	165	131	34	148	136	12	169	150	19
Texas	442	261	181	270	196	74	342	236	106
West South Central	972	613	359	653	500	153	820	581	239
Montana	49	37	12	37	33	4	45	37	8
Idaho	67	47	20	45	38	7	52	43	9
Colorado	69	51	18	45	40	5	60	51	9
N. Mex.-Ariz.	90	32	58	69	27	42	66	28	38
Wyo.-Utah-Nev.	59	41	18	40	32	8	46	34	12
Mountain	334	208	126	236	170	66	269	193	76
Washington	113	76	37	84	65	19	92	68	24
Oregon	92	66	26	67	56	11	84	69	15
California	377	146	231	301	129	172	305	139	166
Pacific	582	288	294	452	250	202	481	276	205
UNITED STATES	7,118	5,249	1,869	5,269	4,252	1,017	5,970	4,695	1,275

Average number of workers on farms January through April 1961,
by regions and States, with comparisons ^{1/}

(Thousands of persons)

Region and State	January through April			January through April			January through April		
	average 1955-59			1960			1961		
	Total	Family	Hired	Total	Family	Hired	Total	Family	Hired
New England	148	102	46	125	85	40	121	82	39
New York	156	112	44	139	98	41	137	97	40
New Jersey	42	29	13	37	26	11	36	26	10
Pennsylvania	196	166	30	172	148	24	163	140	23
Middle Atlantic	394	307	87	348	272	76	336	263	73
Ohio	249	224	25	227	205	22	220	198	22
Indiana	220	203	17	198	182	16	188	174	14
Illinois	240	198	42	214	178	36	211	175	36
Michigan	207	183	24	193	168	25	189	164	25
Wisconsin	289	265	24	265	243	22	257	236	21
East North Central ...	1,205	1,073	132	1,097	976	121	1,065	947	118
Minnesota	255	232	23	228	208	20	225	206	19
Iowa	259	239	20	249	230	19	246	228	18
Missouri	250	228	22	229	211	18	228	209	19
North Dakota	83	73	10	72	62	10	71	62	9
South Dakota	89	82	7	79	74	5	79	73	6
Nebraska	141	127	14	136	122	14	137	121	16
Kansas	149	137	12	135	123	12	131	119	12
West North Central ...	1,226	1,118	108	1,128	1,030	98	1,117	1,018	99
Delaware-Maryland...:	60	42	18	56	39	17	56	41	15
Virginia	186	152	34	168	137	31	167	137	30
West Virginia	68	57	11	61	51	10	58	48	10
North Carolina	317	275	42	271	233	38	268	230	38
South Carolina	156	112	44	138	96	42	136	94	42
Georgia	173	136	37	151	116	35	143	109	34
Florida	123	56	67	111	47	64	124	48	76
South Atlantic	1,083	830	253	956	719	237	952	707	245
Kentucky	207	181	26	192	167	25	185	161	24
Tennessee	194	166	28	180	154	26	176	150	26
Alabama	125	105	20	105	87	18	102	82	20
Mississippi	214	176	38	178	143	35	179	136	43
East South Central ...	740	628	112	655	551	104	642	529	113
Arkansas	192	139	53	168	114	54	158	107	51
Louisiana	140	98	42	130	86	44	125	82	43
Oklahoma	181	164	17	152	138	14	156	139	17
Texas	374	285	89	355	251	104	336	235	101
West South Central ...	887	686	201	805	589	216	775	563	212
Montana	47	39	8	43	36	7	43	36	7
Idaho	51	42	9	50	41	9	52	42	10
Colorado	57	51	6	55	48	7	53	46	7
N.Mex.-Ariz.:	71	32	39	69	29	40	69	28	41
Wyo.-Utah-Nev.:	49	38	11	45	34	11	45	35	10
Mountain	275	202	73	262	188	74	262	187	75
Washington	94	75	19	95	70	25	89	67	22
Oregon	81	64	17	76	62	14	77	63	14
California	316	140	176	317	140	177	310	136	174
Pacific	491	279	212	488	272	216	476	266	210
UNITED STATES	6,449	5,225	1,224	5,864	4,682	1,182	5,746	4,562	1,184

^{1/} Average of number during survey week of each month.

B A S I S O F E S T I M A T E SFarm Employment

Farm employment estimates of the Statistical Reporting Service include all persons considered working on farms during specified periods, as follows:

(1) Farm family workers

- (a) Farm operators who do any farm work or chores on or for their farms during the designated survey week.
- (b) Other members of the farm operator's family or household who worked 15 hours or more on the farm during the survey week without receiving cash wages, not counting housework. In sharecropper areas, croppers and members of their families are considered family workers when working their own crops, but as hired workers if earning cash wages during the survey week.

(2) Hired farm workers

Persons doing farm work for pay during the survey week. Members of the operator's family receiving cash wages for work on their farms are classed as hired workers.

Farm Wage Rates

Farm wage rates, published quarterly by the Statistical Reporting Service, are based on farmers' reports of average farm wage rates paid in their localities. Rates for different wage arrangements are reported. Composite rates per hour are derived by computing a weighted average of all rates. Piece rates for farm work are not reported because of the great diversity of kinds of rates involved. In conversion to composite hourly rates, however, weights for rates per hour without board or room, are increased to allow for piece rate work. This assumes that piece rates and hourly rates are approximately equivalent. Wage rates relate to cash wages only, exclusive of value of any perquisites furnished such as house, room, or meals.

Source of Data

A Nationwide sample of from 20,000 to 25,000 reports from farm operators representing many localities in each State provides monthly reports on farm employment on these farms and quarterly reports on farm wages. Data from Censuses of Agriculture and Population and enumerative sample surveys are important in determining the overall levels of employment estimates. Annual and seasonal changes involve estimates of changes in the number of farms and other factors determining farm work requirements.

The SRS farm employment estimates differ from those in the Monthly Report on the Labor Force (MRLF), published by the Department of Labor, owing to differences in definition, method, and survey timing. The MRLF data come from interviews in about 35,000 households, both nonfarm and farm, in a sampling pattern designed for National estimates of the labor force. All persons 14 years old or over in the civilian non-institutional population are considered. This report excludes from farm totals all children below 14 years of age and persons who do some farm work but mostly nonfarm. Included as farm workers by MRLF but not by SRS are some persons on farms such as typists, bookkeepers, and certain agricultural processors, and also farm operators doing no work during the survey period but who have no other job.

The SRS basic data come from the farm operator on the monthly general farm report for his farm and locality (a mailed questionnaire). He reports the number of persons working on his farm during the survey week regardless of age or other employment. Census of Agriculture and other bench mark data used by SRS involve duplication of workers who are counted on more than one farm. The MRLF report covers the week ending nearest the 15th; the SRS report, the last full calendar week ending at least one day before the end of the month. Both surveys are subject to sampling variation.

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