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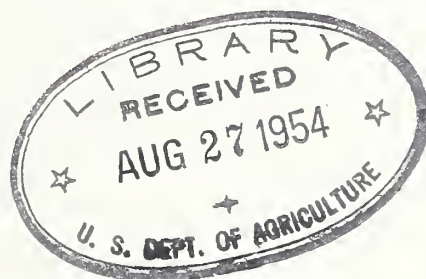
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Unemployment and Partial Employment of HIRED FARM WORKERS

Selected Areas of Louisiana



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

and

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
BUREAU OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

Washington, D.C.

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PREFACE

This is one of four detailed reports resulting from cooperative surveys conducted by the former Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Bureau of Employment Security in 1952. A summary report entitled "Unemployment and Partial Employment of Hired Farm Workers in Four Areas" was published by the cooperating agencies in April 1953.

A number of persons in both agencies contributed to the planning of the surveys, the field work, and the analysis of findings. General direction of the surveys was provided, in the Department of Agriculture, by Margaret Jarman Hagood and Louis J. Ducoff, now of the Farm Population and Rural Life Branch, Agricultural Marketing Service; and in the Department of Labor by Louis Levine, E. D. Vinogradoff, and William Mirengoff of the Reports and Analysis Division, Bureau of Employment Security. Acknowledgment is made of the services of Willis F. Sloan and James G. Gray, Farm Placement Service, Bureau of Employment Security, in the formulation of the objectives of these surveys and in facilitating field operations. Paul P. Wallrabenstein, Special Farm Statistics Branch, Agricultural Marketing Service, and Lester Rindler of the Reports and Analysis Division, Bureau of Employment Security, contributed substantially to the development of statistical data and plan of analysis. Field survey operations were conducted under the direction of State Agricultural Statisticians in each State involved--Georgia, Arkansas, Louisiana, and New Mexico--in consultation with State and local Employment Service Offices. Preparation of this report was the responsibility of personnel in the Production Economics Research Branch, Agricultural Research Service.

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UNEMPLOYMENT AND PARTIAL EMPLOYMENT OF HIRED FARM WORKERS
IN SELECTED AREAS OF LOUISIANA

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INTRODUCTION

General interest in the type of problems analyzed in this report grew out of concern over the adequacy of the Nation's manpower force in the face of mounting demands for defense preparation. The Korean invasion had occurred in June 1950 and all segments of the economy, including agriculture, were trying to meet increased production schedules with a limited supply of labor. Largely because of competing nonfarm employment opportunities and seasonal fluctuations in requirements, some agricultural areas were hard-pressed at times to obtain a sufficient number of qualified workers.

Despite progress in improving utilization of the labor force during this period, many farm workers continued to be affected by partial employment and seasonal unemployment. Agencies operating in the manpower field tried to cope with labor shortages, on the one hand, and to reduce seasonal labor surpluses, on the other. A requisite in both instances is information adapted to the needs of such activities as recruitment, routing, and placement of available workers. Such information, put to use, benefits workers, employers, and public alike.

It was believed that some towns and cities in the South and Southwest contained workers who were not fully employed, except perhaps during seasons of peak labor demand on farms in nearby areas. Certain population centers were selected by the then Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Bureau of Employment Security for a cooperative study of seasonal farm workers in four of these areas in the spring of 1952. Three of these were Cordale, Ga.; Pine Bluff, Ark.; and Roswell-Artesia, N. Mex. The fourth, with which this bulletin is concerned, included Opelousas, Ville Platte, Eunice, Washington, and several smaller towns and villages of St. Landry and Evangeline Parishes, La. Persons were selected for interviewing by random sampling of blocks within the specified areas. Those selected had three principal characteristics: (1) They lived in nonfarm residences; (2) they worked on farms for wages from May 1951 through May 1952; and (3) they were members of households that contained no farm operators. ^{2/} In the Louisiana survey area, all of the 391 workers studied were Negroes and most of their farm work had been in cotton.

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^{2/} For a description of the methodology of the survey, see "Unemployment and Partial Employment of Hired Farm Workers in Four Areas," (a summary report), U. S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics and United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Security, April 1953, pp. 17-18.

Information was obtained as to the workers' patterns of employment, their wages and earnings, the extent, duration, and seasonality of unemployment among them, their availability for other work during unemployment periods, and the volume and severity of partial employment. Much of the information collected was processed and used immediately by government agencies having responsibility for assisting in the orderly placement of workers when and where they were needed. This is one of a series of published reports designed to reach a wider audience.

The urgency associated with certain manpower problems shortly after the beginning of Korean hostilities has abated. But the goal of using human skills and energies economically and productively in this country is a continuing one. Each unit of work lost involuntarily by a worker reduces the value of goods or services that otherwise might have been created. Thus the incentive to achieve effective utilization of the labor force remains strong.

When adjustments in the economy occur, they tend to be made at the margin. Under present conditions, the timeliness of the study reported here lies in its treatment of a group of essentially marginal workers. The extent of their participation in the labor force is responsive to variations in employment opportunities both on and off the farm. With this group, unemployment is not always a simple matter of classification. Nor is the question limited to its technical implications. Substantive loss of a worker's services, whether classified as unemployment, partial employment, or nonproductive activity which removes him from the labor force, represents a cost to the worker's family, to prospective employers, and to the productive capacity of the Nation.

In this context, language becomes important. This report may be better understood if several of the terms used are defined. For these definitions see the appendix.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This report presents findings from interviews with hired farm workers in 1 of 4 selected areas surveyed by the former Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Bureau of Employment Security in May 1952. The 391 workers interviewed were Negroes who lived in Opelousas, La., and other towns and villages of St. Landry and Evangeline Parishes. All of them had worked on farms for wages during the year preceding the survey. The survey resulted from a need for specific information concerning local sources of farm labor; it had as its purpose the analysis of worker characteristics, their employment patterns, wages, and earnings, and their availability for other work during periods of unemployment.

In general, the workers in the Louisiana sample comprised a marginal labor force. The group was characterized by a high proportion of women and youths, by seasonality of work, and by relatively strong attachments to home areas. More than two-fifths of all workers were under 20 years of age, and more than half, of all ages, were women and girls. A majority were employed for only

5 to 16 weeks between May 1951 and May 1952. Although three-fifths of them worked only in agriculture, many were classed as casual workers who were in the labor force for only brief periods during peak seasons of labor demand on nearby farms. But in slack seasons, unemployment and partial employment were common, notwithstanding the tendency of housekeepers and others to withdraw seasonally from the labor force.

These farm workers held an average of 2.1 jobs during the survey year. This figure was higher for adult workers, as most of the younger persons who worked held only one job and then withdrew from the labor force. Methods used to find work were personal and unorganized. Generally not migratory by habit, few of these workers chose to go to other areas in search of work. But apparently they became more mobile when definite job commitments were given them. About 7 in 10 jobs held by the workers studied were farm jobs, and 86 percent of these were in cotton. At midsummer, after cotton was laid by, and in winter, many of the workers tried to fill in the slack season with nonfarm employment. They worked in a variety of unskilled occupations, as laborers, waiters, and household servants.

Nonfarm work was not sufficient to keep them fully employed. Most workers were employed for less than 4 months during the survey year. Seventy-one percent of the group had been idle at some time during the survey year. More than two-fifths experienced unemployment. One in 5 of the workers studied was unemployed longer than 2 months. Most severely affected were male household heads and their older sons, a third of whom were without work for more than 4 months. During June and July and also in winter, about a third of those available for work were unemployed.

Only 96 workers had done some farm work in the 2 weeks preceding the survey. These workers were questioned about partial employment, which was defined as employment for less than 8 days, or less than 6 hours per working day, during the 2 weeks. Under this definition, three-fifths of these people were only partially employed.

As underutilization of labor appeared to prevail among the workers studied, those 16 to 60 years of age were asked about their employment expectations in the coming year. More than half of the 288 workers questioned expected to be without work for at least 3 months. These 152 workers were then asked about their willingness to take off-season local jobs. Sixty-three percent said they were available for such work. Most of these were women. About a third were heads of households. Availability of the workers varied according to season. The first quarter of the year drew the lowest response. The comparatively busy months of April through September were most favored.

Workers studied held a total of 839 jobs during the survey year--594 farm jobs and 245 nonfarm jobs. Most of the farm jobs were in cotton and sweetpotatoes, with cotton accounting for 86 percent of all farm jobs. The typical daily wage rate was between \$3 and \$4 for farm jobs and between \$1 and \$3 for nonfarm jobs.

Most of the piece rates paid in the cotton harvest ranged between \$3 and \$4. These were usually quoted per 100 pounds of seed cotton.

More than nine-tenths of the farm jobs included some kind of perquisite with the wages. In most cases, this consisted of meals or transportation or both. Housing was seldom included, as ordinarily the workers were employed near their homes.

Some workers were employed at jobs that required relatively high levels of skill; their earnings raised the average for all workers above that of the more common rates received. Thus, average daily earnings on farm jobs were \$4.41 and \$3.40 for nonfarm jobs. Male household heads and their older sons usually earned more than the average. For the survey year, average earnings were about \$359 from all work, or \$226 from farm and \$137 from nonfarm work. These were lowered by the large number of secondary workers in the sample, but even male household heads, who had the highest earnings, earned only \$703, on the average, during the survey year.

What measures might be suggested to alleviate this situation? In the long run, an organized effort needs to be made to increase the educational opportunities of these people. Types of vocational training that will better fit them for alternative kinds of employment might be emphasized. Programs to facilitate the movement of surplus workers to take jobs out of the area, especially during slack farm work periods, should be given careful consideration. More nonfarm work opportunities within the area during these slack seasons would be a great asset to the workers, to farm employers who need seasonal labor, and to the income situation of the community.

To look to more immediate ends, one fact appears to be significant. The workers studied most often obtained their farm and out-of-area jobs through direct solicitation by employers. This would indicate that many of them do not actively seek work, but wait to hear about employment opportunities from an outside source. Perhaps an expanded educational program could be conducted in the area to acquaint these farm workers with the types of services available to them. They should be encouraged to go to the employment service office and to think of it as their own as well as the employers'. This might also help to increase the willingness of workers to accept jobs beyond their own immediate areas in certain seasons of the year, especially if wages and working conditions of such jobs were fully described to them by an employment service representative.

THE SURVEY AREA

St. Landry and Evangeline Parishes are about 50 miles north of the Gulf of Mexico and 150 miles northwest of New Orleans. They lie on a low, flat plain dotted with large wooded areas. The temperature is mild and precipitation is high. The growing season extends from early March to late November.

Both parishes are in the cotton and rice areas of south central Louisiana. Sweetpotatoes, soybeans, corn, and sugarcane are also important crops. The

1950 Census of Agriculture showed the combined land area of the two parishes to be slightly more than 1,000,000 acres and approximately half of this land was in farms. Farms were comparatively small; they averaged 54 acres in Evangeline and 44 in St. Landry. Almost four-fifths of the farms in Evangeline parish and more than half of those in St. Landry were operated by whites. Only a third of the farms in this area were owner-operated; tenant farming was important, with 53 percent of the farms in Evangeline and 62 percent of those in St. Landry operated by tenants. Most of the tenants furnished their own tools and power for farm work. Use of horse and mule power was common.

In 1950, the value of products sold by most farmers in these two parishes was between \$600 and \$2,499. More than four-fifths of the farms in the area reported a value of products sold which was below \$2,500, and almost two-thirds of them reported less than \$1,500.

In 1949, the principal crops harvested in St. Landry parish were: Cotton, 49,000 acres; corn, 48,000 acres; soybeans, 38,000 acres; sweetpotatoes, 34,000 acres; and rice, 18,000 acres. Of these, cotton and sweetpotatoes were most important in terms of requirements for hired labor. Evangeline parish harvested 50,000 acres of rice, 20,000 of cotton, and 12,000 of corn. Rice did not affect the demand for seasonal labor to any great extent as the harvesting of this crop is almost completely mechanized.

Data from the 1950 Census indicated that St. Landry, with 78,000 people, is the most densely populated rural parish in Louisiana. Only a fourth of its population lived in urban areas. Opelousas, the parish seat, had a population of 12,000. St. Landry is a young, growing parish; its population increased 10 percent between 1940 and 1950, and the median age of its 1950 population was only 21 years. There were 4.2 persons per household in St. Landry, compared with the State average of 3.6. More than 2 in every 5 persons in St. Landry were Negroes, compared with 1 in 3 in Louisiana as a whole. The high proportion of Negroes was also reflected in the educational level of the parish. The median years of school completed by adults in the parish was 4.5; for the State this figure was 7.6, but for adult Negroes in St. Landry it was only 2.2. Low incomes were typical in the parish; in 1950, 64 percent of the families of St. Landry had incomes of less than \$2,000. In the same year, the median income of nonwhite families in the parish was \$825.

Evangeline is a smaller parish to the west of St. Landry. Its population was 32,000 in 1950, an increase of about 4 percent over 1940. A fifth of the population was urban and almost a fourth were Negroes. The median age of the population was 24 years. Evangeline households had an average of 3.6 persons, the same as the State average. The educational level of the adult population was on a par with St. Landry's, but the median years of school completed by Negro adults in Evangeline parish was only 0.9 years. The income level was about the same in both parishes. In 1950, the median income of Negro families in Evangeline was \$867, and 65 percent of the families of both races in the parish had incomes of less than \$2,000.

Of the nearly 15,000 employed persons living on farms in St. Landry and Evangeline parishes during the last week of March 1950, all but 2,300 were farm operators and unpaid family workers. The seasonal contrast in the number of hired workers was apparent from reports of the Bureau of Employment Security which showed 14,000 hired seasonal workers employed in rice, cotton, and sweet-potatoes in the early part of September. In spring, about 3,500 seasonal farm workers are needed in the area, but in winter very few are required. From the few hired workers living on farms in the last week of March it is evident that most of this seasonal labor pool does not come from the farms themselves. It originates in the small towns and open country within the area. No out-of-area workers are employed in these two parishes.

For many years, Negro workers living in the 13 population centers of St. Landry and Evangeline parishes have supplied the seasonal labor demand on nearby farms. Women and children often provide most of the labor for cotton chopping, but during the harvest season in early September considerable numbers of men are employed.

Migratory farm workers are not needed in this area. On the contrary, in November and December, some local workers are "day-hauled" some 60 miles to New Iberia for the sugarcane harvest. Some workers from the Opelousas area also work during March and April in the strawberry harvest in the area around Hammond. A somewhat smaller number migrate for the strawberry harvest because at the same time the land in St. Landry and Evangeline Parishes is in preparation for planting cotton and sweetpotatoes, corn also demands attention. Farm workers are usually recruited directly by farmers or their agents rather than by crew leaders.

Many of these seasonal farm workers are also employed in one of several processing activities in the area, such as rice driers, cotton gins, cotton oil mills, and sweetpotato packing sheds. Other industries which give employment for some farm workers during part of the year are construction, transportation, lumber and wood products, personal household service, and eating and drinking places. Most of the jobs open to these workers are unskilled.

Despite these employment activities, the local office of the Employment Service reported that 827 persons were receiving unemployment insurance in May 1952, when this survey was conducted. This amounted to 6 percent of the total nonagricultural employment in the area, which was high compared with the national average. It was also somewhat higher than the State average; with approximately 4 percent of the total population of the State, the Opelousas local office area accounted for more than 5 percent of all State disbursements for unemployment insurance during April. As much of the employment of the area was not covered by unemployment insurance, actual unemployment in the Opelousas area was even higher than these data indicate.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORKERS

In this study a random selection was made of about a third of all households in sections of the towns and cities in the survey area where farm workers were

known to live. Therefore, these households contain a specific kind of seasonal farm worker living in population centers of various size. Schedules were taken in 210 households. Some 1,081 persons were living in these households, and almost half of them had done some work for wages during the 12 months preceding the date of interview. The survey households were rather large, with an average of 5.1 persons in each, compared with 3.6 for Evangeline parish as a whole, and 4.2 for St. Landry. The average for the United States is 3.4, according to the 1950 Census.

Data on the population of households and on jobs held in the survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana in May 1952 were as follows:

Households visited	210
Population in the households - total	1,081
Wage workers (any work in preceding year)	493
All farm workers	391
Males	171
Females	220
Worked at farm work only	241
Worked at farm work mostly	30
Worked at nonfarm work mostly	120
Casual workers	53
Short-term seasonal workers	296
Long-term seasonal workers	42
Jobs held in survey year - total	839
Farm	594
Nonfarm	245

In these households were 493 persons who had done some wage work during the year preceding the survey. The workers were generally young. For example, 41 percent of them were under 25. Nineteen percent were less than 16. The workers were almost evenly divided with respect to sex: 251 males, 242 females. The median grade of school completed by workers 25 years of age and older was 3.1.

Of the 210 households, 183 were headed by persons who had done some work during the year preceding the survey. One hundred thirty, or 71 percent, of these households had male heads (table 1). Households with male heads were the larger and had more workers in them; female heads were associated with smaller families and fewer workers.

Table 1.- Distribution of farm-laborer households ^{1/} studied in Louisiana, by sex of household head, size and number of workers in each, May 1952

Persons and workers in households	All households	Households with	
		Male head	Female head
	Number	Number	Number
All households	183	130	53
1 person	6	-	6
1 worker	6	-	6
2 persons	30	22	8
1 worker	6	4	2
2 workers	24	18	6
3 persons	17	8	9
1 worker	7	2	5
2 workers	4	3	1
3 workers	6	3	3
4 persons	30	20	10
1 worker	7	4	3
2 workers	11	9	2
3 workers	8	4	4
4 workers	4	3	1
5 persons	100	80	20
1 worker	6	4	2
2 workers	37	30	7
3 workers	28	22	6
4 workers	22	17	5
5 workers	7	7	-

^{1/} This table excludes the 27 households for which no head was specified or where head did no work during survey year.

Of the 493 workers in all survey households, about 1 in 5 had done only nonfarm work during the year preceding the survey date. Most of the information collected in the survey pertains to the rest of the workers, all of whom had done some farm work for wages during the previous year. These 391 farm workers

form the nucleus of this study. Three-fifths of them had worked only in agriculture during the last year. Of the remainder, those who combined farm and nonfarm work, most were more closely identified with nonfarm than with farm work. This undoubtedly reflects the prevalence of nonfarm job opportunities in the Opelousas area. Only 7 percent of the farm workers studied had had any experience or training other than their usual work. The few who had had such experience were almost all personal household workers or laborers.

The age and sex distribution of the farm workers is shown in table 2. Again, the large number of young people is noted. Forty-two percent were under 20 years of age; most of these were males. Women made up two-thirds of the middle age groups--20-54 years. The predominance of females in this group was not characteristic of all the 493 workers studied in Louisiana; it was only among the 391 farm workers that females were more numerous than males. The high proportion of women and youths is a reflection of the seasonal nature of employment among the workers studied. Housewives and students traditionally do farm work for brief periods during peak seasons, but they spend the major part of the year in nongainful activities. But the large number of such workers in this study is not an indication that women and children do most of the farm work in the area. Their actual contribution in terms of man-hours or units produced may be much less significant than that of adult males.

Table 2.- Distribution of farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by age and sex, May 1952

Age	All farm workers		Sex			
	Number	Percent	Male Number	Male Percent	Female Number	Female Percent
All farm workers	391	100	171	100	220	100
Under 14	40	10	29	17	11	5
14 - 19	126	32	63	37	63	29
20 - 34	74	19	27	16	47	21
35 - 54	109	28	30	17	79	36
55 - 64	27	7	15	9	12	5
65 and over	15	4	7	4	8	4

STATUS AND EMPLOYMENT OF THE LABOR FORCE

A major purpose of the study reported here was to learn more about local people who help to meet farmers' demands for labor at peak seasons, with a view to better utilization of their services. In addition to the kinds of background data already presented, certain areas of inquiry are especially relevant. In what kinds of work are these people generally engaged? What do they do during slack farm seasons? How much employment do they obtain during a year, and why and when are they idle?

Of all the farm workers in the Louisiana survey area, three-fifths did farm work only during the year preceding the survey; the rest did some nonfarm work as well (table 3). Eighty percent of the 150 persons who had done some nonfarm work said they spent more of the year in nonfarm than in farm work. Thus, their identification with farm work was less distinct than that of the other workers who said that farm work was either their main or sole occupation.

Table 3.- Distribution of farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by type of work and weeks worked during survey year, May 1952

Farm workers classified by weeks worked	All farm workers		Workers who did					
	Number	Percent	Farm work only		Mostly farm work		Mostly nonfarm work	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All farm workers	391	100	241	100	30	100	120	100
1 - 4 weeks	29	7	27	11	2	7	-	-
5 - 16 "	200	51	179	75	10	33	11	9
17 - 40 "	82	21	32	13	17	57	33	28
Over 40 "	80	21	3	1	1	3	76	63

Slightly more than half of the farm workers were employed from 5 to 16 weeks during the survey year, May 1951-May 1952. Another fifth had from 17 to 40 weeks employment, and about the same proportion worked for more than 10 months. Those workers who did farm work only were generally employed for shorter periods, while those who did chiefly nonfarm work had the most employment. The few persons who did farm work for 40 weeks or more were male family heads and their older sons. Most other family members were casual or seasonal workers. Short-term seasonal workers, who comprised three-fourths of the group studied, did farm work for 1 to 4 months.

Male workers generally spent more time in farm work than females. Fourteen percent of the males were engaged in farm work for periods longer than 4 months; only 8 percent of the females were so classified (table 4).

Table 4.- Percentage distribution of farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by type and sex of worker, May 1952

Type of worker	All farm workers	Sex	
		Male	Female
	Percent	Percent	Percent
All farm workers	100	100	100
Casual	13	12	15
Short-term seasonal	76	74	77
Long-term seasonal	11	14	8

The survey area provides some nonfarm employment opportunities for these unskilled workers. This was reflected in the fact that family heads spent more time in nonfarm than in farm work in the year preceding the survey (table 5). Male family heads also spent an average of 10 man-weeks looking for work. Among other family members, only sons 16 years of age and older experienced equivalent periods of unemployment.

Table 5.- Man-weeks spent in various activities during survey year, by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by relationship to head of household, May 1952

Relationship to head	All farm workers	Average number of man-weeks spent in					
		Farm wage work	Nonfarm wage work	Looking for work	Keeping house	Attend- ing school	Other
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
All farm workers	391	10	10	5	9	12	2
Male heads	61	13	19	10	1	2	3
Female heads	46	10	18	2	16	-	2
Wives	84	11	10	4	22	-	1
Sons, 16 and over	50	14	9	10	-	14	1
Daughters, 16 and over	45	10	11	3	10	14	-
Children under 16	88	8	-	4	2	34	-
Others	17	9	6	2	7	22	2

Farm work was a secondary task for most of the mature women in the sample. Female household heads and wives generally spent more time in housekeeping than in farm work, but on the average they had more weeks of farm and nonfarm

employment combined than of housework. Female family heads spent an average of 28 weeks working and only 16 in keeping house; wives had 22 weeks of house-keeping and 21 of paid employment.

Children under 16 usually spent 2 months at farm work and about 8 months attending school.

To a large extent, the employment patterns of these seasonal farm workers were molded by the character of the crops grown in their local area. Cotton, sweetpotatoes, and rice are three of the chief crops grown in St. Landry and Evangeline parishes, and the first two are highly seasonal in their demands for labor. The harvesting of sweetpotatoes and cotton takes in marginal members of the labor force during August and September, thereby swelling farm employment, as shown in the chart (page 15). 3/

More than four-fifths of the farm workers surveyed were doing farm work during the latter part of August and the beginning of September. This was by far the largest number so engaged at any time during the year. Some work is provided by cotton chopping and hoeing around May, but only a fourth as many workers were affected by this as by the late summer harvest peak. Not only farm labor requirements, but also some inflexibility in the working habits of the group studied, might be responsible for this gap. For example, some men are unwilling to accept jobs in cotton chopping -- partly because of the low wages -- and this work is usually done by women and children.

Unskilled jobs in construction, transportation, lumber mills, processing plants, and personal service were the main employment sources to which these workers turned in slack farm seasons. To some extent, these nonfarm jobs helped to absorb surplus workers, as witness the inverse changes in farm and nonfarm work in the chart. But these jobs were not sufficient to prevent unemployment. More than a fifth of the workers said that they were without jobs in June and July, the period after cotton is "laid by." Unemployment affected more persons at that time than it did from December through March. The main reason for this was that school-age youths, who made up a large part of these workers, remained in the labor force in summer and were therefore affected by unemployment at that time. These young workers leave the labor force to return to school in the fall, so that the winter slack season does not affect them. The winter slack season was probably more serious than the summer slack season in its effects on employment of individual workers, as many of these workers had to assume the burden of family support.

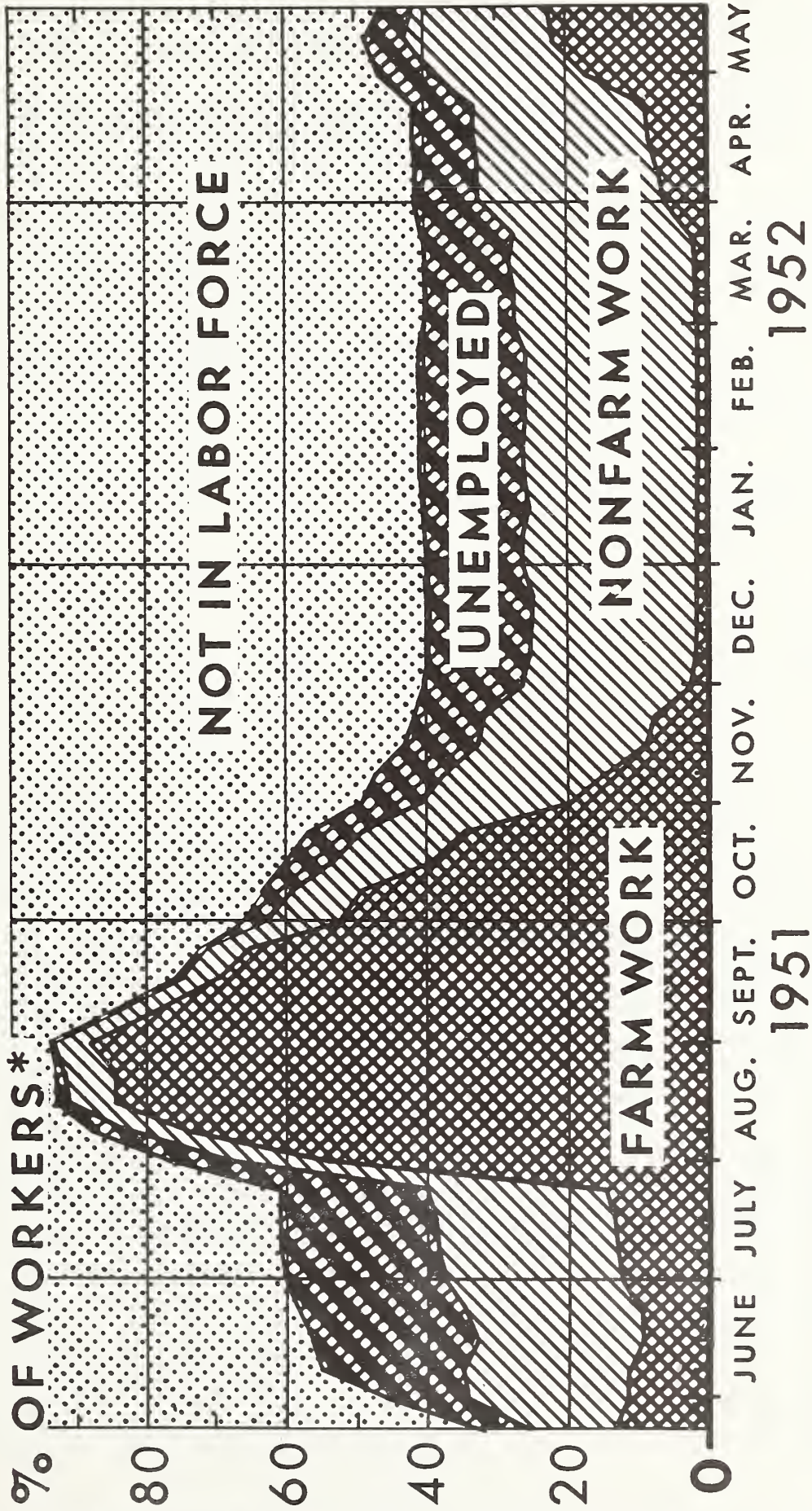
In view of the seasonality of employment in the survey area, the frequency of movement between jobs was rather high. More than a third of the farm workers

3/ It should be kept in mind that the chart is based on the employment histories of the 391 farm workers studied in the Opelousas area and pertains to a particular type of farm worker, seasonal workers who live in cities and towns. It does not reflect the seasonal changes in total farm employment, nor even in hired farm employment, within the area.

In Opelousas and Nearby Towns, Louisiana

FARM WAGE WORKERS

Distribution by Labor Force Status, May 1951 - May 1952



* PERSONS IN THE SURVEY WHO DID FARM WAGE WORK AT ANY TIME DURING YEAR

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Figure 1.

studied had 3 or more jobs, both farm and nonfarm, in the 12 months preceding the date of interview (table 6). About 4 percent had 5 or more jobs.

Table 6.- Number of workers and percentage distribution of their jobs by weeks worked per job and by worker's relationship to head of household, for farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, May 1952

Relationship to head	All farm workers		Weeks worked per job					
	Number	Percent	1-4	5-8	9-16	17-24	25 or more	
All farm workers	391	100	28	27	34	3	8	
Male heads	61	100	23	24	36	5	12	
Female heads	46	100	31	20	31	1	17	
Wives	84	100	29	19	42	2	8	
Sons, 16 and over	50	100	27	26	37	5	5	
Daughters, 16 and over	45	100	27	27	35	4	7	
Children under 16	88	100	34	50	16	-	-	
Others	17	100	31	28	32	6	3	

Family heads and other adult workers tended to hold more jobs than other family members, such as younger children. For example, no children below the age of 16 had more than 3 jobs, and more than three-fifths of them had only 1. ^{1/4}

Under the definition used, workers who reported nonfarm jobs tended to have more periods of employment in the course of a year than those who worked only at farm jobs. The modal number of jobs held by those persons who did farm work only was 1; for those who were chiefly farm workers, this figure was 2; while for those who were mainly engaged in nonfarm work, it was 3. The average number of jobs held was somewhat higher for all 3 classes.

Sixty percent of the jobs of these Louisiana workers lasted from 1 to 4 months. Only 11 percent lasted more than 4 months. Household heads generally had jobs of longer duration than other family members.

^{1/4} These facts tend to understate the insecurity of employment which these workers experience. This is due to the definition of "job" used in this survey, which was "an uninterrupted period spent at one occupation, such as picking cotton, regardless of changes in employers." However, a different employer is usually implied with a job change. Thus, if the latter concept were considered, these workers would have had a much higher average number of jobs.

As might be expected, those workers who did farm work only, or chiefly, had more farm jobs than those who were mainly engaged in nonfarm work (table 7). The number of farm jobs varied with the time spent in farm work. Casual workers, who did farm work for a month or less, had no more than 2 farm jobs and 91 percent of them had only 1 such job. Short-term seasonal workers held more farm jobs than casual workers, as did long-term seasonal workers.

Table 7.- Percentage distribution of farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by number of farm jobs held, by type of work done in survey year, and type of worker, May 1952

Type of work and type of worker	All farm workers		Workers who had specified number of farm jobs		
	Number	Percent	1	2	3 or more
			Percent	Percent	Percent
All farm workers	391	100	62	26	12
Type of work					
Farm only	241	100	62	26	12
Mostly farm	30	100	44	33	23
Mostly nonfarm	120	100	66	26	8
Type of worker					
Casual	53	100	91	9	-
Short-term seasonal	296	100	65	29	6
Long-term seasonal	42	100	3	33	64

Of all jobs held by the workers during the survey year, about 70 percent were farm jobs, or an average of 1.5 per worker. Nearly 90 percent of all these farm jobs were in cotton (table 8). Almost three-fourths of these were in harvest work, and virtually all the rest were in cotton chopping and hoeing. Two-thirds of the cotton harvest jobs lasted from 20 to 60 days, but 71 percent of the jobs in chopping and hoeing lasted less than 21 days.

Work on sweetpotatoes accounted for 11 percent of the farm jobs. Nearly half of these were in planting; 13 percent were in cultivating, hoeing, and weeding; and the rest were in harvest operations. Cultivating and planting jobs were brief, most of them lasting less than 10 days. Harvest jobs generally lasted longer, ranging from 11 to 30 days.

Table 8.- Distribution of farm jobs held during survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by days worked on job, by crop and operation, May 1952

Crop and days worked per job	All farm jobs	Operation			
		Planting	Cultivating, hoeing, weeding	Harvest	Other
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
All farm jobs	594	32	144	408	10
Cotton	509	-	134	374	1
1-10 days	72	-	52	20	-
11-20 "	96	-	43	53	-
21-30 "	76	-	17	59	-
31-40 "	94	-	14	80	-
41-50 "	59	-	4	55	-
51-60 "	60	-	3	56	1
61-80 "	46	-	1	45	-
Over 80 "	2	-	-	2	-
Unknown	4	-	-	4	-
Sweetpotatoes	68	32	9	26	1
1-10 days	27	18	6	3	-
11-20 "	25	9	1	15	-
21-30 "	12	3	2	7	-
Over 30 "	4	2	-	1	1
Other	17	-	1	8	8

Slightly more than half of the farm jobs were begun in August, and three-fourths of these ended in September and October. Nine percent began in May and June 1951, and four-fifths of these ended in the same period. Table 9 shows the number of farm jobs held by workers in the sample during each month of the survey year.

Table 9.- Farm jobs, nonfarm jobs, and unemployment periods in effect during each month of survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, May 1952

Month	Farm jobs	Nonfarm jobs	Unemployment periods
Total	<u>1/</u> 594	<u>1/</u> 245	<u>1/</u> 238
May 1951	54	44	34
June	58	90	118
July	66	99	116
August	343	57	59
September	350	24	6
October	212	61	34
November	79	96	48
December	10	96	66
January 1952	7	96	65
February	5	100	64
March	9	101	59
April	39	102	46
May	110	89	40

1/ Figures do not add to totals as jobs and unemployment periods often carry over to more than 1 month.

Of all farm workers studied, about three-fifths did farm work only during the year preceding the date of interview. The rest did both farm and nonfarm work (table 10). These were more often household heads than other family members. Most of the workers who combined farm and nonfarm work had 2 or more nonfarm jobs during the year. None had more than 3 nonfarm jobs.

As might be expected, there was an inverse correlation between the doing of nonfarm work and the time spent in farm work. No nonfarm work was done by 76 percent of the long-term seasonal workers. Sixty-one percent of the short-term seasonal workers and 55 percent of the casual workers had no nonfarm jobs. The figure for the last group of workers would be even lower if the workers studied had been in the labor force continuously throughout the year. Such persons, who had a month or less of farm work, might be expected to engage in nonfarm work at some time during the rest of the year. But in the group studied,

many of the casual workers were housewives or students who worked on farms briefly in peak seasons and then withdrew from the labor force.

Table 10.- Percentage distribution of farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by number of nonfarm jobs held during survey year, by relationship to head of household, and by type of worker, May 1952

Relationship to head and type of worker	All farm workers		Workers who held specified number of nonfarm jobs		
	Number	Percent	0	1	2 :or more
All farm workers	391	100	62	16	22
Relationship to head					
Male heads	61	100	36	23	41
Female heads	46	100	43	11	46
Wives	84	100	61	17	22
Sons, 16 and over	50	100	58	24	18
Daughters, 16 and over	45	100	58	18	24
Children under 16	88	100	92	8	-
Others	17	100	70	12	18
Type of worker					
Casual	53	100	55	21	24
Short-term seasonal	296	100	61	15	24
Long-term seasonal	42	100	76	17	7

Most nonfarm jobs held by farm workers in the survey area lasted from 21 days to about 2 months, although more than a fifth of them lasted 150 days or more (table 11). These people usually worked as laborers in such industries as construction, lumber and wood products, wholesale farm products and processing, eating and drinking places, and private households. In the last two industries, these workers normally performed personal services, such as those of waiter, cook, or housekeeper.

It is evident that many farm workers tried to fill in the slack farm season with nonfarm jobs. Most nonfarm jobs began in May or June, or in October or November. Many of the first group ended in July or August, while most of the second group were still in effect at the time of the survey. Table 9 showed the concentrations that occurred during June and July and between November and April. This pattern coincides closely with the seasonal low levels of farm employment and the high levels of unemployment as shown in the chart.

Table 11.- Distribution of nonfarm jobs held during survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by duration of each, May 1952

Duration of job	All nonfarm jobs	
	Number	Percent
All nonfarm jobs	245	100
Under 25 days	40	16
25 - 49 "	63	26
50 - 74 "	48	20
75 - 99 "	22	9
100 - 149 "	19	8
150 - 199 "	37	15
200 and over	11	4
Unknown	5	2

Nearly two-fifths of the jobs of any kind which the surveyed workers had from May 1951 through May 1952 were obtained through solicitation by employers (table 12). Previous contact between workers and employers was responsible for a fifth of the job placements, and another fifth were obtained after a personal search by workers. Crew leaders were instrumental in making only about a tenth of the job placements.

Table 12.- Distribution of all jobs held during survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by location of work, and method of recruitment, May 1952

Method of recruitment	All jobs	Location of work				Farm jobs only
		Home parish	Outside home parish	Unknown		
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	
All jobs	839	784	43	12	594	
Solicited by employer	326	299	24	3	314	
Previous contact	171	162	9	-	112	
Personal search	160	155	4	1	19	
Crew leader	91	83	5	3	90	
Friend or relative	55	54	1	-	32	
Related to employer	28	28	-	-	26	
Other	8	3	-	5	1	

Almost all of the jobs were near workers' homes. Only 5 percent were in an adjacent parish and almost none was farther away from home. Of those outside the home parish, more than half were solicited by the employer, a figure well above the average for all jobs. It was evident that the workers studied do not choose to migrate to another area unless they have a rather definite job commitment.

More than half of the farm jobs were obtained through the employer's solicitation, and about a fifth were the result of previous contact between worker and employer. Crew leaders were responsible for 15 percent of the placements.

NONWORK TIME

Periods during the year in which these farm workers were not gainfully employed were of special interest. Such periods involve more than unemployment; they may be regarded as unproductive only when the persons affected were available for work. Workers were not questioned, for example, about nonwork periods when the reason for them was school attendance or illness, and these reasons are not included in the meaning of the term "period not at work."

Seventy-one percent of the farm workers had one or more nonwork periods during the year preceding the date of interview (table 13). Most workers so affected experienced only one or two such periods; women and girl workers reported more nonwork periods than did men and boys.

Because of the composition of the labor force studied and the seasonal character of farm labor requirements, the amount of nonfarm work done by a worker was associated with the continuity of his employment. Eighty-five percent of the workers who did only farm work had some nonwork periods; for those who did mainly farm work, the figure was 77 percent. It was only 42 percent for those who were chiefly engaged in nonfarm work.

The comparative instability of both farm and nonfarm employment of these workers is shown by an examination of the rates of turnover. The average monthly rate of job-turnover of workers interviewed was about 5 times the labor turnover rate of all workers employed in manufacturing industries. The United States Department of Labor publishes monthly accession and separation rates for workers in all manufacturing industries. ^{5/} In 1951, these rates ranged between 3.0 and 6.0. This means that during any month of 1951, no more than 6 of each 100 workers in manufacturing industries left their jobs or got new ones. Information of this kind on a per worker basis could not be obtained in this survey, but turnover rates were computed for jobs rather than for workers. Results show that, on the average during the survey year, for every 100 jobs held at any time during a month, about 31.1 had been newly acquired in that

^{5/} U. S. Dept. of Labor, Employment and Payrolls, various issues.

month, and 29.8 had ended during the month. Rates were 20.5 and 16.5, respectively, for nonfarm jobs alone, and 39.4 and 40.7 for farm jobs. ^{6/}

Table 13.- Percentage distribution of farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by number of periods not at work, by sex, relationship to head of household, and type of work done in survey year, May 1952

Sex, relationship to head, and type of work	All farm workers		Workers having specified number of nonwork periods			
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
			0	1	2	3 :or more
All farm workers	391	100	29	37	29	5
Sex						
Male	171	100	35	42	18	5
Female	220	100	24	32	38	6
Relationship to head						
Male heads	61	100	42	18	33	7
Female heads	46	100	41	11	39	9
Wives	84	100	16	20	57	7
Sons, 16 and over	50	100	40	38	12	10
Daughters, 16 and over	45	100	25	40	31	4
Children under 16	88	100	18	77	5	-
Others	17	100	47	29	24	-
Type of work						
Farm only	241	100	15	41	41	3
Mostly farm	30	100	23	23	27	27
Mostly nonfarm	120	100	58	31	7	4

In all, 439 nonwork periods were reported by the 278 workers affected (table 14). Of these, more than half were reportedly due to no work being available. Family duties were given as the reason for 40 percent of the periods of nongainful employment. Voluntary idleness was reported in 5 percent of the cases. Very few of the workers received unemployment compensation when idle, as only 2 percent of all the 439 nonwork periods were covered by such compensation. Household heads were also questioned as to public relief benefits received. Answers were obtained concerning 121 nonwork periods, and in three-fourths of these cases no relief benefits were received.

^{6/} See definition of "job" used in this survey, p.41. Use of the conventional concept of "job" would have resulted in still higher rates of turnover for workers in the sample.

Table 14.- Distribution of periods not worked during survey year, by farm workers and household heads interviewed in Louisiana, by reason for not working and obtaining of unemployment compensation and relief benefits, May 1952

Obtaining of unemployment compensation and relief benefits	: Total	: All periods	Reason for not working			
			: No work available	: Family duties	: Not interested in more work	: Other
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
All farm workers	<u>1</u> / 278	439	236	175	20	8
Compensation obtained	6	8	6	1	-	1
Compensation not obtained	269	421	222	172	20	7
Unknown	7	10	8	2	-	-
Household heads	<u>1</u> / 62	121	64	41	10	6
Relief benefits obtained	17	31	15	13	2	1
Relief benefits not obtained	51	90	49	28	8	5

1/ Figures do not add to total as some workers and household heads are included in more than one category.

UNEMPLOYMENT

As a major item among the nonwork categories, unemployment as such was difficult to measure accurately among this group of workers, and especially among those with only a marginal attachment to the labor force. The problem of memory was acute, as information on the work record had to be obtained for an entire year. Also, housewives who normally do not work in winter sometimes found it hard to say whether they were keeping house because no work was available, or not working because they were keeping house. In the former case, they were classified among the unemployed; in the latter, they were classified as not in the labor force.

Despite these difficulties, certain useful information was obtained concerning the nature of unemployment among this group of farm workers. Of the 391 workers studied, 169, or 43 percent, experienced some unemployment during the survey year, averaging 1.4 such periods for each unemployed worker (table 15).

Table 15.- Distribution of unemployment periods experienced during survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by sex of worker, relationship to head, type of work, and type of worker, May 1952

Sex, relationship to head, type of work, and type of worker	All farm workers	Unemployed workers	Unemployment periods
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>
All farm workers	391	169	238
Sex			
Male	171	97	138
Female	220	72	100
Relationship to head			
Male heads	61	29	49
Female heads	46	9	15
Wives	84	20	34
Sons, 16 and over	50	30	48
Daughters, 16 and over	45	20	27
Children under 16	88	57	61
Others	17	4	4
Type of work			
Farm only	241	118	155
Mostly farm	30	17	36
Mostly nonfarm	120	34	47
Type of worker			
Casual	53	19	24
Short-term seasonal	296	123	166
Long-term seasonal	42	27	48

More than half of the male farm workers were unemployed during the year. This was true of less than a third of the female workers, many of whom had family responsibilities and household duties which caused them to withdraw temporarily from the labor force. Relatively more younger workers (those under 25) than older ones were affected by unemployment. Because they are not in school in the slack summer season, a high proportion of the children and youths remain available for work. Therefore, they are technically unemployed. However, the unemployment of this group was generally brief and not economically disastrous. Although relatively fewer male heads and older sons were unemployed, the unemployment they experienced was more frequent and more severe than that of younger workers.

Persons who were chiefly engaged in nonfarm work during the survey year were much less affected by the incidence of unemployment than were other farm workers. About half of those who worked mainly or entirely on farms were unemployed at some time during the year, as compared with only 28 percent of those who were chiefly engaged in nonfarm work.

Mainly because of the comparatively brief time spent in the labor force, only 36 percent of the casual workers experienced any unemployment. Most of them were supplementary workers, such as housewives and children, who withdrew from the labor force after brief spells of farm work. Many such workers had long periods of nongainful activity without being considered unemployed during those periods. Of the short-term seasonal workers, 42 percent were unemployed at some time during the year, as compared with 64 percent of the long-term seasonal workers. The latter group, some of whom were engaged in farm work for more than 40 weeks, normally remain in the labor force throughout the year, and therefore are affected by unemployment during all slack seasons. About 1 worker in 12 was unemployed for as long as 25 weeks, about 1 in 8 for as long as 4 months, about 1 in 5 longer than 2 months, and more than 1 in 4 for as long as 5 weeks (table 16). Only 7 percent were unemployed for a month or less, and the rest of the workers were unemployed for undetermined periods of time. Almost a third of the male heads and older sons were unemployed for more than 4 months.

Table 16.- Percentage distribution of farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by weeks of unemployment during survey year, by relationship to head of household, and by type of worker, May 1952

Relationship to head and type of worker	: All :		Weeks of unemployment					: Unknown :
	: farm : workers:	: 0	: 1-4	: 5-8	: 9-16	: 17-24	: 25 or : more	
			Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	
All farm workers	100	57	7	9	7	4	9	7
Relationship to head								
Male heads	100	51	3	3	10	13	20	-
Female heads	100	80	-	2	-	2	5	11
Wives	100	76	1	1	4	4	8	6
Sons, 16 and over	100	39	10	8	14	8	21	-
Daughters, 16 and over	100	54	7	2	16	-	5	16
Children under 16	100	38	17	25	6	1	1	12
Others	100	76	12	6	6	-	-	-
Type of worker								
Casual	100	64	2	7	8	2	2	15
Short-term seasonal	100	59	8	10	6	2	8	7
Long-term seasonal	100	33	5	-	17	26	19	-

Length of time spent in farm work, being correlated with the labor-force status of the worker during the year, largely determined the extent of unemployment. Only 12 percent of the casual workers were unemployed for as long as 9 weeks; this figure was 16 percent for short-term seasonal workers, and 62 percent for long-term seasonal workers.

Seasonal distribution of unemployment rates for workers in the sample indicates the relationship between their employment and the varying demands for farm workers in the area. (See tabulation.) It also reveals the comparative intensity of joblessness among these workers.

Unemployment rates of farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, as a percentage of the number of workers in the labor force, by months (average of 4 weeks) are given below.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Unemployment rate</u> (Percent in labor force)
June 1951	36.5
July	36.2
August	4.8
September	1.2
October	8.6
November	20.9
December	35.8
January 1952	35.7
February	34.6
March	31.1
April	20.9
May	13.3
Monthly average	23.3

The national unemployment rate for farm laborers and foremen, as reported by the Bureau of the Census, averaged only 2.1 percent for 1951. This compares with a monthly average unemployment rate of 23.3 percent for workers in this survey. The rate ranged as high as 36.5 percent in some seasons of the year. Generally, rates of unemployment followed closely the seasonal patterns of the crops. The proportion of workers without jobs was heavy throughout the year except during the cotton and sweetpotato harvests in August, September, and part of October. From December through March, approximately a third of the labor force was unemployed. Again in June and July, more than a third of the workers were unemployed.

PARTIAL EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment, as the preceding data show, was a familiar role to many of the workers in the Louisiana sample. But the difference between full and partial utilization of a worker's time is not always evident from data covering technical

unemployment. For a close-up of time actually devoted to productive work, therefore, an appraisal of the degree of employment was undertaken for a briefer period than the 12 months included in the principal analysis. To this end, workers were questioned as to the amount of farm work they had done in the 2 weeks preceding the date of interview. Those who had done some farm work were then questioned further about partial employment. ^{7/} The 2-week time period was chosen because for longer periods the workers have difficulty remembering the number of hours they worked each day or the length of their work-week.

Of all the farm workers studied, 96, or about a fourth, had done some farm work for wages during the previous 2 weeks. This group was composed mainly of male household heads, wives, and older sons (table 17). About 3 in 4 of the 96 workers had worked fewer than 10 days in the 2-week period, and 58 percent worked fewer than 8 days.

Almost three-fifths of the 96 workers questioned were partially employed during the 2 weeks immediately preceding the date of the survey; that is, they worked for fewer than 8 days in that period. Female household heads, older daughters, and children under 16 were affected to a greater extent than other family members. Male household heads and older sons were more fully employed, with an average of 7.2 and 8.6 workdays, respectively.

A total of 313 man-days, exclusive of Saturdays and Sundays, were classed as "not worked" in the 2 weeks preceding the date of interview. This represented about a third of the possible working time. Almost three-fifths of these days were not worked either because no work was available or because of weather or crop conditions (table 18). Housekeeping was the reason reported for 35 nonwork days, or 11 percent of the total; this did not include the customary day taken off each week by women in the sample to do their laundry and other household chores.

^{7/} See definition, p.41. Partial employment can be considered as employment for less than: (1) A standard number of hours per day, or (2) a standard number of days per work-week, or other work period. In this study, persons working as many as 8 days in the 2 weeks preceding the date of interview were considered relatively fully employed. Persons who worked fewer than 8 days were defined as partially employed. There is one serious qualification to these statements--that the workers in question to be partially employed must be available for full employment. For any individual worker, this is not always possible to determine precisely and the difficulties were particularly noticeable among the group surveyed. The problem here is similar to that discussed under unemployment, where considerable vagueness on the subject of availability was shown by casual or "fringe" workers, such as housewives and students. But in the discussion of partial employment, it can safely be assumed that almost all the group who worked for less than 8 days were truly partially employed. So few of this group were uncertain about their availability for full employment that they can be disregarded.

Table 17.- Farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, who had done some farm work in previous 2 weeks, by number of days worked and relationship to head of household, May 1952

Days worked in previous 2 weeks	All farm workers	Relationship to head										
		Male heads	Female heads	Wives	Sons, 16 and over	Daughters, 16 and over	Children under 16	Others	Number	Number	Number	Number
All farm workers	96	25	12	23	17	11	6	2				
Those who worked:												
2 days or more	95	25	12	23	16	11	6	2				
4 days or more	80	21	8	19	16	10	5	1				
6 days or more	54	14	5	14	14	5	1	1				
8 days or more	40	12	3	10	12	2	-	1				
10 days or more	25	8	2	7	8	-	-	-				
12 days or more	7	4	-	-	3	-	-	-				
14 days	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-				

Another aspect of partial employment as tested here is that of working less than a standard number of hours per day. The standard chosen was 6 hours and those who worked 6 or more hours per day were considered to be fully employed on a given day. Those who worked no hours at all on any given day were already considered under the "short work-week" aspect of partial employment. This left the rest, those who worked from 1 to 5 hours, as the partially employed. However, a total of only 7 workdays of 1 to 5 hours duration were reported by the workers, and 6 of these were reported by children under 16 who probably were not available for fuller employment. It seems likely that only one type of partial employment, the short work-week, is of much significance in the area surveyed.

Table 18.- Percentage distribution of days not worked in previous 2 weeks ^{1/}, by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana who had done some farm work in the 2-week period, by reason for not working, and relationship to head of household, May 1952

Reason for not working	: All : farm workers	: Relationship to head of household	
		: Heads	: Nonheads
All farm workers - number	78	29	49
Total days - number	313	118	195
- percent	100	100	100
Weather or crop conditions			
- percent	31	32	30
No work available "	28	34	24
Housekeeping "	11	11	11
Illness "	9	4	12
Personal "	7	9	6
Other "	14	10	17

^{1/} Excluding Saturdays and Sundays.

AVAILABILITY FOR OFF-SEASON EMPLOYMENT

It is evident from the extent of unemployment and partial employment among the farm wage workers surveyed in Louisiana that organized efforts are needed to extend the continuity of employment among those willing to accept off-season jobs. To determine what might be done in planning for this group, all workers 16 to 60 years of age were asked how long they expected to work during the following year.

Of the 288 farm workers aged 16 to 60, 118, or two-fifths, expected to be working for at least 10 months during the year to come (table 19). For the remaining 152 workers, 16 to 60 years old, who expected to work for less than 10

months or who were uncertain of their work plans, information on willingness to accept off-season jobs was obtained. Eighty-two of these workers said they would take off-season, local nonfarm jobs during the coming year, but 7 of them did not know in what seasons they would be available, so the effective total available was 75 workers. For local farm jobs, 79 persons were available, although 7 were not sure of the seasons. The total number available for one or both types of local work was 96, or 63 percent.

Table 19.- Farm workers aged 16 to 60 interviewed in Louisiana, by employment expectations and availability for off-season work during the coming year, by sex, May 1952

Work expectations and availability during coming year	Farm workers 16-60		Sex			
	Number	Percent	Male		Female	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Work expectations, 1952-53						
Farm workers, 16-60	288	100	111	100	177	100
To work 10-12 months	118	41	53	48	65	37
To work 0-9 months <u>1/</u>	152	53	49	44	103	58
No response	18	6	9	8	9	5
Off-season availability						
Workers questioned	152	100	49	100	103	100
Workers available for: <u>2/</u>						
Local farm work	79	52	33	67	46	45
Local nonfarm work	82	54	38	78	44	43
Nonlocal farm work	12	8	8	16	4	4

1/ Includes 40 workers; 13 males, 27 females who were uncertain of their plans.

2/ Figures do not add to totals, as some workers were available for more than one kind of work.

Almost all workers preferred not to accept farm jobs that would involve leaving their home communities. Only a dozen of the 152 workers questioned were interested in nonlocal employment. The question on this subject had to be framed very generally, and specific details on nonlocal employment could not be presented to the respondents. Therefore, the extremely low proportion of workers willing to take nonlocal farm work may understate the actual situation regarding availability for out-of-area farm employment. More workers would probably consider farm jobs in other counties or States if they had further details regarding them. Favorable wages and working conditions might induce some workers to move who indicated that they would not do so. As previously noted, most of the jobs that migratory workers from the Louisiana area had during the preceding year were solicited by the employers. Definite job commitments might influence other workers to migrate. A fairly large group among the farm workers interviewed, as

pointed out earlier, were housewives or other women with family responsibilities who were not free to leave. For this reason, the response of females to the question of availability was markedly lower than that of males for each of the three categories of work.

The area surveyed employs no migratory farm labor. Although the area usually supplies some migratory labor for other areas, few workers in the Louisiana sample had done any migratory farm work during the year preceding the survey. Most workers in the towns studied had comparatively strong ties in the community which limited their mobility. Therefore, it could not be expected that large numbers of them would readily accept farm work of an unknown nature away from their home areas.

In regard to local work, there was no significant difference in the number available for farm or nonfarm work. For some categories, such as male workers, nonfarm work appeared to be somewhat more attractive than farm work, but this was usually due to seasonal differences in preference. A problem of interpretation arose with regard to worker availability for farm work during certain months. In winter, there are almost no farm jobs to be had in this area, as these workers well know. Thus, having indicated a preference for local employment, few declared themselves available for work which they knew did not exist (table 20).

Table 20.- Distribution of farm workers interviewed in Louisiana who were available for local farm or nonfarm work during the coming year, by headship of household, by quarter available, May 1952

Headship of household and quarter available	Workers available for		
	Farm work	Nonfarm work	Either work
	only	only	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>
All farm workers			
January-March	5	22	18
April-June	26	18	18
July-September	23	19	21
October-December	7	29	20
Unknown	4	4	3
Head			
January-March	1	11	7
April-June	5	6	4
July-September	8	4	5
October-December	4	14	6
Unknown	1	1	-
Nonhead			
January-March	4	11	11
April-June	21	12	14
July-September	15	15	16
October-December	3	15	14
Unknown	3	3	3

Previous work habits, rather than prospects of new employment, probably influenced the answers to questions on availability. Forty-five of the workers said they would accept some kind of work during the period January through March. About half of this number said that they would do only nonfarm work, and another two-fifths indicated no preference as to type of work. Only 5 of the workers said they would do farm work only. That farm jobs are almost nonexistent at this time of year undoubtedly kept the latter figure so low. Sixty-two workers said they would be available for employment in the second quarter of the year. This was an increase of more than a third over the first quarter; it corresponded to the seasonal increase in the labor force that usually occurs during the cotton-chopping season. The number of persons who said they were willing to accept only farm work increased by much more, however, and the number available for nonfarm work alone decreased slightly. The number willing to accept employment in the third quarter was practically the same as that for the second quarter, while in the fourth quarter, the number of available workers decreased slightly. Nonfarm work was favored, with slightly more than half of the available workers interested only in that kind of work.

WAGES AND EARNINGS

Of the farm jobs in cotton, nearly three-fourths involved piece rates, which were generally per 100 pounds for picking (table 21). Most of these rates ranged between \$3 and \$4, with \$2 to \$3 next in importance. The rest of the cotton jobs were paid by the day, and the range between \$3 and \$5 accounted for most rates. Wage agreements usually involved only the employer and individual employees, although on 14 percent of the farm jobs, crew leaders served as intermediaries and actually paid the workers.

Table 21.- Distribution of farm jobs held during survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by crop, wage rate, and operation, May 1952

Crop, wage unit, and wage rate	: All : farm jobs	: Operation			
		: Planting	: Cultivation	: Harvest	: Other
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>
All farm jobs	594	32	144	408	10
Cotton	509		134	374	1
Day rates	137		134	2	1
\$2.00-2.99	3		3		
3.00-3.99	84		83	1	
4.00-4.99	49		48	1	
5.00-5.99	1				1

Continued.

Table 21.- Distribution of farm jobs held during survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by crop, wage rate, and operation, May 1952-Continued

Crop, wage unit, and wage rate	All farm jobs	Operation			
		Planting	Cultivation	Harvest	Other
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
Piece rates ^{1/}	372			372	
\$1.00-1.99	6			6	
2.00-2.99	88			88	
3.00-3.99	270			270	
4.00-4.99	8			8	
Sweetpotatoes	68	32	9	26	1
Day rates	53	23	6	23	1
\$1.00-1.99	1			1	
2.00-2.99	5	1		4	
3.00-3.99	26	12	2	12	
4.00-4.99	16	7	4	5	
5.00-5.99	5	3		1	1
Hour	15	9	3	3	
\$0.50	13	8	3	2	
.75	2	1		1	
Other	17		1	8	8
Day rates	14		1	5	8
\$2.00-2.99	1				1
3.00-3.99	7		1	1	5
4.00-4.99	4			3	1
5.00-5.99	2			1	1
Other	3			3	

^{1/} Usually for picking cotton by the hundredweight.

Almost four-fifths of the jobs in sweetpotatoes were paid by the day and, as in cotton, the \$3 to \$5 rates were most common.

Workers on 15 of 16 cotton jobs received some kind of perquisite in addition to their wages (table 22). Because of the practice of dayhauling farm workers in this area, housing for workers was rarely provided. But 89 percent included transportation and 31 percent included meals. Almost 7 in 10 of the jobs in sweetpotatoes included perquisites. Fifty-six percent included transportation and 21 percent included meals.

Table 22.- Distribution of farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, and their farm jobs, by crop and perquisites furnished, May 1952

Perquisites furnished	Cotton		Sweetpotatoes		Other	
	Workers	Jobs	Workers	Jobs	Workers	Jobs
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
Total ^{1/}	400	509	59	68	16	17
None	24	30	17	22	3	3
Meals	15	16	1	2	1	1
Transportation	245	313	25	26	5	5
Meals and transportation	107	141	11	12	4	5
Others	9	9	5	6	3	3

^{1/} Worker figures do not add to totals, in some cases, as some workers are counted in more than one category.

About half of the farm jobs gave the workers daily earnings from \$2.00 to \$3.99. Average daily earnings tended to increase with the time spent at farm work. For example, casual workers earned an average of \$3.55 per day; short-term seasonal workers, \$4.39; and long-term seasonal workers, \$4.87 (table 23).

Table 23.- Distribution of farm jobs held during survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by daily earnings from each, and by type of worker, May 1952

Daily earnings	All farm jobs	Type of worker		
		Casual	Short-term seasonal	Long-term seasonal
		Percent	Percent	Percent
Total	100	100	100	100
Less than \$1.99	3	21	1	---
\$2.00-3.99	50	48	52	45
4.00-5.99	32	21	32	36
6.00-7.99	11	10	12	9
8.00 and over	4	---	3	10
Average	Dollars 4.41	Dollars 3.55	Dollars 4.39	Dollars 4.87

Casual workers were often secondary wage earners, such as housewives and children, and they did not always command the going wage rate. Seasonal workers were more likely to be primary wage earners and, as such, they averaged higher wage rates for comparable work.

Average daily earnings per job from farm jobs was \$4.41. Male household heads commanded higher earnings than other family members (table 24). Children under 16, older daughters, and female family heads had the lowest daily earnings.

Table 24.- Percentage distribution of farm jobs held during survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by daily earnings from each, by relationship to head of household, May 1952

Earnings per day	All farm jobs	Relationship to head						
		Male heads	Female heads	Wives	Sons, 16 and over	Daughters, 16 and over	Children under 16	Others
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
All farm jobs	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Less than \$1.99	3	2	4	1	---	5	7	---
\$2.00 - 3.99	50	30	53	47	43	59	69	48
4.00 - 5.99	32	45	25	39	35	28	15	39
6.00 - 7.99	11	13	16	11	16	8	6	9
8.00 and over	4	10	2	2	6	---	3	4
Average	<u>Dol.</u> 4.41	<u>Dol.</u> 5.02	<u>Dol.</u> 4.22	<u>Dol.</u> 4.48	<u>Dol.</u> 4.77	<u>Dol.</u> 4.00	<u>Dol.</u> 3.74	<u>Dol.</u> 4.80

Average total earnings from farm work for these workers amounted to \$226 in the year before the interview. This average was lowered to a large extent by the many women and children in the sample who worked only for brief periods. As was to be expected from the definitions of the three types of workers, earnings were lowest for casual workers and highest for long-term seasonal workers. Casual workers earned only \$52, on the average, from farm work, and short-term seasonal workers earned \$204. Long-term seasonal workers earned an average of \$600.

Children under 16 worked and earned less from farm work than any other family members. Male family heads and their older sons had considerably higher earnings from farm work than other household members. Male heads earned an average of \$306, and for older sons this figure was \$312.

This tabulation shows:

<u>Type of worker and relation to head</u>	<u>Average gross earnings from farm work</u>
All farm workers	\$226
Type of worker	
Casual	52
Short-term seasonal	204
Long-term seasonal	600
Relation to head	
Male heads	306
Female heads	187
Wives	243
Sons, 16 and over	312
Daughters, 16 and over	201
Children under 16	139
Others	221

Of the total of 594 farm jobs, 37 percent were paid on time rates. Most of these rates were daily rates and the few exceptions were hourly rates (table 25.) Most of the latter ranged from 50 to 74 cents an hour, while the typical daily rate ranged between \$3 and \$4.

Table 25.- Distribution of time-rate jobs held during survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by time unit, wage rate and type of job, May 1952

Time unit and wage rate	Farm jobs		Nonfarm jobs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All time-rate jobs	219	100	237	100
Monthly			3	1
\$100 - 199	---		3	1
Weekly			121	51
Under \$10	---		51	22
\$10 - 19	---		60	25
20 - 29	---		9	4
30 - 39	---		1	1/2

Continued.

Table 25.- Distribution of time-rate jobs held during survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by time unit, wage rate and type of job, May 1952-Continued

Time unit and wage rate	Farm jobs		Nonfarm jobs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Daily	204	93	71	30
\$1.00 - 1.99	1	1	30	13
2.00 - 2.99	9	4	17	7
3.00 - 3.99	117	53	7	3
4.00 - 4.99	69	31	7	3
5.00 - 5.99	8	4	4	2
6.00 - 6.99			6	2
Hourly	15	7	42	18
\$.50 - .74	13	6	6	3
.75 - .99	2	1	33	14
1.00 and over	---	---	3	1

¹/ Less than 0.5 of 1 percent.

Of the 245 nonfarm jobs, 97 percent were paid on time rates. Hourly rates represented 18 percent of the nonfarm jobs paid on time rates. Most of these were from 75 to 99 cents. Thirty percent of the time-rate nonfarm jobs were daily rates, most of which ranged from \$1 to \$3. Weekly rates were most important in nonfarm jobs, representing more than half of the jobs paid for by time rates. Less than a tenth of the jobs paid by the week paid as much as \$20.

Average daily earnings per nonfarm job were \$3.40; this was lower than the daily earnings from farm work (table 26). Male household heads and their older sons earned more from their nonfarm jobs, on the average, than other family members. Children under 16 averaged only \$1.50 per day. Female household heads and their daughters also had low daily earnings from their nonfarm jobs. All of these low nonfarm earnings were a reflection of the unskilled nature of the jobs.

Average gross earnings from nonfarm work were \$137 in the 12 months before the survey. Male heads earned considerably more than this. Children under 16, older daughters and wives had very low gross earnings from nonfarm work. Again, this was probably due to the types of jobs usually open to them, such as low-paying personal service work, and also to the little time they spent in nonfarm work.

Table 26.- Distribution of nonfarm jobs held during survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by daily earnings from each, and worker's relationship to head of household, May 1952

Relationship to head of household	Workers with nonfarm jobs	Total nonfarm jobs	Nonfarm jobs having specified daily earnings					Average daily earnings per job
	No.	No.	Less than \$2.00	\$2.00-3.99	\$4.00-5.99	\$6.00-7.99	\$8.00 and over	Dollars
Total	150	245	97	75	21	43	9	\$3.40
Male heads	39	70	3	16	15	30	6	5.54
Female heads	26	47	30	17	—	—	—	1.88
Wives	33	52	29	22	—	—	1	2.13
Sons, 16 and over	21	30	1	11	5	11	2	4.97
Daughters, 16 and over	19	30	24	6	—	—	—	1.70
Children under 16	7	7	7	—	—	—	—	1.50
Others	5	9	3	3	1	2	—	3.83

The tabulation below shows the data on earnings from nonfarm work.

Relationship to head	Average gross earnings from nonfarm work
All farm workers	\$137
Male heads	402
Female heads	135
Wives	80
Sons, 16 and over	203
Daughters, 16 and over	81
Children under 16	4
Others	103

Average gross earnings from all work was only \$359 among the group of workers studied. As expected, male household heads and their older sons earned well above this average. Children under 16, older daughters, wives and female family heads earned considerably less.

Gross earnings from all work was determined largely by time spent at farm work. Casual farm workers had average yearly earnings of \$258; short-term seasonal workers earned \$334. Long-term seasonal workers had average earnings of \$661.

Average gross earnings from all work done during survey year are shown below:

<u>Characteristics of workers</u>	<u>Average gross earnings from all work</u>
All farm workers	\$359
Relationship to head	
Male heads	703
Female heads	317
Wives	325
Sons, 16 and over	505
Daughters, 16 and over	277
Children under 16	142
Others	312
Type of worker	
Casual	258
Short-term seasonal	334
Long-term seasonal	661
Type of work	
Farm only	231
Mostly farm	413
Mostly nonfarm	601

The type of work in which a worker was chiefly engaged also influenced his earnings. Those who did farm work only earned about \$231, on the average, in the survey year. Workers who did both farm and nonfarm work had higher earnings. Those who did chiefly farm work earned \$413, and those who did mainly nonfarm work earned \$601 in the year.

Of the 839 jobs held by workers in the preceding year, only 8 percent had any deductions made from their wages, and of these, 86 percent were nonfarm jobs. In all, 70 jobs involved deductions from wages, and about two-thirds of these were for Social Security (table 27). On most of the rest of these jobs, deductions were reported for income-tax purposes. Very few Social Security or income-tax deductions were made from farm jobs. In a few cases deductions were made for meals, and all these were on farm jobs.

Table 27.- Distribution of jobs held during survey year by farm workers interviewed in Louisiana, by type of deduction made from wages, and type of job, May 1952

Type of deduction	Jobs having		Type of job	
	wage deductions		Farm	Nonfarm
	Number	Number	Number	Number
All jobs	70	10	60	
Social Security	37	3	34	
Income tax	19	2	17	
Social Security and income tax	8	1	7	
Meals	4	4	--	
Unknown	2	--	2	

APPENDIX

Terms Used

1. CASUAL WORKER--one who did farm wage work for 1 to 4 weeks during the survey year.
2. FARM WORKER--a person who did some farm work for wages in the survey year.
3. A JOB--arbitrarily defined, for purposes of this report, as an uninterrupted period spent in one particular occupation, regardless of changes in employer. For example, if a worker picks cotton during the entire month of August on four different farms, he is considered to have had only one job (or occupation period) during that month. But if he picked sweetpotatoes for a week in the middle of the month, he would have had three jobs: (1) Picking cotton, (2) picking sweetpotatoes, and (3) picking cotton. Similarly, if his employment had been interrupted by a week of unemployment in the middle of the month, he would have had two jobs, both of them picking cotton. This modified usage of the term departs from the conventional definition because individual workers find it difficult to reconstruct from memory the details of employer-employee relations in work paid for on a piece-rate basis.
4. LABOR FORCE--includes all persons working for pay or profit, as well as those unemployed. Persons voluntarily idle, in school, or unable to work are not in the labor force.
5. LONG-TERM SEASONAL WORKER--one who did farm wage work for 17 or more weeks during the survey year.
6. PARTIAL EMPLOYMENT--employment for less than: (1) A standard number of hours per day, or (2) a standard number of days per work week or other work period. In this study, only those persons who had done some farm work for wages during the 2 weeks immediately preceding the interview were questioned about partial employment. This approach was used to minimize memory bias and to provide a close-up view of time utilization. Working for at least 1 hour but less than 6 on any workday was considered evidence of partial employment. Persons who worked fewer than 8 days during the 2 weeks were also considered to be only partially employed.
7. PERIOD NOT AT WORK--an uninterrupted period during the survey year in which the worker was not gainfully employed and not in school or ill.
8. SHORT-TERM SEASONAL WORKER--one who did farm wage work for 5 to 16 weeks during the survey year.
9. SURVEY YEAR--the 12-month period (May 1951 to May 1952) preceding the date of interview.

10. UNEMPLOYMENT--implies availability for work but without a job. To measure the degree of unemployment among the group studied, each worker was asked to recall what he did during each week in the survey year. Persons were described as being in the labor force during a given week if they said: (1) That they had worked during that week, (2) that they had been actively seeking work, or (3) that they had wanted to work but believed that no work was available. Among persons who were in the labor force, those who were either looking for work or who believed no work was available were classified as unemployed. Thus, in referring to unemployed persons, those who were keeping house, in school, voluntarily idle, or unable to work were excluded.



