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FARM TENURE IN THE UNITED STATES

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The census of 1900 reported an area of 841 million acres of land as included within farms; this is about forty-five per cent. of the entire land area of continental United States. The census divides farm lands into two parts: (1), improved or cultivated land; and (2), unimproved land consisting of woodland, permanent pastures, etc. In 1900 the improved land was a trifle less than half of the total farm area, or 415 million acres, which is 21.6 per cent. of the land area of the United States. There were in that year 5,739,657 farms, having an average area of 146.6 acres each, of which 72.3 acres were improved land. Statistics of agriculture have been gathered with increasing fullness by each census since 1850. Data concerning tenure were first obtained in the census of 1880.

The average number of acres per farm and the average number of acres of improved land are given for each census in the following table:

Census of	Av. acreage per farm.	Av. acreage of improved land per farm.
1850	202.6	78.0
1860	199.2	79.8
1870	153.3	71.0
1880	133.7	71.0
1890	136.5	78.3
1900	146.6	72.3

The average farm decreased in size from 1850 to 1880, and since that time has increased. Whether this recent increase is to continue and whether it has significance, time alone will show.

Viewing the country by geographical sections, the greatest increase in farm area has taken place in the Western section, including the states of the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Slope, and in the North Central States, including those north of the Ohio River and the south boundary of Missouri and Kansas, and from Ohio

westward to include the Dakotas, Nebraska and Kansas. In the north Atlantic section, including New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and the south central section, including the states south of the Ohio River and the south boundary of Missouri and Kansas, and from Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama westward to include Oklahoma and Texas, the average farm has increased only between 1890 and 1900, while in the south Atlantic section bordering the Atlantic, including the states south of Mason and Dixon's line, with West Virginia, there has been a steady decrease in the size of farms from 1850 to 1900.

The column giving the average number of acres of improved land per farm shows irregularities, with a general decrease from the earliest censuses to the last one. Viewing the country as before, by sections, the north Atlantic and south Atlantic sections show a continuous decrease in area of improved land; the south central section shows a general but not regular decrease; the north central section shows an increase from 1850 to 1900; while the western section shows an increase to 1880, and since that time a decrease.

The 5,739,657 farms in the United States in 1900 were distributed as follows as regards tenure:

Farms operated by	No. of farms.	Percentage of all farms.
Owners	3,149,344	54.9
Part owners	451,515	7.9
Owners and tenants	53,299	0.9
Managers	59,213	1.0
Tenants for cash	752,920	13.1
Tenants on shares	1,273,366	22.2

The first class comprises those farms owned entirely by the occupants; the second, those owned in part by the occupants and in part by some other person or persons from whom they are rented by the occupants; the third, a small class, includes those occupied in part by the owners of the entire farm; the remainder being worked by tenants; while the fourth class comprises farms owned by individuals or corporations and carried on by salaried managers. In earlier censuses all these four classes have been considered as owned farms, and for purposes of comparison they will be grouped together. The last two classes comprise the rented farms; the first for a fixed money rental, the second for a share in the product.

In 1900, tenantry was most common in the southern states, where only fifty-three per cent. of the farms were worked by their owners, the remaining forty-seven per cent. being operated by tenants. It was least common in the western states where only one-sixth were rented. In the northeastern states twenty-one per cent. were rented, and in the north central states twenty-eight per cent. The lowest proportion was in the State of Maine, where fewer than one in twenty farms were worked by tenants, while the highest proportion was in Georgia, where three-fifths of the farms were rented.

Farms carried on by managers were most numerous in the far western states, where this class of farms consists mainly of great cattle or sheep ranches. There is little difference among the different sections of the country in the prevalence of the two kinds of rental, whether for cash or shares.

The foregoing table shows that less than two-thirds, or 64.7 per cent., of all farms were worked by their owners, and that more than one-third, or 35.3 per cent., were operated by tenants. It shows, furthermore, by comparison with similar returns from earlier censuses, that the proportion of tenant farmers has greatly increased. Thus, in 1880, three-fourths, or 74.5 per cent., of all farms were worked by their owners and only one-fourth by tenants.

It must not be hastily assumed, however, that because the number and proportion of rented farms have greatly increased that we are drifting toward a system of landlordism. If owned farms have increased in number as rapidly as has the farming population, or the occupation class of those engaged in agriculture, it would appear that there has occurred no relative diminution of the owning class, and we must look elsewhere for those who have rented the farms.

Out of every 1000 males engaged in agriculture in 1880, 422 owned their farms; in 1900, the corresponding number was 423, or practically the same. Out of the same 1000 persons in 1880, 145 rented their farms, and in 1900 this number had increased to 231. The remainder of the 1000 persons, 433 in 1880 and 346 in 1900, were farm laborers. This class shows a great decrease in the twenty years, and leads to the conclusion that the increase in renters came from the class of farm laborers and not from the owners, and indicates progress and not retrogression, since it is a step upward from laborer to renter.

The total number of males engaged in agricultural pursuits increased twenty-four per cent. in the twenty years between 1880 and 1900. In the same period the total number of farms increased forty-three per cent., showing, as above, by another method, a much greater increase in the number of farms than in persons engaged in farming.

The number of farms worked by their owners increased twenty-four per cent. in the same time, the same proportion as the increase in agricultural workers. In the same period, rented farms increased not less than ninety-nine per cent., or four times as rapidly as the owned farms. Farms rented for cash increased 134 per cent., and those rented on shares eighty-one per cent.

In earlier times when public land suitable for farming could be had for the asking, the farm laborer who wished to better his conditions availed himself of the liberal land laws and secured for himself a homestead from the public lands, becoming at one step a proprietor. In those days there were, in all probability, few rented farms. Now, however, with the public lands available for cultivation without irrigation practically gone, he is obliged to purchase at high prices from private owners, or to lease. In many, perhaps most, cases he is unable to purchase, and therefore leases in the hope of being able to purchase later.

The following table shows the average size of farms and the amount of improved land per farm, under various forms of tenure, and the proportion of the farm which was improved:

	Farm areas.	Improved land.	
	Acres.	Acres.	Percentage.
Average size of all farms	146.6	72	49.3
Wholly owned	134.	69	51.2
Partly owned	277.	126	45.4
Owned and tenanted	172.	102	59.5
Managed	1,514.	189	12.5
Rented for cash	103.	57	55.1
Rented on shares	92.	65	70.3
All classes of ownership	174.	78	44.8
Both classes of rental	96.	62	64.6

The owned farms were much larger than those rented, both as regards total and cultivated area. On the other hand, a larger part of the rented farms was cultivated than of the owned farms. The

largest farms were those under managers, and of these the proportion under cultivation was far the least. Of the two classes of rented farms, those rented on shares had a much larger proportion of cultivated land than those rented for cash.

The following table classifies owners and tenants of farms and farm laborers, by age, in percentages of the total of each age group:

Age in years.	Percentage of all in age groups.		
	Owners.	Tenants.	Laborers.
10 to 24	2	6	92
25 to 34	26	32	42
35 to 44	53	30	17
45 to 54	64	27	9
55 to 64	74	19	7
65 plus	81	14	5

Out of every 100 persons under twenty-five years of age engaged in agricultural pursuits, ninety-two were laborers, six were tenants, and only two owned farms. Between twenty-five and thirty-four years, there was a large increase among owners and tenants and a great decrease among laborers. This decrease among laborers continued through all ages, while the proportion of tenants decreased in each age group above thirty-four years. On the other hand, the proportion of owners increased throughout, and was greatest at the most advanced ages.

The following table shows a classification by age of farm owners, tenants and laborers in proportions of the total number of each of these three classes:

Age in years	Percentage of all in classes.		
	Owners.	Tenants.	Laborers.
10 to 24	2	10	71
25 to 34	15	32	18
35 to 44	25	25	6
45 to 54	25	19	3
55 to 64	19	9	1
65 plus	14	5	1

Of all farm laborers, seventy-one per cent. were under twenty-five years of age, and the proportion rapidly diminished with advancing age. Tenants increased up to thirty-four years, and then decreased through all ages. Owners increased up to forty-five years and then decreased slowly.

Both these tables show unmistakably a strong movement with

advancing age away from the laboring class to the tenant class, and thence in turn to the owner class.

Rented farms were most numerous among cotton farms, *i. e.*, farms devoted mainly to the culture of this textile; of all rented farms, thirty-six per cent. were cotton farms; hay and grain farms formed twenty-six per cent.; and live stock, sixteen per cent. Of all cotton farms, nearly two-thirds were rented; of hay and grain farms, nearly two-fifths; and of live stock farms, only one-fifth.

The following table shows the average value per farm, under different tenures, of land and buildings and the average value per acre of the land:

	Land.	Buildings.	Land and Buildings.	Land value per acre.
Owners	\$2,124	\$711	\$2,835	\$15.84
Part owners	3,627	721	4,348	13.11
Owners and tenants	2,961	855	3,816	17.24
Managers	11,627	2,379	14,006	7.68
Cash tenants	2,099	423	2,522	20.83
Share tenants	1,854	386	2,240	20.05

The greatest value, both of land and buildings, is in the class of managers, due of course to the large area and the corresponding extent of the establishment. The smallest, both as to land and buildings, is in the two tenant classes; the first because the area of the farm is small, and the second because a large proportion of the occupants are colored who require less costly structures.

The following table shows the value of implements and machinery on farms classified by different forms of tenure:

	Average value per farm.	per acre.	Percentage value of land.
Owners	\$139	\$1.04	6.6
Part owners	186	0.67	5.1
Owners and tenants	169	0.99	5.7
Managers	788	0.52	6.8
Cash tenants	92	0.89	4.4
Share tenants	89	0.96	4.8

In average value per farm, the cost of implements and machinery was very high in those farms under managers, owing to the large area and value, and lowest in the rented farms owing to their small extent and the race of a large proportion of the occupants.

In value per acre, the class of managers is very small, while the tenant class is not much smaller than the owner class.

In percentage of value of land, the tenant class is smallest, for the reasons before given.

The following table shows for rented farms the percentage which the number of owners of one farm, two farms, etc., bore to the total number of owners, the percentage of the total number of rented farms thus held, and the corresponding percentages of the total acreage and value in each group:

No. of farms.	Percentage of owners.	Percentage of farms.	Percentage of area.	Percentage of value.
1	80.0	52.0	62.3	66.9
2	11.4	14.8	13.7	14.3
3 and 4	5.4	11.6	9.4	8.4
5 to 9	2.3	9.7	7.0	5.2
10 to 19	0.7	6.0	4.2	2.9
20 and over	0.2	5.9	3.4	2.3

In further explanation of this table, eighty per cent. of all owners of rented farms owned only one farm each; fifty-two per cent. of all rented farms were thus owned; the area of these farms was 62.3 per cent. that of all rented farms, and the value 66.9 per cent. of the value of all. Furthermore, 0.2 per cent. of all owners of rented farms owned twenty or more farms each, and collectively they owned 5.9 per cent. of all farms, 3.4 per cent. of the area, and 2.3 per cent. of the value.

This table measures the extent of the concentration of farm lands and values in few hands. While such concentration is apparent, it has not yet made great progress. Those who owned twenty or more farms numbered 3,244, held an average of thirty-five farms each, with an average area of 1,959 acres.

The degree of concentration in the ownership of rented farms is further characterized by the following statements. Fifty-five per cent. of the owners possessed forty-seven per cent. of the farms with only twenty-six per cent. of the area and but ten per cent. of the value; thirty-seven per cent. of the owners had thirty-eight per cent. of the farms, forty-four per cent. of the area, and forty-six per cent. of the value; while eight per cent. of the owners had fifteen per cent. of the farms, thirty per cent. of their area, and no less than forty-four per cent. of their value. Thus the largest and most valuable of these farms were in few hands.

The owners of not less than seventy-five per cent. of the rented farms lived in the county in which the farms were situated; fifteen

per cent. lived in the same state, but outside of the county; five per cent. lived outside of the state; and the remaining five per cent. was not reported. Less than 0.1 per cent. lived in foreign countries.

The following table shows for rented farms the percentage which the number of owners of farms, their acreage and value, in each specified class of size of farm bore to the total number, area, and value:

Acreage per farm.	Percentage of owners.	Percentage of farms.	Percentage of area.	Percentage of value.
Under 100	55.3	41.9	16.6	21.9
100-200	26.4	23.7	25.2	30.0
200-500	14.8	20.2	29.0	30.4
500-1000	2.5	7.6	11.3	9.2
1000-2500	0.8	4.6	7.4	5.2
2500 plus	0.2	2.0	10.5	3.3

In interpretation of this table, the rented farms having an area less than 100 acres were owned by 55.3 per cent. of all owners, numbered 41.9 per cent. of all rented farms, had collectively an area of 16.6 per cent., and a value of 21.9 per cent. of all such farms.

The percentages of value were greater than those of area in the smaller farms, and decreased relatively among the larger farms. Thus, whereas among the farms of less than 100 acres the total area was only 16.6 per cent. of all rented farms and the value 21.9 per cent. of the value of all, the farms of 2500 acres and more comprised 10.5 per cent. of all the rented area and only 3.3 per cent. of all the rented value.

From this table it will be seen that one per cent. of the owners possessed 6.6 per cent. of the farms, 17.9 per cent. of the area, and 8.5 per cent. of the value.

The following table shows for rented farms the percentage which the number of owners, of farms, their acreage and value, in each specified class of value, bore to the total number, area and value:

Value per farm.	Percentage of owners.	Percentage of farms.	Percentage of area.	Percentage of value
Under \$1,000	38.8	30.9	13.5	4.4
\$1,000-\$2,000	15.8	15.6	11.9	6.0
\$2,000-\$5,000	24.1	23.8	24.6	21.5
\$5,000-\$10,000	13.2	14.5	19.8	24.3
\$10,000-\$25,000	6.9	10.3	17.1	26.4
\$25,000 plus	1.2	4.9	13.1	17.4

The rented farms valued at less than \$1000 were owned by 38.8 per cent. of all owners of rented farms, were in number 30.9 per cent. of all, comprised 13.5 per cent. of the area of all such farms, and had 4.4 per cent. of their value.

From the above table it appears that 8.1 per cent. of the owners held 15.2 per cent. of the farms, 30.2 per cent. of the area, and 43.8 per cent. of the value; and further, that 1.2 per cent. of the owners held 4.9 per cent. of the farms, 13.1 per cent. of the area, and 17.4 per cent. of the value.

Farms occupied by white farmers were 86.6 per cent. of all farms; those of negro farmers were 13.0 per cent.; the small remainder, 0.4 per cent., representing those of Indians, with a few Chinese and Japanese.

Of the white occupants, 70.5 per cent. were owners, 9.6 per cent. were lessees for cash, and 19.9 per cent. were lessees for shares in the product.

Of the colored occupants, only 25.4 per cent. were owners, while 36.6 per cent. were lessees for cash, and 38.0 lessees for shares in the product.

Thus the proportion of rented farms to all farms differs widely between the two races—29.5 per cent. for whites and not less than 74.6 per cent. for the colored.

Of all farms operated by colored farmers, 96.5 per cent. were in the states lying south of Mason and Dixon's line, the Ohio River, and the south boundary of Missouri and Kansas, and from the Atlantic westward to Texas. The further discussion on tenure and race will be confined to this area.

In the South in 1900 there were 2,620,391 farms, of which 1,879,721, or 71.7 per cent., were occupied by whites, and 740,670, or 28.3 per cent., by colored. The farms occupied by whites had an average area of 172 acres, and those occupied by colored farmers an average area of only fifty-two acres. Each "white" farm contained fifty-five acres on the average and each "colored" farm thirty-one acres of improved land. Of the entire area in farms, whites occupied 89.3 per cent. and colored occupied 10.7 per cent. Of the entire area of improved land, whites occupied only 81.6 per cent., and colored 18.4 per cent., a proportion much greater than that of farm land.

Of all "white" farms, 63.9 per cent. were owned by the occu-

pants and 36.1 per cent. were rented. Of the "colored" farms, only 25.4 per cent. were owned and 74.6 per cent. were rented, showing very decided differences between the two races. Of all owned farms, 86.4 per cent. were "white" and 13.6 per cent. were "colored." Of all rented farms, 55.1 per cent. were "white" and 44.9 per cent. were "colored." The renting of farms was vastly more prevalent among the colored than among the white population of the South.

The following table shows the average area of owned and rented farms and of the improved land of each race:

Class.	Average area in acres.	
	White.	Colored.
All farms	172	52
Owned farms	217	73
Rented farms	92	43

Class.	Average area of improved land in acres.	
	White	Colored
All farms	55	31
Owned farms	61	33
Rented farms	44	31

White farms were in each case much larger than colored, although the disproportion was not as great with improved land in farms as in the total area of farms, showing that with the colored farms the proportion of improved land was greater. The following table measures this and also demonstrates that rented farms were more fully developed than were owned farms:

Class.	Percentage of improved land in farms.	
	White.	Colored.
Owned farms	28.0	44.6
Rented farms	49.2	71.6

Of the total acreage in white farms, 80.6 per cent. was owned and 19.4 per cent. was rented; of the acreage of colored farms, only 36.6 per cent. was owned and 63.4 per cent. rented. Of the total owned acreage, whites had 95.0 per cent., and colored only 5.0 per cent. Of the rented acreage, whites had 72.5 per cent. and colored 27.5 per cent.

Of the total area of improved land owned, whites held 92.3 per cent. and colored 7.7 per cent., the latter somewhat more than their proportion of the total farm acreage. Of the improved land rented, whites held 63.7 per cent. and colored 36.3 per cent. This last is also a larger proportion than of the total farm area.

Of the improved area of white farms, 71.0 per cent. was owned

and 29.0 per cent. rented; of the improved area of colored farms, 26.5 per cent. was owned and 73.5 per cent. rented. Thus the proportions for the two races are very nearly reversed.

The average value of the white owned farm was \$2381, and of the colored farm only \$807; of the white rented farm \$1362, and of the colored farm \$606. The white owned farm thus had a value nearly three times as great as that of the colored owned farm, and the white rented farm a value more than double that of the colored rented farm. These differences in value, however, are merely a reflex of the difference in area, for in value per acre there is little difference between the farms of the two races. Owned farms, both of white and of colored, were valued at \$11 per acre, and rented farms of white and colored at \$15 and \$14 per acre, respectively.

The value of the product per white owned farm was \$656, and of the colored owned farm \$381; for white rented farm \$461, and for colored rented farm \$347, the white farms of the same tenure producing more than the colored, owing to their greater area. The production per acre for white owned farms was \$3.02, and for colored owned farms \$4.51; for white rented farms \$4.98, and for colored rented farms \$8.04. These differences are due to the varying proportions of improved land, as shown in the following statement. The product per acre of improved land was for white owned farms \$10.79, and for colored owned farms \$10.11; for white rented farms \$10.42, and for colored rented farms \$11.26.

The ratios of production to value of farms varied through quite a wide range. The proportions were, for white owned farms twenty-seven per cent., for colored owned farms forty-one per cent.; for white rented farms thirty-four per cent., and for colored rented farms fifty-seven per cent. The larger the proportion of improved land the larger the percentage of product.

At the close of the Civil War the negro held practically no farm land. In the forty-four years which have elapsed, he has acquired five per cent. of the owned farm land of the South and 7.7 per cent. of the owned improved land, besides renting 27.5 per cent. of the rented farm lands and 36.3 per cent. of the rented improved land. The value of the farms he owns is five per cent. of the value of all owned farms, and the value of those he rents is 27.0 per cent. of the value of all rented farms. The products of his farms are 23.0 per cent. of all agricultural products of this part of the country.