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VOLUME V

AGRICULTURE

GENERAL REPORT AND ANALYTICAL TABLES

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age and the crops produced; also as to the location and character of irrigation and drainage enterprises, and the capital invested in such enterprises.

Schedules and method of canvass.—The general farm schedule was prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Census Act and was designed for the exclusive purpose of collecting data relating to farm operators, farm land, farm property (including live stock), and farm products. A schedule was also prepared for the exclusive purpose of collecting data relative to domestic animals not on farms. These schedules and the instructions to the enumerators are reproduced in Appendix A, at the end of this volume.

Special schedules were also prepared for securing information with regard to irrigation and drainage enterprises. Further information with regard to these schedules and the method followed in their use is given in connection with the reports on irrigation and drainage in Volume VII.

The two general schedules (the general farm schedule and the schedule relating to domestic animals not on farms) were carried by the enumerators who collected the statistics of population. The terms of the Census Act prescribing the method of securing the data are in part as follows:

That each supervisor of census shall be charged with the performance within his own district of the following duties: To consult with the Director of the Census in regard to the division of his district into subdivisions most convenient for the purposes of the enumeration, which subdivisions or enumeration districts shall be defined and the boundaries thereof fixed by the Director of the Census; to designate to the director suitable persons and with his consent to employ such persons as enumerators, one or more for each subdivision; to communicate to enumerators the necessary instructions and directions relating to their duties; to examine and scrutinize the returns of the enumerators, and in the event of discrepancies or deficiencies appearing in any of the said returns, to use all diligence in causing the same to be corrected or supplied; to forward the completed returns of the enumerators to the director at such time and in such manner as shall be prescribed.

That each enumerator shall be charged with the collection in his subdivision of the facts and statistics required by the population and agricultural schedules and such other schedules as the Director of the Census may determine shall be used by him in connection with the census, as provided in section 8 of the act. It shall be the duty of each enumerator to visit personally each dwelling house in his subdivision and each family therein and each individual living out of a family in any place of abode, and by inquiry made of the head of each family, or of the member thereof deemed most competent and trustworthy, or of such individual living out of a family, to obtain each and every item of information and all particulars required by this act as of date January 1 of the year in which the enumeration shall be made; and in case no person shall be found at the usual place of abode of such family or individual living out of a family competent to answer the inquiries made in compliance with the requirement of this act, then it shall be lawful for the enumerator to obtain the required information as nearly as may be practicable from the family or families or person or persons living nearest to such place of abode who may be competent to answer such inquiries. It shall be the duty also of each enumerator to forward the original schedules, properly filled out and duly certified, to the supervisor of his district as his returns under the provisions of this act; and in the event of dis-

crepancies or deficiencies being discovered in these schedules, he shall use all diligence in correcting or supplying the same.

It will be seen from the above paragraphs that the enumerators who carried the general farm schedules personally visited each farm and obtained either from the farmer himself or from a member of his family or other competent individual, the information with regard to the farm, which information he at once entered upon a farm schedule. Likewise, the enumerators who carried the schedules relating to domestic animals not on farms visited the persons in charge of stables, barns, and other inclosures in cities, towns, and villages, and secured from them the facts desired.

Date of enumeration.—The act to provide for the fourteenth and subsequent decennial censuses, approved March 3, 1919, provided that the enumeration of population, farms, and live stock should be made as of January 1, 1920. The Census Office Committee on Legislation for the Fourteenth Decennial Census gave the following reasons for the change of date:

The change of date to January 1 was made to meet the requirements of the agricultural census, which, because of the house-to-house canvass, must be taken in connection with the enumeration of population. The 15th of April, the date of the previous census, is not a good time of year in which to take a census of crops and live stock. At that date several months have elapsed since the crops of the preceding year were harvested, and in the interval the farm may have changed hands, so that the information is supplied by some one who has not direct personal knowledge of the facts. It is, moreover, the season of the year when farm animals are born, and therefore it is a poor time at which to count live stock. Probably the best time for a census of agriculture is the fall, say October or November. But the census of population must be taken at the same time, and a serious objection to taking the decennial census in the fall is that every other census would coincide with a presidential election. Obviously, there would be difficulties in the way of conducting a successful, impartial, and scientific census in the midst of the excitement of a political campaign. So, all things considered, the committee came to the conclusion that January 1 was the best date for the census. The only objection suggested to that date is that in rural districts heavy falls of snow may retard the progress of the enumeration. There may be a few districts in which, for this reason, the work can not be completed within the 30 days which the law allows, but in such cases the director, under the provisions of this section, has discretionary authority to defer the enumeration, and some extension of the time in a few isolated instances will not be a matter of any serious consequence.

The Director of the Census, in his annual report to the Secretary of Commerce for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1920, made the following statement:

The date January 1, 1920, was fixed by the Fourteenth Census act as that to which the census should relate. This census is the first which has been taken in the winter, all previous enumerations having been made in the spring or summer. January 1 was recommended by the Bureau for incorporation in the law as the census date in deference to the wishes of the Department of Agriculture and of the various interests making use of agricultural statistics. In some respects this date has decided advantages over any other for the purposes of an agricultural census. The past year's work on all farms has been finished by January 1, and the coming year's work has not as a rule been begun. Practically all farmers are occupying the farms which they operated during the preceding

year, whereas a few months later many of the renters will have removed to other farms. Again, young farm animals are born in large numbers during the spring and early summer but not in December or January, and therefore a live-stock census referring to January 1 is of far more value than one taken several months later. But against these manifest advantages must be offset the pronounced disadvantage due to the inclement weather which is apt to prevail in many sections of the country in January. It happened that the weather in January, 1920, was worse than usual. In some of the enumeration districts the cold was so extreme and the snow had drifted to so great an extent as seriously to delay the work in the rural districts, and farther south the rains were so heavy as to make the country roads well-nigh impassable.

As a result of the delays due to the severity of the weather which characterized the early months of the present year, the field work of the Fourteenth Census was protracted through a longer period than had been anticipated, although the returns began to reach the Bureau early enough and rapidly enough to make it possible to organize and train the force of clerks and machine operatives and to get the work of compilation well under way at an earlier date

than had been possible at any preceding census. In this way also the change in the census date is advantageous to the Bureau, since it permits a materially earlier commencement of the work of compiling and tabulating the returns preparatory to their publication, which, under the law, must be made not later than June 30 of the second year following that in which the enumeration is made.

The census of 1910 was taken as of *April fifteenth*, while all previous censuses of agriculture were taken as of *June first*. As a result of the change of date to *January first* for the census of 1920, it should be noted that the live-stock figures are not strictly comparable either with those of the census of 1910 or with those of earlier censuses. A more complete discussion of this subject will be found in Chapter IX. The census enumeration of farms and live stock began on January 2, 1920, and in most districts was completed within the 30 days allowed by law.

REASONS FOR DECREASE IN NUMBER OF FARMS AND IN FARM ACREAGE.

In Appendix B, at the end of this volume, are presented extracts from letters received from a considerable number of the supervisors of the census, in reply to a question as to the reason for the decrease between 1910 and 1920 in the number of farms or in the farm acreage in their respective districts. The explanations most frequently given in these letters are summarized below.

Scarcity of labor.—In many states, especially in the eastern part of the country, the number of farms and the farm acreage reported in 1920 were less than the figures reported in 1910. And even where the state totals showed an increase, there were decreases in many of the counties. The most important single reason for this condition appears to have been the scarcity of farm labor, which made it necessary for many farmers to reduce the acreage which they operated, and even induced considerable numbers of farmers to give up their farming operations altogether, at least for the time being. In addition to its effect on the available supply of labor which could be hired for farm work, the relatively high wages paid in manufacturing centers frequently induced the farmers themselves to leave their farms.

Consolidation of farms.—In many cases there was a considerable reduction in the number of farms reported in 1920, as compared with 1910, while the acreage remained the same, or at least declined much less than the number of farms. This situation frequently resulted from the consolidation of farms, the acreage of certain farms no longer operated as separate units being taken over by other farmers and added to their farms.

Permanent abandonment of low-grade land.—The present census shows a continuation of the tendency

which has been evident for several decades, especially in New England, toward the abandonment for agricultural purposes of low-grade land; that is, of what the economists might term marginal or submarginal land. A considerable part of the land in the so-called abandoned farms of these sections is used for pasture, and as such would of course be included in the acreage of unimproved farm land. Large areas, however, have been permitted to grow up to brush or forest and are no longer used even for pasture.

Cotton boll weevil.—In certain parts of the cotton belt the spread of the cotton boll weevil has interfered so seriously with profitable cotton farming as to result in a reduction in the number of farms and in the farm acreage. Even when other crops are grown on the land, the number of farmers required for their cultivation is smaller than when cotton was raised, since cotton requires intensive cultivation and is largely raised by tenant farmers operating small areas.

Oil and mining development.—In a considerable number of localities large areas of farm land have been taken over by development companies for oil wells or for mining operations. The area thus lost to the total farm acreage includes, of course, land purchased and held by speculators as well as that actually developed for mineral production.

Extension of city areas.—The extension of the areas of cities and manufacturing towns, while not a very important factor, has been sufficient to affect seriously the figures for a number of individual counties. In many cases, of course, the land has simply been surveyed and cut up into building lots. This process, however, usually removes it just as effectively from the class of farm land as if it had actually been used for building purposes.