A Study Of
Rural Manpower
In Southeastern Oklahoma

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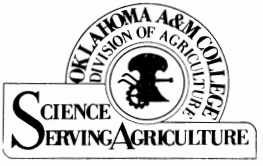

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Agricultural Experiment Station
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
Oklahoma A. & M. College, Stillwater
in cooperation with
AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE
United States Department of Agriculture

Findings of the Study

The Agricultural Experiment Station in cooperation with the U. S. D. A. recently undertook a study to analyze and appraise the rural manpower situation of a large section of Southeastern Oklahoma. The section studied is referred to in this bulletin as "Economic Area 9".

Objectives of the study were to determine: (1) the size, composition, and work patterns of the labor force; (2) the degree of underemployment of rural workers in that area; (3) the amount of additional manpower available if the workers' time was utilized, and (4) how much of the manpower might be used for part- or full-time labor in agriculture or industry in the area, in other areas of the State, or even in other states.

The findings of the study are summarized below.

1. The 1950 Census places 54 percent of the United States population 14 years of age and over in the labor force, if employed or seeking employment during the census week, compared to 49 percent for Oklahoma as a whole, and 42 percent of that of Economic Area 9 in Southeastern Oklahoma.
2. Of the population surveyed in Economic Area 9 of Oklahoma, only about 40 percent of that portion 14 years of age and over belonged to the labor force, if engaged in or available for full-time employment during the entire year 1952.
3. In Southeastern Oklahoma, with greater relative numbers of disabled, retired, and aged persons and, hence, of nonworkers, the percentage participation in the labor force of the work age population is far below the State and national averages.
4. Around 18 percent of the labor force was underemployed in 1952. The data indicate, therefore, that a relatively high degree of underemployment, or inadequate employment, characterizes Oklahoma Economic Area 9.
5. More people live in Economic Area 9 than the present economy can employ fully, i.e., the combined agricultural and nonagricultural demand for labor is too feeble to provide full employment for the population of working age.
6. Besides a weak demand, the employability of labor is diminished by the limited number of skills possessed by persons seeking employment.

7. The labor supply is further immobilized by an unwillingness of three-fourths of the **underemployed** workers to leave the area permanently to accept employment. Attachments to home and neighborhood are powerful forces in impounding the labor supply and preventing its full absorption where strong demands exist.

8. About one-seventh of the total labor force is unemployable because of unwillingness to leave the area.

9. More than one-half of the presently underemployed labor force indicated no desire to secure additional employment.

10. Despite the inertia of the labor supply, Economic Area 9 lost 65,000 persons or 35 percent of its population between 1940 and 1950, leaving a disproportionally large residue of physically disabled people, which partially accounts for the resistance to further migration.

11. Recent trends in agricultural organization and technology, from intensive cultivation of crops to extensive uses of land, offer strong prospects of further unemployment, especially on farms.

12. Conventional industries previously established elsewhere promise little hope for Southeastern Oklahoma, but indigenous industries producing goods having wide-spread demands would go far toward bringing full employment.

13. The apparent conclusion is that to bring full employment to Southeastern Oklahoma will require: (1) redistribution of the population within the area; (2) development of new industries peculiar to the area; (3) expanding the growth of berries, fruits, and vegetables on soils suitable for such use, which would also create related processing job opportunities, and (4) intensive programs of vocational education to direct the labor supply into a greater diversity of new skills.

14. It will be necessary then to develop new and wider markets for the products of whatever industries and new agricultural enterprises may come into being, which means rebuilding the economy, giving attention to all its phases.

A Study Of
Rural Manpower
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By James D. Tarver
Department of Sociology and Rural Life

This study, made in cooperation with the United States Agricultural Marketing Service, analyzes and appraises the rural manpower of a large section of Southeastern Oklahoma. Its findings will serve as an aid to persons and agencies whose task it is to promote effective and full employment, particularly of agricultural labor in that area.[1]

The principal objectives of the study were to:

- Determine the size, composition, and work patterns of the labor force in the area.
- Obtain information as to the degree of underemployment of rural workers.
- Determine the amount of additional manpower, and the people's capabilities, that could be made available by full utilization of the workers' time; and
- Determine the extent to which presently underemployed manpower might be a source of part- and full-time labor for farms and industries in the area, in other areas of Oklahoma, or in other states.

The data for the study were obtained through interviews with a sample of adults in 278 "open-country" households located in the six counties of Southeastern Oklahoma that comprise Economic Area 9.[2]

THE AREA STUDIED

Description

Six counties in Southeastern Oklahoma comprise Economic Area 9: Pittsburg, Latimer, LeFlore, Atoka, Pushmataha, and McCurtain (See Figure 1). Economic Area 9 is basically rural, McAlester being its only municipality with a population over 5,000. The 1950 census classes 76 percent of the population as rural, and over 40 percent of the rural population lived on farms.

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[1] This study of rural manpower was made by the Department of Sociology and Rural Life in cooperation with the Agricultural Marketing Service under the direction of Louis J. Ducoff, Agricultural Marketing Service, and O. D. Duncan, Oklahoma A. & M. College. Acknowledgement is made to Josiah C. Folsom and Ralph R. Nichols, AMS, and Carl H. Skinner, Antlers, Oklahoma, for enumeration in the field survey and to Robert E. Galloway, AMS, for assistance in the analysis and for enumeration in the field survey.

[2] The study defines "open-country" as the remaining territory after taking out all incorporated and unincorporated places with an estimated population of more than 100 inhabitants.

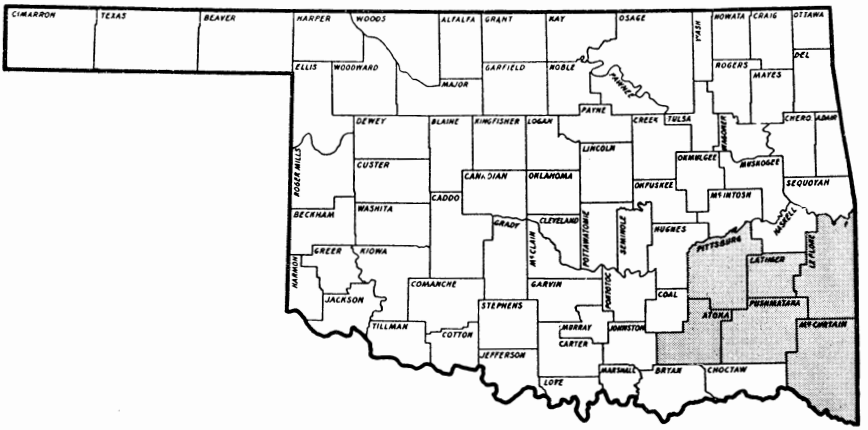

Fig. 1.—Economic Area 9. Oklahoma, 1950.

In 1950, 34 percent of the employed persons worked in agriculture, the principal source of employment in the area; 16 percent supplied business, personal, professional, and related services; 15 percent worked in wholesale and retail trade; 11 percent in manufacturing; 6 percent in construction; 6 percent in transportation; 3 percent in mining; and 9 percent in other industries.

Employment in two major industries, coal mining and lumbering, has declined in recent years. However, total nonfarm employment between April, 1950 and April, 1952 increased slightly.[3]

The average size farm in Area 9 is 170 acres and the major farm enterprise is cattle. In 1949, livestock and livestock products accounted for almost 70 percent of all farm sales. "Patch-farming" is characteristic of the area with corn, hay, and cotton being grown on a somewhat larger scale, while sorghums, peanuts, and castor beans are grown on a smaller scale.

Since 1935 there has been a rapid decline in the number and an increase in the size of farms in Area 9. The size of farms in this area is increasing more rapidly than in the State as a whole. The shift from field crops, especially cotton, to greater numbers of livestock, and the conversion of cropland back to pasture mean a less intensive farming enterprise and a larger unit.

Coinciding with the increase in the average size of farms has been a trend toward greater mechanization. There was an increase of about 150 percent in the number of tractors on Area 9 farms between 1945 and 1950. However, farmers still farm mostly with horses and mules. There were only 2,400 tractors on the 14,000 farms in Area 9 in 1950, while there were 35,000 horses and mules.

[3] The increase for Area 9 was 3.2 percent, while that for the State was 10.4 percent during the same period.

Pressure of Population on Resources

Southeastern Oklahoma has felt population pressure upon local resources for some time. The vigorous natural increase of population, together with limited acreage of productive cropland, and lack of sufficient industrial employment opportunities have been largely responsible for this pressure.

Limited economic opportunities have kept the incomes of most rural families in the area relatively low. In 1949, the average income of farm operators from the sale of agricultural products was $1,077 for the area as compared with $3,311 for the State. The average farm expenditure in Area 9 for specified items used for agricultural production was $788. This left an average cash income per farm from farming operation of only $289. However, most farm families had incomes from other sources, such as nonfarm wages and public welfare assistance.

Farm-operator family level-of-living indexes in Area 9 are far below those for the state of Oklahoma and for the United States as a whole. In 1950, the farm level-of-living indexes varied from a low of 44 in McCurtain county to a high of 66 in Pittsburg county as compared to 105 for the State. However, levels-of-living in Area 9 have risen far more percentage-wise since 1940 than in either Oklahoma or the United States.

Many farmers in the area have tried to solve their economic problems by working part-time off their farms. Over 46 percent of the farm operators did some work off their farms in 1949. Nearly 28 percent of them worked off their farms 100 days or more during the year, compared with 24 percent of all Oklahoma farmers, a difference of 16.7 percent, using the State figures as a base. This difference is significant in view of the relatively few opportunities for off-farm employment in this region.

The Survey Population

The 278 "open-country" households included in the survey contained 1,066 people. Of these, 704 were 14 years of age or over.

Several characteristics of the population are of major concern to the utilization of manpower. The total number of persons and their relationship to the economic resources and opportunities indicate the possibilities for effective employment of the labor force. Age, sex, and physical condition of persons affect the numbers in the labor force, and educational attainment and experience determine the types of work that the people can do.

Residence of the Family Head.—There are two major classes of "open-country" households, "rural-farm," only those with farm operators, and "rural-nonfarm," or households without farm operators. Table I gives the number of members in both types of households. Rural-farm households were further divided—according to census definition—into

Table I.—Households and Population Surveyed, by Residence and Type of Farm, Economic Area 9, Oklahoma, March, 1953.

Residence and Type of Farm	Households		Population		
	Number	Percent	All Ages (No.)	Under 14 yrs. of age (No.)	14 yrs. of age and over (No.)
All Classes	278	100	1066	362	704
Rural farm	151	54	626	211	415
Small commercial	42	15	156	45	111
Medium commercial	29	10	123	44	79
Large commercial	25	9	100	30	70
Part-time	18	7	82	25	57
Residential	37	13	165	67	98
Rural-nonfarm	127	46	440	151	289

five classes of farms: small commercial, medium commercial, large commercial, part-time and residential.[4]

Size of Household.—Southeastern Oklahoma is an area of large families. However, the heavy migration of young people has substantially reduced the number of family members remaining at home. The average size of the survey households was 3.8 persons. Rural-farm households average 4.1 and rural-nonfarm households 3.5 persons, respectively.

Age and Sex Distribution.—Children under 14 years of age comprised 34 percent of the resident members of the households in 1953, and persons 65 years of age and over 9.5 percent. The number of people between the ages of 20 to 35 was disproportionately small—evidently a result of emigration from the area.

Over-all, the survey population contained 107 males per 100 females. Generally, masculinity increases directly with the rurality of populations.

The median age of the total resident survey population was 28 years, 30 years for the rural-nonfarm and 27 years for the rural-farm population.

The median age of all male heads of households was 49 years, while that of female heads was 67 years. The age of wives averaged almost 6 years less than that of their husbands. The median age of sons was 19 years and that of daughters was 18 years.

Educational Level.—Household members 14 years and over completed a median of 8.3 grades in school. Differences in median grades of schooling of rural-farm and rural-nonfarm households were not significant, being 8.4 and 8.3 respectively.

Male heads of households had fewer years of schooling than other family members. This reflects partly the differential of age and also the tendency for females to complete more years of schooling than males.

[4] One "abnormal" farm is included in the medium commercial farm class.

LABOR OUTPUT OF RURAL FAMILY MEMBERS DURING 1952

Nature and Extent of Employment

Each of the 704 persons in the survey population 14 years of age and over was asked how many days and at what occupation he worked. In all, 52 percent of these persons worked some during the year. However, 12 percent who worked only intermittently and were not available for full-time employment were not considered as part of the labor force. Around 60 percent of the survey population was not in the labor force. Of these, 13 percent were students attending school, 34 percent were homemakers, 4 percent were retired, and 9 percent were disabled. Therefore, only 40 percent of the survey population was actually in the labor force, as defined in this report. However, this section analyzes the total labor output of all the persons who worked at all during the year 1952.

Table II shows six significant facts: First, the major source of employment for the survey population was in agriculture. While 32 percent of all household members, 58 percent of the male heads of households, and 18 percent of all other family members did agricultural work, only 23 percent of all household members, 54 percent of the male heads of households, and 17 percent of other family members did any nonagricultural work.

Second, the proportion of family members employed at any time during the year was larger for rural-farm than for rural-nonfarm households, the percentages being 58 and 42, respectively.

Third, rural-farm persons worked a larger average number of days than did the rural-nonfarm people.

Fourth, the male heads of households provided the chief means of family support. Around 85 percent of the male heads worked, compared to only 32 percent of all other family members. Approximately 80 percent of the males were employed, but only 20 percent of the females. Most female heads and wives were homemakers; consequently few worked outside the home. Most children 14-18 years of age were attending school, and those employed at all worked only during summer vacations.

Fifth, the employed persons worked a larger number of days at nonagricultural than at farm work, the averages being 194 days in non-agricultural work and 154 days for those employed on farms.

Sixth, male heads of households worked a larger number of days than other household members, averaging 252 days at all work in contrast with 152 days for other household members.

Employment of Rural-Farm Family Members

Table III shows that the amount of work performed by the farm family labor force was related to farm size. On large commercial farms 67 percent of the household members did some work during the year

Table II.—Persons Employed at Various Kinds of Work During the Year 1952, by Residence and Position in the Household.

Residence and Fosition in the Household	Number of Persons	Persons Working at Various Kinds of Work					
		Any Work		Farm Work		Nonagricultural Work	
		Percent	Average Days Worked	Percent	Average Days Worked	Percent	Average Days Worked
All Family Members	704	52	213	32	154	23	194
Male heads	259	85	252	58	181	54	206
Other members	445	32	152	18	104	17	172
Rural Farm	415	58	218	49	161	27	177
Male heads	146	97	266	66	187	47	184
Other members	269	38	151	26	112	16	166
Rural Nonfarm	289	42	204	8	81	32	212
Male heads	113	71	228	13	128	64	227
Other members	176	23	155	5	38	19	179

1952, compared with 60 percent for those on medium commercial farms, and 54 percent for those on small commerical farms.

Table III discloses two other important points regarding the rural-farm workers. First, male heads of large commercial farm households worked the largest average number of days while male heads of small commercial farms worked the fewest. Second, other family members in small commercial farm households were employed the greatest average number of days, and those on part-time farms worked the fewest.

Work on the Home Farm.—Table IV points out: First, a much larger proportion of the male heads of rural-farm households than of other family members worked on the home farm during 1952, the comparisons being over 90 percent and only 23 percent, respectively. Second, the proportions of household members working on the home farms were greatest for large commercial farms and smallest for part-time and residential farms. Third, both male heads and other family members in large commercial farm households worked the largest number of days on the home farm, while male heads and other family members of part-time farm households worked the fewest.

Work Off the Home Farm.—Table V shows that: (1) Slightly over one-third of the rural-farm family members worked off the family farm; and (2) Part-time farm households had the largest proportion of members doing off-farm work, while the small commercial households had the smallest.

Table III.—Rural-Farm Household Members Working at All Work and Average Days Worked per Worker, During the Year 1952, by Position in the Household, and Type of Farm.

Position in the Household And Type of Farm	Number of Persons	Persons Working at All Work		Average Days Worked*
		Number	Percent	
All family members	415	242	58	218
Small commercial farms	111	60	54	199
Medium commercial farms	79	47	60	229
Large commercial farms	70	47	67	245
Part-time farms	57	32	56	217
Residential farms	98	56	57	207
Male heads	146	141	97	266
Small commercial farms	40	39	98	214
Medium commercial farms	28	28	100	273
Large commercial farms	25	24	96	318
Part-time farms	18	18	100	301
Residential farms	35	32	91	267
Other family members	269	101	38	151
Small commercial farms	71	21	30	172
Medium commercial farms	51	19	38	164
Large commercial farms	45	23	51	170
Part-time farms	39	14	36	108
Residential farms	63	24	38	128

* Eight-hour days of work.

Table IV.—Rural-Farm Household Members Working on the Home Farm and Average Days Worked Per Worker, During the Year 1952, by Position in the Household, and Type of Farm.

Position in the Household, And Type of Farm	Number of Persons	Persons Working on Home Farm		Average Days Worked*
		Number	Percent	
All Family Members	415	196	47	157
Small commercial farms	111	55	50	170
Medium commercial farms	79	37	47	172
Large commercial farms	70	39	56	212
Part-time farms	57	24	42	59
Residential farms	98	41	42	131
Male heads	146	133	91	175
Small commercial farms	40	39	98	180
Medium commercial farms	28	27	96	184
Large commercial farms	25	23	92	258
Part-time farms	18	17	94	65
Residential farms	35	27	77	158
Other Family Members	269	63	23	118
Small commercial farms	71	16	23	145
Medium commercial farms	51	10	20	139
Large commercial farms	45	16	36	147
Part-time farms	39	7	18	43
Residential farms	63	14	22	79

* Eight-hour days of work.

Employment on other farms constitutes a small part of the annual labor output of rural-farm persons in Southeastern Oklahoma. Only 10 percent of the rural-farm population worked an average of 55 days on other farms in 1952.

Farm family members employed on other farms, for the most part, worked for wages. Almost 65 percent of the total time was spent at farm wage work while the remainder was at custom work involving baling hay, combining, threshing, and plowing.[5]

The major part of the off-farm employment of farm persons was spent at non-agricultural work. Slightly less than 30 percent of the rural-farm persons were employed at non-agricultural work, and they for an average of 177 days.

A summary of the labor output of rural-farm family members during 1952 shows that they spent 58 percent of their working time on their home farms, 4 percent on other farms, and 38 percent at non-agricultural employment. The family members working on their home farms averaged 157 eight-hour days, compared with 55 days for those employed on other farms, and 177 days for those in non-agricultural jobs. These figures indicate clearly that non-agricultural employment is indispensible to the farm economy in Southeastern Oklahoma. Part-time farming

[5] The number of days worked on other farms as exchange work was omitted since the farm operators received the same amount of exchange work on their farms as they spent on the farms of their neighbors.

Table V.—Rural-Farm Household Members Working off the Home Farm and Average Days Worked Per Worker During the Year 1952, by Position in the Household, and Type of Farm.*

Position in the Household and Type of Farm	Number of Persons	Persons Working Off the Home Farm At:					
		All Work		Work on Other Farms		Nonagricultural Work	
		Percent	Average Days	Percent	Average Days	Percent	Average Days
All Family Members	415	34	156	10	55	27	177
Small commercial farms	111	25	94	9	103	18	80
Medium commercial farms	79	30	183	12	74	25	196
Large commercial farms	70	39	121	11	15	30	150
Part-time farms	57	49	197	9	12	42	228
Residential farms	98	35	184	9	42	29	210
Male Heads	146	58	170	17	71	47	184
Small commercial farms	40	43	78	23	106	25	37
Medium commercial farms	28	46	205	19	88	33	247
Large commercial farms	25	56	122	20	16	44	147
Part-time farms	18	100	240	6	1	100	240
Residential farms	35	63	194	14	61	57	199
Other Family Members	269	21	136	6	30	16	166
Small commercial farms	71	15	118	1	75	14	123
Medium commercial farms	51	22	157	8	57	20	150
Large commercial farms	45	29	120	7	12	22	152
Part-time farms	39	26	121	10	15	15	192
Residential farms	63	19	165	6	19	13	238

* Eight-hour days of work.

has increased during the past decade because farmers have been striving to improve their levels-of-living. More and more, farmers have sought non-agricultural employment to supplement their income from farming operations.

Employment of Rural-Nonfarm Family Members

Table II brings out two significant facts regarding employment of the rural-nonfarm population. First, slightly over 40 percent of the rural-nonfarm persons were employed. Second, over three times as many male heads of households as other family members worked during 1952. The male heads were employed for an average of 228 days compared to 155 days for other family members.

Over 90 percent of the work of rural-nonfarm persons was in non-agricultural industries.

Three outstanding differences are apparent in the employment patterns of the rural-farm and rural-nonfarm family members. First, the rural-farm persons worked an average of 14 days more than rural-nonfarm persons. Second, the rural-farm persons were employed approximately twice as many days at farm work as were rural-nonfarm persons. Third, the rural-nonfarm persons worked an average of 35 days more at non-agricultural employment than did the rural-farm persons.

Labor Output Per Household

Of the 278 surveyed households, 87 percent had one or more members employed at least part time during 1952. An average of 1.5 workers per household worked an average of 278 eight-hour days.

Labor Output Per Rural-Farm Household.—There was an over-all average of 1.6 workers per rural-farm household, 1.9 in large commercial farm households, 1.8 in part-time farm households, 1.6 in medium com-

Table VI.—Average "Different" and Eight-Hour Days Worked Per Household, 1952, by Residence and Type of Farm.

Residence and Type of Farm	No. of House-holds	Total Days Worked at All Work		Total Days Worked on the Home Farm	
		"Different" Days	Eight-Hour Days	"Different" Days	Eight-Hour Days
All Classes	278	329	278	---	---
Rural Farm	151	439	350	287	204
Small commercial	42	342	285	278	222
Medium commercial	29	466	370	287	219
Large commercial	25	476	461	346	331
Part-time	18	510	385	203	78
Residential	37	467	314	298	145
Rural Nonfarm	127	199	193	23*	18*

* The members of rural-nonfarm households worked an average of 18 eight-hour and 23 "different" days at all agricultural employment. Six rural-nonfarm households performed productive farm work on their own places, although each operation was too small to classify as a farm.

mercial farm households, 1.5 in residential farm households, and 1.4 in small commercial farm households.

Table VI shows that: (1) All rural-farm family members worked an average of 350 eight-hour days per household. Large commercial farm households members worked the largest number of days, and those of small commercial households the fewest. (2) Rural-farm household members worked an average of 204 eight-hour days on the home farm and 146 days at off-farm work. Almost 99 percent of the rural-farm households employed one or more members on the home farm, while only two-thirds had any members working off the farm.

Labor Output Per Rural-Nonfarm Household.—There was an average of 0.9 workers per rural-nonfarm household. However, 35 of the 127 rural-nonfarm households had no working member. Most persons in these households subsisted as welfare clients. These 35 households included retired and disabled persons, and others not in the labor force for various reasons.

Table VI reveals that rural-nonfarm household members worked almost entirely at non-agricultural employment. All rural-nonfarm workers were employed an average of 193 eight-hour days in 1952, 175 days at non-agricultural work and only 18 days on farms. For all rural-nonfarm households, 72 percent had at least one working family member, 64 percent had at least one member employed at non-agricultural work, and only 17 percent had any members employed at farm work.

The employment patterns of the rural-farm and the rural-nonfarm populations support two significant comparisons: First, each of the 151 rural-farm households had at least one family member employed during 1952, while 35 of the 127 rural-nonfarm households had no working member and subsisted mostly on welfare rolls. Second, rural-farm households averaged 350 eight-hour days of work in contrast with only 193 for rural-nonfarm households.

Three factors explain the difference in total labor output per household in these two groups: First, there were only 0.9 workers per rural-nonfarm household, while the rural-farm group had 1.6. Second, there were relatively more aged persons in the rural-nonfarm than the rural-farm households, which gave them larger proportions of retired and disabled members. Third, the great diversity of farm jobs nearly always insures a need for year-round employment of family labor on farms.

"Different" Days of Work

Since the use of "different" days of work distorts the total labor output of workers, it is necessary to convert all employment to eight-hour days. This affects farm work primarily, since the eight-hour day prevails generally outside agriculture.

The discrepancy between the average number of "different" and "eight-hour" days of work by each household in 1952 appears in Table

VI. The use of eight-hour days reduces the average total labor output of rural-farm households by 89 days, from 439 to 350 and of rural-nonfarm households by only six days, from 199 to 193.

Hired Labor on Survey Farms

The available family labor supply on most Southeastern Oklahoma farms was more than sufficient, two-thirds of them supplying one or more members for off-farm work. However, 37 percent of the farm operators hired additional labor in 1952, employing an average of almost 7 workers and about 83 man-days per farm. Hired laborers worked an average of less than 13 days. Large commercial farms accounted for over half of all man-days of hired labor. In addition to hiring labor, 29 percent of the farm operators also hired custom work during 1952. By far the most important type of custom work used was hay baling.

UNDEREMPLOYMENT OF THE SURVEY POPULATION

Extent of Underemployment

Table VII reveals that the survey population, with only 40 percent in the labor force, contained a high proportion of nonworkers and dependents. School children and housewives and others who had part-time employment, but were not in the labor force, comprised 12 percent of the population. The labor force comprised 43 percent of the rural-farm, compared with only 35 percent of the rural-nonfarm population. Also, it included 68 percent of the males, but only 10 percent of the females of working ages.

The 1950 census placed 49 percent of Oklahoma's population 14 years of age and over in the labor force, compared to a national average of 54 percent. The relatively smaller labor force in the survey popula-

Table VII.—Proportion of the Survey Population 14 Years of Age and Over in the Labor Force in 1952, By Residence and Sex.

Residence and Sex	Total Population 14 Years of Age and Over		Not in The Labor Force		In The Labor Force
	Number	Percent	Those Who Did No Work (Percent)	Those Who Worked Intermittently (Percent)	Percent
All Classes	704	100	48	12	40
Male	363	100	20	12	68
Female	341	100	79	11	10
Rural-Farm	415	100	42	15	43
Male	223	100	12	14	74
Female	192	100	76	16	8
Rural-Nonfarm	289	100	58	7	35
Male	140	100	32	9	59
Female	149	100	84	5	11

Table VIII.—Members of the Labor Force Who were Fully Employed and Underemployed in 1952, By Residence and Sex.

Residence and Sex	Persons in the Labor Force*					
	Total Persons in The Labor Force		Fully Employed or Adequately Employed (Worked 180 eight-hour days or More)		Underemployed (Worked less than 180 eight-hour Days)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All Classes	280	100	230	82	50	18
Male	247	100	207	84	40	16
Female	33	100	23	70	10	30
Rural-Farm	180	100	157	87	23	13
Male	164	100	144	88	20	12
Female	16	100	13	81	3	19
Rural-Nonfarm	100	100	73	73	27	27
Male	83	100	63	76	20	24
Female	17	100	10	59	7	41

* It is assumed that 180 eight-hour days of work during one year constitute full-time employment. This definition, or breaking point between full-time and less-than-full-time employment, is accepted by most labor analysts.

tion was due to: (1) Proportionally more disabled, retired, and aged persons on welfare rolls, and (2) Fewer employment opportunities.

Table VIII portrays three significant underemployment facts: First, a relatively large proportion (18 percent) of the labor force was inadequately or underemployed in 1952.[6] Second, underemployment was over twice as high in the rural-nonfarm as in the rural-farm population, 27 percent in the former and 13 percent in the latter.

Third, relatively more females than males were underemployed, slightly over 30 percent for female and only 16 percent for male workers.

Underemployment on Farms.—Since small noncommercial units comprise about 60 percent of the farms, some underemployment of family members at farm work necessarily occurs during slack seasons. Such farms require little seasonal hired labor except during harvests. The only exceptionally large labor demand is in the northern LeFlore county commercial vegetable area where farmers employ approximately 2,000 seasonal workers (all local people) during peak harvest seasons. The counties comprising Area 9 generally have a labor surplus, particularly for the needs of agriculture.

In 1952, 13 percent of the total rural-farm labor force or 19 percent of the female and 12 percent of the male workers were underemployed.

Only 64 of the 146 male heads of farm-operator families worked full-time on their home farms, while 38 of them had full-time nonagricultural employment. Only 18 other family members worked full-

[6] The employment situation in Southeastern Oklahoma has not improved since 1952. In August, 1954, one report shows that 18 percent of the total labor force in 23 eastern counties of Oklahoma were unemployed. (*Drought Relief and Area Development Recommendations*, compiled by Oklahoma Planning and Resources Board, Oklahoma City, October, 1954, p. 4.)

time on their home farms, while 20 had full-time non-agricultural employment.

Underemployment in Non-agricultural Work.—About one-fourth (27 percent) of the rural-nonfarm labor force was underemployed in 1952. This breaks down to over 40 percent of the female and 24 percent of the male workers.

As figures show, there are insufficient industrial employment opportunities for the people of this area. Only 51 of the 113 male heads of rural-nonfarm families and 16 of the 176 other family members had full-time non-agricultural work in 1952. Five rural-nonfarm male heads worked full-time on farms.

Effects of Underemployment

Three significant findings demonstrate a scarcity of both agricultural and non-agricultural employment opportunities in Economic Area 9: First, there has been a large volume of migration from the area. Second, a sizable volume of seasonal workers leave the area annually to obtain jobs. Third, it is necessary for many people to commute great distances to work since they are unable to secure employment near their homes.

Large Exodus of Population.—The heavy net migration from Southeastern Oklahoma is one indication of a lack of employment opportunities. Because of the high rates of natural increase of population, the decreasing opportunities in agriculture, and the limited industrial opportunities, there has been a constant migration from the area since the depression years in the 1930's.

The greatest exodus of people from Area 9, however, occurred between 1940 and 1950. The region experienced a net loss of 65,000 persons through migration, or a decline of 35 percent in total population. During these years, the net migration from Oklahoma was 434,000 people (a loss of 19 percent), and that from Area 9 was almost twice as great proportionally.

From January 1, 1944, to March 1, 1953, 170 members from 91 of the 278 surveyed households left home permanently. Around 45 percent of the migrants—50 percent of the males and 35 percent of the females—moved to other states. (Figure 2).

Thus far, the area has met the problem of population pressure upon the available resources mainly by a large net emigration of young persons in their most productive years in search of work elsewhere. For example, the net migration loss between 1940 and 1950 was over 70 percent of the Oklahoma rural-farm youth between the ages of 10 to 19 in 1940, while that of the rural-farm people between the ages of 50 to 59 was less than 40 percent.

One effect of this migration is a proportional increase of old people living in the area, where persons 65 years of age and over increased from 4 percent of the population in 1930 to 5 percent in 1940, and to 9 per-

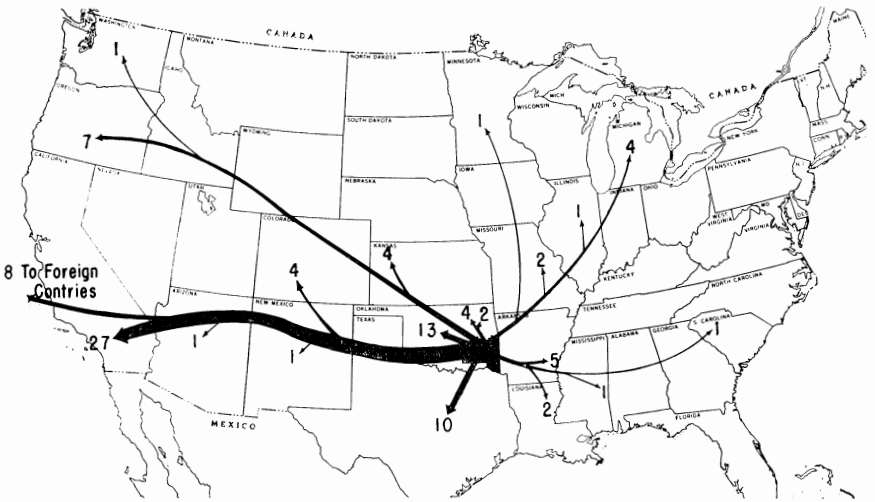

Fig. 2.—Net migration from Oklahoma Economic Area 9 from January 1, 1944 to March 1, 1953. Almost 40 percent of the out-of-state migrants from this area went to California, 15 percent to Texas, and the remaining 45 percent to nine other states, Alaska, Canada, and Japan.

cent in 1950. Moreover, selective outmigration has left a large residue of physically-handicapped individuals in the rural areas. For example, 9 percent of the survey population 14 years of age and older, and 17 percent of the male heads of households were either partially or totally disabled. These persons were not in the labor force and, being disabled, probably could work little even if opportunities were available. Most of them receive public welfare assistance, which increases the dependency burden upon the smaller proportion of remaining young people.

Seasonal Migration of Workers.—In addition to actual population losses a considerable volume of workers nominally reside in the area, but regularly seek outside seasonal employment. Many of these migrants are small farm operators and their families who, for lack of local employment, migrate seasonally to supplement their farm incomes.

At the time of this survey, fewer potential migrants than usual resided in the area. During years of average economic activity and employment levels, about twice as many seasonal migrants as in 1952 leave this area. However, during that year of relatively full employment, many of these seasonal migrants had taken permanent jobs elsewhere, which reduced the size of the movement by approximately one-half. In 1952, an estimated 12,000 seasonal migrants left Area 9 for work. Approximately 4,500 migrated out of the State, while 7,500 worked in other parts of Oklahoma. Of the total seasonal migrants, around 6,500 worked in agriculture and 5,500 secured industrial employment.[7]

[7] Clyde R. Hamm, Research and Planning Division, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, supplied the data concerning seasonal migration from Economic Area 9. .

Long Distance Commuters.—Over 1,000 persons commuted from 50 to 100 miles and many even farther, to Savanna, Oklahoma, to work at the United States Naval Ammunition Depot. This Depot was the largest single employer in Area 9, employing nearly 3,500 persons during 1953 (Figure 3). A large number of these workers resided temporarily near Savanna, while others had temporary rooms in nearby towns for their work periods, and returned home on weekends.

Many workers from Area 9, especially those employed in Arkansas, travelled great distances to and from their work. Over 700 workers residing in the area worked outside, 125 commuting from McCurtain county to the vicinity of Texarkana, about 500 from LeFlore county to Fort Smith, and the remainder to other scattered points. The major employers, besides the Naval Ammunition Depot, supplying employment information included coal mining companies, a lumber company, the McAlester State Prison, the Talihina State Tuberculosis Sanitorium, ordinance plants, railroads, state agencies other than those named, and various other industries, each employing 25 or more persons. Figure 4 shows the commuting patterns of these workers, from which it is obvious that their net wages, and hence their general scales of living, are reduced materially by the overhead expense of going to and from work.

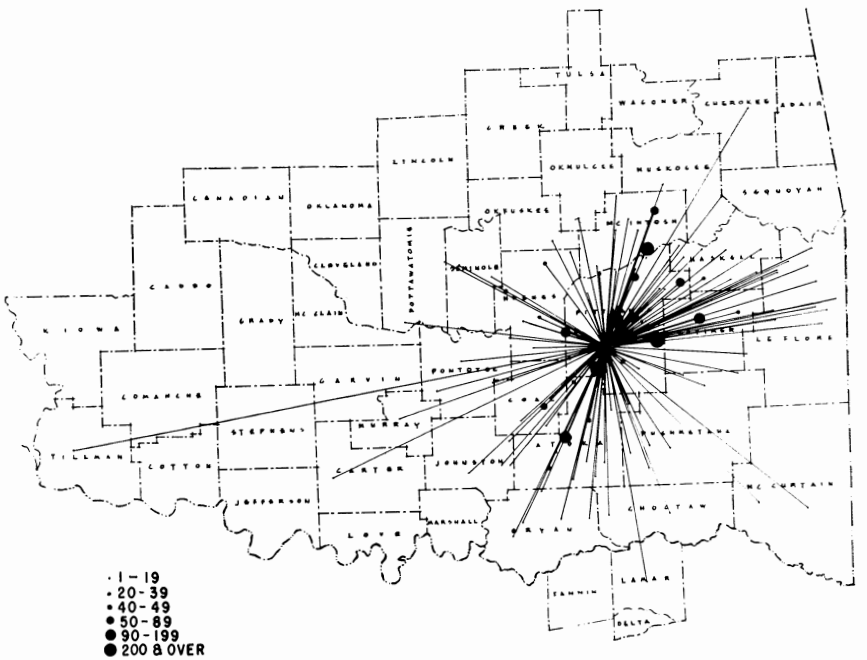

Fig. 3—Residence of employees at Naval Ammunition Depot at Savanna (south of McAlester), 1953. This chart demonstrates the attractive power upon population of a major source of industrial employment, and symbolizes the need for industrial development in Oklahoma as a means of capitalizing its potential human resources.

AVAILABILITY OF WORKERS FOR EMPLOYMENT

The availability of persons for additional or alternate work depends upon: (1) the adequacy of present employment, and (2) individual willingness to accept new employment.

One may expect inadequately employed workers to accept supplemental or alternate local employment when suitable. In addition, probably a number of housewives would accept local non-agricultural employment if available, thus reducing the number of workers willing either to leave or to move their families to secure adequate employment.

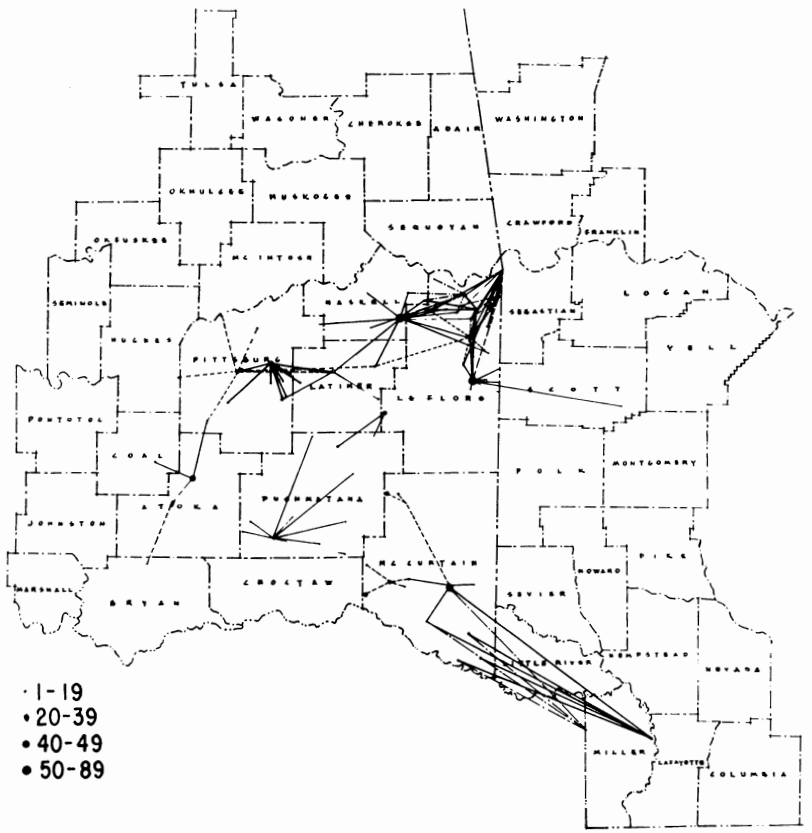

Fig. 4.—Commuting pattern of industrial and defense plant workers residing in Economic Area 9 in 1953. This chart shows the outward as well as the inward attraction of Oklahoma residents commuting to and from non-agricultural work at certain major industrial plants other than the Naval Ammunition Depot (see Fig. 3). The attractive power of employment opportunities at points outside Oklahoma is evident, which emphasizes the need for industrial employment within Oklahoma.

The Adequacy of Present Employment

The survey population 14 years of age and over classified as being: (1) adequately employed, (2) available for employment, and (3) not available for employment. This classification assumes that those in the labor force able to work full-time, but who were underemployed (worked less than 180 eight-hour days during the year), were available for additional or alternate employment. Those not available for work included all those not in the labor force during 1952, children 14 years of age and over in school, and persons disabled, retired, etc.

It was also assumed that persons not working during 1952 were not available for employment.

As shown in Table VIII, 82 percent of the labor force was adequately employed or fully employed. Of this population, 18 percent of the total, those working less than 180 eight-hour days, was underemployed and available for additional or alternate employment. These figures show further that: (1) almost twice as many females as males, proportionally, were available for employment, and (2) a larger proportion of rural-nonfarm than rural-farm persons were available for additional or alternate employment.

Willingness of Persons To Accept Employment

In the survey population, 14 percent of those 14 years of age and over desired supplemental or alternate employment. Most of these were either adequately employed already or were school children seeking only part-time or summer employment. One-fifth of the fully-employed workers and slightly over one-sixth of the school children wanted new jobs.

Table IX shows that only 44 percent of the underemployed workers wanted additional employment, which makes some underemployment inevitable—in this case about 10 percent of the labor force .

Underemployed males relatively more often than females were willing to accept employment. Almost 70 percent of the underemployed persons desiring fuller employment were male heads of households.

Of the underemployed rural-nonfarm workers, 52 percent (compared to 35 percent of the rural-farm persons) desired employment. Also, those inadequately employed and wanting work included 60 percent of the rural-nonfarm and 38 percent of the rural-farm male heads of households.

Persons Wanting Part- and Full-Time Work.—Of all underemployed persons desiring employment, 77 percent wanted full-time work, 14 percent part-time work, and 9 percent either part- or full-time jobs.

Being engaged in farm work for part of the year, a larger proportion of the male heads of rural-farm than of rural-nonfarm households wanted

Table IX.—Percentages of Underemployed Persons in 1952 Willing to Accept Employment and Willing to Leave the Area Permanently for Work Elsewhere, By Residence and Sex.

Residence and Sex	Underemployed Persons in the Labor Force			
	Percentage of Total Labor Force (Percent)	Total Number Under-employed (Percent)	Total Number Willing To Accept Employment (Percent)	Total Number Willing to Leave the Area Permanently (Percent)
All Classes	18	100	44	24
Male	16	100	45	28
Female	30	100	40	10
Rural-Farm	13	100	35	17
Male	12	100	35	20
Female	19	100	33	0
Rural-Nonfarm	27	100	52	30
Male	24	100	55	35
Female	41	100	43	14

part-time employment to supplement their incomes during slack seasons. Although some individuals were free to work part-time each month during the year, most of those wanting additional work were available for employment during June, July, and August.

Those wanting full-time employment included 86 percent of the rural-nonfarm, compared to 63 percent of the rural-farm labor force. About 90 percent of rural-nonfarm compared to 50 percent of rural-farm male heads of households desired full-time work.

Type of Work Wanted.—Of those desiring employment almost 60 percent wanted non-agricultural, and slightly over 40 percent either farm or non-agricultural work. Low wages and irregularity of work on farms accounted for this preference.

All underemployed workers interested in employment were asked what specific types of work they wanted, which revealed a relatively small potential of skilled workers available in Area 9. Common laborers comprised the largest group. Other than common labor, the most frequent preferences were for such jobs as truck driving, lumbering, carpentry, clerical and mechanical work, and pipe and steamfitting.

Persons Willing to Leave Home for Work.—Almost one-fourth of all underemployed workers, or 55 percent of those willing to accept employment, would leave the area permanently, but only for full-time non-agricultural employment. The remainder (45 percent) would accept employment only if they could live at home (See Table IX). Disabled family members, farms, livestock, and other strong attachments to home and neighborhood prevent many from accepting either part-time or permanent full-time employment in other areas.

Table IX reveals also that relatively more males than females and more rural-nonfarm than rural-farm persons are willing to move perma-

nently. Even if all the inadequately employed workers willing to move to find work, did so, 14 percent of the resident labor force would remain underemployed.

Underemployed workers wanting full-time employment asked only "very reasonable" wages, the minimum for common labor varying from $.50 to $1.00 and for carpentry around $2.25 per hour, if within reach of home, and from $50 to $100 monthly above local rates when moving away.

CONCLUSION

In 1952, 18 percent of the labor force in Economic Area 9 was underemployed, and that was a year of relatively full employment. Even so, the rural population constituted a potentially large reservoir of comparatively unused labor. Southeastern Oklahoma has long been recognized as an area of underemployment and of low incomes. Some writers suggest an overly-simple remedy to this problem—merely to drain off the surplus rural manpower to urban industrial centers. As an easy plausible solution, there are at least three reasons why this will fail:

(1) The supposedly large manpower stockpile is reduced by a willingness of only 44 percent of the underemployed workers to accept alternate or supplemental employment. Also 10 percent of the labor force would be underemployed, even if all the inadequately employed persons willing to accept full-time employment had it.

Then, 9 percent of the population 14 years of age and over, and 17 percent of the male heads of households have either partial or total disabilities, which complicates employment quite seriously.

(2) Relatively few—less than one-fourth—of the underemployed workers are willing to leave the area permanently to accept employment. Hence, the immobility of labor itself reduces its employability.

(3) Only a relatively small proportion of the untapped labor has the skills necessary for non-agricultural work anywhere. Although many of the mature persons have been employed at non-agricultural work, such as mining, lumbering, etc., few have skills needed in urban industries. Of the 170 persons migrating from the surveyed households between 1944 and 1953, only 19 percent had received nonfarm training.

Underemployment relief by migration is a matter of quality as well as quantity selection since workers need new skills for new employment. Besides, only 24 percent of the underemployed workers being willing to leave, inadequate employment will continue until the area can either retrain its labor force, or attract or develop new industries. Probably Southeastern Oklahoma needs new non-agricultural employment opportunities more urgently than any other part of the State. When such labor demands appear the area still will face the task of retraining its labor force.

Since only about one-quarter of the inadequately employed people are willing to leave the area, the development of new industries seems to be the easiest way to provide low income workers with nearby part- or full-time employment. However, since the resources necessary for the establishment of new conventional industries may not exist there, it may be feasible to conduct surveys to determine other potentialities and possibilities for solving the underemployment problem. Still, the prime need is for new indigenous industries and farming practices within the area. If neither of these is possible, the only apparent way to alleviate the surplus manpower situation is to extend vocational education so that the youth ultimately may find employment elsewhere, preferably in Oklahoma industry.

A more thorough program of providing information on the labor demand would facilitate the placement of workers from Southeastern Oklahoma into attractive employment.

With sufficient employment opportunities in Southeastern Oklahoma more people would remain there, and with an expansion of either industry or agriculture, both permanent and seasonal emigration would slow down greatly in volume. Also, this would raise the real wages of families by reducing the expense of commuting long distances to places of employment. Perhaps it would invite a return to the area of many of its former residents now living elsewhere. It would facilitate efficient use of the underemployed labor force, and would improve the levels of living of the population in general .

Local leaders in many small American towns on the verge of extinction have united in community action programs to strengthen their local economies and to provide employment for workers who otherwise would be forced to leave to earn a living. The results have been spectacular in a number of instances. With technical assistance, local effort and initiative can render similar service in Southeastern Oklahoma. However, if such leadership cannot expand local industry and agriculture, the only possible alleviation of the surplus rural manpower situation is migration to areas of labor shortage. By that means Oklahoma must sustain heavy losses in the form of educational costs, diminished potential production, and shrunken home markets for its products.

9/55—3½M.