Census report charts gain by large, small farms

LANCASTER — increased numbers of small and large farms and decreases in those of medium size are outlined by data from a report released Monday by the Commerce Department's Bureau of the Census

The US Preliminary Report is based on findings from the 1978 Census of Agriculture.

The US Summary publication summarizes reports issued for each county and state In addition there are reports for each of the four geographic regions.

A farm, for census purposes, is defined as an operation which had, or normally would have had, \$1000 or more in agricultural product sales during 1978.

Comparison with totals from the last previous census (1974) should be made with caution because of significant improvements in data collection procedures in 1978. Bureau officials say they believe the improvements in data collection had a much greater effect on the count of farms than on measures of agricultural production. The effect of the improvements are discussed further below

Census figures for 1978 show a total of 2,479,866 farms, averaging 416 acres in size, with one billion acres of land

Based on 1974 census figures adjusted for undercoverage, the count of farms dropped by an estimated 150,000, the smallest drop in recent years The estimated decrease in counts is subject to sampling error

Census officials indicate that farms with less than 50 acres grew in numbers by about 20,000. Farms 500 acres or more increased about 7500 or two percent. During the same period, mid-size farms with 50 to 500 acres declined an estimated 175,000 farms, a loss of about two percent.

Total cropland, rose five percent from 440 to 461.9 million acres A bigger gain was registered by irrigated land, up 23 percent, from 41 2 to 50.7 million acres four years later

Cropland used only for pasture dropped 6.4 million acres, from 82 7 in 1974 to South was soybeans, moving 763 million in 1978, coinciding with the downward cycle in cattle herds during the period when cattle and calves inventory dropped from 113 2 to 105 9 million head and farms with cattle fell by 41,000 in number

Two percent, 23,000 farms and ranches with 500 or more head of cattle, had inventories amounting to 29 percent of the U S total The North Central States had a major share of the cattle industry, 40 percent of the farms and ranches and 41 percent of the inventories.

Dairy product sales from 221,000 farms in 1978 amounted to \$11.4 billion Milk cow numbers declined nationally, from 10.7 to 104 million head Farms having milk cows dropped from 404,000 to 334,000 Again, the North Central States led, with 4 7 billion cows and \$4 8 billion in sales

Farms with hogs and pigs climbed from 470,000 with 45.5 million head to 513,000 farms with 58.9 million head Farms having inventories of 500 or more now account for 42 percent of the Nation's hogs compared to 33 percent

Broilers sold went up 25 percent from 2 5 to 3 1 billion birds on approximately 34,000 farms.

The number of farms harvesting corn, the leading U.S. crop in acreage, declined from 883,000 to 843,000, while acreage rose from 61 7 to 70.7 million

Farms with soybeans were up from 542,000 to 551,000 in 1978, with 62 million acres harvested, a 29 percent increase over 1974

Hay was cut on 1 2 million farms with 61 8 million acres harvested, five percent more farms and 10 percent more acres than in 1974

Wheat dropped both in farms reporting -- 534,000 to 384.000 - and in acreage harvested, 63 to 54 5 million

Regionally, 562,000 North Central farms harvested 58.1 million acres or corn, 82 percent of the US total, compared with 574,000 farms and 51 2 million acres in 1974 and grew 38 million acres of soybeans or 61 percent of the total.

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up in four years from 142,000 to 159,000 farms and from 15.3 to 23.6 million acres harvested.

Wheat was the dominant crop in the West, more than 14 million acres for both census years, but with farms declining from 55,000 to 46,000

Hay led in the Northeast, up from 90,000 to 105,000 farms and from 49 to 58 million acres in 1978

The average value of land and buildings per acre went up from \$336 to \$627 The average value of land and buildings per farm rose 78 percent from \$148,000 to \$263,000

The sales of agricultural products rose 33 percent over the four-year period, from \$81 5 to 108 4 billion The average sales per U S. farm rose from \$35,000 to \$44,000 Sales of livestock and livestock products accounted for 47 percent of the U.S. total agricultural sales.

While gross sales were up, costs also grew rapidly. For example, feed costs rose 18 percent from \$136 to \$161 billion; commercial fertilizer up 25 percent from \$5 1 to \$6 4 billion, and gasoline and other petroleum products increased 64 percent from \$3 1 to \$5.1 billion

Total energy costs on farms was about \$6 2 billion

In farm product sales by geographic region, the North Central States with 41 percent of the farms held a strong lead, contributing 44 percent, \$47.6 billion to the US. total

The South was next, with \$33.1 billion, followed by the West, \$22 billion, and the Northeast, \$5 7 billion The average per farm sales was highest in the West, \$77,000

and lowest in the South, include the following. \$33,000

Other facts on the US agricultural industry brought out by the Census

Eighty-eight percent or 2 2 million of the 25 million farms were operated by individuals or families,

241,000 by partnerships, and 54,000 by corporations, or which 48,000 were family

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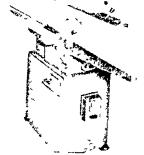
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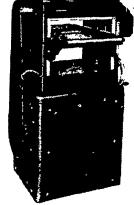
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