

PART IV

THE PATTERN OF AGRICULTURE

Farms - Number and Size

Most of the farms in Snohomish County are of medium and small size. According to the Census of Agriculture, there were 2,919 farms in the county in 1959. This was 1,426 less than enumerated in 1954. However, the Census definition of a farm in 1959 was more restrictive than in 1954 and this accounted for part of the reduction in the number of farms between the two Census dates. In Snohomish County, the decrease in the number of farms which resulted from the change in farm definition from 1954 to 1959 was 909. Census data indicate that a peak number of farms was reached during the first half of the 1940's when there were over 6,200 farms. Farm numbers have steadily declined since 1945. In 1959, Snohomish County ranked fifth in the state in the number of farms.

The relative smallness of Snohomish farms in comparison to the state average is largely the result of (1) land purchase methods and (2) types of farming. Most of the farmland was originally sold by timber and lumber companies in small acreages of logged-over land. Generally, these were 20 to 40 acres each. Many original 160 and 320 acre homesteads have been subdivided among heirs, or by resale as even smaller farms. General farming of the livestock, hay and grain type has been largely replaced by specialized dairy, poultry, berry and vegetable farming. The latter types together with the high value of land has tended to make the small farm most practicable. On the fringes of Everett and Seattle and within the foothill sections part-time farming has resulted in the establishment of numerous small farms. Nearly 70 percent of Snohomish farms were less than 50 acres in size in 1959 and about 55 percent were between 10 to 49 acres.

Table 9. Farms, Number and Average Size, Land in Farms
Snohomish County, 1900-1959

Year	Total Farms in the County	Average size of farms in the County (acres)	Total County Area in Farms (acres)	Percent of County area in Farms
1900	1,024	95.2	97,507	--
1910	1,813	65.3	118,328	--
1920	3,095	49.0	151,584	11.5
1925	4,740	35.6	168,528	12.8
1930	4,262	37.6	160,310	12.1
1940	6,231	30.2	188,304	14.0
1945	6,259	31.1	194,687	14.5
1950	4,786	37.7	180,285	13.4
1954	4,345	38.2	166,136	12.4
1959	2,919	50.9	148,604	11.1

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture

The number of small farms has greatly decreased while those above 180 acres increased slightly between 1954 and 1959 in Snohomish County. Part of the decrease in the number of small farms resulted from the change in the 1959 Census definition of a farm. However, this also is indicative of the tendency to consolidate small, less efficient farms into larger units.

Vegetable and general farms both totaled 35 in 1959, each representing about one percent of the total number of farms in the county. (Census defined general farms as those growing field seed crops, hay and/or silage. A farm was also classified as general if it had cash income from three or more sources and did not meet the criteria for any other type.) About 61 percent of the Snohomish County farms were classified as miscellaneous by the Census. This category included farms raising nursery and greenhouse products, forest products, mules, horses, colts and ponies.

Table 10. Types of Farms, Snohomish County, 1959

Type of Farm	Estimated Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the County	
		1954	1959
Total farms in county	3,002	100.0	100.0
Field crop farms	--	--	--
Vegetable farms	35	.8	1.2
Fruit-and-nut farms	95	6.7	3.2
Poultry farms	151	8.1	5.0
Dairy farms	654	22.1	21.8
Livestock farms other than poultry and dairy	200	2.5	6.7
General farms	35	.5	1.2
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms	1,832	59.3	61.0

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Some farm types in Snohomish County have increased in numbers in recent years while others have decreased. Livestock farms increased by 90 units between 1954 and 1959 and represented the category with the largest increase during this period. There were also 15 more general farms enumerated in 1959 than in 1954.

Between 1954 and 1959, miscellaneous farms dropped 744 units, from 2,576 to 1,832 while dairy farms decreased by 307 operations. Also, there were 199 less poultry farms and 195 less fruit-and-nut farms in 1959 than in 1954. Vegetable farms numbered 35 in 1954 as well as in 1959.

Farm Residence and Operation

Snohomish County agriculture is characterized by a large number of operators residing on farms and dividing their work between agriculture and off-farm work. Persons living on farms find seasonal and part-time work in Everett and Seattle as well as on farms other than their own. In 1959, about 59 percent of the farm operators worked off their farms. Around 52 percent worked off the farms more than 100 days per year. On an income basis, 63 percent of the operators and their families gained more cash income from off-farm work than they received from farm products marketed from their own farms.

The majority of Snohomish County farmers live on the farms they operate. About 96 percent of the farmers reported living on the farms they operated in 1959. The remaining 4 percent lived in nearby villages, towns and cities.

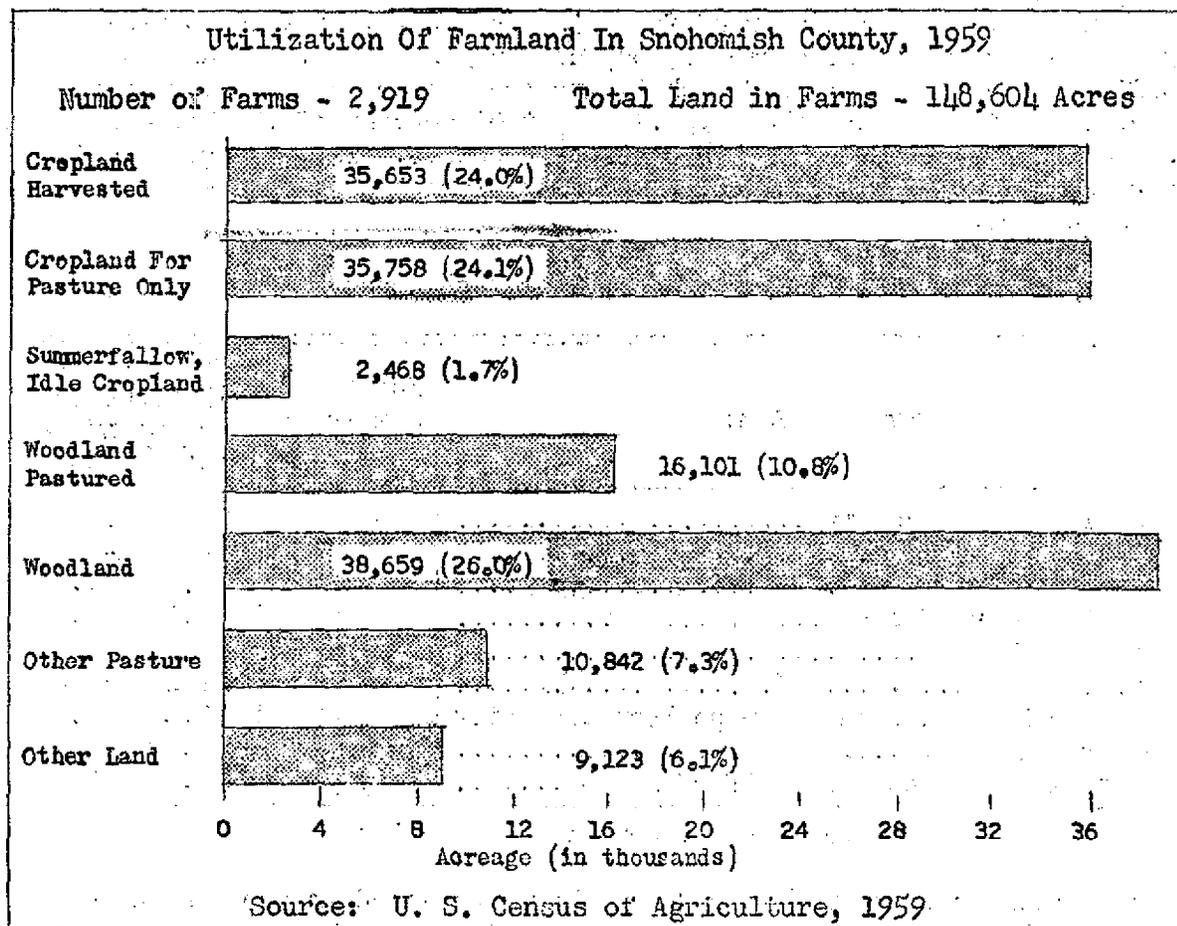


Figure 8. Utilization of Farmland in Snohomish County, 1959.

Farmland Utilization

Crops were harvested from about 24 percent of the land in farms in 1959. Another 24 percent was in pastured cropland while almost 2 percent was in summer-fallow or idle cropland. Thus, cropland accounted for about one-half of the land in farms in 1959.

Woodland constituted about 37 percent of Snohomish County's total farmland in 1959. Almost a third of the farm woodland was pastured. Farmers have found it very expensive to clear Douglas fir cut-over land and much of it has been used as woodland pasture. Many farms in the hilly parts of the county have tracts too steep for any economic use other than as woodlands. In recent years farmers have realized the value of their woodland for sustained yield of pulpwood and small saw logs and are practicing better woodlot management and farm forestry.

Other pasture amounted to little over 7 percent of the county farmland. The remaining farmland, about 6 percent, was in farmsteads, roads, wasteland, etc.

Farm Values

The value of farm lands and buildings in Snohomish County has greatly increased since the turn of the century. After reaching a high point in 1920, farm values decreased during the depression years of the 1930's. Since 1940, however, the total value of farm property in the county increased more than two and one-half

times, from about \$28,500,000 in 1940 to over \$75,000,000 in 1959. According to the Census of Agriculture, the average value of land and buildings per farm increased from a low of \$4,577 in 1940 to \$25,824 in 1959. Value of farmland per acre during the same period rose from about \$151 to \$503.

The rise in farm and land values has been caused by several factors. One has been the general rise of prices in real estate throughout the western United States. Another factor has been the large amount of labor and capital. Snohomish County farmers have invested in land and building improvements. A third factor has been the increase in population and the expansion of commercial farming which has increased demands for farm land.

Table 11. Value of Farm Land and Buildings
Snohomish County, 1900-1959

Year	Total Value of Farm Lands and Buildings	County Average Values	
		Per Farm	Per Acre
1900	\$ 2,781,130	2,716	\$ 28
1910	11,807,689	6,513	100
1920	22,972,111	7,422	151
1930	31,735,500	7,446	198
1940	28,520,393	4,577	151
1950	52,626,856	10,996	302
1954	61,142,840	14,072	419
1959	75,380,256	25,824	503

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Farm Tenure

A large majority of the farmers in Snohomish County own the farm they operate. Many farms have remained in the families of the pioneers who established them originally. Full-owner farms in 1959 constituted 82 percent of all county farms and these farms contained almost 67 percent of the county's farmland. Over 10 percent of the farms were operated by part-owners--farmers who own part of their land and rent land from others. This type of agricultural enterprise has increased over the years while the number of farms operated by full owners has declined. Farms operated by part owners accounted for about 21 percent of the county's total farm acreage in 1959.

Table 12. Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms
by Tenure of Operator, Snohomish County, 1925-1959

Year	Number of Farms	Full Owners		Part Owners		Managers		Tenants	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1925	4,740	4,122	87.0	176	3.7	14	.3	428	9.0
1930	4,262	3,642	85.4	167	3.9	40	.9	413	9.7
1935	6,026	4,989	82.8	184	3.0	22	.4	831	13.8
1940	6,231	5,201	83.5	188	3.0	17	.3	825	13.2
1945	6,259	5,441	86.9	298	4.6	14	.2	506	8.1
1950	4,786	4,170	87.1	322	6.7	11	.2	283	5.9
1954	4,345	3,808	87.6	302	6.9	6	.1	229	5.3
1959	2,919	2,408	82.5	306	10.5	17	.6	188	6.4

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Tenancy--the renting or leasing of land--is not common in Snohomish County. Only 188 farms in the county were operated by tenants in 1959. The percentage of tenant farms has declined since the high of nearly 14 percent in 1935. In 1959, the tenant group accounted for only about 6 percent of all farms in the county and contained only 9 percent of the farmland. Manager operated farms are a very insignificant part of Snohomish agriculture. In 1959, only a little over one-half of one percent of all farms were operated by individuals who managed land for others and were paid a wage or salary for their services. They operated about 3 percent of Snohomish's total farmland during 1959.

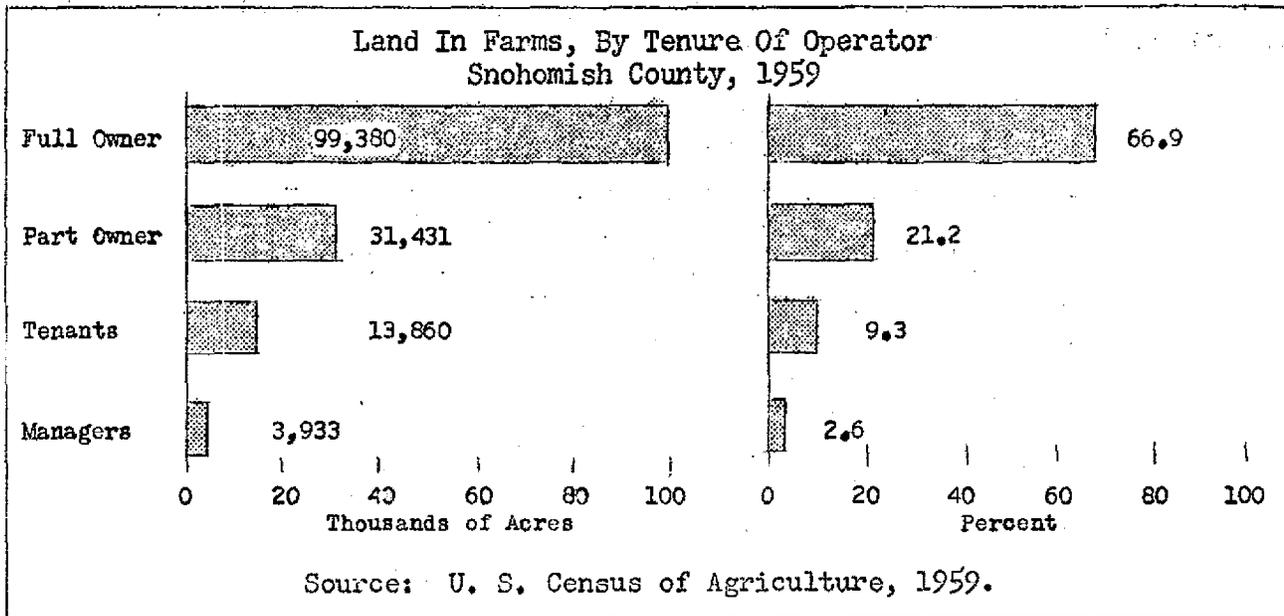


Figure 9. Land in Farms, By Tenure of Operator, Snohomish County, 1959.

Irrigation

The amount of irrigated cropland and pasture in Snohomish County has been steadily increasing. Irrigation becomes a valuable asset during summer dry periods. Most of the county's irrigation is accomplished with movable sprinklers with the water originating in wells or streams.

Table 13. Irrigated Farms: Number and Acreage
Snohomish County, 1950, 1954 and 1959

Item	1959	1954	1950
Number of irrigated farms	203	123	56
Land irrigated (acres)	6,296	4,431	1,468
Irrigated land in farms according to use:			
Farms irrigating crops	141	109	38
Acres of crops irrigated	3,114	2,886	792
Acres of other land irrigated	3,182	1,545	676

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Snohomish's irrigated acreage in 1959 amounted to 6,296 acres or about 4 percent of the county's total farmland. Almost half of the irrigated acreage was in crops, most of which was in hay, strawberries and vegetables. The remaining

irrigated acreage was largely pasture.

Farm Facilities

The capacity of a farmer to produce is significantly related to farm equipment and facilities at his disposal. Snohomish County farms are relatively well-equipped with modern farm machinery. Home conveniences such as telephones and home freezers are common. Tractors, motor trucks and automobiles are found on a majority of Snohomish County farms. In 1959, about 77 percent of the farms reported 3,529 tractors of which 315 were of the crawler type. The number of farms with automobiles was 2,627 which represented around 87 percent of the Snohomish County farms. Almost 65 percent of the farms also had motor trucks in 1959. The importance of dairy farming in the county is indicated by the relatively high frequency of milking machines and electric milk coolers noted by the Census in 1959. Although 22 percent of the farms were classed as dairy farms, 33 percent had electric milkers. Twenty-two percent had coolers.

Table 14. Specified Equipment and Facilities on Farms
Snohomish County, 1959

Facility or Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone	2,601	86.6
Home freezer	1,577	52.5
Milking machine	979	32.6
Electric milk cooler ...	649	21.6
Crop drier (for grain, forage or other crops)	6	.2
Power operated elevator, conveyor or blower ...	329	11.0
Grain combines	71	2.4
Corn pickers	--	--
Pick-up baler	243	8.1
Field forage harvester .	244	8.1
Motortrucks	1,942	64.7
Tractors	2,316	77.1
Crawler tractors	284	9.5
Automobiles	2,627	87.5

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1959.

Farm Roads

In recent years, much progress has been made in providing all-weather roads for farm families. Most of the farms are located within easy access of the main highways in Snohomish County. In 1959, about 71 percent of the farms were located on hard-surfaced roads. Only 3 percent of the farms required travel on dirt roads while the remaining 26 percent were on improved roads of gravel, shell or shale. Nearly all of the farms situated on dirt roads were located within 4 miles to a hard-surface road.

Table 15. Snohomish County's Rank Compared With
Other Washington Counties

Item Compared	Rank	Quantity
<u>General</u>		
Land area	13	1,344,000 acres
Number of farms	5	2,919 farms
Land in farms-percent	31	11.1 percent
Average size of farms	31	50.9 acres
Cropland harvested	23	35,653 acres
Irrigated land in farms	19	6,296 acres
Rural farm population	4	7,953 persons ^{1/}
Total county population	4	172,199 persons ^{1/}
<u>Cash farm income</u>		
Value of all farm products sold	15	15,687,935 dollars
Value of livestock sold	4	12,899,240 dollars
Value of crops sold	23	2,788,695 dollars
<u>Livestock on farms</u>		
All cattle and calves	5	50,612 head
Milk cows	2	21,839 head
Hogs	16	3,028 head
Chickens	5	397,604 birds
Horses and mules	8	1,311 head
Sheep and lambs	21	2,140 head
<u>Dairy and poultry products sold</u>		
Value of dairy products sold ...	2	8,345,001 dollars
Whole milk sold	2	194,235,908 pounds
Value of poultry products sold .	2	2,280,383 dollars
Chickens sold	7	1,099,888 birds
Eggs sold	5	4,590,051 dozen
<u>Important crops harvested</u>		
Clover-Timothy hay	6	15,386 acres
Other hay	8	1,845 acres
Grass silage	2	10,181 acres
Vegetables	5	4,560 acres
Berries	2	1,537 acres

^{1/} U. S. Census of Population, 1960.

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1959.