

PART IV

The Pattern of Agriculture

Farms: Number and Size

Most of the agriculture in Kitsap County is on medium and small farms. According to the United States Census of Agriculture, 1954, there were 1,550 properties classified as farms. This was 242 less than reported in 1950. The decline was due in part to a change in Census methods, but does show a continuing general trend in the decline of farm numbers accompanied by an increase in the size of individual farms. Consolidation of farms through purchase and lease has increased the average from 21.8 acres in 1925 to 27.5 acres in 1954. Kitsap County ranked fourteenth among the 39 counties of the state in number of farms, but was last in size of farms.

The smaller farms are largely the result of land acquisition and purchase methods, types of farming and high land values. During earlier settlement much logged-over land was sold in 10, 20 and 40 acre units to part-time farmers. Many of the original 160 acre homesteads were taken over by the Government for the development of Federal housing and defense installations. Subdivisions of farms on shoreline areas for residential properties has been common since 1940.

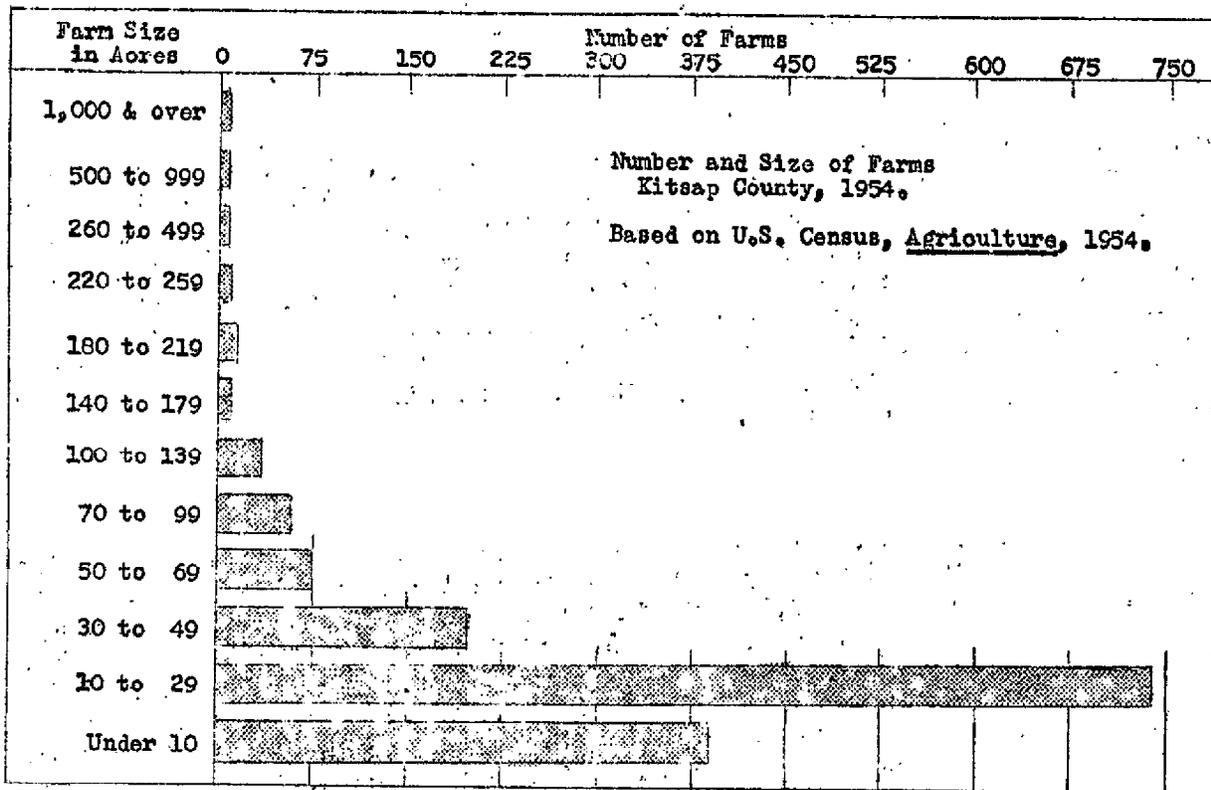


Figure 7.- Number and Size of Kitsap County Farms, 1954.

Average farm size also decreased as the population grew and land prices increased. The popularity of part-time farming by workers in the Government defense plants has also resulted in many small-scale farming operations in poultry, berries, livestock, dairy and other specialty farm enterprises. Heavy costs of clearing stump and forest land have tended to discourage development of large commercial farm holdings. These and other economic factors have created a present pattern in which over 75 percent of the farms are less than 30 acres. Farms from 10-29 acres are the largest group, numbering 739. In the 1954 Census there were only 21 farms of 180 acres and larger.

Table 9. - Farms, Number and Average Size, Land in Farms, Kitsap County, 1900-1955

Year	Total Farms in the County	Total County area in farms (acres)	Average size of farms in the county (acres)	Percent of County area in farms
1900	446	29,132	65	11.3
1910	950	42,332	45	16.5
1920	1,535	43,885	28	17.0
1925	2,359	51,453	22	21.8
1930	1,557	38,367	25	15.0
1940	2,102	46,196	22	22.0
1945	1,758	38,162	22	14.8
1950	1,792	46,031	26	17.9
1954	1,550	42,677	28	16.5

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture, 1900-1954.

In 1954 the 1,550 farms of Kitsap County contained 42,677 acres or only 16.6 percent of the total land area within the county. The acreage in farms grew from 29,132 acres in 1900 to a peak of 51,453 in 1925. During World War II and again in 1950 the number of farms and the total acreage in farm land increased because of an increase in part-time farming. Since 1950 the area in farms and numbers of farms have been decreasing denoting some abandonment of farming for other employment and a change in the use of some farmland for residential and industrial purposes. This is a recent general trend in the Puget Sound area of Kitsap, Pierce, King and Snohomish Counties where population and industry have been growing.

Farm Values

The values of land, farms and farm buildings have increased greatly since 1940. Values increased rapidly between 1900 and 1930, then lowered during the 1930's. From a figure of \$7,698,910 in 1940, farm property in Kitsap County more than doubled in value by 1954. Value of farmland and buildings per farm averaged \$11,451 and \$425.94 per acre with buildings. The rise in farm and land values has been caused by several factors. One is the general use of prices in real estate and standing timber throughout the western United States. Value has been added by the large amount of labor and capital for clearing and general improvements in the last thirty years. Another factor is the increased demand for rural home and small-farm acreage related to the general growth of industrial population.

Table 10.- Value of Farm Property
Kitsap County, 1920-1954

Year	Total Value All Farm Property in County	County Average Values	
		Per Farm (dollars)	Per Acre (dollars)
1920	\$ 8,874,588	\$ 5,012	\$175
1930	7,385,112	4,743	192
1940	7,698,910	3,663	166
1950	16,613,632	9,271	358
1954	17,749,050	11,451	426

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Farm Tenure

A very large majority (95 out of each 100 farmers) own and fully operate their farms. Tenancy, or the renting and leasing of entire farms, is uncommon; only 52 out of 1,550 farms were operated by tenants in 1954. Many farms have remained in ownership of the pioneer families who established them. About 4.7 percent of the farms were partly owned in 1954, showing a fluctuation during the last 30 years. This is caused in part by the increasing numbers of full owners. The percentage of tenant farming had been decreasing since 1935 and in 1954 farms entirely operated by tenants on leases comprised only 3.5 percent of the farms.

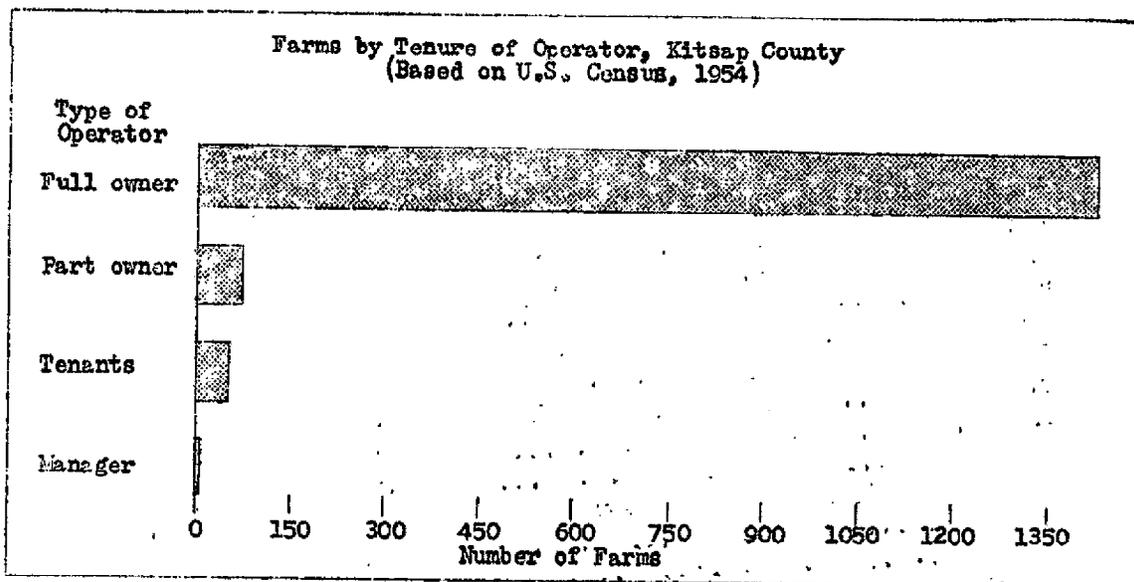


Figure 8.- Farms by Tenure of Operator, Kitsap County, 1954.

Table 11.- Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms
By Tenure of Operator, Kitsap County
1925-1954.

Year	Number Farms in County	Full Owners		Part Owners		Managers		Tenants	
		number of farms	percent of all farms						
1925	2,359	2,170	92.0	34	1.4	1	.04	154	6.5
1930	1,557	1,405	90.2	52	3.3	23	1.5	77	4.9
1935	1,665	1,447	86.9	61	3.7	4	.2	153	9.2
1940	2,102	1,821	86.6	99	4.7	4	.2	178	8.5
1945	1,758	1,630	92.7	47	2.7	4	.2	77	4.4
1950	1,704	1,627	95.5	93	5.5	2	.1	70	4.1
1954	1,499	1,427	95.2	70	4.7	1	.07	52	3.5

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Types of Farms

Nearly 80 percent of the farms are classified as miscellaneous, with numerous dairy, poultry, livestock and fruit-and-nut farms. Farm types classified by the Census show diversification among a variety of specialties. Poultry (120) and dairy (80) are the leading types of specialty farms followed by fruit-and-nut (mainly berry) and livestock farms.

Table 12.- Types of Farms, Kitsap County, 1954.

Type of Farms	Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the county
Total farms in county.....	1,550	
Field-crop farms.....	0	
Cash-grain.....	0	
Other field-crop.....	0	
Vegetable farms.....	5	.3
Fruit-and-nut farms.....	60	3.9
Dairy farms.....	80	5.2
Poultry farms.....	120	7.7
Livestock farms other than dairy and poultry..	40	2.6
General farms.....	5	
Primarily crop.....	0	
Primarily livestock.....	5	.3
Crop and livestock.....	0	
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms.....	1,241	80.0

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Farm Residence and Operation

Kitsap County agriculture is characterized by a large proportion of operators residing on farms and dividing their employment between work on and work

off the farm. Both the Tacoma and Seattle metropolitan areas, the Federal Naval and military installations in and near Bremerton and the forest operations in Kitsap and neighboring Mason County provide a variety of seasonal and part-time jobs. Most of the county might be classified as a region of part-time farming. At some time of the year nearly seventy-five percent of all Kitsap County farmers worked off their farms during 1954, according to the Census of Agriculture. Out of this group, over 1,050 or 68 percent of all Kitsap County farmers worked in non-farm industries more than 100 days of the year. These part-time farmers received more income from off-farm work than from sales of crops and livestock.

Farmland Utilization

Crops were harvested from only about 13 percent of the land in farms in 1954. An additional 14 percent was in cropland used only for pasture and 5 percent lay idle or in fallow. Typical of western Washington farmland utilization, woodlands made up the largest share of the acreage. Woodlands which are not being grazed amounted to 41 percent. A little over 12 percent of all farmland was in pastured woodland. Altogether, the farm woodlands covered about 23,000 acres or over half of the land in farms. Douglas fir and alder timber grow well under natural conditions. Farmers have also found that the clearing of Douglas fir cut-over land is expensive. Some have left such acreage in stumps and brush as woodland pasture or Christmas tree land. Many land owners

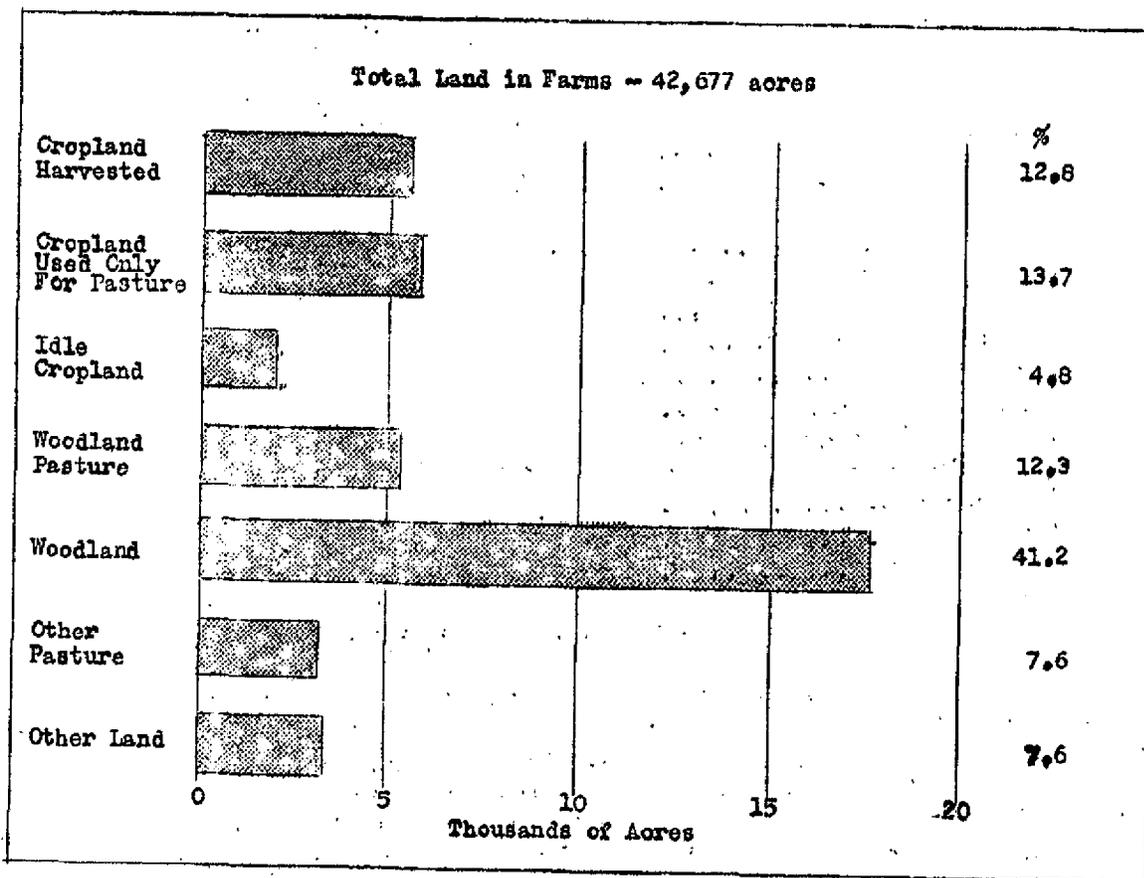


Figure 9.-- Utilization of Farmland in Kitsap County, 1954.

are beginning to practice farm forestry for the harvesting of Christmas trees and forest greens which are shipped to eastern markets; Others have left dense regrowth stands undisturbed to grow timber for farm use and for future commercial cutting.

Farm Facilities

In 1954 most of the farms in Kitsap County were above the state average in the use of facilities which save labor and make rural life easier. Farmers in this county enjoy an extensive rural electric service provided by both privately and publicly-owned utility services. Over 98 percent of farm homes and buildings were equipped with electricity. Seventy-five percent reported having telephones. Washington State averages for these facilities on farms were 97 and 74 percent, respectively. The farming country is located in the Puget Sound area and is within the reception zone of four television stations. A higher than average number of rural homes, nearly three-fourths of them, have television sets. Most of the farms also have piped running water and a little over one-third have refrigerators in the form of home freezers. The rates for electric service and the amount of electricity used are lower than in many other farm areas of Washington. In 1950 the Census found that the average farm monthly electric bill was \$7.23 compared to the state average of \$8.50.

Table 13.- Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms
Kitsap County, 1954.

Facility of Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone.....	1,166	75.2
Electricity.....	1,526	98.5
Television set.....	1,091	70.4
Piped running water.....	1,491	96.2
Home freezer.....	526	33.9
Electric pig brooder.....	25	1.6
Power feed grinder.....	20	1.3
Pick-up balers.....	10	.6
Field forage harvesters..	10	.6
Artificial ponds, reser- voirs and earch tanks	160	10.3
Motortrucks.....	751	48.5
Tractors.....	936	60.4
Automobiles.....	1,276	82.3

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Farming in Kitsap County is not mechanized to the degrees found in the more commercially developed farm counties of the state. Several conditions limit the use of labor-saving devices. The more important ones are the frequent number of small-sized farms, the large number of part-time farming operations on small fields and the tendency to raise crops and livestock which require little mechanized machinery. The heavily wooded and irregular terrain also limits the use of wheeled equipment. The most common equipment found on Kitsap

farms are tractors, milking machines and motor trucks. The ownership of automobiles was also higher than the national farm average.

Irrigation and Facilities

Because of the dry summer climate and the desire to get higher yields of berries, truck crops and pasture grass, there has been an increasing interest in irrigation. The number of irrigated farms as well as the land irrigated on these farms has nearly doubled from 1950 to 1954. There has been a marked increase in the use of more irrigation equipment since 1945. In 1945 there were only 14 farms using irrigation, but by 1954 the number had increased nearly seven times to 95 farms.

Table 14.- Irrigated Farms: Number and Acreage
Kitsap County, 1950 and 1954

Item	1950	1954
Number of irrigated farms.....	48	95
Land in irrigated farms.....	2,302 acres	4,413 acres
Land irrigated ^{1/}	629 acres	1,052 acres
Irrigated land in farms according to use:		
Farms irrigating crops.....	35	80
Farms irrigating pasture.....	25	29
Acres of crops irrigated.....	235	765
Acres of pasture irrigated.....	385	287

^{1/} Includes land irrigated by canals, pipes and overhead sprinkler systems.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Dairymen find that sprinkler irrigation increases the cattle forage capacity of upland pastures. The gravelly glacial soils common in the Kitsap area require considerable irrigation. The top horizon of the soil dries out severely in the mid-summer dry season. Soil drainage on the glacial moraine slopes is rapid during the winter wet season.

Irrigation in this county consists of 95 individually or farm-owned systems. They employ mainly wells, pumps and sprinklers. There are also a few gravity systems. In 1954 there were 1,052 acres irrigated, with nearly three-fourths of this acreage in commercial vegetable, fruit and nut and berry crops. The use of more irrigation in Kitsap County follows a general trend in the other western Washington counties. There has been a large increase in the amount of acreage devoted to irrigated crops such as fruits, berries and vegetables. Reasons for the 100 percent increase in irrigated cropland is due in part to the rise in the value of land and the abundance of lakes, streams and ground water that are usable for irrigation.

Table 15.- Kitsap County's Rank Compared with
Other Washington Counties

Item Compared	Rank	Quantity	Year
General			
Land area.....	36	257,280 acres	1954
Number of farms.....	15	1,250 farms	1954
Land in farms--percent.....	25	13.6 percent	1954
Average size of farms.....	39	27 acres	1954
Cropland harvested.....	35	5,025 acres	1954
Rural farm population.....	15	6,095 persons	1950
Total county population.....	7	75,724 persons	1950
Cash farm income			
Value of all farm products sold....	31	1,844,958 dollars	1954
Value of livestock sold.....	24	1,375,762 dollars	1954
Value of crops sold.....	32	416,285 dollars	1954
Livestock on farms			
All cattle and calves.....	35	6,718	1954
Milk cows.....	23	2,238 head	1954
Hogs.....	18	1,731 head	1954
Chickens.....	11	130,808 birds	1954
Horses and mules.....	30	433 head	1954
Sheep and lambs.....	33	426 head	1954
Dairy and poultry products sold			
Value of dairy products sold.....	23	401,076 dollars	1954
Whole milk sold.....	24	7,847,000 pounds	1954
Value of poultry products sold....	12	798,713 dollars	1954
Chickens sold.....	12	235,351 birds	1954
Eggs sold.....	10	1,326,404 dozen	1954
Important crops harvested			
Clover and timothy.....	25	1,670 acres	1954
Fruits.....	14	572 acres	1954
Strawberries.....	6	180 acres	1955
Vegetables.....	27	27 acres	1955

Source: U.S. Censuses of Agriculture, 1950, 1954.