

PART IV

The Pattern of Agriculture

Farms: Number and Size

Farming in Okanogan County is on both large and small farm units. Large farms, while less numerous, contain most of the farm land. In 1954 a total of 825 farms, or almost 47 percent of the 1,770 properties classified as farms in Okanogan County, were farms with less than 49 acres each. Another 261 farms, or 15 percent of the county's farms, contained over 1,000 acres each. Large ranches contain the bulk of the land in farms, having 1,518,856 acres of a total of 1,758,255 acres. This gave Okanogan County an average farm size of 993 acres ranking it sixth in the state in average size of farms. Excluding large holdings from the total, over four-fifths of the places averaged only 192 acres per farm. In general, the county is one of small and medium farms with a few large farms adding greatly to the average size of farms and to the acreage in farms within the county. As a general rule, farm holdings have become larger since 1920.

Being large in geographic area, Okanogan County has more farms than most other Washington counties, ranking thirteenth in the state in number of farms

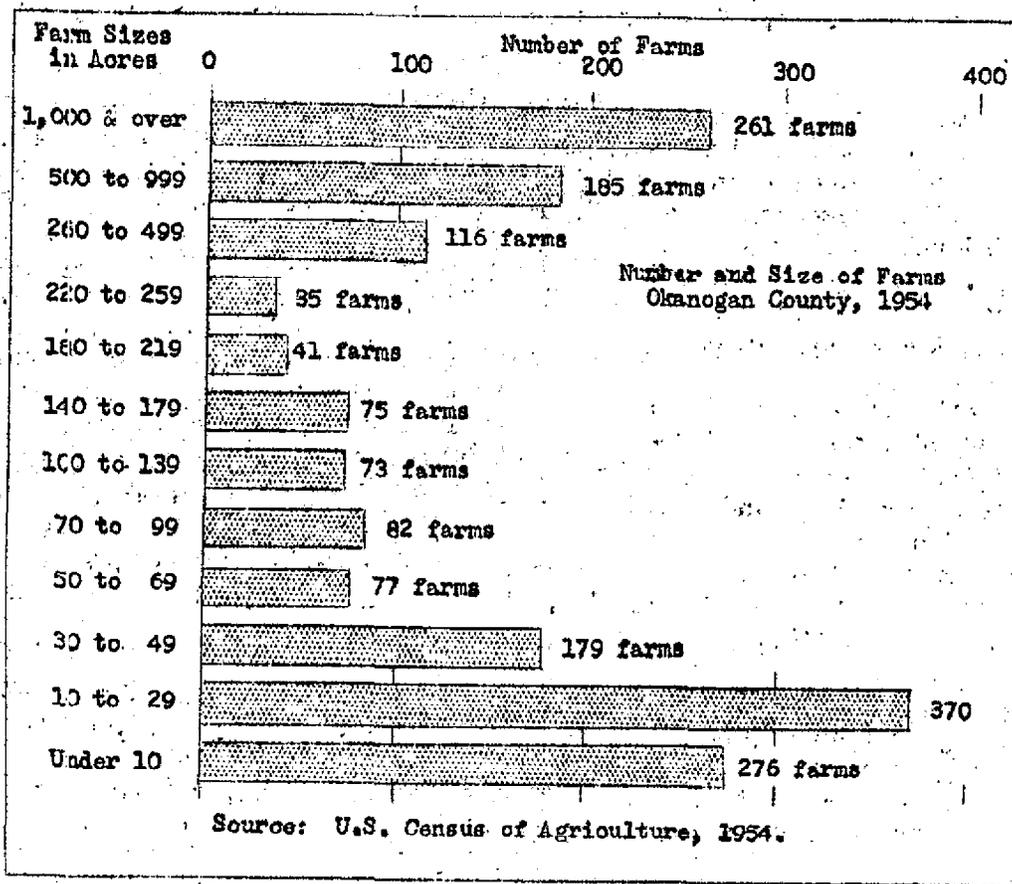


Figure 7.- Number and Size of Okanogan County Farms, 1954

in 1954. The number of farms reached a peak of 2,856 in 1920. Since that time the number has steadily declined as farms have been consolidated by purchase or lease. While this was happening, the land area in farms within the county has steadily increased over the years. In 1954 Okanogan County had the largest number of acres in farms (1,758,266) of any county in the state. Because of a large mountainous area in public forest lands and domain, only 52 percent of its area is in farmland. The acres in farms has been increasing as area in forest and dry wasteland has been reclaimed by irrigation or incorporated into farms for grazing ranges. More larger farms have resulted also from large-scale livestock farming, dry land farming and more intensive pasturing of hilly areas.

Table 8.- Farms, Number and Average Size, Land in Farms
Okanogan County, 1900-1954

Census 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	506	80,196	158.5	2.4
1910	2,173	379,766	175.0	11.5
1920	2,856	689,796	241.5	20.3
1925	2,496	586,281	234.9	17.3
1930	2,326	691,558	297.3	20.4
1940	2,397	954,264	398.1	28.2
1945	2,338	1,146,831	490.5	33.8
1950	2,023	1,435,372	709.5	42.3
1954	1,770	1,758,266	999.3	51.9

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

Large-Size Farms

Large livestock ranches are quite characteristic. These large units of 1,000 acres or more contain much of the land area in farms of Okanogan County.

Table 9.- Large Farms: Number and General Land Use
Okanogan County, 1954

Land Utilization on Large Farms	Farms 1,000 to 4,999 acres	Farms 5,000 acres and over
Number of farms-----	220 farms	41 farms
Land in farms-----	450,335 acres	1,068,521 acres
Cropland harvested-----	42,657 acres	16,399 acres
Cropland used only for pasture-----	6,124 acres	4,261 acres
Cropland not harvested and not pastured (idle, fallow land)-----	26,519 acres	6,694 acres
Woodland pastured-----	83,626 acres	431,016 acres
Woodland not pastured-----	1,334 acres	12,140 acres
Other pasture (not cropland and not woodland)-----	284,512 acres	587,331 acres

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

There are 220 farms exceeding 1,000 acres in size and 41 farms that include 5,000 acres or more within their fence lines. These large units contained a total of 1,518,856 acres, or 86 percent of all the farmland in the county in 1954. The bulk of the remaining farmland is composed of smaller-sized irrigated farms in the valleys and highlands.

Large ranches specialize mainly in cattle and cash-grain farming. In 1954 the harvested cropland on the farms with 1,000 acres or more amounted to 59,056 acres. Another 10,385 acres was in cropland used only for pasture. Summer fallow and idle land accounted for 33,213 acres. By far the greatest utilization of land on the big ranches was pasture other than woodland and cropland. This was the main use of great expanses of dry sagebrush foothills and scabland. The total acreage in these 1,000-acre or more ranches was 871,843 acres or almost three-fifths of the land in large farms. Pastured woodland totaled 514,642 acres with only 13,474 acres of un-pastured woodland. Cattle and sheep were carried on 1,396,870 acres of various kinds of pasture.

Farm Values

Since 1950 the value of land and farm buildings has increased by 60 percent in Okanogan County. Farm real estate and property was at its lowest level around 1940 when the average was only \$13 per acre. By 1954 the total value of farms in the county had increased over four times. The average farm was worth six times more than in 1940 and the average per acre was almost four times as great. Values in recent years have gone up because of returns from farming and increased improvement of land and buildings. Since 1940, land price increases have followed a general trend of increased value of farm real estate. Irrigation development has greatly expanded land values in the Okanogan Valley.

Farm Tenure

A large majority (about 70 out of each 100 farmers) own and fully operate their farms. Tenancy, or the renting and leasing of entire farms, is uncommon.

Table 10.- Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms
By Tenure of Operator, Okanogan County
1925-1954

Year	Number Farms in County	Full Owners		Part Owners		Managers		Tenants	
		number of farms	percent of all farms						
1925	2,196	1,816	72.8	333	13.3	34	1.4	313	12.5
1930	2,326	1,594	68.5	377	16.2	49	2.1	306	13.1
1935	2,539	1,650	65.0	406	16.0	61	2.4	422	16.6
1940	2,397	1,620	67.6	368	15.3	47	2.0	362	15.1
1945	2,338	1,652	70.7	412	18.9	45	1.9	199	8.5
1950	1,957	1,475	75.4	403	20.6	25	1.3	120	6.1
1954	1,718	1,245	72.5	417	24.3	16	.9	92	5.3

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

This varies only slightly from the state pattern of farm ownership--75 percent of all the farms being operated by full owners. Farms run by tenants and managers were more common in the 1930's. Farms operated by managers and tenants have declined since 1935. Full ownership was at a low in 1935 during the depression. Part ownership (a method where land or parts of a farm are rented although the renter still owns a farm) has become more popular in recent years. In general, the largest farms are operated by managers and the acreage and number of farms under the manager type of tenure has increased in recent years.

Types of Farms

Okanogan agriculture is well diversified. There are eleven principal types of farming. The greatest portion (632) of Okanogan County farms were classed as miscellaneous by the Census of 1954. The two main specialties were fruit farms (552) and livestock other than dairy and poultry (346). Field crop farms (132) were next in importance with 122 farms of the cash-grain type. The other specialties in order of importance were dairy (34) and poultry farms (11).

Table 11.-- Types of Farms, Okanogan County, 1954

Type of Farms	Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the county
Total farms in county.....	1,766	
Field-crop farms.....	132	
Cash-grain.....	122	6.9
Other field-crop.....	10	.6
Vegetable farms.....	0	
Fruit farms.....	552	31.2
Dairy farms.....	34	1.9
Poultry farms.....	11	.6
Livestock farms other than dairy and poultry	346	19.6
General farms.....	59	
Primarily crop.....	26	1.5
Primarily livestock.....	10	.6
Crop and livestock.....	23	1.3
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms.....	632	35.8

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Farm Facilities

In 1954 Okanogan County farm homes and farm operations were much better equipped with household conveniences and labor-saving devices than in earlier Census periods. Notable progress had been made even though the percentage for several types of facilities was still below the state average. Almost 95 percent of the farms homes were using electricity. Just under one-third of the county's farms had home freezers while over two-thirds had telephones. Only 5 percent had a television set. The county in general is too far from the nearest television stations to get good reception without use of expensive reflectors and other special equipment.

Okanogan County is well-mechanized for field crop farming. The percentages of farms mechanized with tractors, motor trucks and automobiles are very high. In degree of mechanization in the general state picture, the county ranks seventeenth in grain combines, fourteenth in field forage harvesters and eleventh in number of pick-up hay balers. The largest new investments and additions in equipment since 1950 have been a three-fold gain in pick-up hay balers and a doubling of use of home freezers.

Table 12.- Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms
Okanogan County, 1954

Facility or Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone.....	1,217	68.8
Electricity.....	1,680	94.9
Television set.....	89	5.0
Piped running water.....	1,570	88.7
Home freezer.....	551	31.1
Electric pig brooder.....	24	1.4
Power feed grinder.....	254	14.4
Milking machine.....	123	6.9
Grain combines.....	156	8.8
Corn pickers.....	--	--
Pick-up balers.....	177	10.0
Field forage harvesters.....	28	1.6
Artificial ponds, reservoirs and earth tanks.....	123	6.9
Motortrucks.....	1,219	68.9
Tractors.....	1,380	78.0
Automobiles.....	1,563	88.3

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Irrigation and facilities

Okanogan County ranked fifth in the state in irrigated cropland harvested during 1954. There were 1,299 farms irrigating 32,338 acres of cropland and also 5,776 acres of pasture. This was an increase of over 8,000 acres irrigated, but a decrease of 117 farms using irrigation since 1950. Irrigated pasture more than doubled, while cropland increased about 25 percent.

Irrigation in the county includes both public projects diverting water from the major rivers and small private farm-owned systems. There are 123 farms in the county that have artificial ponds, reservoirs and earth tanks. Many of the systems employ sprinkler irrigation, although gravity systems are also popular.

Irrigation is highly necessary because of a dry summer climate. It is essential to get profitable yields of fruit, hay and pasture. Hay with 12,517 acres was the leading crop irrigated. Fruit was second with 11,930 acres (out of 12,525 acres grown) reported irrigated. Pasture was third in importance with 5,776 acres under irrigation. Only about 700 acres of small grains were

irrigated. About three-fifths of the irrigated farms specialize in fruit orchards. More water is needed to expand agriculture. The Bureau of Reclamation plans to expand irrigation in southern Okanogan County along the Columbia River with the Chief Joseph Dam Project.

Table 13.- Irrigated Farms: Number and Acreage
Okanogan County, 1950 and 1954

Item	1950	1954
Number of irrigated farms.....	1,416	1,299
Land in irrigated farms.....	466,929 acres	603,219 acres
Land irrigated 1/.....	29,920 acres	38,114 acres
Irrigated land in farms according to use:		
Farms irrigating crops.....	1,349	1,232
Farms irrigating pasture.....	358	510
Acres of crops irrigated.....	26,172	32,338
Acres of pasture irrigated.....	2,443	5,776

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

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Farmland Utilization

Almost 90 percent of the land in farms in Okanogan County is in range land pasture and woodland pasture. A total of 971,209 acres or 55 percent was in sagebrush and scabland range pastures, being found on large livestock ranches.

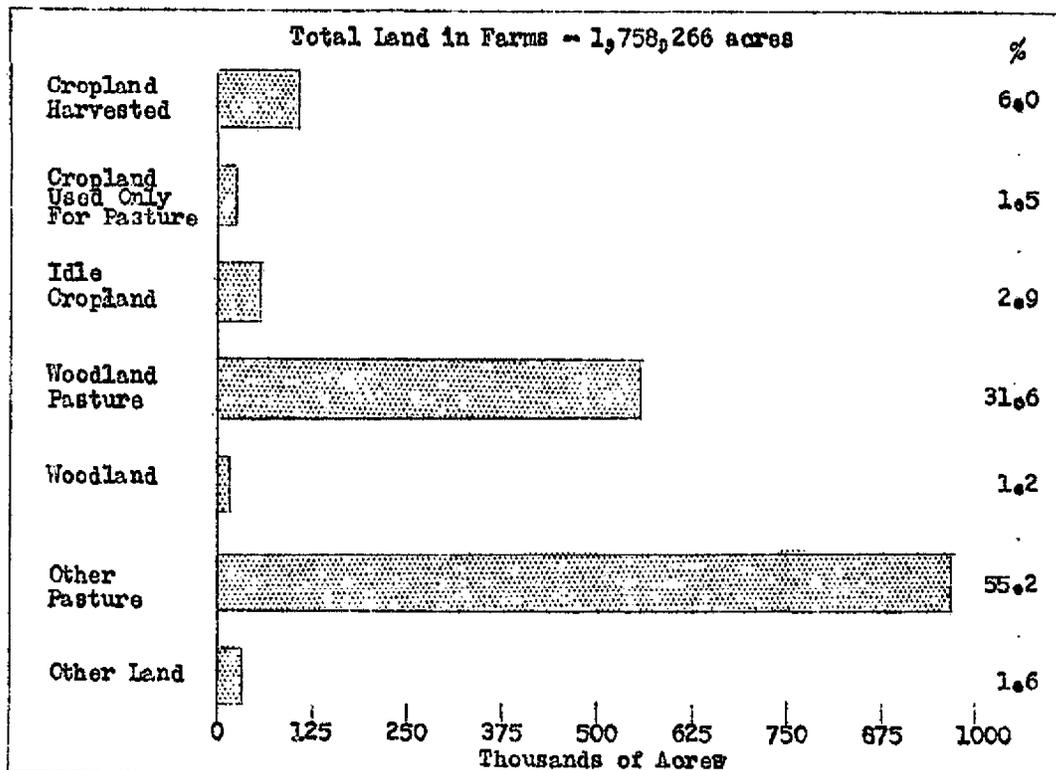


Figure 8.- Utilization of Farmland in Okanogan County, 1954

The second largest use was pastured woodland covering 555,750 acres, nearly a third of all land in farms. Only 6 percent of all the farmland in the county was harvested cropland which includes the orchards. The fourth most important land use in acreage was summer fallow and idle cropland. The large farms had the majority of land used for all purposes but still only had 56 percent of the harvested cropland. As irrigation in the county has increased, the use of land for harvested crops has increased. Recently, however, harvested cropland in grain has decreased 14,000 acres between 1949 and 1954. Some 13,307 acres of the decline between the two years was in spring wheat and hay land.

Farm Residence and Operation

During 1954 about 6 out of every 10 Okanogan County farmers worked off their farms on a part-time basis. Some 45 percent of Okanogan County farmers worked off the farm 100 days or more. Slightly over 40 percent of all the county's farmers earned more from this non-farm employment than they did from sales of products from their lands. The logging industry and seasonal work in fruit orchards provide the most opportunities for off-farm work. Cash crops grown on most of the farms leave the farmers idle time during parts of the year. Also many of the farms specialize in livestock such as beef cattle which do not require the full time during the whole year.

The Census in 1954 also showed that 116 of the county's farmers did not live on the farm that they operated. In many cases, farm operators live in town removed from the livestock or wheat farm which they operate in a remote county area.