

PART IV

The Pattern of Agriculture

Farms: Number and Size

Farms have been decreasing in number and becoming larger in size in Wahkiakum County. The largest number of land units operated as farms was the 458 recorded in the Census of 1945. By 1955 the number of farm places was 376 indicating that 90 or more farming operations were abandoned or consolidated in the last 10-year period.

Size of farms as an average range between 80 and 90 acres and have tended to become a little larger in recent years. Several factors have caused this trend toward larger farms. Many small operations have been purchased or leased and consolidated with larger units. A few owners have purchased adjoining properties to be added to tree farms. Some places have been sold as residential property near towns and along highways. Successful, larger-scale dairy and vegetable farms with machinery have added acreage to increase the size of their operations. Despite the increase in average size, the most common sizes of farms in Wahkiakum County are the forty and twenty acre units. Before 1920 there were a larger number of 160 and 80 acre units. These larger pioneer farms have in most cases been subdivided in the last 30 years.

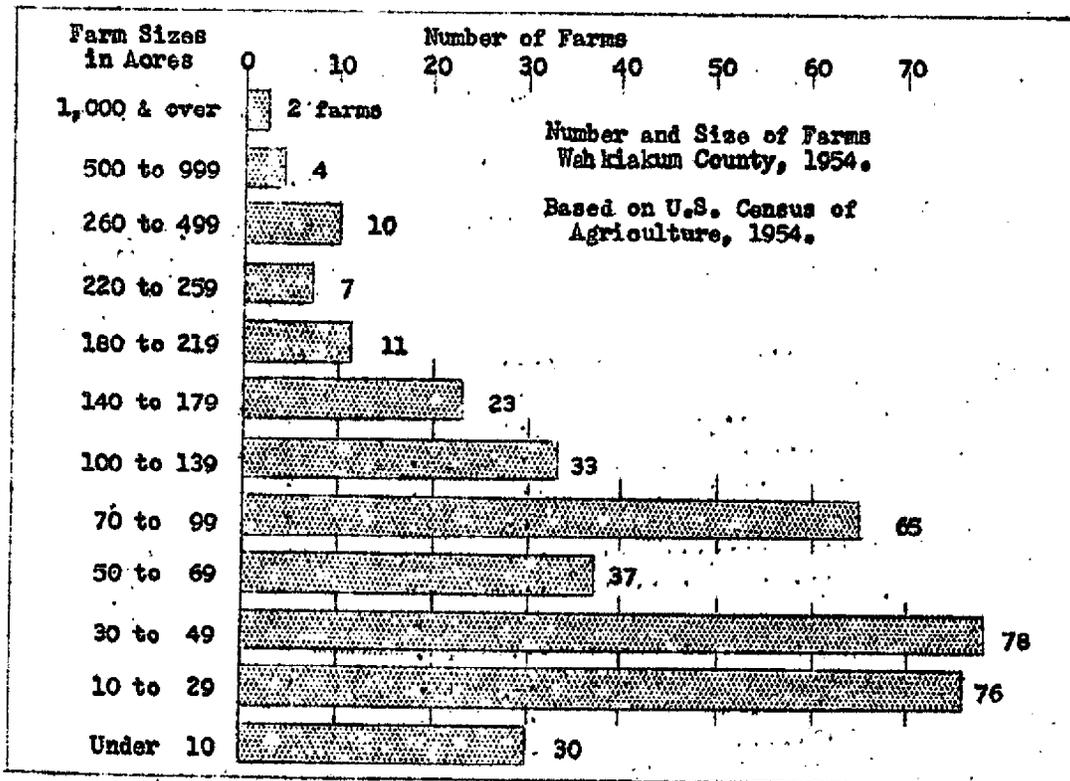


Figure 8.- Number and Size of Wahkiakum County Farms, 1954.

Table 6.- Wahkiakum County Farms: Number, Total Land in Farms and Average Size of Farms 1900-1954.

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	247	32,564	130	18.9
1910	229	29,030	128	16.9
1920	373	33,209	89	19.3
1925	395	32,612	82	18.9
1930	388	31,713	82	18.4
1940	449	31,236	70	18.1
1945	458	31,538	69	18.3
1950	394	32,809	83	19.1
1954	367	33,235	90	19.3

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

According to the last census there are only two farms in Wahkiakum County which can be classified as large land holdings. In 1954 there were two farms which together covered 3,980 acres. These units had about 275 acres in hay and other crops and pastured cropland. The remainder of the land was in cut-over forest land and young regrowth timber being managed as timber and pulpwood crops on a long-term basis.

Types of Farms

Dairy farms predominate in Wahkiakum County. Over one-half of all farm places were the dairy type at the time of the 1954 Census. Second most

Table 7.- Types of Farms, Wahkiakum County, 1954

Type of Farms	Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the county
Total farms in county.....	367	
Field-crop farms.....	0	
Cash-grain.....	0	
Other field-crop.....	0	
Vegetable farms.....	10	2.7
Fruit-and-nut farms.....	0	
Dairy farms.....	201	54.8
Poultry farms.....	5	1.4
Livestock farms other than dairy and poultry..	41	11.1
General farms.....	0	
Primarily crop.....	0	
Primarily livestock.....	0	
Crop and livestock.....	0	
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms.....	110	30.0

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

important type of farm was the general unclassified type operated on a part-time basis or as a rural residence with a garden and some livestock for home use. Dairy farms, while larger and more productive, were about ten fewer than in 1949. Poultry farms also are decreasing. Vegetable farms have increased recently by 10 commercial operations, largely as a result of specializing in cucumbers for a processing market.

Farm Values

The money or market value of Wahkiakum farm land and buildings has more than doubled since the low values of the 1920's when \$7,700 was about the average value of a farm. By 1955 persons interested in taking up farming in Wahkiakum County found that land and buildings averaged about \$256 per acre and that an average farm place was valued at over \$18,000. In the last census the total value of farm land and buildings within the county was estimated at \$7,071,800.

Table 8.- Value of Farm Property
Wahkiakum County, 1920-1954

Year	Total Value All Farm Property in County	County Average Values	
		Per Farm (dollars)	Per Acre (dollars)
1920	\$3,470,048	\$ 7,694	\$102
1930	3,258,545	8,398	86
1940	2,813,590	6,266	90
1950	5,502,998	13,967	160
1954	7,071,808	18,808	256

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Farm Ownership and Tenure

A large majority, about 85 out of 100 farmers, own their land and buildings. Tenancy, or the renting of and leasing of entire farms characterizes only about 6 percent of Wahkiakum County operations. The high percentage of

Table 9.- Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms
By Tenure of Operator, Wahkiakum County, 1925-1954.

Year	Number Farms in County	Full Owners		Part Owners		Managers		Tenants	
		number of farms	percent of all farms						
1925	395	341	86.3	14	3.5	3	.8	37	9.4
1930	388	329	84.8	12	3.1	2	.5	45	11.6
1935	461	376	81.6	25	5.4	-	-	60	13.0
1940	449	362	80.6	20	4.4	-	-	67	14.9
1945	458	394	86.0	33	7.2	-	-	31	6.8
1950	394	330	83.7	35	8.9	1	.2	28	7.1
1954	376	320	85.1	31	8.2	1	.3	24	6.4

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

farm ownership indicates that many farms are paid for and that many prefer to purchase rather than rent land. Many farm families have retained their property since getting title in the pioneering period.

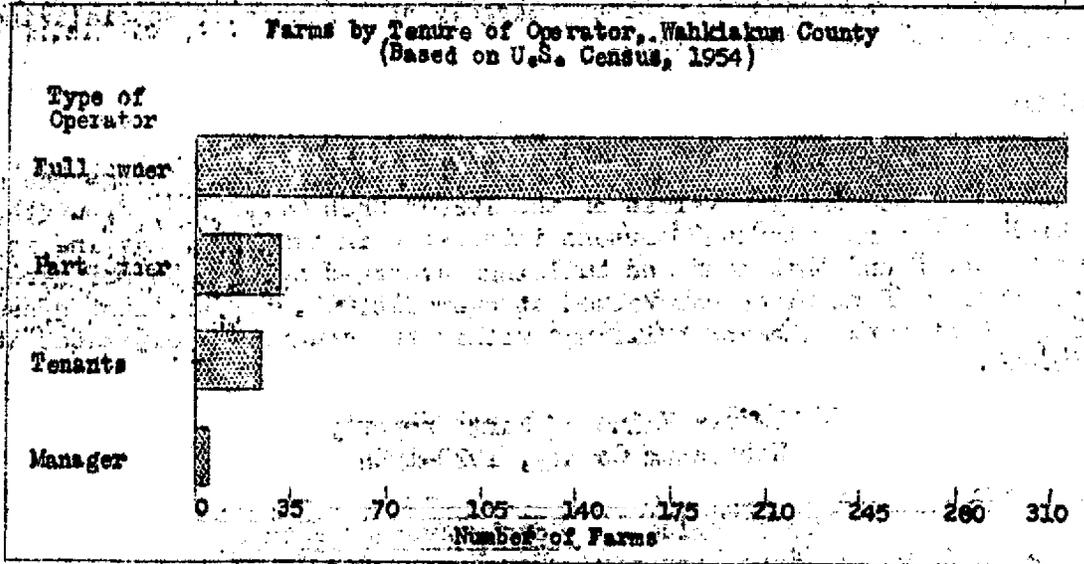


Figure 9.- Farms by Tenure of Operator, Wahkiakum County, 1954.

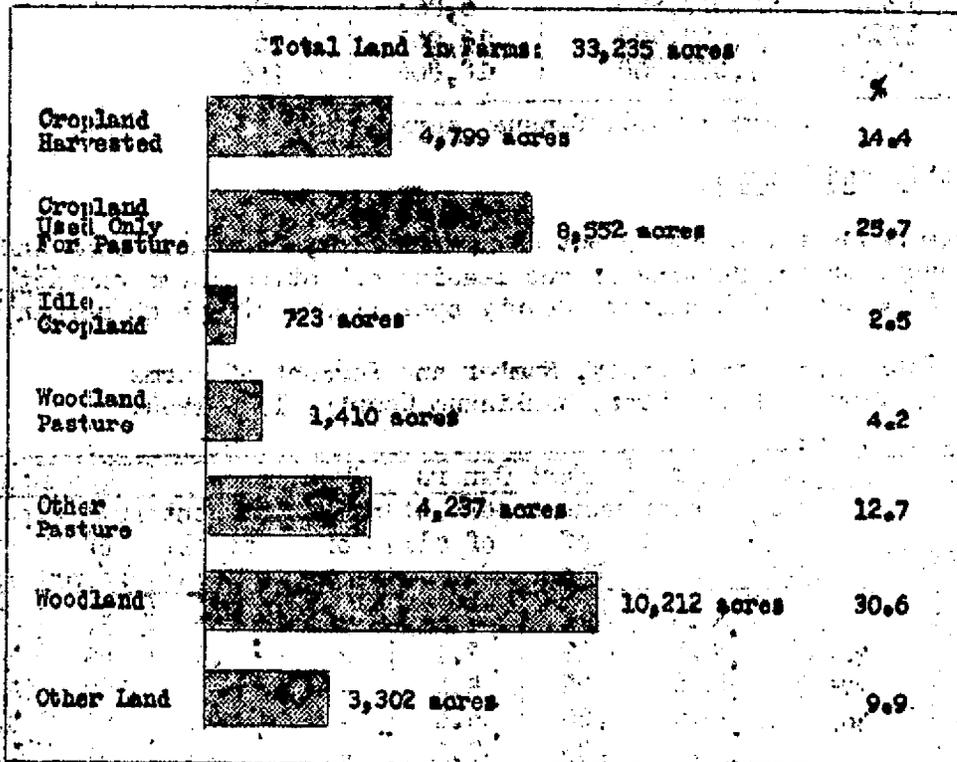


Figure 10.-Utilization of Farmland in Wahkiakum County, 1954.
Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Since 1925 there has been a considerable increase in part-owned farms. In the part-owner system a portion of a farm and some of its buildings are rented on a share crop or share profit basis. Many elderly people live in retirement on farms and contract part of their land to a neighbor.

Farmland Utilization

Nearly one-third of the farmland in Wahkiakum County is woodland. There are 162 farms which have woodlands that are not pastured or used for any other purpose than growing timber and pulpwood. Woodlands owned by farmers amount to over 10,200 acres and are of about the same acreage as in 1950. The second major type of land used by farmers is the permanent pasturing of land by dairy cattle. This land is pastured entirely and yields no hay or field crops. Permanent pasture amounts to 8,500 acres. Cropland harvested for hay, feed grains, vegetables and other cash crops is the third major use and approximates 4,800 acres.

Farm Residence, Operation and Income Classification

Wahkiakum County is characterized by a large proportion of part-time and non-commercial farming. In common with many other western Washington areas where wages can be earned in forest industries, fishing and seasonal occupations, a majority of farm owners earn most or a large part of their incomes at work away from the farm. In 1954 the operators of 210 farms or 67 percent of all in the county worked in jobs off their farms part of the year. Over two-fifths of the farm operators worked over 100 days per year in industries and other occupations, and this income exceeded that gained from selling farm products.

The classification of the 367 farms in the county show that 272 make commercial sales of dairy and animal products, livestock, forest products and crops. Over two-fifths have low income from farm products sales. There has been, however, an upward trend in the number of larger commercial farms grossing over \$10,000 per year.