

**Wisconsin Farm Labor Program: A Report  
On How The Labor Shortage Was Met**

*Wisconsin*  
**FARM LABOR**  
*Program*



*A Report on how the  
Labor Shortage was met*

EXTENSION SERVICE  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
MADISON

## *Acknowledgment*

FARM FAMILIES can be proud of their achievements during the war years, won in the face of heavy odds against them. By an all-out effort to meet the heavy demands made upon them for food, feed, and fiber, they came through with near miracle production for five consecutive years.

As a result of this great effort during World War II, production in Wisconsin increased 42% and the output per farmer during the same period increased 50%.

Besides the farmer and his family, thousands of other local people with no previous experience in farm work, volunteered in the production of vital farm crops. They were a great help to farmers in meeting the enormous demands for agricultural products and deserve due credit for their contribution.

The Wisconsin Agricultural Extension Service, through the Emergency Farm Labor program, recruited local labor, and furnished farmers and growers with foreign labor and prisoners of war when they were needed. The extent to which farmers were benefited by this service is indicated by the fact that Extension made a total of 73,159 farm job placements in a single year.

We herewith wish to acknowledge the help received from cooperating agencies. Especially to Glenn A. Woodruff and his staff from the Office of Labor; Major Joseph A. Westbrook and other officers of the Prisoners of War branch of the War Department; Herbert H. Smith, of the United States Employment Service; Col. John F. Mullen and Marvin Schaars of the Selective Service Staff; and Marvin P. Verhulst, Secretary of the Wisconsin Cannery Association, we extend our appreciation.

*Arlie Mucks*

State Supervisor,  
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**A Report of the Operations of the  
Farm Labor Project in Wisconsin  
For the Years 1943 - 1946**

**D**URING the past four years, Wisconsin farmers—like those all over the nation—have met the challenge of producing increased amounts of food and fiber necessary to carry on a war and reconvert to peacetime activities. This they have accomplished despite continued shortages of manpower, seed, fertilizer, machinery and transportation.

Meanwhile, the farm population in Wisconsin steadily declined. Where there was a surplus of farm labor ten years ago, there was now a shortage. When the United States entered the war in 1942, there were nearly 20% fewer men on farms than back in 1939. Some had left the farms for industries where wages were higher, and many others had entered the war services.

This resulted in a serious farm labor shortage throughout the state which was only slightly eased by veterans returning to farms in 1946.

*Raking cranberries, a highly seasonal job, requires strong able-bodied men.*



## Labor Program Launched

When Congress saw that the lack of labor was threatening crop production, Public Law 45 was passed on April 29, 1943, to reduce the shortage. This law gave the Agricultural Extension Service the responsibility of supplying agricultural labor. It also provided funds for each state to carry out a farm labor program in every county where it was needed.

### STAFF APPOINTED

In Wisconsin, a farm labor staff was appointed in the state Extension office to administer the program. County agricultural agents carried out the program in the counties.

Farm labor assistants were appointed in most of the counties to assist farmers with their labor needs. These men carried the major responsibility for determining labor needs, recruiting and placing domestic and foreign workers, making draft deferment investigations, aiding farmers

to better utilize labor and machinery, assisting workers with housing and transportation problems, and job training.

The aim as far as possible, was to meet the labor needs of all farmers in the county. The total placements from 1943 through 1946 were:

1943 .....	33,057
1944 .....	42,569
1945 .....	73,159
1946 .....	48,151

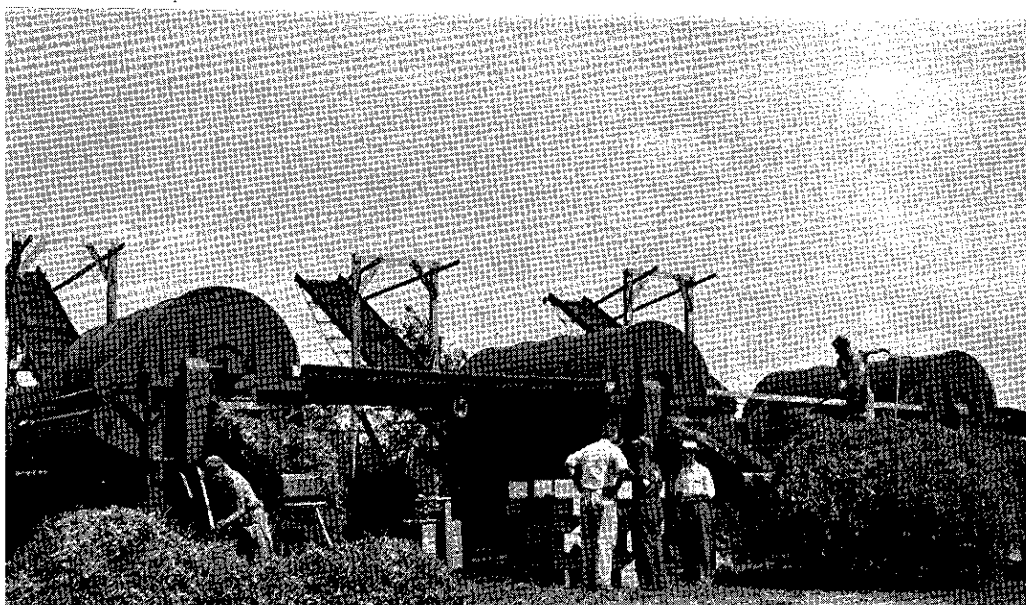
Thousands of others responded to radio and newspaper publicity and took farm jobs without contacting the Farm Labor Office.

### LABOR NEEDS TWO-FOLD

In general, farm labor needs were two-fold. There was a shortage of experienced, year-round farm hands needed on Wisconsin general farms. Also, about 40,000 seasonal workers were needed every year to plant, cultivate, weed, and harvest seasonal crops.

There are about 180,000 farms in the state largely family-operated and devoted to the dairy and livestock industry.

*Wisconsin produced one-third of the nation's canning peas. Harvesting the crop is an important seasonal job. Soldiers from a nearby army field kept the viners busy.*



On such farms, about three-fourths of a farmer's time is required for the care of livestock and about one-fourth for crop production.

### HELP SHORT ON DAIRY FARMS

The continuous nature of the work is such that the largest part is done by the farm family or by year-round hired men. The shortage of this type of worker was most critical and recruitment most difficult. But farm labor personnel did recruit some such workers every year and direct them where they were badly needed. The number of year-round men placed was:

1943 .....	4,683
1944 .....	7,816
1945 .....	5,545
1946 .....	4,311

### SEASONAL LABOR

Wisconsin is not only a leading dairy state in the nation but is also a leading producer of canning crops. Demands for canning crops caused the acreage to be increased to 254,000 acres, an increase of 128%.

The cultivation and harvesting of canning, truck crops and sugar beets requires large amounts of hand labor not usually furnished by the farm family. Large numbers of workers are needed yearly to harvest peas, corn, beets, carrots and other vegetables for canning; to cultivate and harvest sugar beets; and to pick cherries, apples, cucumbers, tomatoes and potatoes.

During the war this large labor force was made up mostly of volunteer workers of which about 20,000 were boys and girls of school age. Between three to four thousand women, as well as business men, industrial employees and soldiers and sailors on pass from nearby camps also volunteered.

Other groups used in seasonal crops during the past three years were foreign workers and German prisoners of war. Each year Jamaicans, Barbadians, Mexican Nationals, and migrant Texas-Mexicans were brought into the state to work in seasonal crops. German war prisoners were used in 1943, 1944 and 1945.

It was the presence of foreign workers and war prisoners that made the harvesting of seasonal crops possible. These persons could be shifted quickly from one job to another and from one area to another, and so free the farmer for his regular farm operations.

Each of these groups made an important contribution to the farm labor force and had a real share in harvesting vital food crops while at their best.

*Thousands of young people were recruited and placed on summer jobs. It's "time out for lunch" for this group of young people picking cherries in Door county.*



## SUMMARY OF PLACEMENTS

	1943	1944	1945	1946
Total number of Farm Labor placements . . .	32,057	42,560	73,159	48,151
Number of different persons placed:				
Men .....	11,486	17,865	27,252	21,885
Women .....	2,648	3,098	2,040	3,894
Youth .....	17,258	21,175	16,000	11,498
Investigations made of draft deferred cases for Selective Service .....		28,175	19,137	7,176
Number of foreign workers in the state:				
Jamaicans .....	1,300	1,700	1,900	1,509
Mexicans .....		800	1,300	1,921
Barbadians .....		500		287
Bahamians .....			45	113
Hondurans .....				5
Prisoners of war .....	100	275	3,500	300
Conscientious objectors in the state .....	100	100	100	4

## NEW "HIGHS" ACHIEVED

Although the shortage of manpower, machinery, commercial fertilizer, and processing facilities made "all out" food production most difficult, wartime totals reached the highest peak in state history.

The 15½ billion pounds of milk produced was an all-time high record. Livestock numbers were the highest in history. The more than 26,000,000 cases of canned foods, grown and processed in the state, helped feed hungry people in all parts of the world.

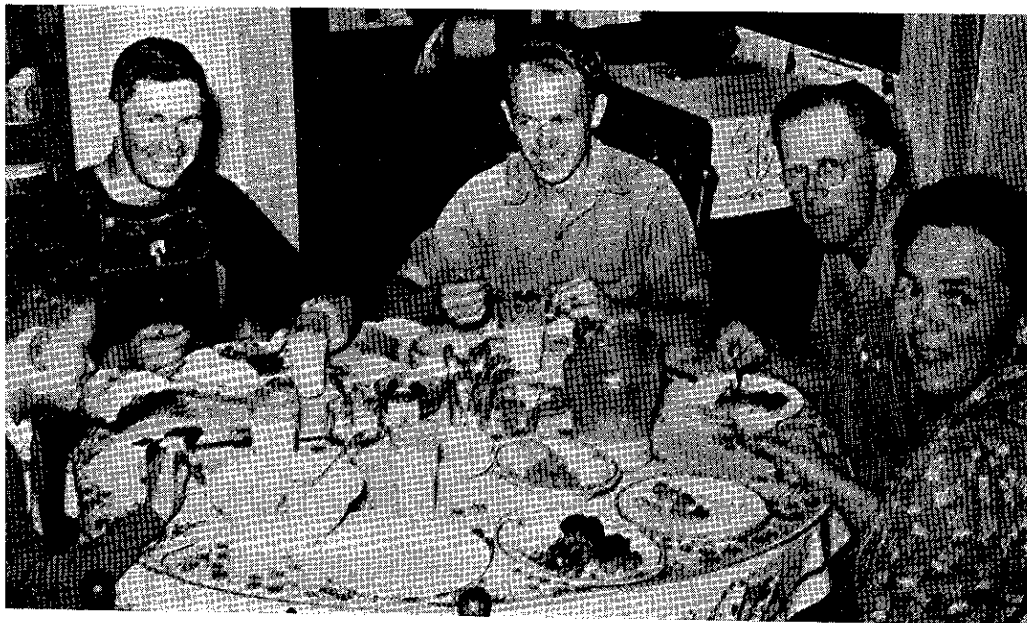


# The Farm Family

These high production records were made chiefly with family labor on Wisconsin's diversified farms. The farm family unit is the backbone of the farm labor force. Family members do about 92% of the year-round work on Wisconsin's general farms while hired hands do only about 8%. With the exception of seasonal labor during the harvest season, most of the farm work is divided among family members as follows:

Operators .....	53%
Wives .....	12%
Sons .....	22%
Daughters .....	3%
Others in household .....	2%
Hired men .....	8%

*Wisconsin farms are largely family-operated. Family units such as this provide the largest part of the family labor force.*





*This Outagamie farm girl took a man's place operating a tractor.*

These figures are averages for the state. On individual farms, the family labor force differs greatly. For example, only one farmer in four has a son working at home who is 16 years old or older. On such farms the son does approximately one-half of the work. On the other hand, nearly one-half of the farmers have no help at all except that which they receive from their wives and exchange with their neighbors.

### **WOMEN DID THEIR SHARE**

Although the greatest contribution made by women has been through their work in the farm home, Wisconsin farm women also represent 15% of the total farm labor force.

Contrary to what might be expected, studies indicate that wives do more farm work where the husband is able-bodied than in cases where he is partially disabled. Wives of able-bodied men, on the average, do about 65% more work than the wives of partially disabled men.

The production programs on individual farms are organized around the labor of farm men. They plan and control operations. Women make the greatest contribution to farm work as helpers to men rather than as substitutes for them.

A measure of women's contribution is revealed in the fact that married men keep an average of three more milk cows per farm than do widowers or single men of the same ages.

During the war, women had to take over a larger portion of farm work as a result of the shortage of male labor. Also, city women in some areas, helped out in extremely critical periods. Altogether, some 2,000 to 3,000 women were annually recruited and placed in seasonal farm jobs by Extension Service. An additional 30 to 40 were placed each year in year-round farm jobs.

## **OLDER PEOPLE WORKED HARDER**

Not to be overlooked in the contribution of the farm family to food production, is the work of aged farm operators and those elderly people who helped their sons or sons-in-law operate farms.

Many of these older people filled the gap left by younger workers who left the farms for industry or the armed forces. Some who had retired went back to work; others who would have retired continued to work, and still others worked harder and longer hours than they would otherwise. The type of help given by these aging men was extremely important since an extra man, even though not completely able-bodied, makes it possible for an operator to do many jobs he could not do alone.



*In Marathon county this 70-year-old man brought in his hay crop alone with the help of his hay loader.*

The age at which farmers continue to operate their farms has advanced considerably in the last 20 years. At the beginning of the war, over half-again as many farmers were over 60 years of age as there were 20 years earlier. This trend continued, and at a more rapid rate, until at the present time, one-half of the farmers in the state are over 50, one-third are over 55, and one-fourth are over 60 years of age.

According to farmers' own estimates, a man 65 years of age can do only about one-half as much work as a young able-bodied man.

These older men, working alone and maintaining production on their farms as their age increased, deserve credit and appreciation for the contribution they made. Some of these older men are now retiring, giving veterans an opportunity to operate their farms.

# Draft Age Boys Deferred

In the family unit the draft age boy is an important producer and as such is irreplaceable on the majority of farms. It would be difficult to estimate the contribution made to agriculture during the war by these draft age men. That it was large is well known.

Of all the work done by males, nearly one-half was done by men eligible for induction. This includes operators, sons and hired men. Altogether, 53% of the farms in the state depended upon labor furnished by workers of the ages 18 through 37, and these farms have accounted for 60% of the state's production.

The farm labor shortage was the result of various forces, one of which was the young men entering the armed services. The Tydings Amendment to the Selective Training and Service Act, passed in November 1942, helped retain many necessary young men. It provided for deferment of registrants found necessary to and regularly engaged in agriculture so long as they remained so engaged and were irreplaceable. In Wisconsin, such deferments had been made since March 1941, in cases where farm workers were urgently needed.

## **LARGE NUMBERS DEFERRED**

Deferments were made in proportion to the number of men needed. In counties where the number of crop acres and dairy cows per farm were low, fewer men were deferred. But in the dairy sections, where farmers kept more cows and where more crop land was cultivated, the number of deferments was much greater.

Toward the end of 1944, one man was deferred for every 2.3 farms in the state. In the northern counties this ratio was as low as one man for every five or six farms. In some of the southern counties it averaged one man for every two farms.

A report prepared by Marvin A. Schaars\*, shows that in March, 1946, this state had the largest number of deferments for agriculture. At the peak, in January 1944, more than 86,000 men with II-C and III-C classifications were deferred to agriculture.

Agricultural deferments in Wisconsin between April 1, 1943 and March 1, 1946:

Date	Number of Deferments
<b>April 1, 1943</b> .....	45,159
May .....	(not available)
June .....	64,830
July .....	73,303
August .....	79,186
September .....	81,712
October .....	82,222
November .....	84,028
December .....	85,574
<b>January 1, 1944</b> .....	86,252
February .....	85,382
March .....	85,403
April .....	84,208
May .....	83,295
June .....	83,189
July .....	84,044
August .....	(not available)
September .....	82,649
October .....	(not available)
November .....	81,818
December .....	80,694
<b>January 1, 1945</b> .....	80,085
February .....	78,364
March .....	76,377
April .....	74,829
May .....	72,593
June .....	70,939
July .....	70,197
August .....	70,145
September .....	23,921**
October .....	23,961
November .....	23,800
December .....	23,596
<b>January 1, 1946</b> .....	23,278
February .....	22,299
March .....	21,601

\*Chief, Agricultural Classification, State Selective Service System.

\*\*The reduced number of II C beginning September, 1945, was due to change in classification.

Dairying with its correspondingly large need for skilled labor accounted for the large number of deferments.

Wisconsin is the most important dairy state in the union. The care of cattle and production of milk requires a great deal of labor. When it is remembered that Wisconsin has about 40% more cows than the next highest state—Minnesota—and produces about 72% more milk than Minnesota, it is evident that there was justification for the large number of deferments.

### **EXCEEDED REQUIREMENTS**

The war unit plan was devised to aid Selective Service Boards in determining the production on a farm. Sixteen war units of farm production per man were suggested as a basis, although deferments could be granted for as low as eight units.

That men deferred on farms did a good job is borne out by the records. A review of 27,000 deferments of men under 26 during the summer of 1945 showed that the average war unit production on farms was 22.9 units per man. This production was 43% above the 16 war units that national headquarters suggested as a minimum standard.

### **WAR BOARDS AIDED**

County war boards aided the Selective Service system a great deal in supplying information and making recommendations concerning deferments all during the war. In a single year, 1945, the war boards advised local Selective Service Boards as to needs of more than 27,000 young men (under 26) on farms.

Farm labor assistants also performed valuable services for both Selective Service Boards and county war boards in getting information about the labor needs on thousands of farms. Such information assisted greatly in making intelligent classification of farm workers.

Wisconsin's outstanding contribution to the nation's food supply during the critical war period is due in a large part to the retention of skilled and irreplaceable workers of draft age on farms.

The forming and carrying out of a state-wide policy to retain essential laborers was due to the decisive action taken by the Director of Selective Service in the state, Col. John F. Mullen, and his assistant, Marvin A. Schaars, who was in charge of agricultural classification. They displayed at all times an appreciation of the labor needs of farmers without losing sight of the basic obligations of the system to provide men for the armed forces.

In spite of the large number of deferments, many farm reared boys did enter the services. The exact number of boys who left farms to enter the service is not known, but their war record bears out the tremendous contribution they made along with other Wisconsin boys.

*These bean pickers were only a few of the thousands of children who put in long hours of work in fruit and vegetable crops.*





# Thousands Volunteered For Farm Work

Most counties had carefully planned farm labor programs, and the skill and energy with which they were operated brought successful outcomes to many difficult and challenging situations. Part of the success is due to the many individuals who assisted with the program in various ways.

## **YOUTH EARNED WHILE LEARNING**

As the labor situation tightened on the farms, boys and girls of school age took on an increasing proportion of farm work. The greatest part of this was in various kinds of help given their parents in doing more field work, more milking, and more chores.

In addition they took on several farm jobs that lend themselves to youth labor. They did a great deal of family gardening, many carrying out special garden projects. They picked beans, cucumbers and potatoes on the farms of their parents and neighbors. Many learned to milk cows and drive tractors and trucks at ages earlier than they would normally.

Second only to the work done on their fathers' farms, was the contribution made in harvesting fruit and vegetable crops which require a great deal of hand labor. Not only farm youth but city youth as well responded generously to the need of local farmers and growers.

Many vegetable growers relied entirely upon youth for weeding, hoeing, and picking their crops. They did the largest part of the work in picking 9,600 acres of snap beans. During the emergency, schools were closed in the northeastern part of the state to allow children to help pick potatoes. City children of school age weeded, picked, bunched and prepared vegetables for the fresh vegetable markets in the lake shore counties.

Both city and farm boys and girls have always harvested a large share of the small fruits and have usually turned out in large numbers to pick cherries.

In the area where hybrid seed corn is produced, detasseling is done almost exclusively by boys and girls recruited from nearby towns and villages. In areas where strawberries are produced commercially, they are picked largely by boys and girls. Carrots, onions, beets and cucumbers were other vegetable crops in which the boys and girls did large amounts of work, weeding, hoeing and harvesting.

### **THOUSANDS RESPONDED**

Nearly every county had a special youth recruiting program. Farm labor agents worked with school officials, signing up students before the end of the school year. Frequently contacts were made through boys' and girls' clubs, and church organizations. In some cases labor assistants made a house-to-house canvass to discover available youth.

In all, over 17,300 young people were placed on Wisconsin farms in 1943; about 21,200 in 1944; over 16,000 in 1945 and about 11,500 in 1946. Many, if not most of these, worked on several different farm jobs during the summer. As the war went on, boys and girls responding to recruitment drives were younger than at the beginning of the war.

In 1943, almost one-half of the boys and girls placed on farm jobs were over 16 years of age while in 1945, nearly 13,000—of the 16,000—were under 16 years of age.

Special Victory Farm Volunteer certificates were awarded to those who did commendable work during the season.

## SOLDIERS AND SAILORS HARVESTED

Many service men able to find time while on leave or pass, helped farmers during harvest time by working on such jobs as haying, grain and corn harvest, and with canning and vegetable crops. These soldiers and sailors where available usually did excellent work for farmers. Soldiers from Camp McCoy helped farmers in Monroe county; 250 soldiers helped with the pea harvest in Columbia, Dane and Dodge counties; and sailors from the Great Lakes Naval Training Station worked on truck farms in the southeastern part of the state.

*Sailors "on leave" helped harvest tomatoes before frost in Racine county.*





*Business men helped harvest grain.*

## **BUSINESS MEN VOLUNTEERED**

Farmers received help during harvest time from business men who volunteered to work on farms after they completed their own day's work and sometimes on Sundays and holidays. In some instances they even closed their places of business for a part of the day to help. In Brown county, for example, some business men formed a farm work group. One-half of these men closed their places one day and the others the next day to give each group an opportunity to help farmers.

In Washington county, 165 West Bend business and professional men signed up for part time work. They elected captains and worked in teams helping farmers with haying, cutting and shocking grain, and filling silo.

In Ozaukee county, the Cedarburg Volunteer Fire Department helped thresh flax at the county fair grounds. Farm labor assistants usually worked with organized service clubs to recruit town people. Many business men also served as volunteer recruiting agents. Local merchants often informed customers of critical farm jobs existing in their localities.

In all there were nearly 1200 such volunteer leaders in Wisconsin of whom high school teachers probably composed the largest group. A total of 126 community placement centers were operated in this way.

# Extension Assisted In Many Ways

But the Extension Service helped farmers in other ways with their labor problems than by just providing workers. For example, they encouraged farmers to get the fullest possible use of both labor and machinery by more neighborhood exchange and by doing more custom work.

In many counties, farmers appointed committees to determine reasonable rates for various machines. This resulted in more custom work being done as farmers knew in advance what a job would cost them and men owning machines were assured of a reasonable return.

## **MORE CUSTOM WORK DONE**

Many counties reported practical examples of working out satisfactory schedules for loan and hire of scarce machinery. In some counties, labor and machinery exchange have become well established.

For example, in Antigo all farm agencies and dealers in farm products pledged their support to the farm labor and machinery exchange program in that area.

In Brown county farmers exchanged or rented all available machinery, and in Lincoln county—when there was no

extra help to be had at haying time—the Extension office helped farmers work out a labor exchange schedule.

In Kewaunee county 20 hay choppers did custom work on about 2,000 farms, some of them chopping as much as 100 tons a day. They visited two farms a day when the weather was right and charged \$4.50 a load. Each load averaged about two tons.

Four farmers on the Agricultural Committee and five town chairmen in Langlade county made schedules and arrangements for labor and machinery exchanges. Farmers applied to them and received assistance in their turns.

The exchange of labor by farmers, although it did not add to the total labor available, pooled it for more effective use.

The farm labor program also required that prevailing wage rates be set up for each job and each particular crop. Accordingly, county farm wage boards, composed of the county agent and four others, were organized. They held hearings to determine the going wage rates paid agricultural labor in their counties.

Wages paid to foreign workers and prisoners of war were set in accordance with the findings of the county wage boards.

### **JOB TRAINING FOR ALL**

With so many new and unskilled workers, farmers had to adjust to a great deal of inexperienced help. Educating employers as well as workers became an important part of the farm labor program.

Experience has taught that taking time to show the worker how to do a job when he starts, pays big dividends in getting a satisfactory job done.

The responsibility for job training was delegated to a member of the state staff who talked with producers and watched workers in the field. From these observations, "Method Sheets" were prepared which suggested the best ways of doing such jobs as bean, cherry, and apple picking and snapping sweet corn. The instruction sheets were written in three languages, English, German and Spanish. The methods were demonstrated to field bosses and supervising workers, who in turn trained thousands of other workers.

# Migrants Foreign Workers War Prisoners

With the shortage of general labor and with help from service men so much reduced, Wisconsin farmers had to rely more and more on help from foreign and migrant workers. Jamaicans, Barbadians, Mexican Nationals and migrant Texas Mexicans—were brought into the state to work in seasonal crops. They harvested peas, sweet corn and other vegetables for canning, picked cherries and apples, snap beans and cucumbers, harvested potatoes, onions and fresh vegetable crops and worked in sugar beets. In addition, 45 white Bahamian workers came in 1945, some with their families and some without, to work as hired hands on general farms.

*The Mexican-Nationals snapped sweet corn for Dane county canning factories.*



In 1946, in addition to other types of foreign workers, there were also two white and 111 negro Bahamians and five Hondurans working in special crops.

### **TEXAS MEXICANS**

Texas families of Mexican descent, "Spanish Americans" as they are often called, represent the most significant source of out-of-state migratory labor in Wisconsin. These workers have migrated to Wisconsin for summer work since the late 1920's. Originally they came to work in the sugar beet fields. Soon they began to work on other crops between the spring and fall work in sugar beets, primarily cucumbers and other vegetables. Many families are now coming to work all summer for vegetable growers.

In 1946 about 3,500 Texas-Mexicans worked in Wisconsin, nearly 2,000 of them in sugar beets, the remainder chiefly in vegetable crops. They came in families of all sizes and did most of the work in sugar beets and cucumbers. Unlike Mexican Nationals and Jamaicans, these workers are free agents and migrate at will to the areas where they believe employment opportunities are best. Usually they are recruited and transported by the employers, principally the sugar beet companies.

The Texas-Mexican women in the picture are operating a home-made mechanical onion harvester. Most onions in Wisconsin are hand harvested but a few machines, such as this one which replaces several workers, are being used.

### **MEXICAN NATIONALS**

Since 1943, Mexican workers have been brought into the state to meet the emergency need for farm labor. Their time was divided principally among sugar beets, cucumbers, canning crops and vegetables.

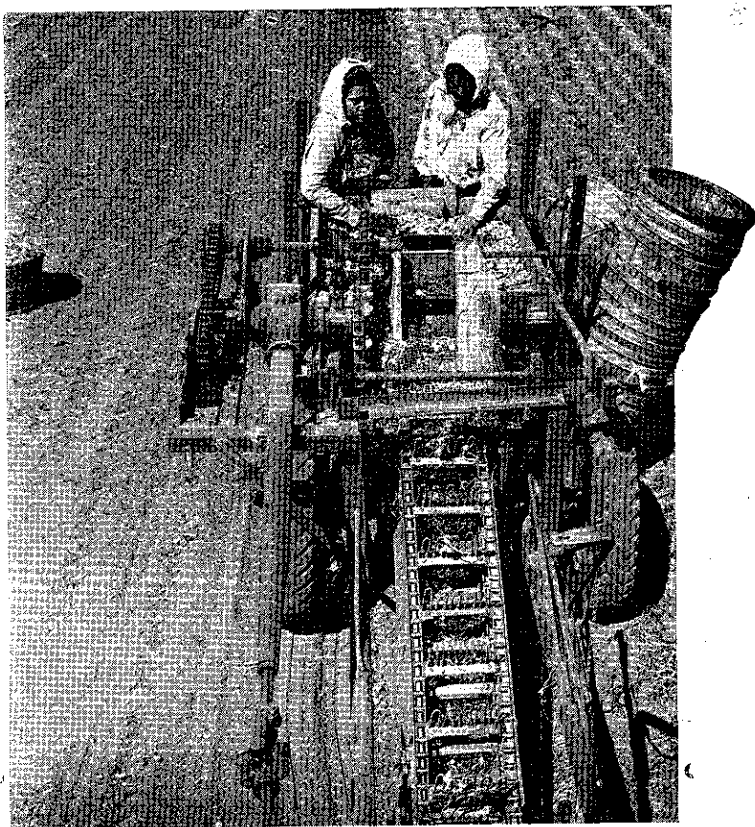
The Mexicans were recruited and imported at government expense and worked for farmers, growers and canners on contract. Their contribution to the work in sugar beets, hoeing blocking and thinning, was second only to that of the Texas-Mexican migrants. They also contributed significantly in the harvest of cherries and apples, truck crops and fresh market vegetables. Mexican Nationals



were paid the prevailing piece-work or hourly wage rate. As guaranteed savings 10% of their earnings was withheld and deposited to their credit in Mexico.

The fact that most of the men spoke only Spanish, sometimes limited their use in small numbers. There were a few, however, who could speak English, and in other cases Texas-Mexicans were used as interpreters. In spite of the language handicap they adapted themselves quite well. Frequently they worked very long days. A group of 402 Mexicans working for a canning company averaged 12.9 hours per day for an entire two-week period during the pea pack.

*This home made onion picker can harvest a thousand bushels in an eight-hour day. It was rigged-up by William G. Kraus, Kenosha county.*



## JAMAICANS

Jamaicans were imported into Wisconsin in 1943, 1944, 1945, and 1946. Like the Mexican Nationals, they did all types of work on special crops in Wisconsin. However Jamaicans did proportionately more work in canning crops.

Between the pea and corn pack, Jamaicans were used in cherry harvest, vegetable harvest and general farm work. Several factories retained their Jamaicans to work in snap beans, lima beans, tomatoes, red beets and other canning crops.

Also some Jamaicans were loaned to other states for their use during this slack period in Wisconsin. At the end of this period, they were returned for work in the corn pack. They proved especially productive in snapping sweet corn, where several groups set records which surpassed those of local workers. A part of this was due to piece-work methods of pay, which, when practicable and when rates were high enough to provide a real inducement, usually increased the productivity of the workers.

The 1900 Jamaicans in Wisconsin earned a total of over \$816,000 for their agricultural work in one year. Combined earnings of foreign workers in the state in 1945 totalled \$1,292,230 for the season.

Most of the Jamaicans and a great many of the Mexicans lived in rather large camps during their stay in Wisconsin. All of them needed housing and living accommodations. To make it possible for employers to provide suitable accommodations according to regulations required by the government, Extension officials made special arrangements in 1944 and 1945 with nearby Army camps to supply sleeping and eating equipment. About 47,000 separate items were furnished to more than 80 employers. Included were about 2,200 beds and mattresses, 7,500 comforters or blankets, and eating and cooking equipment for more than 3,000 workers. In 1946, the Extension Service purchased equipment and loaned it on a rental basis.

Employers of foreign labor were required to furnish housing to the workers without cost. Although the housing could be modest, it had to be sanitary, dry and of sufficient size to accommodate workers with some comfort. Employers commonly made over abandoned farm homes, warehouses, or other buildings for labor camp purposes. In many instances, surplus government grain bins were purchased and converted into suitable housing.

Although housing was furnished free, foreign workers were charged for their board up to a maximum of \$1.40 per day. Usually one of the workers was hired as a cook. Other small groups, especially Mexicans, "batched," buying their own food and doing their own cooking.

Foreign workers' camp life frequently was made more interesting with games and reading materials provided by

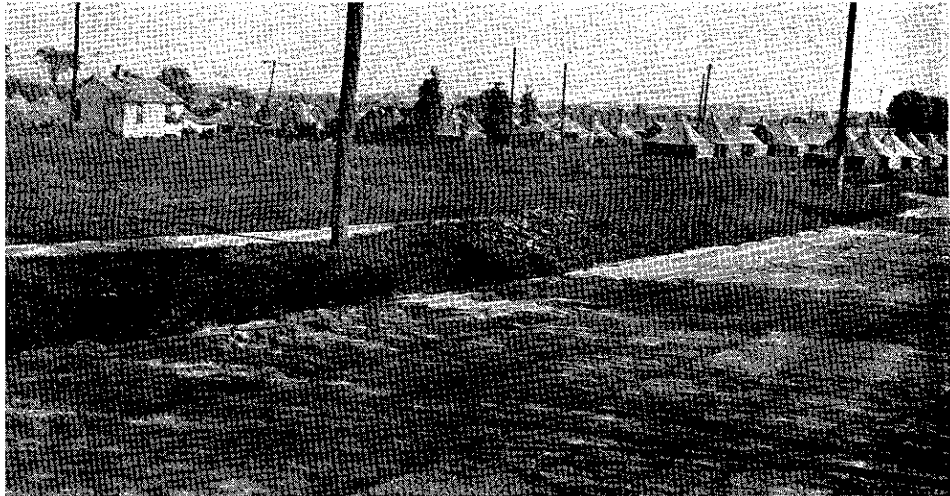
*Growing and harvesting sugar beets required large crews of extra workers. Jamaicans did many such time-consuming jobs.*



employers. Dominoes and checkers were especially popular with Jamaicans and Mexicans. Many played guitars and other musical instruments and the evenings and rainy days were brightened with group singing.

*"Chow time" in a Jamaican labor camp. Note the divided trays and the cups without handles—all Army equipment.*





*German prisoners of war from this camp worked for vegetable and fruit growers in southeastern Wisconsin.*

## WAR PRISONERS

Wisconsin farms also had the use of prisoners of war during the harvest season. During 1944, about 250 were placed on farms by the Farm labor assistants. The following year about 9,000 were used in the state, of which 3,500 were used for field work exclusively.

During the harvest season, 39 prisoner of war camps were established. Twelve of these furnished prisoners primarily for agricultural work. Twenty-seven were established by the United States Employment Service for in-plant work in food processing industries. These camps often supplied prisoners for farm work. Similarly, agricultural camps often furnished prisoners for in-plant work. The Extension Service, the U.S. Employment Service, and the Army cooperated closely in locating the camps where they could serve both in-plant and agricultural needs to the greatest advantage. Through this cooperation, foreign workers and prisoners of war were so distributed as to make some form of out-of-state labor available to all areas of need.



*These German prisoners of war are being transported to work in the fields under military guard.*

Seven of the twelve agricultural camps were in Door county, and one each served the Racine-Kenosha county area, the Oneida-Vilas area, Waukesha, Wood, and Bayfield counties.

Prevailing wages were paid the government for prisoners' work. The prisoners in turn received 80 cents a day in script which could be exchanged at the prison canteen for personal items. Prisoners spending less than 80 cents a day received the balance due when they returned to their own country.

These workers were a picked group with a satisfactory record of performance. Farmers and other employers reported almost unanimously that they were very satisfactory workers. They were housed in tents or converted buildings often on county fair grounds. The camps ranged in size from about 60 to 600, with an average of 242 per camp. These prisoners were used on hundreds of different farms.

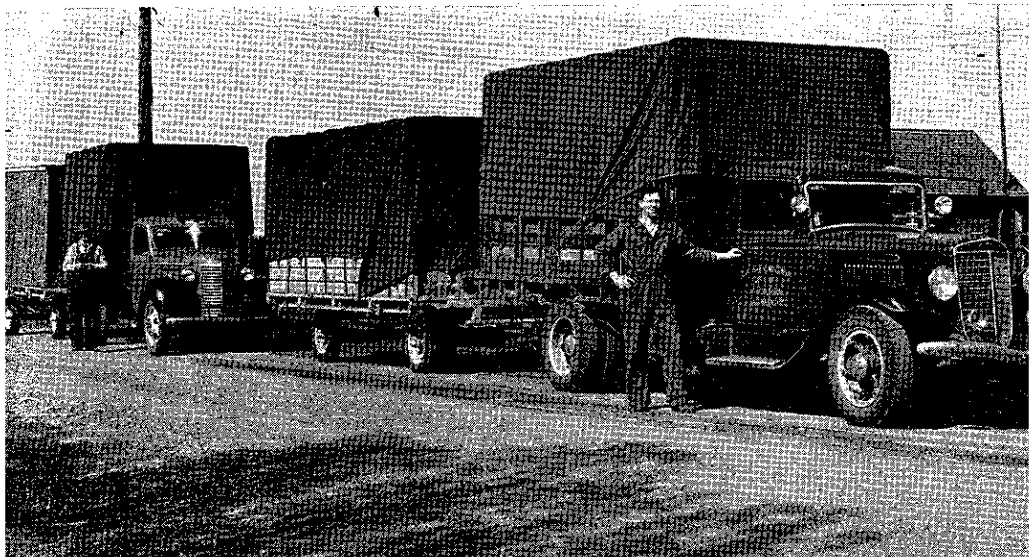
# Labor Saving and Safety Caravan Toured the State

A part of the job of the Farm Labor program was demonstrating how labor could be saved by using short-cut-methods and making labor saving devices at home with materials available.

Accordingly, the farm and home labor saving and safety caravan was developed by Extension specialists under the sponsorship of the Farm Labor program.

The portable show consisted of over 100 items of equipment, some full scale and some models, with 82-ply-wood panels as a background. The panels carried charts and explanatory materials to clarify the demonstration.

*The Caravan exhibit, carried on trucks and trailers, visited 53 Wisconsin counties in the spring of 1945.*





*These farmers are examining a home-made labor-saving grain elevator exhibited on the caravan tour.*

The various sections were manned by Extension specialists, county Extension workers and farm labor assistants assigned to the job of explaining the equipment. Portable microphones, signs and art work, all helped tell the story.

The caravan show operated from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Traveling microphones were used by specialists to discuss their exhibits. A safety quiz program, in which persons attending were asked pertinent questions relative to farm and home safety was one of the features of the show.

A regular crew, supplemented by volunteer committees arranged by county Extension offices, set up and took down exhibits. Many counties encouraged local people to make and demonstrate their own home-made labor saving equipment.

In one county, 38 different labor saving devices for farm and home use were registered and shown. Farmers built and are using many of the items exhibited at the caravan.

The caravan, in touring the state, showed in 53 counties and was attended by more than 60,000 people. In six counties attendance reached more than 2,000 and 36 counties reported an attendance of 1,000 to 2,000 people.



# Shift to Peace Time Program

The farm labor program was started in 1943, when the world was at war, and the demands for farm products were at a peak. The program was carried over into peacetime activities because acreage allotments and demands for food products continued to be as high as ever. Farm labor, even during 1946, was as hard to get as in previous years.

*As many as 2,000 people visited the Caravan exhibits at one showing.*



The lifting of man-power controls at the end of the war did not relieve the labor shortage. Instead, the fewest number of farm hands on record were available at harvest time.

There were many reasons for this: Men previously deferred were taken into the service; others who had been frozen to farm jobs left for other industries; some farmers thought wages were too high and managed without extra help; and many operators were getting older and less able to do a full day's work.

## VETERANS RETURN

Farm reared boys now discharged from the armed forces and returning to farms are helping ease the labor shortage. To show how returning veterans would affect the farm labor force, a study was made of ex-service men who returned to farms. The study included 32 townships in 30 counties throughout the state. It showed that for every 100 men who left agriculture for the armed forces, about 50 had returned to farms. More than one-half were working for wages, while 37% were renting. The rest operated their own farms. The 50% who went into non-farm jobs is about the same number which normally leave farms for industry or the professions.

At the time the study was made, 3% of the discharged men who had not taken farm jobs were in school and 8% were unemployed or undecided as to their immediate plans.

## SIGNS OF CHANGE

Since June, 1946, the farm labor situation has changed somewhat. In some counties orders for foreign workers placed early in the spring were cancelled when pea harvest was ready because enough local help could be recruited.

Reports from counties also show that, despite the shortage in production of farm machinery, many new labor saving devices are being used on farms and many of them are made at home. This means that in the future fewer men will be able to farm more acres.

A great increase in the number of milking machines used has reduced labor on many farms. Other labor saving machinery fast coming into use includes barn cleaning equipment, hay hoists, manure loaders, combines, hay choppers and improved silage machinery. Most of these have worked out so well that more work is being accomplished with fewer hands than ever before.

One county reports that corn pickers alone have increased 75%-80% in numbers. Many factories are using improved machinery for cutting and hauling pea vines, and some hand labor in the sugar beet fields is being eliminated by automatic digging, lifting and loading machines.

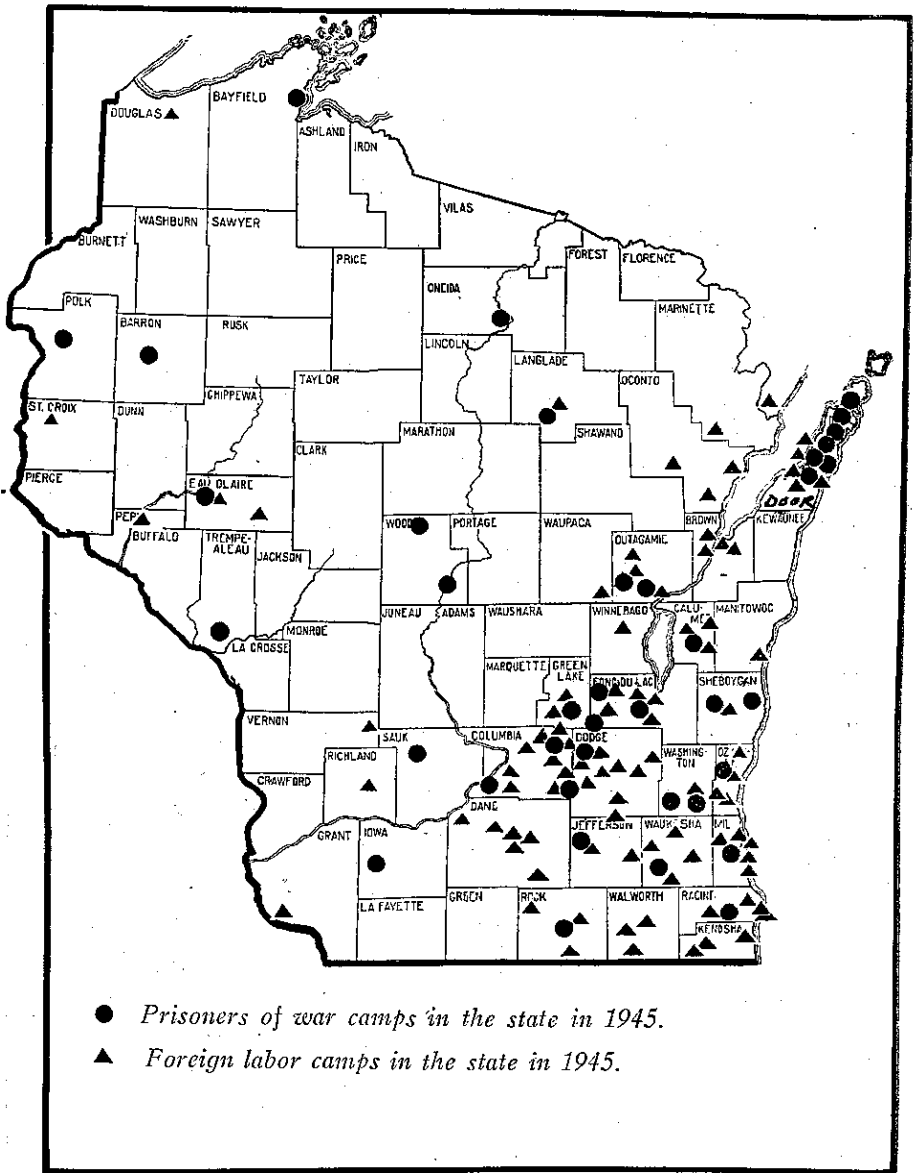
### NEW PROBLEMS

The problem of supplying labor to agriculture will continue. However, there may be more recruitment of domestic labor and less of foreign workers. The problem of providing adequate housing for both year-round and seasonal workers will probably receive more attention in the future. Job training programs must be continued. County agents and their farm labor assistants are also being asked to help veterans with their farm training programs, to help them get G. I. loans, to obtain good farm leases, and to help them buy farms.

While the Farm Labor project as conducted by the Agricultural Extension Service has successfully supplied labor for Wisconsin farms during the emergency, and helped farmers in many other ways, there are now peace-time problems to be considered, and much new work to be done.

*Power machinery helps stretch manpower. This combine, harvesting Canary grass seed, cuts and threshes heads in one operation.*





Published and distributed under Act of Congress, May 8, 1914,  
 by the Agricultural Extension Service, College of Agriculture of  
 the University of Wisconsin, Warren W. Clark, Associate Director,  
 the United States Department of Agriculture co-operating

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