

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

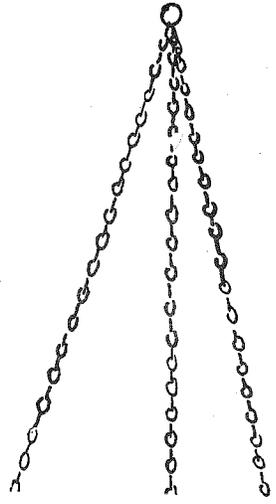
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201 Jobs
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FARM LABOR REPORT



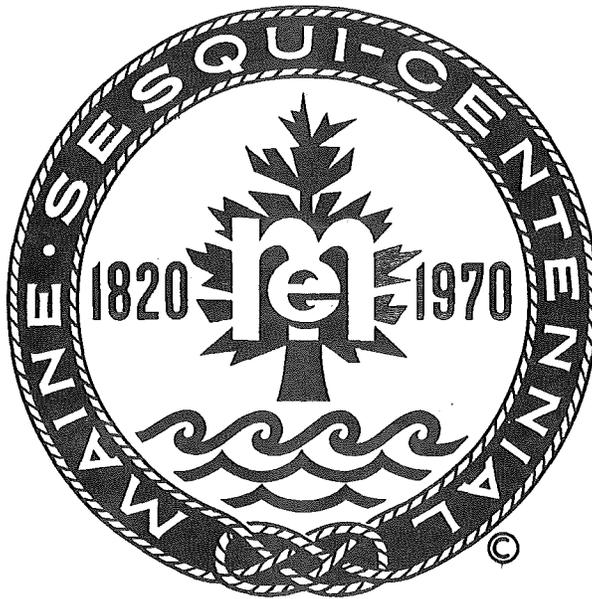
MAINE



1970

ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL
AND
FOOD PROCESSING REPORT

Maine farm labor report



MAINE EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSION

236329

PUBLISHED UNDER APPROPRIATION NO. 4444

1970

STATE OF MAINE

ANNUAL REPORT
ON
FARM EMPLOYMENT

MAINE EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSION

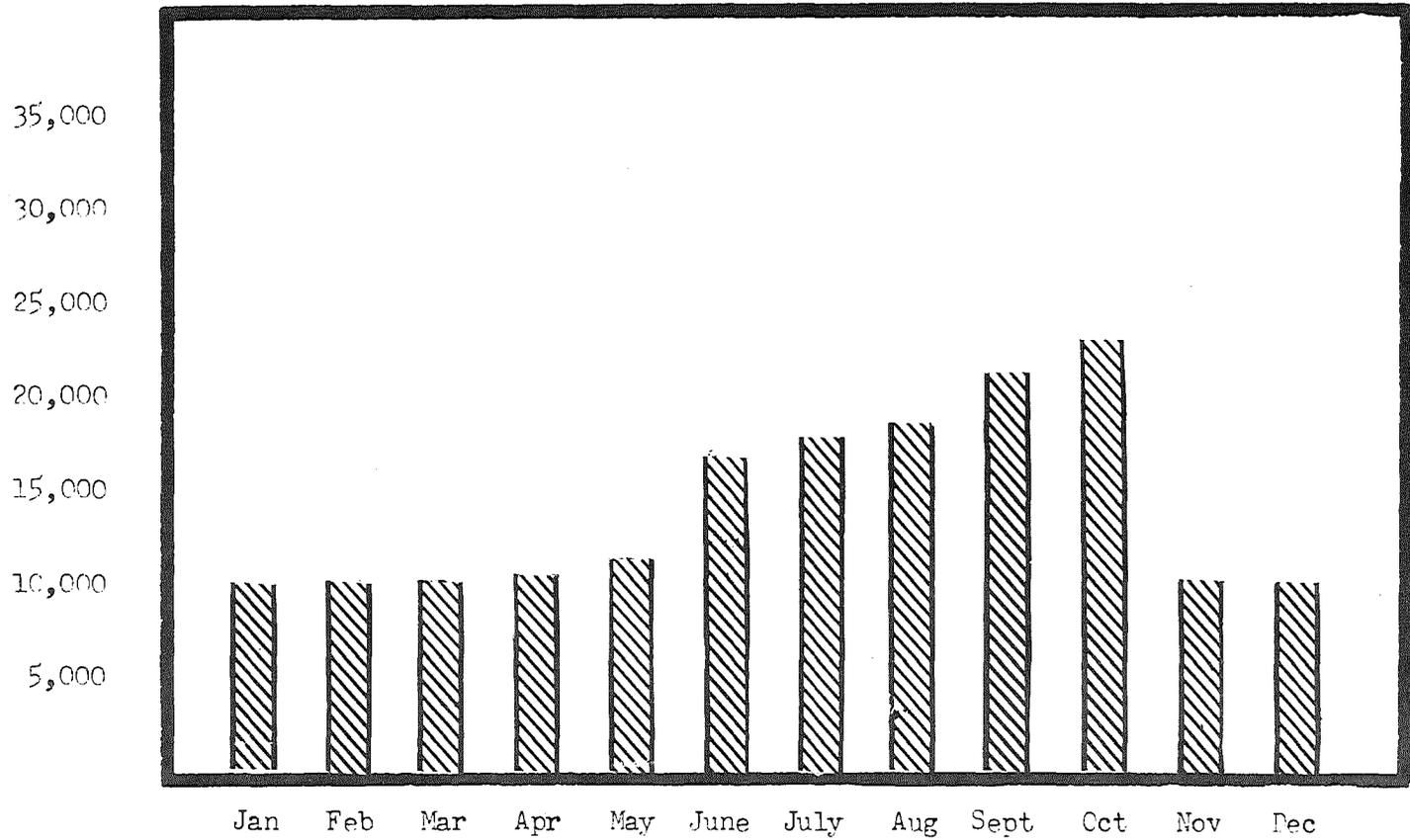
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MAINE'S AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT

FOR THE YEAR 1970 BY MONTH



FARM LABOR AND RURAL MANPOWER REPORT

ORGANIZATION

The Farm Labor Service has been reorganized along lines compatible with the recently evolved policy of offering full-breadth services to rural inhabitants. No longer are we to restrict our efforts exclusively to providing jobs in and services to the agricultural sector of the economy. The major emphasis will be establishing outreach in rural areas of the State, and offering residents the full spectrum of employment services, such as labor market information, job referral, job development, testing and counseling. An effort will be made to coordinate and cooperate with other agencies serving these individuals.

MEETINGS

1. Meeting on Proposed Piece Rate for Tree-Length Cutting with Regional Office and American Pulpwood Association - December 16
2. National Farm Labor Meeting, Daytona Beach, Florida - Early January
3. Northeastern Manpower & Training Officials, Federal and State Labor Officials, Augusta - February 19
4. Meeting at Administrative Office in Augusta covering all aspects of the 1970 Apple Harvest - July 6
5. Meeting with Woodcutting Industry Representatives, Augusta - September 22

MAJOR CROPS

The agricultural pattern of the State continues to change from year to year due to industrial and commercial expansion and gradual liquidation of smaller farm units. Vast home building and highway construction projects have absorbed much land previously devoted to agriculture.

A. POTATOES

The potato industry, representing the crop for which the State is possibly best known, continues to be the most intensive user of labor. During the

1970 harvest, labor requirements amounted to 20,800 individuals, broken out as follows:

Local Adults, Male and Female - 4,500 (includes and estimated
300 visa Canadians)

School Youth - 14,500

Indians (Canadian and American) - 700

Bonded Canadians, Male and Female - 1,100

1. Aroostook County Survey for Supplemental Harvest Labor

Early in July a survey was conducted throughout Aroostook County to determine supplemental Canadian harvest labor requirements. The survey team was composed of one representative from the Regional Office and nine from the Maine Agency. One hundred and fifty-three potato growers were interviewed during the course of one week. Results of this survey are as follows:

	<u>Ordered 1969</u>	<u>Ordered 1970</u>
Pickers	1,419	1,260
Barrel Handlers	259	180
Machine Operators	38	70
Cooks	<u>38</u>	<u>30</u>
Total	1,754	1,540

Acreage planted 1969 - 20,586
1970 - 19,583 (only those surveyed)

Fifty-five farmers indicated they would not be using Canadian labor during the 1970 harvest because of the acquisition of mechanical harvesters or because they have stopped planting completely.

As compared to ten years ago, total labor requirements are down approximately 10,000, largely because of the use of mechanical harvesters which will be described later. Both the planting and harvesting of the 1970 potato crop were plagued with bad weather. Planting was considered to be about ten days late because of excessive moisture; and because of this, acreage may have been reduced by 8,000 to 9,000 acres. From the

start of harvesting in earnest on September 21 through the end of October, a total of 19 days were lost due to rain and excessive moisture in the ground. In addition, 9 days were lost due to frost conditions in the morning. Obviously, this was expensive for the grower and made it difficult for piecework crews to earn an adequate wage.

In the final analysis, it is estimated that approximately 140,000 acres of potatoes were harvested in Aroostook County.

2. Processing Plants

"Yet another change in the potato industry has been the expansion of the processing industry. In 1968, 10,371,000 cwt. of raw potatoes, 28 percent of the State crop, was utilized by county processing firms. This compares with 8,318,000 cwt. for the 1967 crop and 2,908,000 for the 1961 crop. The increase reflects a national trend toward consumption of processed potatoes. Although consumption of potatoes has remained relatively stable, a decreasing use of fresh potatoes has accounted for a corresponding increase in the use of processed potato products.

The National Potato Council expects the trend to continue. The trend of the past twelve years seems almost certain to continue. Nothing short of a total depression and financial fiasco would reverse the path potatoes are taking and, even then, it could be a temporary nature.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture estimates that in 1968, 45 percent of potato food used nationally was processed, while 55 percent was fresh. This compares with 1960 when 24 percent was processed and 76 was fresh." 1/

B. APPLES

Maine, together with the other New England states and New York, produces a large crop of MacIntosh apples. Because of the delicacy of the Mac-

1/ Excerpt from The Farmer's Share

Intosh variety, it has thus far proven entirely impractical to attempt mechanization. For this same reason, extreme care must be taken when picking the crop in order to avoid bruises which later may contaminate entire bins. Many of the larger producers are located in the Southern and Central part of the State, which is highly industrialized. Therefore, it has been - and in all probability will continue to be - impossible to locate sufficient domestic pickers to harvest the crop. For this reason, growers have to rely on supplemental help from Canada. During the 1970 harvest season, certification was granted for 425 Canadian pickers.

Lack of frost and unseasonably warm weather during the harvest resulted in an excessive amount of drops. At this writing, the total bushels involved is unknown. Controlled atmosphere storage facilities for a total capacity of nearly 700,000 bushels enables 28 of the State's orchardists to market MacIntosh Variety of excellent quality well into the month of June.

C. BERRIES

Hancock, Waldo, Washington - and to a lesser degree - York Counties have substantial acreages of blueberries. The 1970 harvest, however, was a near disaster. An early frost coupled with a prolonged hot, dry spell resulted in a crop 20 percent of that produced in a normal year. In light of the poor raking conditions, it was extremely difficult to entice pickers to stay on the job. At the outset of the harvest, growers were paying \$1.25 per box, or \$2.50 per bushel, but were forced to increase the price to a high of \$4.00 per box in order to retain their workers. Many processing plants were compelled to purchase berries in Canada.

EFFECT OF MECHANIZATION AND ITS POSSIBLE FUTURE EFFECTS ON LABOR REQUIREMENTS

A. Apples

As previously mentioned, the MacIntosh variety of apples, at least for the foreseeable future, defies mechanization. In order to avoid huge crop losses, orchardists thus must still rely exclusively on hand labor to safeguard their investment. In this connection, also, it is well to remember the economic truism that a business - whether it be agricultural or nonagricultural - is either progressive or regressive. Because of this fact, progressive growers continue to plant trees, although increasingly of the Dwarf variety. The outlook for the 1971 harvest should be about the same as that for the year just passed.

B. Potatoes

Mechanical potato harvesters during the past ten years have become increasingly evident in the fields of Aroostook County. Many of these harvesters are of an advanced design; thus further reducing labor requirements. As previously mentioned, and as a direct result of the continued acquisition of harvesters, labor requirements are down approximately 10,000 from that of ten years ago. During this period, Canadian labor has fallen from a figure of approximately 7,000 to 1,110.

C. Berries

A prototype blueberry harvester has been tried and proven relatively successful in the fields. Terrain conditions, however, may preclude rapid acquisition of this machine.

WAGE SURVEYS

The following wage surveys were completed in the field during 1970 with follow-up in the field by the Maine Employment Security Commission and the U.S. Department of Labor on all phases of the Secretary's Regulations:

AGRICULTURAL WAGE SURVEYS AND RESULTS - 1970

A. Apple Pickers

1. Crop Wage Area 1-21-03 Central Maine
Strip Picking-----October 2-October 12
Prevailing Wage Rate Finding: Strip Picking - 30¢ per bushel
2. Crop Wage Area 1-21-04 Kennebec Valley
Strip Picking-----October 2-October 12
Spot Picking-----October 2-October 12
Prevailing Wage Rate Finding: Strip Picking - 25¢ per bushel
Spot Picking - 30¢ per bushel
3. Crop Wage Area 1-21-05 Western Maine
Strip Picking-----September 25-October 9
Spot Picking-----September 25-October 9
Prevailing Wage Rate Finding: Strip Picking - 30¢ per bushel
Spot Picking - 30¢ per bushel

B. Potato Harvest

1. Crop Wage Area - Aroostook County - 21-01-VH-08
Barrel Handlers-----\$2.00 per hr.
Harvest Machine Workers-----\$1.75 per hr.
Potato House Workers-----\$2.00 per hr.
Tractor & Equipment Operation----\$2.00 per hr.
Truck Driver-----\$2.00 per hr.
Picking - per barrel-----\$.30 per barrel
Survey Period - September 28-October 2

HOUSING

In order to insure compliance with Federal Housing Regulations, the following inspections were made in the field during the 1970 season: Aroostook County (Potatoes) - 93, Apples - 31 and Woods - 105.

PEAK HARVEST PERIODS, ESTIMATED, CROP REPORTING AREAS

Aroostook	East	Central	Kennebec	Western
County	Coast	Maine	Valley	Maine
1-21-01	1-21-02	1-21-03	1-21-04	1-21-05
Presque Isle	Calais	Rockland	Augusta	Lewiston
		Bangor	Bath	Portland
			Skowhegan	Rumford
				Sanford

Potato Planting and Care	5/1/-9/15			
Market Gardens		6/1-9/1		5/1-11/1
Strawberry Harvest		7/1-8/1		7/1-8/1
Blueberry Raking	8/1-9/1	8/1-9/1	8/1-9/1	7/15-8/15
Apple Harvest		9/15-10/30	9/15-10/30	9/15-11/15
Potato Harvest	9/15-10/15			

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY OF THE STATE

A. Potatoes

In the past two decades, Aroostook County has lost over 2,100 farmers, most of whom were natives and loved the rugged, open country of Northern Maine. Many leave the county for industrial jobs, frequently out of state; others remain, sometimes working in potato-connected jobs; and yet others seem to drift away. The frustration and pain of failure are reflected in the words of this grower:

"As I get prepared to leave farming, I kind to regret it in a way. I am leaving something of a tradition that has been handed down through generations before me. I live and farm the same farm that my grandparents cleared before me and worlded to raise their families. My father and his father served on bank boards, farm co-op boards, potato industry boards to work for the betterment of farming. They have advised farmers to help themselves and their families in the surrounding communities. But I must leave with my 5 children. I have been a failure. We as a family spend nothing over and above what is absolutely necessary to maintain a home and a living. So here we come labor class to join you!!!"1/

Reasons are many and varied for this continuing loss of farmers. Probably the foremost is the cost-price squeeze in which the smaller farmer finds himself enmeshed. Possibly another major reason is that the whole marketing structure has long been overdue for a major overhaul.

B. Apples

Predicting the outlook for the State's orchardists is far from being a simple task. One thing, however, seems certain. The problem of

1/ Excerpt from The Farmer's Share

locating an adequate labor supply will be critical in the foreseeable future. In all probability, there will be a continuing reduction in total numbers of orchardists state-wide. Some of the vacated orchards will be leased or purchased by other growers while others will be thrown open to the public on a "pick your own" basis.

TOTAL NUMBER OF SEASONAL HIRED AGRICULTURAL WORKERS REPORTED ON FORM ES-223, 1970

NOTE: As required (Ref: ES Manual part III, ch. 4804, B.2)

Area and Local Office	Reporting Dates							
	May 31	June 15	July 15	August 15	September 15	September 30	October 15	October 31
1-21-01 Aroostook County Presque Isle (figures identical)	3,125	2,475	2,325	2,800	3,090	20,767 ^{1/}	17,400 ^{1/}	2,860 ^{1/}
1-21-02 East Coast				870				
1-21-03 Calais Ellsworth Central Maine	170	175	360	420 450 504	310	488	145	
1-21-04 Bangor Rockland Kennebec Valley	170	175	360	395 109	310	488	145	229 ^{2/}
1-21-05 Augusta Skowhegan Western Maine		210	325	495	518	725	211 18 425	
Portland Lewiston Sanford Rumford		120 65 25	200 65 60	350 75 70	360 98 60	161 301 215 48	113 218 73 21	

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^{1/} Potato Harvesting only.

^{2/} Apple Harvesting only.

SELECTED DATA ON FARM PLACEMENT OPERATIONS

I T E M	N U M B E R
SECTION A. DAY-HAUL ACTIVITIES AT POINTS OPERATED BY STATE AGENCY	
1. Towns with day-haul points	1
2. Number of day-haul points	12
3. Sum of days day-haul points operated during year	212
4. Total number of workers transported during year	1,800 Est.
SECTION B. SELECTED SERVICES TO SCHOOL-AGE WORKERS (under 22 years)	
5. Supervised camps <u>operated</u> for school-age farm workers	NA
a. Placements in camps	NA
6. Placements of school-age workers in supervised live-in farm homes	NA
SECTION C. SERVICES TO INDIANS LIVING ON RESERVATIONS	
7. Rendered by on-reservation local offices or at itinerant points	
a. Farm placements	NA
b. Applicant-holding acceptances	NA
8. Other farm placements of reservation Indians	NA
SECTION D. OTHER SELECTED DATA	
9. Number of local offices which hold farm clinics	NA
10. Sum of days on which farm clinics were held	NA
11. Total number of local offices participating in formal community service programs	NA
12. Peak number of volunteer farm placement representatives	NA

SIGNATURE <i>Arthur W. Dwyer</i>	TITLE Manager
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