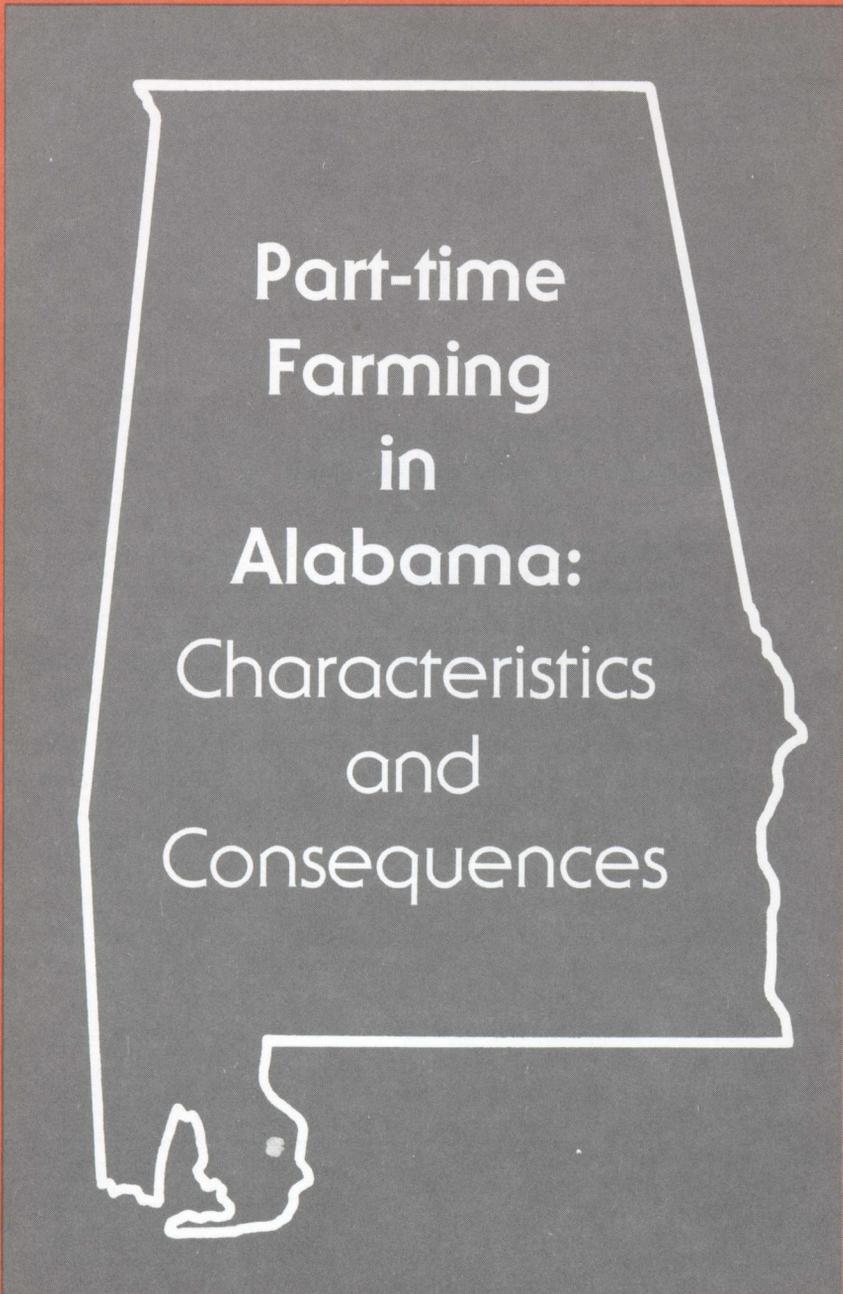


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**Part-time
Farming
in
Alabama:**
Characteristics
and
Consequences



ALABAMA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
AUBURN UNIVERSITY

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without regard to race, color, sex, or national origin.*

PART-TIME FARMING IN ALABAMA: CHARACTERISTICS AND CONSEQUENCES

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INTRODUCTION

PART-TIME FARMING includes farmers who supply labor to off-farm jobs to supplement or stabilize family income as well as others who engage in farming as a sideline to full-time employment in another line of work. Of the 57,503 Alabama farm operators reporting in the most recent Census of Agriculture, 67.8 percent worked one or more days off the farm and 48 percent were employed in other jobs 200 or more days during the previous year (8). Only 36.8 percent indicated their principal occupation was farming. Thus, nearly half of the State's farm operators pursued full-time occupations other than agricultural production in 1978, 11.5 percent more than in 1974.

The financial status of many farm households is greatly improved as a result of the income and benefits contributed by off-farm work. Off-farm jobs held by both women and men often provide employment-related benefits to the household, such as health insurance, pensions, and life insurance. Many households depend on the women's contribution for solvency, often helping the farm family escape poverty status. For many part-time operators, employment off the farm is a matter of survival when the farm does not provide a sufficient or stable source of income (3).

The rise of part-time farming can be attributed to a number of shifts in the structure of the agricultural industry. Advances in production technology have facilitated enlargement of farms and use of labor-displacing mechanization. Low product

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prices and high input costs often are obstacles to full-time farming. Producers not willing or able to expand or intensify their farm operations may turn to other sources of income. In many locales, readily available industrial jobs present a risk-averse, immediately rewarding set of opportunities that compete for the farmer's time and labor (2). Thus, some otherwise full-time operators have chosen to seek employment off the farm.

Several financial incentives make part-time farming desirable for some individuals who might not be involved in agriculture under different circumstances. A number of tax advantages may accrue to upper-income individuals inclined to pursue farming as a hobby or sideline. The deductibility of capital expenditures, the potential to depreciate equipment and facilities, the flexibility of cash accounting, and the special treatment given to estate and gift taxes (affecting the transfer of wealth) each serves as tax benefits attractive to those with outside income to protect (7). Others may spend part of their time in farming because farmland is a relatively indestructible asset and has been viewed as a hedge against inflation.

Lifestyle considerations may also draw individuals to part-time farming. A less hectic pace of life, more living space, and other environmental amenities have increased the desirability of nonmetropolitan residence. For many individuals, a farmstead is symbolic of quality of life, individual freedom, and self-sufficiency that have become ascendent values in recent years (4).

The diversity of landholding and operating arrangements that characterize the part-time sector is not well understood. Of particular interest in this report is the nature and extent of both spouses' occupational involvement off the farm in relation to farm characteristics, as well as operator attributes and orientations. Even though a minority of full-time operators (36.8 percent) produces 71.6 percent of the value of the State's agricultural product, it is clear that part-time operators represent a majority of people involved in agriculture in the State. Thus, it is important to understand their distinctive needs, characteristics, and orientations.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the research reported herein was to examine selected issues and trends in the changing structure of Alabama agriculture. The results should provide a statistical pro-

file of the major types of off-farm employment arrangements found among Alabama farm families.

One objective was to develop a descriptive classification or typology of off-farm employment based on results from a Statewide mail survey of farm operators. Although the Census of Agriculture profiles the operator's off-farm-work status, the contributions of farm wives and other family members are not addressed (1). This study included both the farm operator and his wife's work status in classifying off-farm employment arrangements. Comparisons were made between the occupations held by farm men and women working off the farm in comparison to occupations held by all employed men and women in Alabama.

A second objective was to compare the characteristics of farms operated by full-time farmers with those run by operators with various combinations of off-farm employment. In particular, size of farm, ownership arrangements, and farm enterprises were considered.

A third objective was to determine the relationship between attitudes toward selected farm policy issues and off-farm work status. Orientations toward farming as an occupation, public policy toward small farms, and the future in farming were examined.

DATA AND METHOD

Data for this study were obtained from two primary sources: the 1978 Census of Agriculture and a Statewide mail survey of a random sample of Alabama farmers conducted in the spring of 1981.

The Census of Agriculture provides a periodic statistical profile of the State's farming industry. The 1978 Census of Agriculture was conducted primarily by mail, supplemented by personal interviews with a statistical area segment sample for maximum completeness of coverage. Of particular interest to this study were the data obtained in response to question 20-7 on the report form. The item reads: "How many days did the operator (senior partner or person in charge) work at least 4 hours off this place in 1978?" The respondent was instructed to include work at a nonfarm job, business, or someone else's farm, but to exclude exchange farm work. Responses were obtained in six categories but are summarized here by "none,"

“1 to 99 days,” “100 to 199 days,” and “200 or more days” of work off the farm (8).

For the Statewide survey, a sample of farmers was drawn from a master listing of Alabama farm operators maintained by various agencies and organizations serving the State. The 1,005 farm operators in the sample represent 1.75 percent of the 57,503 Alabama farms reported in the 1978 Census of Agriculture. They responded to a 10-page questionnaire addressing beliefs about various issues related to the organization of agriculture and other matters germane to policy, decision making, and agricultural change in the State (5).

In January 1981, the questionnaire and a cover letter explaining the purpose and intent of the study were mailed to each individual in the sample. One week later, a reminder postcard was sent. Two weeks later, a replacement questionnaire was mailed to non-respondents. In another 3 weeks, a third questionnaire was sent to the remaining non-respondents.

A total of 705 farmers returned completed, usable questionnaires, representing a completion rate of over 70 percent. Fifteen percent of the sample returned blank questionnaires or were reported as being retired, deceased, or otherwise no longer in farming.

Off-farm work status was obtained by asking respondents to indicate whether they or their spouse “worked full-time,” “worked part-time,” or “did not work off the farm.”

Occupations were obtained through open-ended questions asking “What is (was) your main occupation called?” “What kind of work does (did) your wife do?” The occupations were summarized into 10 general occupational groups (9).

Beliefs about agricultural structure, commitment to farming, small farm problems, and the entry process were assessed by asking respondents to rate a set of statements using five response categories, “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Their responses were summarized for purposes of analysis by three categories, “agree,” “undecided,” and “disagree.”

A series of factors relating to the farm operator’s future in the business was also obtained. Respondents rated each item with a five-category response framework, “help a lot” to “hinder a lot.”

FINDINGS

Location of Part-time Farm Operators

The first two sections examine selected data from the 1978 Census of Agriculture related to the number, location, and characteristics of Alabama operators with off-farm work. The analysis then turns to sample data that profile farm husband and wife work combinations, farm organization, and orientations toward a series of policy issues.

Figure 1 shows the percentage and location of farmers working 200 or more days off the farm in Alabama by county. Only one county, Jefferson, had more than 60 percent of its operators working 200 or more days off the farm. Chilton and Greene both had less than 30 percent working full-time jobs, with the farmers in Greene County reporting 29.5 percent and those in Chilton reporting the lowest percentage, 9.6 percent.

The percentage of farm operators listing their principal occupation of farming is shown in figure 2. In the northern part of the State, most counties showed 35 percent or less of the farmers with a main occupation of farming. Most of the counties in the southern section had 45 percent or more of the farmers reporting their occupation as farming.

The low percentages of operators with principal occupations in farming in the north probably reflects the many industrial employment opportunities and the large number of smaller farms in that region. South Alabama has had a long history of agricultural dominance. The high percentage of farmers in the south may be a result in part from agricultural vestiges of the past and the lower levels of industrial development found there today. Also, larger farm operations require more direct management attention by operators, a time demand usually not compatible with off-farm employment.

The five counties in the extreme southeastern part of the State showed a high percentage of operators with farming as a principal occupation. The prominence of peanuts as a steady income-producing commodity, in conjunction with natural soil resources and other attributes, may contribute to a higher incidence of individuals principally occupied as farmers.

Characteristics of Part-time Operators: Census Profiles

Characteristics of Farms. Characteristics of farms tabulated by operator work days off the farm are given in table 1. These data were taken from the 1978 Census of Agriculture for Alabama. Each item or subtable sums to 100 percent down each column of off-farm work status and is constructed to allow comparisons across work status categories. Being employed 200 or more days off the farm is considered to be full-time.

Part-time farmers were less likely to be part-owners or tenants, as shown in item 1. Farmers who worked 200 or more days off the farm were more likely to be full owners of their farm (68.6 percent). The farmers who worked 1 to 99 days off the farm were least likely to be full owners of a farm (58.3 percent).

In item 2, off-farm workdays are crosstabulated by type of organization. Nearly 90 percent of the operators in each work category indicated that their operation was an individual or family farm. Although differences were small, those working 200 or more days off the farm were somewhat more likely to operate individual or family-owned farms; whereas, those with no off-farm employment were somewhat more likely to operate partnership or incorporated farms.

Off-farm employment by size of the farm is examined in item 3. Part-time farmers operated smaller farms. The majority of farmers who worked 100 or more days operated farms less than 100 acres in size. About 65 percent of the farmers employed 200 or more days operated farms between 1 and 99 acres in size. For the farmers working no days off the farm, 46.9 percent operated farms 1 to 99 acres. Farmers that did not have other jobs were nearly four times as likely to operate a farm 500 or more acres in size, compared to those working full-time.

Part-time farmers also had lower levels of gross farm sales, item 4. More than 80 percent of the farmers working 200 or more days off the farm had gross annual sales less than \$10,000. This compares with less than 55 percent of farmers working no days having \$10,000 or less in sales.

The proportion of farmers having \$40,000 or more in sales decreased markedly with off-farm work. More than 26 percent of the farmers working no days off the farm had sales greater than \$40,000. For farmers working 200 or more days, only 7 percent had this level of gross sales.

TABLE 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF FARMS BY OPERATOR WORKDAYS OFF THE FARM:
1978 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE, ALABAMA

Classification	Operator workdays off the farm			
	None	1 to 99	100 to 199	200 or more
	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>
1. Tenure:				
Full owner	61.9	58.3	61.8	68.6
Part owner	29.8	31.2	28.1	23.3
Tenant	8.3	10.5	10.1	8.1
2. Organization:				
Individual or family	89.4	90.5	91.2	93.2
Partnership	8.8	8.5	7.3	6.3
Corporation	1.8	1.0	1.5	.5
3. Size of farm:				
1 to 49 acres	28.7	31.2	34.4	42.8
50 to 99 acres	18.2	19.2	23.1	22.7
100 to 499 acres	38.5	30.9	36.0	30.8
500 to 999 acres	8.7	7.6	4.1	2.7
1,000 or more	5.9	4.1	2.4	1.0
4. Value of products sold:				
Less than \$2,500	30.5	36.6	38.4	47.9
\$2,500 to \$9,999	24.4	27.7	33.6	33.4
\$10,000 to \$39,999	18.4	19.4	17.4	11.7
\$40,000 to \$99,999	13.3	9.2	5.6	3.9
\$100,000 or more	13.4	7.1	5.0	3.1
Number	18,509	4,676	4,499	27,854

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census. 1978 Census of Agriculture, AC78-A-1, Alabama.

Age and Gross Sales. Subtable 1. of table 2 shows off-farm work status by age for two levels of gross farm sales. Data are shown for two sales classes of farms: less than and more than \$20,000.

Young, low farm income operators were more likely to work off the farm (item 1a). Over half the low farm income operators having no working days off the farm were over 65 years of age. In contrast, 96 percent of the low farm income operators employed fulltime were younger than age 65. The latter category encompasses nearly half the farmers in the State.

Most operators with gross sales of more than \$20,000 did not have off-farm employment (item 1b). Operators of larger farms who had off-farm work were somewhat younger than those who did not.

The second subtable compares the age and off-farm work of those who did and did not identify their principal occupation as farming. Most operators reporting their principal occupation as farming had no off-farm workdays (item 2a). More than a third with no off-farm workdays were age 65 or older. More than 74.2 percent of the self-identified farmers with full-time jobs off the farm were middle-aged.

TABLE 2. AGE OF FARM OPERATORS BY OPERATOR WORKDAYS OFF THE FARM, WITHIN TWO LEVELS OF GROSS FARM SALES AND WITHIN PRINCIPAL OCCUPATION AS FARMING AND NOT FARMING: 1978 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE, ALABAMA

Age of operator	Operator workdays off the farm			
	None	1 to 99	100 to 199	200 or more
	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>
1. Gross Farm Sales				
a. Less than \$20,000:				
Under 35 years	4.1	10.8	14.7	16.7
35 to 64 years	43.9	66.3	69.5	79.4
65 or over	52.0	22.9	15.8	3.9
Number	11,908	3,496	3,724	24,554
b. More than \$20,000:				
Under 35 years	16.1	23.6	22.5	17.7
35 to 64 years	72.3	72.3	74.3	80.2
65 or over	11.6	4.1	3.2	3.1
Number	6,601	1,180	775	3,030
2. Principal Occupation				
a. Farming:				
Under 35 years	10.0	16.6	17.3	17.1
35 to 64 years	56.2	65.3	72.4	74.2
65 or over	33.8	18.1	10.3	8.7
Number	14,098	2,642	1,134	1,099
b. Other than farming:				
Under 35 years	3.1	10.8	15.7	16.8
35 to 64 years	47.1	71.0	69.6	79.5
65 or over	49.8	18.2	14.7	3.7
Number	4,411	2,034	3,365	26,485

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1978 Census of Agriculture, AC78-A-1, Alabama.

Of the individuals who did not identify their principal occupations as farming, most reported 200 or more off-farm workdays (item 2b). Nearly 50 percent of those with nonfarm occupations and without off-farm work were age 65 or older. Of the operators with occupations other than farming and 200 or more off-farm workdays, almost 80 percent were middle-aged.

The data show that 26,485, or 46 percent, of Alabama farmers had other occupations and 200 or more off-farm workdays. This suggests that hobby, tax loss, or lifestyle motivations may be significant influences for many operators, although a fundamental need for additional income undoubtedly is a primary reason for nonfarm employment.

Standard Industrial Class of Farms. Table 3 tabulates 12 major categories of farm production by operator workdays off the farm. The table is ordered in terms of the proportion of full-time Alabama farmers in each classification. Considerable variability is found in off-farm workdays among the various commodities.

Comparing across the table, enterprises that demand much labor and time are chosen less often by operators with work off

TABLE 3. STANDARD INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION OF FARM BY OPERATOR WORKDAYS OFF THE FARM: 1978 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE, ALABAMA

Classification	Operator workdays off the farm			
	None	1 to 99	100 to 199	200 or more
Livestock (beef)	<i>Pct.</i> 32.8	<i>Pct.</i> 37.5	<i>Pct.</i> 40.7	<i>Pct.</i> 47.2
Cash grain	17.5	19.7	18.3	14.0
Field crops	13.8	12.1	8.0	7.2
Livestock (other)	12.6	13.9	13.5	16.1
Poultry and eggs	10.7	6.0	8.9	5.8
General crop	3.1	2.7	2.0	2.1
Vegetable and melon farms	2.1	3.2	2.3	2.1
Dairy	2.1	1.3	1.3	.8
Fruit and nut	1.6	1.3	1.9	1.6
General livestock	1.5	.8	.6	1.2
Horticultural	1.2	.9	.9	.8
Animal specialty	1.0	.6	1.6	1.1
Number	18,509	4,676	4,499	27,854

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1978 Census of Agriculture, AG78-A-1, Alabama.

the farm. Beef production was the enterprise most commonly reported by operators with off-farm employment, as 47 percent of those reporting 200 or more days of off-farm work indicated involvement in this commodity. Other types of livestock enterprises also were more frequently reported by part-time farmers.

Poultry and egg production, however, was somewhat less likely to be undertaken by operators with off-farm workdays. In general, the proportion of farmers producing cash grain and field crops declined as off-farm work increased, although the pattern was occasionally mixed among those working less than 200 days. Cash grain, melon, and vegetable farmers were somewhat more likely to indicate 1 to 99 days of employment during the year.

Statewide Survey Results

Husband and Wife Off-farm Employment

Work Status Typology. From the sample data obtained in a Statewide mail survey, table 4 shows the distribution of husband and wife off-farm work status combinations. The question "In the past year did you work off the farm in a part-time or full-time job" was used as a basis for classifying the 705 respondents. The same question was also asked in reference to the wife's work off the farm. When the three employment possibilities are applied in regard to both husbands and wives, nine combinations result. These combinations range from

TABLE 4. DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE FARM OPERATORS BY HUSBAND AND WIFE OFF-FARM WORK STATUS: STATEWIDE SAMPLE, ALABAMA, 1981

Off-farm work status	All combinations	Summary categories used in tables	
	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>No.</i>
Husband and wife both work	—	21.7	(153)
Both full-time	11.2		
Husband full-time; wife part-time	5.3		
Husband part-time; wife part-time	3.1		
Both part-time	2.1		
Only husband works	—	27.1	(191)
Husband full-time	18.1		
Husband part-time	9.0		
Only wife works	—	13.2	(93)
Wife full-time	9.8		
Wife part-time	3.4		
Neither husband nor wife works off the farm	38.0		
Younger than 65	21.2	21.3	(150)
65 or older	16.8	16.8	(118)
Total	100.0	100.0	(705)

“both the husband and wife work full-time off the farm” to “neither the husband nor the wife works off the farm.”

To simplify the analysis, the first eight work status combinations were combined to form three categories. The four “both the husband and wife work,” categories were merged, as were the two “only the husband works” categories, and the two “only the wife works” off the farm categories.

Table 4 demonstrates that in more than three of five (62 percent) farm families, a husband or wife was engaged in a full or part-time job. In seven of 10 employed farm families, both the husband and the wife worked. When both spouses worked, about half the time both worked full-time.

In families where only one member was working, the husband was twice as likely to be working than the wife. The husband was the sole off-farm worker in slightly more than a quarter of the farm families.

In about one out of seven farm families, the wife was the only off-farm employee. When only the wife was working, she was more likely to occupy a full-time job than the husband when only he had off-farm employment.

The last category in the typology consisted of farms on which neither the operator nor spouse had off-farm work. These respondents accounted for more than a third of all farms in the survey. Nearly half were 65 years of age or older. Since one objective of the study was to examine the characteristics of active part-time farmers as compared to active full-time farmers, it was necessary to divide the “neither work” category by

age. The typology then distinguishes those younger than 65 from those 65 or older with no off-farm employment. Some of those older than 65 may remain active full-time farmers, but they undoubtedly are oriented toward retirement in some way, and no other satisfactory criterion was available.

Off-farm Occupations. This section compares the off-farm occupations of farmers with those characterizing residents of the State as a whole. Occupations of men and women both in the sample and in Alabama are summarized by 10 categories and compared in table 5. The objective of this analysis was to determine whether some occupations tend to complement part-time farming more than others.

The data show that a larger percentage of male part-time farmers had professional occupations than all male workers in Alabama. Farm men more frequently had jobs as sales and office workers, laborers, craftsmen, teachers, and technicians than did all male workers in the State in general.

Farmers had fewer operative and service occupations than the State as a whole. The largest difference was in the occupation of machine operatives. In Alabama, there was nearly twice the proportion with this kind of occupation in the general population as among working farmers.

There are more professionals, teachers, managers, and office workers among employed farm women than among all employed women in Alabama. The occupations of operative and service workers occurred proportionately less often in the sample of farm women.

TABLE 5. OCCUPATIONS BY OFF-FARM WORK STATUS: ALABAMA FARMERS—1981
STATEWIDE SAMPLE AND ALABAMA EMPLOYED PERSONS
16 YEARS AND OLDER—1980 CENSUS

Occupation	Men			Women		
	Both work	Husband only	Alabama total	Both work	Wife only	Alabama total
	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>
Professionals	11.8	12.2	7.6	12.4	4.8	7.1
Teachers	5.6	3.7	1.3	11.0	14.3	6.9
Technicians	2.8	3.7	2.4	.0	.0	3.3
Managers	11.1	11.0	10.4	7.6	3.6	6.1
Sales and office workers	14.6	17.7	18.6	37.2	38.1	38.1
Craftsmen and mechanics	25.7	25.6	22.5	2.1	1.2	2.5
Operatives	13.2	12.2	20.9	15.2	16.7	14.6
Laborers	12.5	10.4	8.8	4.1	3.6	2.6
Service workers	2.8	3.7	7.4	10.3	17.9	18.0
Other0	.0	1.1	.0	.0	.8
Number	144	190	882,050	145	92	629,878

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1980, PC(1)-C2, Alabama: U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. Table 54.

The occupation of teacher was the category of greatest difference when compared to all women workers in Alabama. Nearly twice as many farm women were teachers.

The typology differentiates farm families in which both spouses work off the farm from families where only the husband works off the farm. More "husband only works" farmers had occupations that were professional, sales and office, and service than did the men in the "both work" category. More "both work" farm husbands were teachers, operatives, and laborers.

In a similar comparison, there were more farm women in teacher and service occupations in the "wife only works" category than in families where both spouses worked. When both husband and wife worked off the farm, proportionately more women professionals were found in the sample. Fewer farm women in the "women only work" classification were employed as professionals or managers than among women in the "both work" classification.

Comparing the jobs held by farm women and farm men, the occupational classes of professional, technician, manager, craftsman and mechanic, and laborer tended to be more prevalent among men than women. Similarly, these occupations also were more characteristic of men than women employed in Alabama.

Farm Enterprises. Table 6 tabulates major crop and animal enterprises reported in the survey by off-farm work status. The enterprises are listed in order of their frequency of occurrence in the total sample. Percentages do not sum to 100 because most of the farmers reported more than one enterprise.

TABLE 6. MAJOR CROP AND ANIMAL ENTERPRISES BY OFF-FARM WORK STATUS: STATEWIDE SAMPLE, ALABAMA 1981

Enterprise ¹	Off-farm work status				
	Both work	Husband works	Wife works	Neither works	
				Younger than 65	65 or older
	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>
Beef cattle	79.5	79.1	68.9	66.2	67.9
Corn	38.4	52.9	48.9	51.4	55.4
Soybeans	39.7	34.8	50.0	56.8	36.6
Vegetables	19.9	32.6	24.4	24.3	30.4
Hogs	21.9	24.6	20.0	18.2	16.1
Peanuts	12.6	11.2	20.0	18.2	19.6
Poultry	7.4	7.7	8.0	18.1	13.8
Cotton	4.0	7.0	10.0	18.2	11.6
Dairy cattle	2.6	4.3	6.7	5.4	3.6
Number	152	190	92	149	118

¹Multiple responses were possible.

Soybeans, peanuts, cotton, and dairy cattle were enterprises more likely to be reported when only the wife worked off the farm or the husband was a full-time farmer younger than age 65. Of the items in table 6, cotton shows the greatest difference in preference between the groups of farmers. Cotton was four times as likely to be an enterprise undertaken by a farmer without other employment than by an operator working off the farm. Part-time operators tended to pursue beef cattle and hogs as farm activities.

When the husband works off the farm, the enterprises chosen were less likely to be labor and time-intensive activities such as cotton and peanuts. Activities with more flexible time and labor demands, such as beef cattle, were more likely to be pursued by farm husbands who worked off the farm. Corn, vegetables, poultry, cotton, and dairy were enterprises less likely to be found in families where both spouses worked off the farm.

Commitment to Farming

Reasons for remaining in farming and enduring the uncertainties of weather and weak prices are examined in table 7. The chi-square statistic suggests that responses to all the items in table 7 varied across the categories of off-farm work status in some non-random way.

More than 60 percent indicated that for them, farming was strictly a business (item 1). The respondents classed as "wife only works" and both age groups of "neither works off the farm" were more likely to agree with this item. A difference of at least 9 percentage points in the proportion agreeing separated these groups from the part-time farmers.

Respondents in the two categories "both work off the farm" and "husband only works off the farm" were twice as likely to disagree with the next item, "being my own boss," than were those in the other three categories. Over 80 percent of the sample agreed with this item.

Responses to item 3 indicate that a majority of all but one type of farmer would not be willing to accept a lower income to keep their life on the farm. The exception was "neither works off the farm—65 or older." In this group, 61.5 percent agreed with the item. A majority of older farmers would accept a lower income to stay on the farm.

More than 49 percent of those in the category "neither works off the farm—65 or older" felt that recognition from friends

TABLE 7. SOURCES OF COMMITMENT TO FARMING BY OFF-FARM WORK STATUS:
STATEWIDE SAMPLE, ALABAMA 1981

Item	Off-farm work status					No answer
	Both work	Husband works	Wife works	Neither works Younger than 65 or 65 or older		
	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>No.</i>
1. For me farming is strictly business.						
Agree	61.1	62.6	73.0	71.7	78.5	(33)
Undecided	6.0	7.7	7.9	6.9	2.8	
Disagree	32.9	29.7	19.1	21.4	18.7	
				$\chi^2 = 16.0^*$		
2. Being my own boss is one of the major reasons I enjoy farming.						
Agree	82.6	82.6	93.2	88.4	92.6	(30)
Undecided	3.3	4.9	1.1	5.5	2.8	
Disagree	14.1	12.5	5.7	6.1	4.6	
				$\chi^2 = 16.2^*$		
3. There are so many good things about farming that a person should be willing to get along on a lower income to keep these advantages.						
Agree	35.3	38.8	41.6	33.3	61.4	(30)
Undecided	10.0	14.8	14.6	17.4	13.8	
Disagree	54.7	46.4	43.8	49.3	24.8	
				$\chi^2 = 31.3^{**}$		
4. The recognition I get from my friends and neighbors is one of the main reasons I enjoy farming.						
Agree	19.6	23.7	22.5	27.1	49.1	(36)
Undecided	12.8	10.4	13.5	13.9	12.2	
Disagree	67.6	65.9	64.0	59.0	38.7	
				$\chi^2 = 34.9^{**}$		
5. Even if his income has dropped to a low point, a farmer should try to stick it out so his children can grow up on a farm.						
Agree	38.6	42.1	46.6	40.0	56.8	(26)
Undecided	20.7	22.2	27.3	19.3	28.8	
Disagree	40.7	35.7	26.1	40.7	14.4	
				$\chi^2 = 28.0^{**}$		
6. If I had a son growing up at present, I would like to see him become a farmer.						
Agree	33.3	41.3	37.0	46.6	55.0	(25)
Undecided	40.0	26.6	36.0	24.6	19.8	
Disagree	26.7	32.1	27.0	28.8	25.2	
				$\chi^2 = 22.0^*$		
Number	152	190	92	199	118	

* $p \leq .05$

** $p \leq .001$

was the main reason they enjoyed farming (item 4). In contrast, 27 percent or less of the remaining respondents agreed. Thus, the social and lifestyle aspects of farming seem to increase in importance with age.

Item 5, as item 3, links income with a farm lifestyle. In this case, the advantages of farming are viewed relative to their application to the farmer's children. Only among the older farmers did a majority agree with this item (57 percent), while between 39 and 47 percent of the other respondents agreed.

In item 6, less than 50 percent of respondents in all but one category indicated that they preferred their sons to be farmers, but 55 percent of the older full-time farmers agreed. Responses to this item may well reflect beliefs about upward mobility and the status of farming as an occupation.

The six items tend to show that farmers working full-time on the farm are more committed to farming as a way of life than operators with jobs off the farm. Although the older respondents indicated the highest level of agreement with the commitment items, the overall pattern suggests that while a farm lifestyle may be an important source of personal attachment to agriculture, it does not take precedence over income.

Beliefs About Small Farms

Farm operator responses to three items relating to beliefs about small farms are presented in table 8. A majority of re-

TABLE 8. BELIEFS ABOUT SMALL FARMS BY OFF-FARM WORK STATUS: STATEWIDE SAMPLE, ALABAMA 1981

Item	Off-farm work status					No answer
	Both work	Husband works	Wife works	Neither works Younger than 65	65 or older	
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	No.
1. Because of the realities of agriculture today, it is unwise to encourage small farmers to stay in agriculture.						
Agree	52.1	56.0	50.5	36.1	52.7	(25)
Undecided	20.3	15.8	17.6	20.4	15.5	
Disagree	27.6	28.2	31.9	43.5	31.8	
				$\chi^2=19.8^*$		
2. The small farm has not received a fair share of public services.						
Agree	71.5	69.9	75.3	61.3	74.3	(26)
Undecided	17.2	17.5	10.1	16.3	11.9	
Disagree	11.3	12.6	14.6	22.4	13.8	
				$\chi^2=13.5^*$		
3. Special help for small farmers is really just another welfare program.						
Agree	21.1	25.7	17.3	26.7	27.5	(31)
Undecided	11.6	14.2	14.6	19.9	18.3	
Disagree	67.3	60.1	68.1	53.4	54.2	
				$\chi^2=11.7^*$		
Number	152	190	92	199	118	

* $p \leq .05$

spondents thought it unwise to encourage small farmers to stay in agriculture (item 1). However, only 36 percent of the younger full-time farmers could support this contention.

Younger, full-time farmers also differed from the others on item 2. The younger, full-time farmers were least likely to agree that small farms did not receive a fair share of public services.

Although nearly 54 percent of the farmers who did not work off the farm disagreed with the contention that help for small farmers was just another welfare program (item 3), more than 60 percent of the other farmers disagreed. Responses to the three statements suggest that most thought that small farm operators had some right to expect government programs tailored to their special needs. This belief received less support among younger, full-time farmers.

Prospects for the Farm

Long-range Plans. The long range plans of farmers are presented in table 9. The plans are ordered by their frequency of mention in the total sample.

Farmers who were 65 or older and did not work off the farm were most likely to indicate that they planned to retire on the farm. Of this group, 67.3 percent answered "yes."

The next three plans relate to expansion of the farm. The category "both work" showed the most expressed plans for expansion. Families with two off-farm incomes were most likely to indicate that they would buy or lease more land and expand the farm, construct new buildings or facilities, or expand their animal herd.

TABLE 9. PERCENT MENTIONING SELECTED LONG-RANGE PLANS BY OFF-FARM WORK STATUS: STATEWIDE SAMPLE, ALABAMA 1981

Long-range plan ¹	Off-farm work status				
	Both work	Husband works	Wife works	Neither works	
				Younger than 65	65 or older
	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>
Do you plan to:					
Retire on the farm	40.8	51.1	49.5	36.1	67.3
Continue a nonfarm job	57.9	45.2	2.2	.0	.0
Expand an animal herd	52.0	38.8	31.9	32.6	16.4
Buy or lease more land and expand the operation ...	26.3	15.4	16.5	19.4	2.7
Construct new buildings or facilities	21.7	19.1	13.2	17.4	4.5
Quit a nonfarm job	12.5	10.1	1.1	.0	.0
Take a nonfarm job	5.3	6.4	5.5	3.5	.9
Number	152	190	92	149	118

¹Multiple responses were possible.

Of the three groups of respondents having off-farm jobs in the family, those in which both worked were most likely to report they would continue a nonfarm job. This group was also most likely to quit a nonfarm job. (Paradoxically, the desires and pressures of expansion may require increased labor and management time on the farm, but the uncertainties of farm income may make continued off-farm employment a necessity.)

Influences on the Future. Table 10 shows a series of survey items rated as helping or hindering the future survival or growth of the farm. Of the four items, interest rates were said to hinder the future by more farmers. Except for the retired category, over 70 percent indicated that interest rates were a hindrance. Over 78 percent of the respondents from families where someone worked off the farm thought interest rates hindered their future. (At the time of the survey, the prime interest rate was 20 percent.)

TABLE 10. FACTORS PERCEIVED AS INFLUENCING OWN FUTURE IN FARMING BY OFF-FARM WORK STATUS: STATEWIDE SAMPLE, ALABAMA 1981

Item	Off-farm work status					
	Both work	Husband works	Wife works	Neither works		No answer
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Younger than 65	65 or older	No.
1. The price of money I must borrow (interest rate)						
Help	8.3	9.7	7.2	10.9	6.5	(73)
No difference	10.4	10.2	14.5	18.2	33.7	
Hinder	81.3	80.1	78.3	70.9	59.8	
				$\chi^2=31.4^{**}$		
2. The availability of money to borrow						
Help	28.3	25.6	31.0	30.7	21.1	(70)
No difference	28.3	28.4	28.6	30.7	43.3	
Hinder	43.4	46.0	40.4	38.6	35.6	
				$\chi^2=9.9^*$		
3. The price of land						
Help	10.3	11.2	10.7	13.6	7.3	(60)
No difference	17.8	19.0	22.6	30.7	36.4	
Hinder	71.9	69.8	66.7	55.7	56.3	
				$\chi^2=19.8^*$		
4. The availability of land for sale at the going rate						
Help	12.3	12.8	8.6	13.0	9.6	(66)
No difference	26.0	19.4	29.6	36.2	37.2	
Hinder	61.7	67.8	61.8	50.8	53.2	
				$\chi^2=17.0^*$		
Number	152	190	92	149	118	

*p≤.05
**p≤.001

Item 2 shows that the availability of loan money (out of the four items) was said to hinder the least, as less than 46 percent of the sample indicated this item would be an obstacle. Respondents in situations where at least one person worked off the farm indicated that the availability of loan money was a greater problem.

The price of land (item 3) was said to be a hindrance by over 55 percent of the full-time farmers. In contrast, more than 66 percent of the farmers in families with off-farm work said that land prices were a problem. Similarly, operators with off-farm employment were more likely to see land availability as a problem (item 4).

Farmers with off-farm employment found the items in table 6 to be a hindrance more often than did the other operators. This may be because part-time farmers, as suggested by their long-range plans, tended to be more growth-oriented than full-time operators in this sample.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

About 48 percent of the farmers in Alabama worked 200 or more days off the farm in 1978. The highest incidence of part-time farming is found in the northern, more industrialized sections of the State. Farmers employed 200 or more days off the farm were more likely to be full owners. Those who reported no off-farm work were more likely to be engaged in a partnership or a farm organized as a corporation.

Part-time farmers were, in general, younger than full-time farmers. Their farms and gross annual sales were smaller and they tended to pursue enterprises requiring less time and labor.

In addition, almost half the operators in the State identify another line of work, other than farming, as their principal occupation and are employed full-time in their nonfarm pursuits. Only a small number of younger, active, full-time farm operators are in the business at this time.

The older, full-time farmers seemed to be motivated less by economic factors than were younger, part-time farmers. The older, full-time farmers also control a larger share of the agricultural resources. One implication of these findings is that policies intended to influence the use or treatment of land by relying solely on economic incentives may have less than their desired effects.

More farmers with off-farm jobs had white-collar occupations than did the State's employed population in general. Patterns of response to the questionnaire items suggested that part-time farmers were less committed to farming as a way of life than were full-time farmers. Yet, part-time farmers were more growth-oriented, due somewhat to their youth relative to full-time operators.

Part-time farming has many functions. For some it is a tax shelter, a preferred residential environment, or a hobby. For many individuals, part-time farming helps to ease the cost of entry into agriculture. For others, an off-farm job provides an alternate means of achieving a desired income level and staying in agriculture. To many, it is a matter of survival.

Part-time farming also links farm families to benefits and opportunities not as readily available in the farm sector. Job-related health insurance, life insurance, unemployment benefits, and pensions may insulate the farm household from some of the uncertainty of agricultural markets and ensure quality of life in retirement years. Thus, fringe benefits further encourage farm family labor force participation over and above a basic need for improved income.

Over 34 percent of the Alabama farm wives reported work off the farm. In addition to their off-farm jobs, many farm women regularly do bookkeeping and raise food for the family. Some may run farm errands and occasionally perform other farm tasks, such as harvesting crops and caring for farm animals (6). Women who work off the farm may do so for financial reasons, for themselves, and for the overall benefit of the farm family, as well as to provide money directly for the farm operation. An important conclusion of this study is that any conception of part-time farming is not complete without considering farm women's off-farm employment.

From 1964 to 1978, the proportion of Alabama operators working off the farm increased from 27 percent to 55 percent of the total. A similar change occurred in the country as a whole (7). With population decentralization, narrow profit margins, and increasing energy and labor costs, the proportion of part-time farmers is expected to grow substantially. Increased numbers of rural industrial jobs have competed for the time

and labor of would-be full-time farmers. At the same time, low product prices and the relentless treadmill of economic efficiency continue to force many operators to seek off-farm employment to support themselves and their families. Often these individuals keep their farm residence as well as a limited involvement in agricultural production.

The full-time operator represents a shrinking minority of those who call themselves farmers in Alabama. The part-time segment of the State's agriculture is expanding as many individuals employed in other sectors of the economy retain or seek involvement in agricultural production. Furthermore, the data show that although part-time farmers tended to operate smaller farms, the frequently encountered inclination to link part-time operators with small farms is not fully warranted. A considerable number of small farm owners have no off-farm employment and many part-time operators run sizeable units.

Part-time farming is on the increase in Alabama agriculture. Most young farmers have off-farm employment. As they grow older, the now-younger group may be expected to keep their nonfarm occupational involvement until economic conditions clearly merit commitment of their full effort to agricultural production.

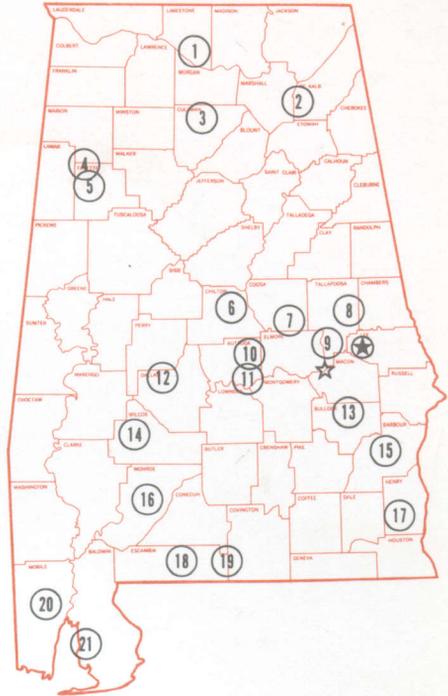
Individuals who farm and work at another job encompass a diverse set of circumstances, traits, and interests. Trends seem to point to the emergence of the part-time farmer as a distinct voice in agricultural affairs.

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Alabama's Agricultural Experiment Station System AUBURN UNIVERSITY

With an agricultural research unit in every major soil area, Auburn University serves the needs of field crop, livestock, forestry, and horticultural producers in each region in Alabama. Every citizen of the State has a stake in this research program, since any advantage from new and more economical ways of producing and handling farm products directly benefits the consuming public.



Research Unit Identification

- ★ Main Agricultural Experiment Station, Auburn.
- ☆ E. V. Smith Research Center, Shorter.

1. Tennessee Valley Substation, Belle Mina.
2. Sand Mountain Substation, Crossville.
3. North Alabama Horticulture Substation, Cullman.
4. Upper Coastal Plain Substation, Winfield.
5. Forestry Unit, Fayette County.
6. Chilton Area Horticulture Substation, Clanton.
7. Forestry Unit, Coosa County.
8. Piedmont Substation, Camp Hill.
9. Plant Breeding Unit, Tallassee.
10. Forestry Unit, Autauga County.
11. Prattville Experiment Field, Prattville.
12. Black Belt Substation, Marion Junction.
13. The Turnipseed-Ikenberry Place, Union Springs.
14. Lower Coastal Plain Substation, Camden.
15. Forestry Unit, Barbour County.
16. Monroeville Experiment Field, Monroeville.
17. Wiregrass Substation, Headland.
18. Brewton Experiment Field, Brewton.
19. Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center, Covington and Escambia counties.
20. Ornamental Horticulture Field Station, Spring Hill.
21. Gulf Coast Substation, Fairhope.