

For some time censuses of agriculture have included a question which asked the operator for the number of days he worked off the farm during the year preceding the census. This provided only a part of the information that was needed and users of the census began calling for more information on this aspect of farm life.

The 1950 Census of Agriculture and the 1950 Census of Population and Housing were taken at the same time. As part of the tabulation program, it was possible to combine information on income and economic activity of farm people from the census of population with information from the census of agriculture. The results proved so useful to Government agencies, farm organizations, and others interested in agriculture that the Bureau of the Census was urged to repeat this special tabulation following the 1959 Census of Agriculture and the 1960 Census of Population and Housing.

When plans were formulated for the 1964 Census of Agriculture, careful consideration was given to the fact that if information concerning the nonfarm activities and income of farm people were to be available, it would have to be collected as part of that census. The desirability and feasibility of adding these questions was carefully reviewed, as were all other parts of the 1964 census, with an advisory committee which consisted of representatives of the following organizations: American Farm Bureau Federation; National Council of Farmers Cooperatives; National Grange; National Farmers Union; National Association of State Departments of Agriculture; Farm Equipment Institute; Association of State Universities & Land Grant Colleges; Agricultural Publishers Association; American Petroleum Institute; American Farm Economics Association; Rural Sociological Society; American Statistical Association; and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In addition, a technical subcommittee was established, consisting of representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of the Census, to give careful consideration not only to the needs for the data, but also to the best means of obtaining them.

It was decided that the questions on income included in the 1964 census should follow as closely as possible the pattern of questions used in the 1960 Census of Population. It was recognized that some modifications would need to be made in order to take into account the special circumstances of farmers. The Bureau's experience in collecting income data over many years has shown that there is a danger of forgetting relatively infrequent or incidental items, and that the quality of the income data is improved if the questions are formulated in a way that helps the respondent remember by inquiring specifically about a number of sources from which income may be secured. Accordingly, wages or salary are distinguished from income from a person's own nonfarm business or profession, and these, in turn, from other sources of income. For most people these other sources include social security payments, pensions, veterans' payments, welfare payments, and the like, but in the case of farmers there may also be income from rental of farm or nonfarm property, soil bank payments, oil leases, and similar sources. Therefore, it was decided that these latter should be listed separately. However, the farmer was asked to report only the total for each of the four major types of sources.

From our experience in censuses and surveys, we have found that it is necessary to collect information about each member of a house-