

# Trends among agricultural employment status: A recombined tabulation of Employment Status Survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

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## 1. Introduction

As the scale of farm management continues to grow, the number of businesses unable to perform planned farm work due to shortages in agricultural workers is increasing. Japan faces a growing labor shortage amid a declining birthrate and aging population. Securing the number of workers needed for effective farm management becomes an increasingly critical problem. There is therefore a need to identify the characteristics and key problems related to securing farm workers, and to compare the employment status of farm employees to that of other industries.

This study used data from the Employment Status Survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, which are comparable to other industries, to conduct an aggregate analysis of farm workers' employment status. We also aggregated individual data from questionnaires to create a recombined tabulation by the Policy Research Institute, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Note).

## 2. More farm employees but increasing percentage of irregular staffs

The number of farm employees considerably increased from 2007 to 2012, and have continued to increase—but at a slower rate—from 2012 to 2017 (Table 1). In terms of regular staffs (persons who are called “Regular employees”) and irregular staffs, the number irregular staffs increased at a higher rate for both male and female, and the ratio of irregular to regular farm employees is also increasing. In addition, the percentage of irregular staffs among farm employees in 2017 is more than 20 points higher than the 22% of male and 57% of female in all industries.

Considering farm employees in terms of male and female regular and irregular staffs, the characteristics differ greatly, depending upon age and occupation. The percentage of male regular staffs is high for all age groups between 20 and 60 years old, with the same age distribution as in all industries. In terms of occupation, 45% of employees work in crop cultivation and 36% work in livestock. The percentages of 25–29- and 55–59-year-olds are high for female regular staffs. In terms of occupation, the highest percentage is 49% of female regular staffs working in crop cultivation, followed by 18% involved in clerical work.

Most male irregular staffs are 60 years or older, of which 32% are employed temporary workers and 27% are employed part-time workers. In terms of occupation, 74% of male irregular staffs work in crop cultivation. A high percentage of female irregular staffs fall into the 35–69 years age range, with the highest numbers being 40–44 years old and in their 60s. Of the female irregular staffs, 69% are employed part-time workers, and 57% are “mainly keeping house.” Lastly, 73% of female irregular staffs work in crop cultivation.

Table 1. Farm employee trends (male and female regular and irregular staffs)

	Actual number (1,000 persons)			Rate of change (%)		Percentage of male and female regular and irregular staffs(%)		
	2007	2012	2017	2007-2012	2012-2017	2007	2012	2017
Total	221.6	280.8	300.9	26.7	7.2	-	-	-
Male regular staffs	56.8	72.2	78.2	27.3	8.3	63.3	55.5	53.2
Male irregular staffs	33.0	58.0	68.9	75.9	18.9	36.7	44.5	46.8
Female regular staffs	37.2	35.9	34.2	▲ 3.4	▲ 4.8	28.2	23.9	22.2
Female irregular staffs	94.7	114.7	119.5	21.1	4.3	71.8	76.1	77.8

Source: Employment Status Survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (recombined tabulation).

### 3. Increasing percentage of male workers working in agriculture despite trying to leave

The Employment Status Survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications shows the characteristics of those who have employed the current job or have left the previous job within a certain period. The increase in the number of farm employees slow from 2012 to 2017, while the growth of new male employees during this period was steady and slowed only slightly; however, the rate decreased significantly among irregular staffs. Conversely, the number of male employees having left the previous job during this period increased at a steady pace, while the number of irregular staffs increase only slightly. In other words, the slowed increase in the number of male regular staffs is largely due to an increased number of persons left the previous job (female persons employed the current job and have left the previous job remained largely steady).

Although the number of male former farm employees increase, the percentage of those employed in same job, even after left the previous job, rise from 23% in 2007 to 34% in 2017, which is similar to the percentage for all industries. Among female, farm employees remain around 20%, decreasing by about 15 points, compared with all industries (Table 2). This indicates that male are more likely to change jobs within agriculture, while female are still less likely to stay within it.

Table 2. Changes in percentage of former workers employed in the same industry (by sex)

	Male			Female		
	2007	2012	2017	2007	2012	2017
Total	39.6	39.0	38.1	36.3	35.7	36.2
Agriculture	23.3	30.8	34.3	20.3	18.8	22.6
Construction	45.1	45.1	45.4	15.3	18.9	21.9
Manufacturing	48.9	43.3	45.8	35.6	31.1	34.2
Sales and retail	35.2	34.6	34.2	39.3	37.8	37.2
Food and hospitality	32.8	37.9	35.6	29.5	30.2	29.1
Medical and welfare	56.8	61.7	61.1	60.2	65.5	64.4

Source: Employment Status Survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (recombined tabulation).

Note: 1) Former workers who left previous job within the past 5 years

2) Agriculture targets former workers and other industries target the employed

### 4. Decreasing trend in male regular staffs' days worked per year

To compete with other industries in male regular staffs, improvements must be implemented in agricultural labor conditions. Agriculture is an occupation that falls under "Exclusions from the Application of Provisions on Working Hours" in the Labor Standards Act. Therefore, as the provision of holidays (1 day or more per week) and working hours (40 hours or less per week) are not applied, the percentage of male regular staffs worked 300 days or more per year is higher than those of all industries (Fig. 1). However, the percentage of farm employees worked more than 300 days per year is steadily declining; as a result, the average number of days worked per year is declining, and the gap between agriculture and all industries is narrowing.

Furthermore, although the number of annual working days for male regular farm employees is higher than in other industries, there is no difference in working hours per week. In 2017, it was 47.7 hours in agriculture and 47.1 hours in all industries. This indicates that the working hours per week in agriculture is shorter than those of all industries; this is presumably because agriculture has less overtime than other industries.

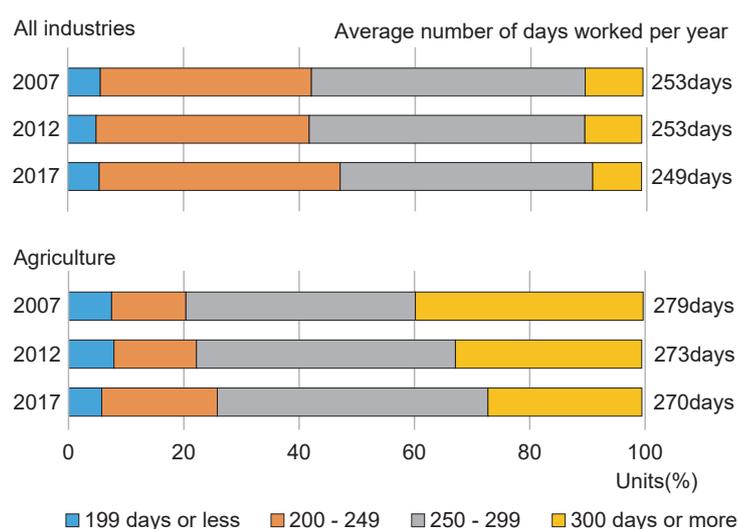


Figure 1. Changes in the percentage of employees per annual number of days worked by male regular staffs

Source: Employment Status Survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (recombined tabulation).

## 5. Conclusion

The Employment Status Survey includes a variety of questions on topics not introduced here, including employment status and employment awareness. Therefore, please refer to the Research Report, Actual Status, and Trends of Agricultural Labor Force, for the results of tabulations on topics that cannot be addressed here.

Note: According to the figures published in the Employment Status Survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, salary-earning farm household members are workers. Here, we are using individual questionnaires to exclude such farmers and household members.