

EXCERPT FROM “THE NEGRO AT WORK DURING THE WORLD WAR AND
DURING RECONSTRUCTION,” 1921
BY THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, DIVISION OF NEGRO ECONOMICS

The boll weevil entered the southwestern corner of Georgia in 1915 and damaged the top, or late fall, cotton crop slightly. In 1916, heavy damage was inflicted in 10 counties in the southwestern section, and before the fall of 1916 the weevil had spread over all or a considerable part of 10 other counties, inflicting damage on some farms and leaving others undamaged. In these counties terrific rains during July added to the damage of the weevil and made it increasingly difficult to take the proper precautions against its inroads. As a result many of the farmers were almost ruined and many decided to change from cotton to food products.... The employers of

about 30 per cent [sic] of the Negro farm hands and tenants in five of the counties heavily damaged by the weevil and about 30 per cent of the hands and tenants in two of the counties suffering moderate damage, together with scattering employers in other boll-weevil counties, were questioned as to their labor supply in 1916 and 1917. Their replies indicated that the line of heavy movement corresponded closely to the line of heavy damage by the weevil.

