

1998 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE - COMMONWEALTH OF NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY

For more than 150 years, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, conducted the census of agriculture. However, the 1997 Appropriations Act transferred the responsibility from the Bureau of the Census to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). The 1998 Census of Agriculture for The Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) is the first census in the Northern Mariana Islands conducted by NASS.

The census of agriculture is taken to obtain agricultural statistics for each county, State (including territories and protectorates), and the Nation. The first U.S. agricultural census data were collected in 1840 as a part of the sixth decennial census. From 1840 to 1920, an agricultural census was taken as a part of each decennial census. Since 1920, a separate national agricultural census has been taken every five years.

The 1998 census is the 4th census of agriculture of CNMI. The first agriculture census, taken in 1970 in conjunction with the decennial census, a practice that continued in 1980 and 1990. This is the first agriculture census taken in the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands that was not done as part of the population census, and future agriculture censuses in CNMI will be done on the same five-year cycle used for the main U.S. census.

CENSUS USES

The census of agriculture is the leading source of statistics about CNMI's agricultural production and the only source of consistent, comparable data at the island level. Census statistics are used to measure agricultural production and to identify trends in an ever changing agricultural sector. Many local programs use census data as a benchmark for designing and evaluating surveys. Private industry uses census statistics to provide a more effective production and distribution system for the agricultural community. One of the most important uses of the census data is to justify claims of farmers who may suffer damages and losses due to natural disasters, such as typhoons.

AUTHORITY AND AREA COVERED

The census of agriculture is required by law under the "Census of Agriculture Act of 1997," Public Law 105-113 (Title 7, United States Code, Section 2204g). The law directs the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a census of agriculture in 1998 and in every fifth year thereafter,

covering the prior year. The census of agriculture includes each State, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

The census data for CNMI were collected in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement approved by the Administrator of NASS and by the Department of Commerce of the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

FARM DEFINITION

The statistics collected in the census relate to places with agricultural operations qualifying as farms according to the census definition. In CNMI, this included all places from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the calendar year of 1997. The farm definition differs from that used in 1990 only in the minimum amount of sales necessary to be classified as a farm, which in 1990 was \$100.

COMPARABILITY OF DATA

In general, the type of data from the 1998 census are comparable with those of previous censuses. The major difference in the two censuses is the farm definition, with the 1993 data for farms with sales greater than or equal to \$100, and the 1998 data for farms with sales greater than or equal to \$1000. All dollar values presented in this report are in current dollars, i.e., 1997 data are in 1997 dollars and 1990 data in 1990 dollars. The dollar values have not been adjusted for changes in price levels between census years.

TABULAR PRESENTATION

Tables 1 through 12 show detailed area data accompanied by historic data from the previous census. Tables 13 through 27 show selected data items presented by municipalities. Tables 28 through 31 provide 1997 area data cross-tabulated by tenure of operator, age of operator, size of farm, and value of agricultural products sold.

SPECIAL TABULATIONS

Custom-designed tabulations can be developed to individual user specifications on a programming cost reimbursable basis. Inquiries about special tabulations should be directed to Data Lab Administrator, Marketing and Information Services Office, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20250.

DISCLOSURE RULES

In keeping with the provisions of Title 7, United States Code, no data are published that would disclose the operations of an individual farm. However, the number of farms in a given size category or other classification is not considered a disclosure, so this information may be given even though other information is withheld.

REFERENCE PERIODS

Inventories of livestock, poultry, and machinery and equipment are the number on hand at the time of enumeration. Crop production, crop and livestock sales, and expense data are for the 1997 calendar year.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

The following abbreviations and symbols are used throughout the tables:

- Represents zero.
- (D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual farms.
- (NA) Not available.
- (X) Not applicable.
- (Z) Less than half of the unit shown.