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# INTRODUCTION

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## HISTORY

For more than 150 years, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, conducted the census of agriculture and related censuses and surveys. 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 census of horticultural specialties is a part of the agricultural census program.

The 1998 Census of Horticultural Specialties, conducted for the first time by NASS, is the eighth census of horticultural specialties. Previous horticultural specialties censuses were conducted in conjunction with the census of agriculture and were taken in 1889, 1929, 1949, 1959, 1970, 1979, and 1988. The 1998 Census of Horticultural Specialties includes producers of floriculture, nursery, and other specialty crops, such as sod, mushrooms, food crops produced under glass or other protection, transplants for commercial production, and seeds.

## CENSUS USES

The primary objective of the horticultural specialties census is to obtain a comprehensive and detailed picture of the horticultural sector of the economy. It is the only source of detailed production and sales data at the national level. The census of horticultural specialties provides detailed statistics to government agencies, academia, nursery and floriculture industries, and others on the size and structure of the horticulture industry for planning, policymaking, research, and market analysis.

## AUTHORITY

The 1998 Census of Horticultural Specialties was taken in accordance with the provisions of "Census of Agriculture Act of 1997," Public Law 105-113, the Census of Agriculture Act of 1997 (Title 7, United States Code, Section 2204g). The

law authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct censuses and surveys deemed necessary to furnish annual or other data on the subjects covered by the census.

## HORTICULTURAL SPECIALTIES OPERATION DEFINITION

The definition of a horticultural specialty operation has been changed between censuses. For the 1998 census, a horticultural specialty operation is defined as any place that grew and sold \$10,000 or more of horticultural specialty products during 1998. The definition used for the censuses in 1988, 1979, 1970, and 1959 included operations growing and selling \$2,000 or more of horticultural products during the census year. The definition used prior to 1959 was a \$1,000 minimum sales limit.

The definition of a farm in the census of agriculture, which was the basis for identifying horticultural specialty operations, has also varied. Since 1974, the census of agriculture has included all farms from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold during the census year. Prior to 1974, the farm definition was based on a lower value of products sold and included a relationship to acres in the place.

## COMPARABILITY OF DATA

The data included in this publication are not directly comparable to the 1997 Census of Agriculture or any other publication released at a national level. Differences in the kinds of statistics collected and in collection methodology affect comparability.

## MAJOR DATA CHANGES

Major changes in 1998 to the horticultural specialties census are the inclusion of cut Christmas trees, short term woody crops, and marketing

channels. The addition of cut Christmas trees and short term woody crops is a result of the 1997 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), which reclassified these commodities from forestry to horticulture. NAICS also reclassified vegetable seeds and vegetable and/or melon bedding plant production to vegetable and melon farming, which is not considered a horticultural specialty. However, these crops are included in the census of horticultural specialties since it was impossible to identify these operations prior to data collection. In addition, more detailed information about aquatic plants, herbaceous perennials, tobacco transplants, and irrigation is included.

## REFERENCE PERIOD

The 1998 Census of Horticultural Specialties covers operations for the 1998 calendar year, except for a small number of operations that maintain their records on a fiscal year basis. These operations were permitted to report their fiscal year

reporting an item is not considered a release of confidential information and is provided even though other information may be withheld.

## DATA PRODUCTS

The 1998 Census of Horticultural Specialties data, as well as the 1997 Census of Agriculture Volume 1 Geographic Area Series and related reports, are available on the Internet and in printed reports. The 1997 and 1992 Volume 1 series and some related reports are also available on CD-ROM. Visit the NASS website at [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov) to access Internet files and for product ordering information, or call 1-800-727-9540.

## CUSTOM TABULATIONS

Custom-designed tabulations can be developed to user specifications on a cost-reimbursable basis. Inquiries about special tabulations should be

that included at least half of the 1998 calendar year. Data on employment, land, structures, and equipment were to be reported for the period specified on the questionnaire.

## TABULAR PRESENTATION

U.S. data - Tables 1 through 20 show detailed U.S.-level data.

State data - Tables 21 through 54 present selected data items by State. States not reporting an item are not listed under the item heading. States with a limited number of operations reporting an item are suppressed to avoid disclosing individual information.

## RESPONDENT CONFIDENTIALITY

In keeping with the provisions of Title 7 of the United States Code, no data are published that would disclose information about an individual operation. However, the number of operations

directed to the Data Lab Administrator, Marketing and Information Services Office, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250; by phone on 1-800-727-9540; or by e-mail at [nass@nass.usda.gov](mailto:nass@nass.usda.gov).

## ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

The following abbreviations and symbols are used throughout the tables:

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