

1997 Census of Agriculture

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Rhode Island State and County Data

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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 1997 Census of Agriculture is the first census conducted by NASS.

The census of agriculture is taken to obtain agricultural statistics for each county, State, and the Nation. The first agriculture census was taken in 1840 as part of the sixth decennial census of population. From 1840 to 1950, the agriculture census was taken as part of the decennial census. A separate mid-decade census of agriculture was conducted in 1925, 1935, and 1945. From 1954 to 1974, a census of agriculture was taken for the years ending in 4 and 9. In 1976, Congress authorized the census of agriculture to be taken for 1978 and 1982 to adjust the data reference year so that it coincided with other economic censuses. This adjustment in timing established the agriculture census on a 5-year cycle collecting data for years ending in 2 and 7.

CENSUS USES

The census of agriculture is the leading source of statistics about the Nation's agricultural production and the only source of consistent, comparable data at the county, State, and national levels. Census statistics are used by Congress to develop and change farm programs, study historical trends, assess current conditions, and plan for the future. Many national and State programs use census data to design and allocate funding for extension service projects, agricultural research, soil conservation programs, and land-grant colleges and universities. Private industry uses census statistics to provide a more effective production and distribution system for the agricultural community.

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 after, 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.

FARM DEFINITION

The definition of a farm for census purposes was first established in 1850. It has been changed nine times since. The current definition, first used for the 1974 census, is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year. The farm definition used for each U.S. territory varies. The report for each territory includes a discussion of its farm definition.

COMPARABILITY OF DATA

Most data are comparable between the 1997 and 1992 censuses. A few important changes for the 1997 census may affect comparability for some data. Farms with all acreage in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) are included as farms in the 1997 census tabulations. For the 1992 census, farms that had all their acreage in the CRP or WRP were not included in the census tabulations.

For the 1997 census, farms were classified according to the new North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Due to NAICS, short rotation woody crops, which includes Christmas trees and maple sap gathering, are considered crop production. Emus, ostriches, and rhea are now tabulated in other poultry. In previous agriculture censuses, farms were classified by the Standard Industrial Classification System (SIC). A bridge table showing 1997 farms classified by the SIC and a table comparing 1997 NAICS structure to 1987 SIC structure are shown in Appendix E.

Items removed from the 1997 census:

1. Land diverted under annual commodity adjustment programs
2. Commodity Credit Corporation loans for honey and rye

Dollar values for expenses and agricultural product sales are expressed in current dollars and are not adjusted for inflation or deflation. In general, data for censuses since 1974 are not fully comparable with data for 1969 and earlier censuses due to changes in the farm definition.

REFERENCE PERIODS

Inventories of livestock, poultry, and machinery and equipment are measured as of December 31, of the census year. Crop and livestock production, sales, expenses, income from federal farm programs, irrigation, Commodity Credit Corporation loans, Conservation Reserve and Wetlands Reserve Programs, direct sales, chemicals and fertilizer, farm-related income and hired workers are measured for the calendar year, except for a few crops (such as citrus, avocados, and olives) for which the production year overlaps the calendar year.

TABLES

Chapter 1. State tables 1 through 45 show detailed State-level data usually accompanied by historical data for one or more past censuses. State tables 46 through 52 show 1997 State-level data cross-tabulated by several categories.

Chapter 2. County tables 1 through 17 include general data for all counties. The counties are listed in alphabetical order in the column headings. County tables 18 through 39 only show counties reporting a data item. Counties not reporting an item are not listed under the item heading. Counties with a limited number of farms reporting an item have their data combined and presented as part of "All other counties."

Appendix B. Table A shows the number of American Indian farm operators counted individually as well as those counted collectively on the reservations' supplemental reports at the State and county level. Table B shows selected data for American Indian farm operators and the percent these data contributed to the State total.

Appendix C. Table A displays adjustments to the census counts due to farms undercounted or overcounted in the census. Coverage adjusted counts are shown for total farms by demographic characteristics, land in farms, and total value of sales.

Appendix E. Table A provides 1997 census State-level data tabulated by SIC and table B is a conversion table that assists the data user when making comparisons of establishment data between classification systems.

RESPONDENT CONFIDENTIALITY

In keeping with the provisions of Title 7 of the United States Code, no data are published that would disclose the operations of an individual farm. However, the number of farms reporting an item is not considered a release of confidential information and is provided even though other information may be withheld.

SPECIAL EFFORTS FOR MINORITIES AND AMERICAN INDIANS

To improve coverage of minority farm operators, NASS mailed out over 3,000 letters and postcards to farmers and ranchers asking if they knew any farm operators in their area who might be missed or were missed in previous agricultural censuses. In addition, NASS State offices contacted and visited local farm organizations, especially those representing women and minority farm operators. Postcards were provided for their members to complete and mail in, so they would be included in the 1997 Census of Agriculture.

In previous censuses, the census counted one farm operator for each American Indian reservation. For the 1997 census, the goal was to establish an accurate count of the number of American Indian farm operators. Along with the census report form, an additional form was delivered to each reservation asking for the number of American Indians who operated a farm or ranch on the reservation.

SPECIAL STUDIES AND CUSTOM TABULATIONS

Special studies, such as the 1998 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey and the 1998 Census of Horticultural Specialties, are part of the census program. These special studies are for reference year 1998.

Custom-designed tabulations can be developed to individual user specifications on a cost-reimbursable basis. Inquiries about special tabulations should be directed to the Director, Census Division, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Room 436 Iverson Mall, 3737 Branch Avenue, Temple Hills, MD 20748-1405; by phone on 1-800-523-3215; or by e-mail at nass@nass.usda.gov.

DATA PRODUCTS

The 1997 Census of Agriculture is available on three different media: 1) printed reports, 2) CD-ROM, and 3) the Internet. The NASS home page is located at www.usda.gov/nass/.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

The following abbreviations and symbols are used throughout the tables:

- Represents zero.
- (D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual farms.

- (H) Standard error or relative standard error of estimate is greater than or equal to 99.95 percent.
- (IC) Independent city.
- (L) Standard error or relative standard error of estimate is less than .05 percent.

- (NA) Not available.
- (X) Not applicable.
- (Z) Less than half of the unit shown.
- cwt Hundredweight.
- sq ft Square feet.