

# 1997 Census of Agriculture

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## ***United States*** Summary and State Data

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# Contents

	Page
Introduction .....	VII
<b>MAPS</b>	
United States Map .....	1
State Maps:	
1. Land in Farms by State: 1997 .....	2
2. Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold by State: 1997 .....	3
3. Value of Crops Sold by State: 1997 .....	4
4. Value of Livestock, Poultry, and Their Products Sold by State: 1997 .....	5
<b>FIGURES</b>	
1. Profile of the Nation's Agriculture: 1997 .....	6
2. Percent of Farms and of Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold: 1997 .....	7
3. Farms by Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold: 1969 to 1997 .....	7
4. Land Use: 1997 .....	8
5. Selected Crops Harvested: 1997 .....	8
6. Value of Livestock, Poultry, and Their Products Sold: 1997 .....	9
7. Production Expenses: 1997 .....	9
<b>TABLES</b>	
<b>CHAPTER 1. United States Data</b>	
1. Historical Highlights: 1997 and Earlier Census Years .....	10
2. Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold and Direct Sales: 1997, 1992, and 1987 .....	12
3. Farm Production Expenses: 1997, 1992, and 1987 .....	13
4. Net Cash Return From Agricultural Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	16
5. Government Payments and Other Farm-Related Income: 1997 and 1992 .....	17
6. Commodity Credit Corporation Loans: 1997 and 1992 .....	18
7. Land Use: 1997, 1992, and 1987 .....	19
8. Land in Farms, Harvested Cropland, and Irrigated Land, by Size of Farm: 1997 and 1992 .....	20
9. Irrigation: 1997, 1992, and 1987 .....	20
10. Selected Characteristics of Irrigated and Nonirrigated Farms: 1997 and 1992 .....	21
11. Value of Land and Buildings: 1997, 1992, and 1987 .....	22
12. Value of Machinery and Equipment on Place: 1997 and 1992 .....	22
13. Selected Machinery and Equipment on Place: 1997 and 1992 .....	22
14. Petroleum Products Expenses: 1997, 1992, and 1987 .....	23
15. Agricultural Chemicals Used, Including Fertilizer: 1997, 1992, and 1987 .....	23
16. Tenure and Characteristics of Operator and Type of Organization for All Farms and Farms Operated by Black and Other Races: 1997, 1992, and 1987 .....	24
17. Selected Characteristics of Farms by Specified Racial Groups, Sex of Operators, and Persons of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino Origin: 1997 and 1992 .....	25
18. Selected Characteristics of Farms by North American Industry Classification System: 1997 .....	27
19. Selected Characteristics of Reservations and Abnormal Farms: 1997 and 1992 .....	28
20. Poultry—Inventory and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	28
21. Layers, Pullets, and Pullet Chicks— Number Sold: 1997 and 1992 .....	29
22. Poultry—Inventory and Sales by Farms With Layers and Pullets 13 Weeks Old and Older: 1997 .....	29
23. Turkeys—Number Sold: 1997 .....	30
24. Cattle and Calves—Inventory: 1997 and 1992 .....	30

	Page
25. Cattle and Calves—Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	31
26. Cattle and Calves Herd Size by Inventory and Sales: 1997 .....	31
27. Cow Herd Size by Inventory and Sales: 1997 .....	32
28. Beef Cow Herd Size by Inventory and Sales: 1997 .....	32
29. Milk Cow Herd Size by Inventory and Sales: 1997 .....	33
30. Cattle and Calves—Number Sold Per Farm by Sales: 1997 .....	33
31. Hogs and Pigs—Inventory: 1997 and 1992 .....	34
32. Hogs and Pigs—Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	34
33. Hogs and Pigs—Litters Farrowed: 1997 and 1992 .....	35
34. Hogs and Pigs Herd Size by Inventory and Sales: 1997 .....	35
35. Hogs and Pigs—Inventory and Sales by Number Sold Per Farm: 1997 .....	35
36. Hogs and Pigs—Inventory, Sales, and Litters by Total Litters Farrowed: 1997 .....	36
37. Sheep and Lambs—Inventory, Shorn, and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	36
38. Sheep and Lambs—Inventory, Shorn, and Sales by Size of Flock: 1997 .....	36
39. Ewes 1 Year Old or Older—Inventory, Shorn, and Sales by Size of Ewe Flock: 1997 .....	37
40. Other Livestock and Livestock Products— Inventory and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	37
41. Specified Crops Harvested—Yield Per Acre Irrigated and Nonirrigated: 1997 .....	38
42. Specified Crops by Acres Harvested: 1997 and 1992 .....	39
43. Specified Fruits and Nuts by Acres: 1997 and 1992 .....	44
44. Nursery and Greenhouse Crops, Cut Christmas Trees Harvested, Mushrooms, and Sod Grown for Sale by Value of Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	47
45. Farms by Concentration of Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold: 1997 .....	51
46. Summary by Tenure of Operator: 1997 .....	52
47. Summary by Type of Organization: 1997 .....	63
48. Summary by Age and Principal Occupation of Operator: 1997 .....	74
49. Summary by Size of Farm: 1997 .....	96
50. Summary by Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold: 1997 .....	118
51. Summary by North American Industry Classification System: 1997 .....	140
52. Summary by Combined Government Payments and Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold: 1997 .....	162

## CHAPTER 2. State Data

1. State Summary Highlights: 1997 .....	184
2. Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold and Farms by North American Industry Classification System: 1997 and 1992 .....	193
3. Farm Production Expenses: 1997 and 1992 .....	211
4. Net Cash Return From Agricultural Sales, Government Payments, Other Farm- Related Income, Direct Sales, and Commodity Credit Corporation Loans: 1997 and 1992 .....	220
5. Hired Farm Labor—Workers and Payroll: 1997 .....	232
6. Farms, Land in Farms, Value of Land and Buildings, and Land Use: 1997 and 1992 .....	241
7. Harvested Cropland by Size of Farm and Acres Harvested: 1997 and 1992 .....	259
8. Irrigation: 1997 and 1992 .....	268
9. Machinery and Equipment on Place: 1997 and 1992 .....	277
10. Agricultural Chemicals Used, Including Fertilizer: 1997 and 1992 .....	286
11. Tenure and Characteristics of Operator and Type of Organization: 1997 and 1992 ..	291
12. Farms With Sales of \$10,000 or More: 1997 and 1992 .....	309
13. Selected Crops Harvested: 1997 and 1992 .....	354
14. Cattle and Calves—Inventory and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	377
15. Hogs and Pigs—Inventory, Litters, and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	398
16. Poultry—Inventory and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	407
17. Sheep and Lambs—Inventory, Shorn, and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	416
18. Horses and Ponies—Inventory and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	421
19. Milk Goats—Inventory and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	422
20. Angora Goats—Inventory and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	423
21. Mink and Their Pelts—Inventory and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	424
22. Colonies of Bees and Honey—Inventory and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	424
23. Fish Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	425
24. Miscellaneous Poultry—Inventory and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	428
25. Miscellaneous Livestock and Animal Specialties—Inventory and Sales: 1997 and 1992 .....	433
26. Grains—Corn, Sorghum, Wheat, and Other Small Grains: 1997 and 1992 .....	436
27. Cotton, Tobacco, Soybeans, Dry Beans and Peas, Potatoes, Sugar Crops, and Peanuts: 1997 and 1992 .....	445

	Page
28. Field Seeds, Grass Seeds, Hay, Forage, and Silage: 1997 and 1992 .....	451
29. Vegetables, Sweet Corn, and Melons Harvested for Sale: 1997 and 1992 .....	462
30. Land in Orchards: 1997 and 1992 .....	488
31. Fruits and Nuts: 1997 and 1992 .....	489
32. Berries Harvested for Sale: 1997 and 1992 .....	502
33. Nursery and Greenhouse Crops, Cut Christmas Trees Harvested, Mushrooms, and Sod Grown for Sale: 1997 and 1992 .....	507
34. Other Crops: 1997 and 1992 .....	518
35. Farms Operated by Black and Other Races by Value of Sales and Occupation: 1997 and 1992 .....	523
36. Farms Operated by Black and Other Races by Tenure: 1997 and 1992 .....	524
37. Operators by Selected Racial Groups: 1997 and 1992 .....	525
38. Operators of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino Origin: 1997 and 1992 .....	528
39. Farms With Grazing Permits: 1997 and 1992 .....	529

## APPENDIXES

A. General Explanation .....	A-1
B. American Indian Farm Operators .....	B-1
C. Statistical Methodology .....	C-1
D. Report Forms and Information Sheets .....	D-1
E. Conversion From the 1987 Standard Industrial Classification System to the 1997 North American Industry Classification System .....	E-1
F. Units of Weights, Measures, and Metric Conversion Factors .....	F-1

Index .....	Index 1
Publication Program .....	Inside back cover

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

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

**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 U.S. and State level. Table B shows selected data for American Indian farm operators and the percent these data contributed to the U.S. total.

**Appendix C.** Tables A and B quantify the effect of the nonresponse estimation procedure on selected census data items. Table C presents the percent relative standard error of selected U.S. data items for all farms, and table D presents the percent relative standard error of selected U.S. data items for all farms with sales of \$10,000 or more. Table E presents the standard error for percent change in U.S. totals from 1992 to 1997. Table F presents the percent relative standard error for U.S. and State totals for selected data items. Table G 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 U.S.-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](mailto: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/](http://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.