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# Introduction

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## HISTORY

For 156 years (1840 - 1996), the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census was responsible for collecting census of agriculture data. The 1997 Appropriations Act contained a provision that transferred the responsibility for the census of agriculture from the Bureau of the Census to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). The 2007 Census of Agriculture is the 27th Federal census of agriculture and the third conducted by NASS.

The first agriculture census was taken in 1840 as part of the sixth decennial census of population. The agriculture census continued to be taken as part of the decennial census through 1950. A separate mid-decade census of agriculture was conducted in 1925, 1935, and 1945. From 1954 to 1974, the census 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.

## USES OF CENSUS DATA

The census of agriculture is the leading source of facts and statistics about the Nation's agricultural production. It provides a detailed picture of U.S. farms and ranches every five years and is the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every state and county or county equivalent in the U.S.

Agriculture census data are routinely used by farm organizations, businesses, state departments of agriculture, elected representatives and legislative bodies at all levels of government, public and private

sector analysts, the news media, and colleges and universities. Agriculture census data are used to:

- Evaluate, change, promote, and formulate farm and rural policies and programs that help agricultural producers;
- Study historical trends, assess current conditions, and plan for the future;
- Formulate market strategies, provide more efficient production and distribution systems, and locate facilities for agricultural communities;
- Make energy projections and forecast needs for agricultural producers and their communities;
- Develop new and improved methods to increase agricultural production and profitability;
- Allocate local and national funds for farm programs, e.g. extension service projects, agricultural research, soil conservation programs, and land-grant colleges and universities;
- Plan for operations during drought and emergency outbreaks of diseases or infestations of pests.
- Analyze and report on the current state of food, fuel, feed, and fiber production in the United States.

In addition agricultural news media and agricultural associations use census data as background material for stories and articles on U.S. agriculture and the foods we produce.

## AUTHORITY

The 2007 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, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa.

## FARM DEFINITION

The census definition of a farm 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 definition has changed nine times since it was established in 1850. The current definition was first used for the 1974 Census of Agriculture and has been used in each subsequent agriculture census. This definition is consistent with the definition used for current USDA surveys. The farm definition used for each U.S. territory varies. The report for each territory includes a discussion of its farm definition.

## DATA COMPARABILITY

Most data are comparable between the 2007 and 2002 censuses. A few changes were made to the 2007 census that affect comparability for some data items. See Appendix B, General Explanation and Census of Agriculture Report Form, Data Changes for a detailed discussion of these changes. Dollar figures are expressed in current dollars and have not been 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 PERIOD

Reference periods for the 2007 Census of Agriculture were similar to those used in the 2002 Census of Agriculture. Reference periods used were:

- Crop production is measured for the calendar year, except for a few crops such as avocados, citrus, and olives for which the production year overlaps the calendar year. See Appendix B,

General Explanation and Census of Agriculture Report Form for details.

- Livestock, poultry, and machinery and equipment inventories, market value of land and buildings, and grain storage capacity are measured as of December 31 of the census year.
- Crop and livestock sales, farm expenses, income from federal farm programs, irrigation, Commodity Credit Corporation loans, Conservation Reserve, Farmable Wetlands, Conservation Reserve Enhancement, and Wetlands Reserve Program participation, direct sales income, chemical and fertilizer use, farm-related income, and hired farm labor data are measured for the calendar year.

## TABLES AND APPENDICES

**Chapter 1.** Table 1 shows state-level historical data through the 1978 census and tables 2 through 57 show detailed state-level data usually accompanied by historical data from the 2002 census. Tables 58 through 65 show detailed state-level data cross-tabulated by several categories for the 2007 census only.

**Chapter 2.** County-level data are presented in 56 tables in 2 different table formats - county and county summary. Most tables include 2002 historical data. County tables include general data for all counties within the state. The county names are listed in alphabetical order in the column headings. County summary tables provide comprehensive data for all counties reporting a data item.

**Appendix A.** Provides information about data collection and data processing activities and discusses the statistical methodology used in conducting and evaluating the census. Table A summarizes coverage adjustment for selected items for the state. Table B provides reliability estimates of state totals for selected items. Table C summarizes coverage adjustment for selected items at the county level. Table D provides total number of American Indian or Alaska Native farm operators both on and off reservations by county.

**Appendix B.** Includes definitions of specific terms

and phrases used in this publication, including items in the publication tables that carry the note "see text." It also provides facsimiles of the report form and instruction sheet used to collect data.

## **RESPONDENT CONFIDENTIALITY**

In keeping with the provisions of Title 7 of the United States Code, no data are published that would disclose information about the operations of an individual farm or ranch. All tabulated data are subjected to an extensive disclosure review prior to publication. Any tabulated item that identifies data reported by a respondent or allows a respondent's data to be accurately estimated or derived, was suppressed and coded with a 'D'. However, the number of farms reporting an item is not considered confidential information and is provided even though other information is withheld.

## **SPECIAL EFFORTS DIRECTED AT MINORITIES**

NASS implemented several activities to improve coverage of minority farm operators. These activities included, but were not limited to:

- Obtaining mail lists from organizations likely to contain names and addresses of minority farm operators; and
- Conducting pre-census promotion activities that targeted women, American Indian and Alaska Native, Black and African American, and Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin farm operators; and
- In 2002 an initial effort was made to collect data from individual operators on American Indian reservations in three states. In 2007 this effort was expanded to attempt to collect data from operators on reservations in all states with reservations; and
- Producing a Spanish report form version for Field Office and enumerator use.

## **SPECIAL STUDIES AND CUSTOM TABULATIONS**

Special studies such as the 2008 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey, the 2008 Organic Production Survey, the 2009 Census of Horticultural Specialties, the 2010 Census of Aquaculture, and the 2010 Land and Economic Stability Survey are part of the census program and provide supplemental information to the 2007 Census of Agriculture in the respective subject area. Results are published in print and on the internet.

Custom-designed tabulations may be developed when data are not published elsewhere. These tabulations are developed to individual user specifications on a cost-reimbursable basis and shared with the public. The census Volume 1 on CD-ROM is an alternative data source that should be investigated before requesting a custom tabulation.

All special studies and custom tabulations are subject to a thorough disclosure review prior to release to prevent the disclosure of any individual respondent data. Requests for custom tabulations can be submitted via the internet from the NASS home page, by mail, or by e-mail to:

DataLab  
National Agricultural Statistics Service  
Room 6436A, Stop 2054  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250 – 2054  
or  
Datalab@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 farms.
- (H) Standard error or relative standard error of estimate is greater than or equal to 99.95 percent.

(IC) Independent city

(X) Not applicable.

(L) Standard error or relative standard error of estimate is less than .05 percent.

(Z) Less than half of the unit shown.

(NA) Not available.

cwt Hundredweight

sq ft Square feet