



# Wheat Farming

ACH12-25/March 2015

**A \$15.8 billion industry, up 48 percent since 2007.**

## Five states...

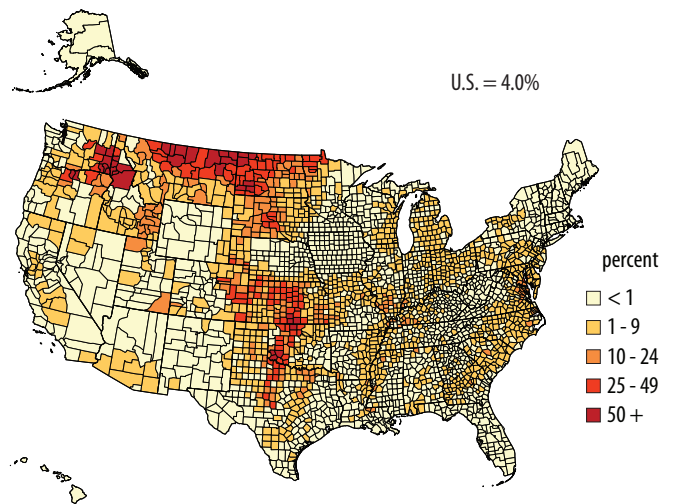
... accounted for more than half of U.S. wheat production and sales in 2012.

### Top States in Sales (\$ billions)

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| North Dakota | 2.5 |
| Kansas       | 2.5 |
| Montana      | 1.4 |
| Washington   | 1.1 |
| Oklahoma     | 0.9 |
| South Dakota | 0.8 |
| Idaho        | 0.7 |
| Texas        | 0.6 |
| Minnesota    | 0.6 |
| Colorado     | 0.5 |

In 2012, the U.S. wheat industry had sales of \$15.8 billion, accounting for 4 percent of total U.S. agriculture sales. Wheat production occurs in many states but is concentrated in the northern and southern plains and the northwestern states. The 2012 Census of Agriculture provides a comprehensive picture of the wheat industry, as well as the oilseed and grain sector overall.

Wheat Sales as Percent of Agriculture Sales, by County, 2012



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

## Industry Size, Value, and Location

Wheat sales were 48 percent higher in 2012 than in 2007, when the last agriculture census was conducted, while the number of farms with sales declined 8 percent during the same period. Wheat production increased 10 percent to 2.2 billion bushels. (Table 1)

Table 1  
U.S. Wheat Farming, 2007 and 2012

|                              | 2007    | 2012    | % Change |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Sales (\$ billions)          | 10.6    | 15.8    | +48      |
| Farms with sales             | 159,527 | 147,022 | - 8      |
| Production (billion bushels) | 2.0     | 2.2     | +10      |

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

Kansas led the country in wheat production in 2012, with 359 million bushels produced, followed by North Dakota (328 million bushels), Montana (180 million bushels), Washington (141 million bushels), and Oklahoma (139 million bushels). These five states accounted for 53 percent of the wheat produced and 53 percent of U.S. wheat sales. The top ten counties are spread across five states.

| Top Counties in Wheat Sales (\$ millions) |       |
|---|-------|
| Whitman, WA                               | 252.5 |
| Lincoln, WA                               | 144.3 |
| Chouteau, MT                              | 143.4 |
| Cavalier, ND                              | 136.7 |
| Ward, ND                                  | 130.5 |
| Hill, MT                                  | 127.0 |
| Polk, MN                                  | 124.7 |
| Umatilla, OR                              | 123.9 |
| McLean, ND                                | 119.5 |
| Adams, WA                                 | 116.9 |

*Does not include counties withheld to avoid disclosing individual data.  
Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.*

## Farm Characteristics

Seventy-eight percent of farms with wheat sales were family or individually operated, accounting for 60 percent of sales. Partnerships (including family partnerships) were 12 percent of operations and 22 percent of sales. (Table 2)

Table 2  
Wheat Farms by Type of Operation, 2012

|                   | % of Operations | % of Sales |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Family/Individual | 78              | 60         |
| Partnership       | 12              | 22         |
| Corporation       | 9               | 17         |
| Other             | 1               | 1          |
| All               | 100             | 100        |

*Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.*

## Oilseed and Grain Farming (including wheat)

In 2012, there were 369,332 U.S. farms with more than half of their income coming from sales of oilseed and grain crops, including wheat. Of these specialized farms, 110,339 had wheat sales of \$13.1 billion, which accounted for 83 percent of the \$15.8 billion in total U.S. wheat sales.

**Production Costs.** Total production costs on specialized oilseed and grain farms were \$93.1 billion in 2012, a 75 percent increase over 2007, when production expenses were \$53.1 billion. The largest expenses were fertilizer, at \$18.8 billion, and cash rent for land and buildings, at \$13.4 billion. Per farm average costs were \$251,982, a 60 percent increase from 2007.

**Producer Characteristics.** The 2012 Census of Agriculture identified characteristics of those responsible for the day-to-day operation of oilseed and grain farms. These farmers were slightly younger than principal operators of all farms. Four percent were women, a smaller share than the 14 percent for all farms. Sixty-six percent reported farming as their primary occupation. Thirty-seven percent earned less than a quarter of their income from farming in 2012, while 13 percent earned their entire income from farming. (Table 3)

Table 3  
Oilseed and Grain Producers: Key Characteristics, 2007 and 2012  
(principal operators of farms specializing in oilseed and grain farming)

|                                       | 2007        | 2012        | All Farms 2012 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
|                                       | percent     |             |                |
| <b>Gender</b>                         |             |             |                |
| Male / Female                         | 95 / 5      | 96 / 4      | 86 / 14        |
| <b>Age</b>                            |             |             |                |
| Under 45 years                        | 19          | 19          | 16             |
| 45 to 64 years                        | 53          | 52          | 51             |
| 65 years and older                    | 28          | 29          | 33             |
| <b>Primary Occupation</b>             |             |             |                |
| Farming / Other                       | 66 / 34     | 66 / 34     | 48 / 52        |
| <b>Percent of Income from Farming</b> |             |             |                |
| < 25%                                 | 40          | 37          | 70             |
| 25% to 49%                            | 14          | 13          | 8              |
| 50% to 74%                            | 18          | 19          | 9              |
| 75% to 99%                            | 17          | 18          | 7              |
| 100%                                  | 11          | 13          | 6              |
| <b>Average Age (years)</b>            | <b>56.1</b> | <b>56.6</b> | <b>58.3</b>    |

*Principal operator is the person responsible for day-to-day operation of the farm. A farm "specializing in oilseed and grain production" has more than half of its sales come from that commodity.  
Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.*

To learn more about wheat farming, the oilseeds and grain sector, the 2012 Census of Agriculture, and how to access national, state, and county data, go to:

[www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)