
Introduction

The 2012 Census of Agriculture Years on Present Farm of Principal Operator report provides data that supplement the 2012 census. The tables provide U.S. and State-level characteristics of farms by the number of years the principal operator operated any part of the operation. The tables include four categories: all farms; farms where the principal operator began on the operation five years ago or less (between 2008 and 2012); farms where the principal operator began on the operation more than five years ago and less than eleven years ago (between 2003 and 2007); and farms where the principal operator began on the operation more than ten years ago (2002 or earlier). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a farm operation as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during a given year.

USES OF CENSUS DATA

Census of agriculture 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. The data are frequently used to:

- Provide agricultural news media and agricultural associations' benchmark statistics for stories and articles on U.S. agriculture and the foods we produce;
- Compare the income and costs of production;
- Provide important data about the demographics and financial well being of producers;
- Evaluate historical agricultural trends to formulate farm and rural policies and develop programs that help agricultural producers;

- Allocate local and national funds for farm programs, e.g. extension service projects, agricultural research, soil conservation programs, and land-grant colleges and universities;
- Identify the assets needed to support agricultural production such as land, buildings, machinery, and other equipment;
- Create an extensive database of information on uncommon crops and livestock and the value of those commodities for assessing the need to develop policies and programs to support those commodities;
- Provide geographic data on production so agribusinesses will locate near major production areas for efficiencies for both producers and agribusinesses;
- Measure the use of modern technologies such as conservation practices, organic production, renewable energy systems, internet access, and specialized marketing strategies;
- Develop new and improved methods to increase agricultural production and profitability;
- Plan for operations during drought and emergency outbreaks of diseases or infestations of pests.

AUTHORITY

The 2012 Census of Agriculture was 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 every fifth year.

DATA COMPARABILITY

Most data are comparable between the 2012 and 2007 censuses. A few changes were made to the 2012 census that affects comparability for some data items. See 2012 Census of Agriculture, Volume 1, Geographic Area Series, Part 51, Appendix B (http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_US/usappxb.pdf) 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 2012 Census of Agriculture were similar to those used in the 2007 Census of Agriculture. Crop production is measured for the calendar year, livestock and poultry inventories are measured as of December 31 of the census year, and crop and livestock sales and production expenses are measured for the calendar year.

“SEE TEXT” ITEMS

Several items in the tables include the note “(see text).” For descriptions, see the 2012 Census of Agriculture, Volume 1, Geographic Area Series (http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_US/usappxb.pdf).

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.

DATA PRODUCTS

The 2012 Census of Agriculture Years on Present Farm of Principal Operator report and other census products are available on the NASS website at www.agcensus.usda.gov.

SUBJECT SERIES REPORTS AND CUSTOM TABULATIONS

Subject series reports such as the 2012 Census of Agriculture Years on Present Farm of Principal Operator report provide supplemental information to the 2012 Census of Agriculture. Results are published 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. Quick Stats, NASS’s online database that allows data users to build customized queries, should be investigated before requesting a custom tabulation.

All NASS publications 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 5307
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.
- (Z) Less than half the unit shown.
- cwt Hundredweight.