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Key Insights from the 2022 Census of Agriculture

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The first Census of Agriculture occurred in 1840; the 2022 Census of Agriculture is the 30th in the series and the sixth conducted by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). The power of the census is its ability to visualize and understand important changes in agriculture at the U.S., state, and county levels. On February 13, 2024, NASS published over 6 million distinct data points from the 2022 Census of Agriculture. The Census of Agriculture defines a farm as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold or would have been sold during the census year. The current farm definition was established in 1974.

Farms and Land in Farms

The census reports the number of farms at 1.9 million, a decrease of 6.9% or about 142,000 farms from 2017. This is a larger percentage decrease than what has been seen in the past 20 years. Land in farms was also down 2.2% or 20.1 million acres. This places the average farm size at 463 acres, a 5% increase from the previous census.

Thinking about the geographic distribution of those 1.9 million farms, there is a high concentration of farms in eastern Texas north through the central United States and on the Pacific coast. Texas has more than twice as many farms as any other state, but it is also down from 2017 by approximately 18,000 farms.

The 2022 census shows decreases in the number of farms in all land size classes except the 5,000+ acre class. Farms with less than 50 acres decreased 6%, or about 55,000 farms, while farms with 50 to 500 acres decreased 7%, or approximately 61,000 farms from 2017.

Farms in the 5,000+ acre class controlled 42% of the land in farms in 2022. This size group's influence has seen a continuous increase over the last 20 years, increasing 7 percentage points over that period.

Value of Production

The number of farms with over \$1 million in sales has been steadily increasing. While other classes have held steady or decreased, 6% of farms in 2022 were in the \$1 million plus size class, compared to 4% in 2017.

The magnitude of contribution from farms with \$1 million or more in sales to the total value of production continues to grow. More than 75% of the \$543 billion in total value comes from farms with greater than \$1 million in sales. Those 105,000 farms represent less than 6% of the total U.S. farms. The share of sales coming from farms with a value of production greater than \$1 million increased from 69% in 2017 to 78% in 2022.

In terms of total value of production, California remains the top agricultural state, with 11% of the value. The top 10 states contributed to 55% of the total value of production in 2022. Most states saw value of production up over 30% from 2017, and half of states had increases of more than \$2 billion.

The value of production at the county level varies across the country. Nine of the top 10 counties in terms of total value of production are in California. Fresno County, with a total value of production at \$7.0 billion, has a higher value of agricultural production than 23 individual U.S. states.

Fruit, tree nuts, and berries was the primary commodity category contributing to those values. Total value of production increased substantially from 2017 to 2022, up almost 40%. This was largely driven by near record high prices of crop and livestock items during 2022.

The total value of crop production was \$281 billion, up 45% from 2017. The leading crop category was grains and oilseeds, at \$168.7 billion. The total livestock value of production was up 35%, at \$263 billion in 2022. Poultry and eggs showed the largest increase, up 56%.

The census also collects data on receipts from government payments and farm-related income. These data allow for the calculation of net income at multiple

levels of aggregation, including state, county, and congressional districts. At the U.S. level, all income categories showed large, uncharacteristic changes between census years. Between 2017 and 2022, net farm income increased by \$36.7 billion. The average net farm income of \$79,790 was up 85% from the previous census.

The census captures internet access on farm by type of access. Overall, internet access has increased from 75% to 79%. Generally, internet access rates were higher in the western and northern states. Farms may have multiple forms of internet connection; respondents were asked to report all that applied. Most notable was the increase in mobile access, moving from 39% in 2017 to 62% in 2022.

Farm Producers

One of the unique contributions from the Census of Agriculture is farm producer demographics, which give us a snapshot of those involved with farming and ranching. The data highlighted are for a farm producer; a producer is someone involved in the decision making for the farm operation. For most data items, information was collected for up to four producers.

The census counted 3.37 million farm producers, down 0.8% from 2017, a much smaller change compared to the decrease in farms at 6.9%. This is due to a large share of farms reporting multiple producers. The number of farms with only one or two producers declined, while the number of farms with three or more producers increased: 60% of all farms reported more than one person involved in the farm decision making.

Female producers account for 36% of all producers, and 58% of farms have at least one female producer. On average farms with female producers are smaller in acreage and sales. Female producers' highest participation in decision making occurs in the categories of day-to-day decisions, recordkeeping, and financial management aspects of the farm.

The average age of our producers is a long running data item in the Census of Agriculture. It receives a lot of attention each census cycle. Average age varies across the country. Producers in the southeast and southwest tend to be older than the overall average. Looking at the average age over the last 20 years, the average age increased by about 1 year per census. The average age of producers increased from 57.5 in 2017 to 58.1 in 2022, continuing the trend, but smaller than in previous census cycles.

A young producer is defined as anyone under the age of 35 as of December 31, 2022. The concentration of young producers is higher in the northern United States. Overall, 8.8% of producers are considered young. Young producers may be running their own farm or they may be operating a farm with other producers. Young producers

increased 3.9% from the previous census, with the largest increases in the Midwest and Great Lakes regions. Young producers are more likely than other age groups to make decisions regarding livestock. On average, young producers participated in fewer decisions than older producers.

New and beginning producers are defined as anyone who operated any farm for 10 years or less, including the census year. Overall, 30% of all producers are new or beginning, and 33% of all farms have a new or beginning producer. The average age of new and beginning producers is 47.1, which is lower than the average age of producers. New and beginning producers increased 11.4% compared to the previous census. Farms with new and beginning producers are smaller than average in sales and acres operated.

9.1% of producers have military service, and 15% of all farms have a producer who has served in the armed forces. The average age of a producer with military service is 68 years old, much higher than the average of all producers. The number of producers with military service decreased 18% from the previous census. This share of farms with producers who served in the military is highest in the southeast. Farms with a producer with military service are smaller than average in terms of acreage and sales.

The census showed a few key things:

- Both farm numbers and land in farms declined.
- There continues to be more of the largest farms.
- Fewer farms account for most agricultural products sold.
- The average age of farmers and ranchers continues to rise.
- There is an increase in both young and new and beginning producers.
- There is an increase in internet access, especially via mobile.

In addition to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, NASS has released many other products. Data Highlights are topical, timely, and easy-to-read summaries of key findings from the Census of Agriculture; for example, a highlight for Organic Agriculture is available. Highlights continue to be released from the 2022 Census of Agriculture.

The subject series data supplement the 2022 Census of Agriculture. They provide the 2022 data summarized by different topics such as watersheds, American Indian reservations, and farm typology, to name a few.

Special studies are additional data collections from specific topics in the 2022 Census of Agriculture. They take a deeper look into those specific items than what is provided in the 2022 Census of Agriculture. An example

of this is the Tenure, Ownership & Transition of Agricultural Land or Local Food Marketing Practices.

Profiles are available for state, county, and congressional District which provide a quick agricultural overview. Rankings are available for Market value of ag

products sold and congressional districts.

All of the 2022 Census of Agriculture data and products can be found on the NASS website -

<https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/index.php>.

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