

2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

WHAT IS THE CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE?

The Census of Agriculture is a “complete count” of farms and ranches and the people who operate them for every state and county in the United States. Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the census is the only source of uniform, comprehensive, and impartial agricultural data. While data from the census provide a detailed picture of demographics, economics, land, and activities on the nation’s farms and ranches at a point in time, information from the census also can be used to illustrate national and local trends in agriculture.

The first Census of Agriculture was conducted in 1840 by the U.S. Department of Commerce, when questions about agricultural production were included in the sixth census of population. In 1982 the census moved to a consistent five-year cycle and by 1997, responsibility for the census was transferred to NASS. The 2022 Census of Agriculture is the nation’s 30th.

WHAT IS A FARM?

For the purpose of the Census of Agriculture, even a small plot of land—whether rural or urban—is counted. 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.

TOTAL NUMBER OF FARMS: (2017) 2,042,220 • (2022) 1,900,487

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

The census collects data on many topics, including land use and ownership; operator characteristics; crops; livestock and production practices; income; and expenditures. Information from the census remains important for people working to save farmland and rangeland for agriculture. Data from the census can be used to:

- Identify the extent of agriculture and how much land supports the current level of production.
- Track information about producer age and the land producers own.
- Analyze the use of conservation practices on the nation’s land.
- Provide data about the economic contribution and health of farm and ranch operations.
- Supply statistics about the next generation of farmers, including new groups interested in farming.

The following highlights are a small sampling of the data available to support the efforts of people who care about the future of agriculture and agricultural land.

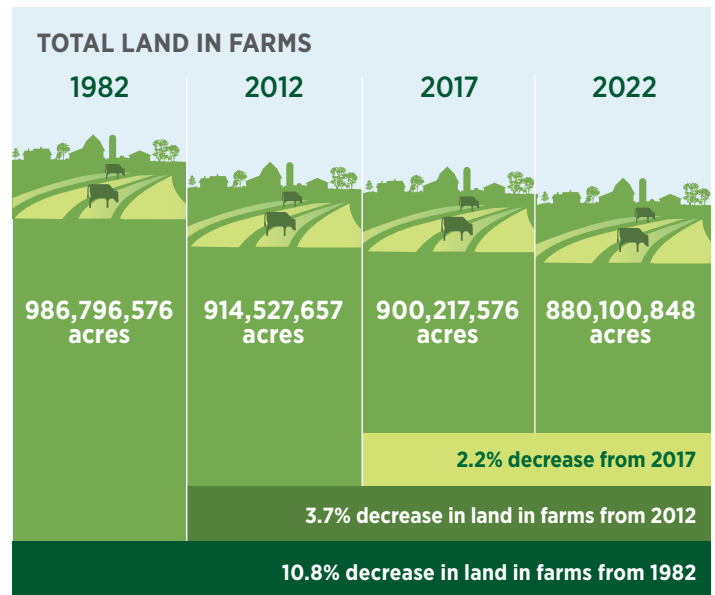
Farm and Ranch Land

The census tracks the amount of farmland as “land in farms.” Land in farms includes total cropland, total woodland, permanent pasture and rangeland, plus land in farmsteads and buildings.

Declines in land in farms are concerning. Land that is no longer part of a farm or ranch operation may be more vulnerable to development. A shrinking supply of land in active agricultural use creates additional barriers for beginning and established producers seeking suitable land. A smaller pool of land devoted to agriculture limits opportunities to establish sound farming practices and/or management systems.

However, net changes in land in farms can be misleading. They provide one measure of the extent of agricultural activity, but do not tell us what is happening to the resource base. Decreases in land in farms do not necessarily indicate conversion; rather, they

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LAND USE TYPE	2022	Change
Cropland	382,356,350 acres	-3.6% from 2017
Permanent Pasture and Rangeland	392,981,662 acres	-1.9% from 2017
Woodland	72,066,694 acres	-1.4% from 2017
Farmsteads and Other Land	32,696,142 acres	+9.3% from 2017

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show that land has been taken out of active production. Better sources of information about agricultural land development and dynamic changes in land cover/use are the [National Resources Inventory](#), conducted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and American Farmland Trust's [Farms Under Threat](#) reports. The amount of farmland and number of farms in the U.S. continue to decline.

- There were 880,100,848 acres of land in farms in 2022, a 2.2% decline from the previous census. Cropland comprises 43% of land in agriculture; permanent pasture and rangeland makes up 45%; 8% is woodland; and 4% is in farmsteads and other uses. Nearly every state saw a decrease in land in farms, with the exception of Alabama, Alaska, and Rhode Island.
- As of 2022, there were 1,900,487 farms in the U.S., a 7% decline from 2017. All but five states — Alaska, Iowa, Maryland, New Jersey, and Rhode Island — lost farms.

Producers

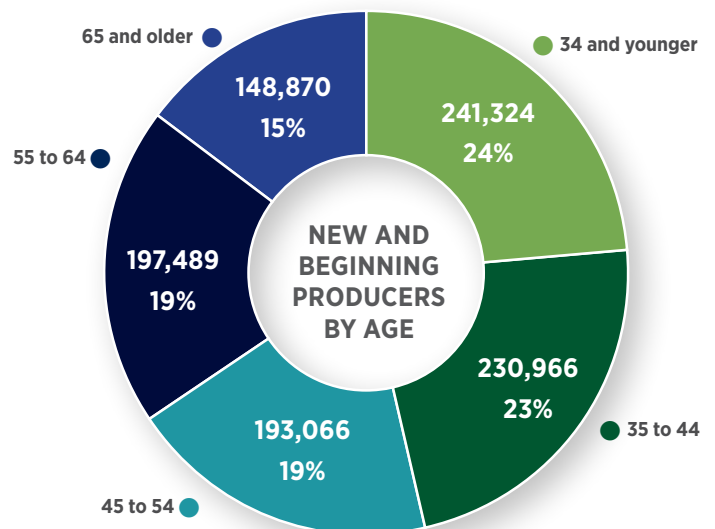
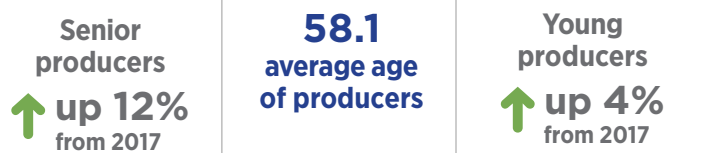
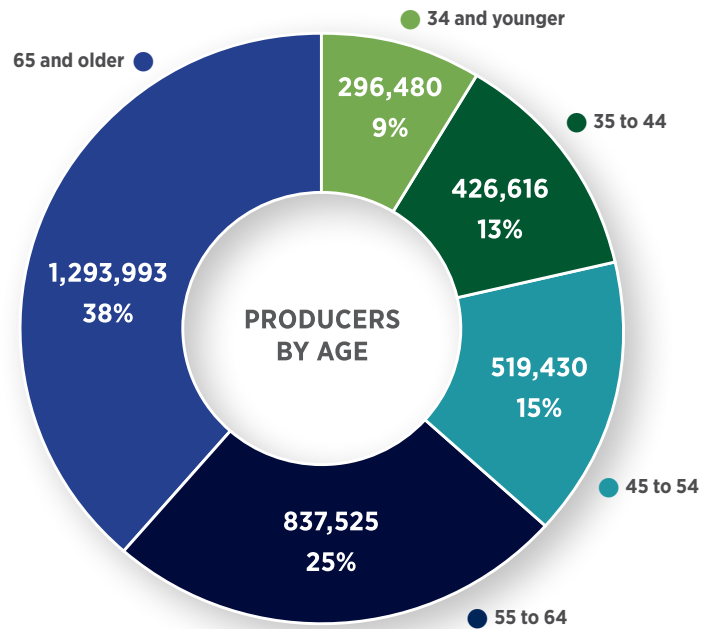
The Census of Agriculture collects demographic and other information for up to four producers per farm. This may be fewer than the total number of producers on some farms. The census also tracks total producers by gender. The number of producers in the U.S. held steady. The majority continued to report as male, though the proportion of female farmers and ranchers was up slightly in 2022. The average age of producers continued to rise.

- In 2022, there were a total of 3,495,177 producers in the U.S.: 1,266,786 female and 2,192,390 male producers. The total number of producers in the U.S. is up 0.4% from 2017, and the ratio of female to male producers varied by 0.34% in favor of female producers.
- The census collected demographic information on 3,374,044 producers, 0.8% less than in 2017. Of these, 36% are female and 64% are male. This ratio of female to male producers remains unchanged from 2017.
- The average age of producers has steadily increased since 2002. Average age in 2022 was 58.1 years old, up from 57.5 in 2017.

Senior Producers

Understanding the amount of land and the number of operations owned and managed by producers age 65 and over is important for assessing risk to the agricultural land base and to certain types of operations. When farmers retire without a next generation in line, land is more likely to be sold for development than kept in agriculture. The number of senior farmers grew more than any other producer age group in 2022.

- There are 1,293,993 senior producers in the U.S., a 12% increase from 2017.
- There are more than four times as many producers aged 65 and older as producers 34 and younger.
- Ownership by senior producers was captured in the 2022 census but was not included in the published tables.



Young and New & Beginning Producers

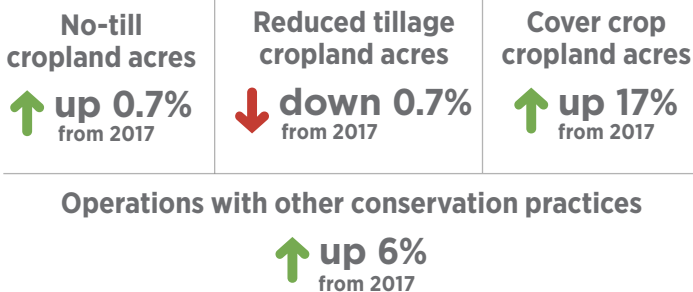
To ensure the future of agriculture in the U.S., more young, new, and beginning farmers are needed, especially as the percentage of farmers nearing retirement increases. The number and proportion of young and beginning producers rose in 2022. See the “Items of Note” box for census definitions of these producer groups.

- As of the latest census, 296,480 farmers and ranchers were under age 35, a 4% increase from 2017.
- In 2022, there were 1,011,715 new and beginning farmers, up 11% from 2017.
- In 2022, 409,965 of these beginning farmers were women, an 11% increase from 2017.

Conservation Practices

Implementing conservation practices — specific land management strategies intended to protect and restore natural resources — can improve soil health, reduce runoff or erosion, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and sequester carbon. Cropland acres declined nationwide but acres under certain conservation practices increased, resulting in larger proportions of cropland covered by no-till and cover cropping. The number of farms employing other conservation practices also increased.

- In 2022, 27.5% of cropland — 105,208,515 acres — was under no-till. There were 97,061,179 acres, or 25.4% of cropland, under reduced tillage.
- 17,985,831 acres were under cover cropping. This remains a small fraction of total cropland at 4.7%.
- Nationwide, 32,717 operations, or 1.7% of farms, practiced alley cropping, silvopasture, forest farming, or had riparian forest buffers or windbreaks.



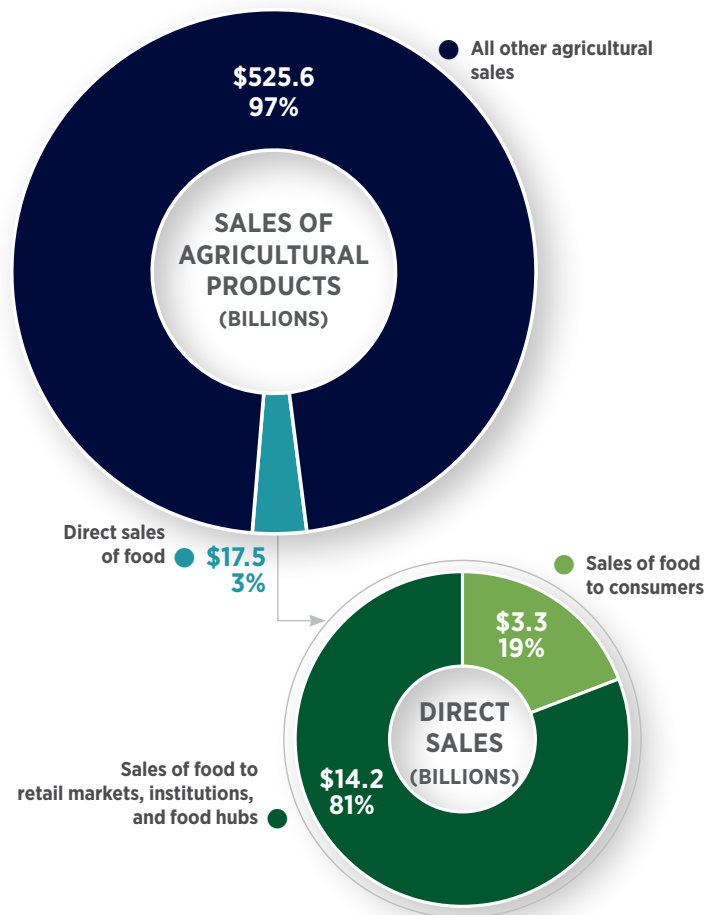
Economic Viability

A strong farm economy that supports thriving farm businesses plays a crucial role in preventing the loss of our nation’s farmland. Census data provides information on the economic viability of farm and ranch operations and of the industry as a whole. The value of agricultural production increased in 2022, even as, overall, the number of farms reporting sales declined.

- In 2022, farms and ranches across the U.S. produced \$543 billion in agricultural products, up 40% from 2017. Nearly 80% of these sales were generated by 6% of farms in the U.S.
- 6.1% of operations, or 116,617 farms, sold edible food directly to consumers, down 10% from 2017. Despite this

decrease, direct-to-consumer sales rose to \$3.3 billion, making up 0.6% of all agricultural sales in 2022. Operations selling food directly to retail markets, institutions, and food hubs increased by 108% to 60,332 farms. These operations represent 3.2% of all farms. Direct-to-retail and institution sales totaled \$14.2 billion, comprising 2.6% of all agricultural sales.

- Nationwide, 37,881 farms, or 2% of operations, reported sales of value-added products using commodities they produced, up 13% from 2017. Value-added sales totaled \$5.7 billion in 2022, a 42% increase from the prior census.
- 17,321 farms reported sales of organic products, down 5% from 2017. Despite this, sales rose to \$9.6 billion in 2022, a 32% increase.



Nationwide value of agricultural products sold

↑ up 40% from 2017

Sales of food direct-to-consumers

↑ up 16% from 2017

Sales of food to retail markets, institutions, and food hubs for local or regionally branded products

↑ up 57% from 2017

FARMLAND INFORMATION CENTER

ITEMS OF NOTE IN THE 2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

- A producer is any individual involved in making decisions for a farm or ranch operation. The 2022 census collected demographic information on up to four producers per farm.
- The 2022 census provides data on all producers and transitioned away from the use of “principal” and “primary” producers.
- Value of food sold directly to consumers remains comparable with the 2017 data item of the same name. This cannot be compared to the 2012 “Value of food sold directly to individuals for human consumption,” which excluded value-added sales.
- Data on new and beginning producers — those operating any farm for 10 years or less — remains comparable with 2017. Prior to 2017, the census published data for producers with “fewer than 10 years of experience” and tracked “years on present farm.”
- A young producer is *less than* 35 years of age. In 2017, “young producer” included those 35 years of age or younger, thus the data are not comparable. To observe trends among young producers, one can utilize 2017 data on producers by age group.
- “Land under conservation easement” includes acres covered by a voluntary agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization, such as a land trust or government agency. Current data does not specify the type of easement and therefore whether the protected land is available for agricultural production.

HOW TO GET DATA FROM THE CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Results from the 2022 Census of Agriculture are published in the full report, which includes data tables, an introduction, appendices, and an index. The introduction provides a brief overview of census goals, history, and data comparability. The appendices describe methodology, data changes, and definitions.

DATA TABLES

The census tables are organized by national, state, and county level data. The NASS website presents data in Chapters 1 and 2.

CHAPTER 1		CHAPTER 2	
VOLUME 1, CHAPTER 1 U.S. National Level Data 77 Tables	VOLUME 1, CHAPTER 1 State Level Data 77 Tables	VOLUME 1, CHAPTER 2 State Level 57 Tables; state level data for individual states	VOLUME 1, CHAPTER 2 County Level 57 Tables; data for each state and its counties side by side

For more information about the 2022 Census of Agriculture and access to additional resources such as highlight publications, subject series reports, and rankings and profiles, visit: nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022.

To access census data from previous years, see nass.usda.gov/AgCensus.

NASS provides tips for navigating census data in their “How to Find Census of Agriculture Data Sources” video.

OTHER WAYS TO ACCESS THE DATA

Quick Stats	Special Tabulations	NASS Staff
A searchable database of comprehensive census data. A user can customize a query by commodity, location, or time period. Categories can also be compared across years. Quick Stats	If data have not been published elsewhere, a request for custom designed tabulations may be submitted to NASS Data Lab. Special tabulations are publishable, re-summarized data from information in the original Census. Requests can be submitted in an online form. Special Tabulations	NASS staff are available to answer questions and provide more details about finding information. A directory of regional offices can be found on the NASS website. NASS Staff

Access to additional, record-level information for authorized researchers may be granted by NASS. For more information contact the NASS Data Lab.

Visit American Farmland Trust’s **Farmland Information Center** for additional resources, including a **data dashboard** geared towards farmland protection practitioners.