

Highlights from the 2022 Census of Agriculture Webinar Responses to Questions from Attendees

Hosted by AFT's Farmland Information Center and National Agricultural Land Network
Presenters: Bryan Combs and Virginia Harris, USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service
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1. What are trends in number of farms vs last census, farm profits, small medium vs large size farms?

Trends in farm numbers and farm economics were presented in slides 9 through 32. Key points included:

- Farm numbers and land in farms both have ongoing declines.
- The largest farms—both in terms of dollars and acres—increased in number while mid- and small-sized farms decreased in number.
- Fewer farms account for the majority of ag products sold.
- There is an increased share of farms with internet access, especially via mobile.

2. Why do so many counties show an increase in land in farms from 2017 to 2022?

Changes in land in farms by county are listed in the [State and County Profiles](#) or in the [Quick Stats database](#). There are multiple reasons why land in farms acreage may change; an increase in land in farms indicates that land was brought into active production. Note that changes in land in farms provide one measure of the extent of agricultural activity, but do not tell us what is happening to the resource base.

3. What do decreases in land in farms indicate? Does it equate to the loss of farmland and ranchland to development?

The census does not capture what happens to land that is no longer being farmed. NASS produces other data sources, however, including the Cropland Data Layer (CDL) that might offer insights into changes in land use over time. The CDL is a spatial dataset that is updated annually.

4. What falls into the “other” land use category?

Land that is not cropland, permanent pasture or rangeland, or woodland that the respondent included as part of the operation. The report form directs producers to include farmsteads, homes and buildings, home gardens, livestock facilities, ponds, roads, and wasteland in this category. There was a small nationwide increase in other land. NASS staff suggest looking at this category at the state and county level to determine where the changes occurred.

5. Does the census track acres of public lands leased by ranchers/ranch businesses? Is there other NASS research that tracks farmer/rancher use of public land?

Public lands are excluded from the census land in farms figures. There are no additional NASS resources tracking use of public lands.

6. Does the Census of Agriculture include any data about organic or regenerative agriculture?

The census provides some information about organic production including sales, and acres of organic fertilizer applied. Data items are included in *Vol. 1, Chapter 1, Tables 41, 46, 51 and 71-77* and *Vol. 1, Chapter 2, Tables 40 and 42*. Data from the 2025 Organic Survey, a NASS Special Study, will be released in 2026. The census did not ask about or attempt to define regenerative agriculture. The census captures information about selected land use practices including no-till, conservation tillage, and the use of cover crops.

7. Is there information about non-farming farmland owners?

The 2022 Census of Agriculture does not include information about non-farming agricultural landowners. This information will be captured in the 2024 Tenure Ownership and Transition of Agricultural Land Survey due to be released in 2025.

8. Do you have data on the transition in who owns agricultural land? Is corporate ownership growing?

You can compare farm counts by legal status in 2022 and earlier survey years using *Vol. 1, Chapter 1, Table 1. Historical Highlights: 2022 and Earlier Census Years*. For more information on farms by legal status, including acreages associated with each legal status in 2022, see *Vol. 1, Chapter 1, Table 74. Summary by Legal Status for Tax Purposes: 2022*.

9. What data are available about land ownership and race? Is there similar data on farm leases?

As noted above, data about land ownership are available in several tables in the full census report, including *Vol. 1, Chapter 1, Tables 11, 63, and 71-77* and *Vol. 1, Chapter 2, Table 45*. For owned and rented farmland and land tenure by race see *Vol. 1, Chapter 1, Table 63. Selected Farm Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity: 2022 and 2017*.

10. In the slide on race and ethnicity, is "number of producers" defined as farmworkers / farmhands on the land or are these producers themselves landowners?

The slide refers to producers—individuals involved in making decisions for the farm operation.

11. Does American Indian include only federally recognized American Indians? Or does it include state recognized as well?

Data on race of farm producers is self-reported by respondents. The agriculture census questionnaire uses the standards for federal agencies, which do not specify that tribes must be federally recognized. NASS works to obtain individual reports from American Indian and Alaska Native producers. In some cases, a single reservation-level report is collected from reservation officials. NASS staff review these data to avoid duplication with data reported by individual producers. Additionally, NASS also obtained the count of producers on reservations who were not counted through individual ag census forms but whose agricultural activity was included in the reservation-level report form. Appendix A, Table D includes the count of both individually reported producers, as well as the count of producers for reservations where individual reports were not collected. NASS will publish an additional subject series report, American Indian Reservations, later this year.

12. What are some trends regarding young and beginning farmers as well as senior operators?

Demographic data about producer age was presented in slides 35 through 40. Data about beginning farmers starts on slide 41. Some points included:

- The average age of producers continues to rise.
- Producers ages 65 and over increased by 12.1%.
- Data shows a 9% decline in producers aged 35-64.
- The number of new and beginning producers increased and young farmers increased. Young producers (under 35 years old) increased by 3.9% between 2017 and 2022.
- New and beginning producers increased primarily on grain and oilseeds and other crops farms.

13. Will NASS be changing the gender categories for the 2027 Census of Agriculture?

NASS is still working to determine the content for the 2027 Census of Agriculture. This includes seeking input from data users on content changes. Data users can submit requests for changes using the form located at: https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/Census_Program_Input_Form/index.php.

14. When presenting income metrics of percent change over time, can you include real and nominal change to reflect the impact of inflation?

The Census of Agriculture provides several data tables related to farm income, including *Vol. 1, Chapter 1, Tables 2-7*. Note that the census data items are expressed in current dollars and have not been adjusted for inflation or deflation.

15. Has any information been tracked about agri-tourism?

The 2022 Census of Agriculture captured the number of farms engaged in and income generated by agri-tourism. This information is reported in *Vol. 1, Chapter 1, Tables 7, and 71-77* and *Vol. 1, Chapter 2, Table 6. Income From Farm-Related Sources: 2022 and 2017*.

16. Does the 2022 Census of Agriculture include stats about succession planning?

The census provides the producers and operations involved in estate or succession planning, including in *Vol. 1, Chapter 1, Tables 53 and 54* (among other tables). Note that these figures do not tell us whether a farm has an estate or succession plan in place, nor would they necessarily capture producers/operations that already have a succession plan in place, and therefore were not involved in estate/succession planning in 2022.

17. Curious what role "point farms" play in the Census findings. How do they impact the interpretation of data?

Point farms are farms that did not have \$1,000 of reported sales for the year but had sufficient crops and livestock to normally have sales of \$1,000 or more. NASS includes point farms in the census statistics. They can be identified in tables that show farms by value of sales or farms by economic class, such as *Vol. 1, Chapter 1, Tables 2-3, and 71-77* and *Vol. 1, Chapter 2, Table 2*.

18. The \$1,000 income threshold seems very low, particularly considering it's been the same since 1974. Can you comment on what is the usefulness of collecting data on such small operations on the national scale?

Congress has directed NASS to maintain the current definition of a farm, first used in the 1974 Census of Agriculture. There have been no specific requests from lawmakers to reconsider the income threshold. The census publication has data tables available, such as *Vol. 1, Chapter 1, Tables 72-73*, that allow data users to look at the characteristics of farms in various size categories.

19. What is the typical cycle for the Census of Agriculture?

The Census of Agriculture runs on a five-year cycle, beginning with the comment period and ending with the release of survey results. In Year 5 (calendar years ending in 4 and 9), NASS releases survey results for the reference year census starting in the spring and initiates the comment period for the following census cycle in the Federal Register that same summer.

20. Are there opportunities to suggest collection of new data items?

NASS invites input for each census. This includes suggestions for content changes and additions. NASS evaluates all the input they receive. NASS recognizes the value in maintaining a relatively stable core set of data items to enable analysis and comparisons over time which limits changes and additions. As part of its evaluation of comments and suggestions NASS considers producers' ability to answer the question and extent to which the content supports implementation of USDA programs. The comment period for the 2027 Census of Agriculture will begin this summer. Data users can also suggest changes at any time on the census using the Ag Census – Solicitation for Input form located at: https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/Census_Program_Input_Form/index.php.

21. Can NASS collect more behavioral characteristics in the future?

NASS has the ability and authority to collect this type of information. Behavioral questions may not be the best fit for the Census of Agriculture, but NASS has other programs and annual surveys that might be better suited to capturing this information. The census is self-administered and surveys attempting to collect behavioral data might benefit from being administered by trained enumerators.

22. Have there been significant changes to data items that would affect comparability over time?

In 2022, NASS only published demographic information for All Producers. Prior to 2017, NASS collected data for a Principal Operator and up to two other operators on the farm. Starting in 2017, NASS collected information for four individuals per farm and asked respondents to identify the principals. NASS has since dropped mention of principals from all tables.

23. What steps has NASS taken to build the producer list?

NASS maintains a list of farmers and ranchers that informs the Census Mailing List. The goal is to build as complete a list as possible of agricultural places that meet the farm definition. NASS does so on an ongoing basis by obtaining outside source lists. Sources lists include those from federal and state governments, producer associations, seed growers, pesticide applicators, veterinarians, marketing associations, and a variety of other agriculture-related lists. NASS also obtains special commodity lists to address specific gaps. For the 2022 Census of Agriculture, NASS made a concerted effort to work with community-based organizations to improve list coverage for minorities and increase participation.

24. What percentage of farmers answer the Census, and if it isn't 100% how do you extrapolate the data to get the "complete count"?

Sixty-one percent of producers responded to the 2022 Census of Agriculture. NASS adjusts responses received to account for list undercoverage (farms not reached in the original mailing), nonresponse (people not returning their census questionnaires), and misclassification (whether an operation is correctly classified as a farm or not). Their approach for each of these factors is described in Appendix A: Census of Agriculture Methodology, available at: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_US_State_Level/usappxa.pdf.

25. We have heard that many specialty crop farmers did not complete the census. What percentage is unreported?

Data users can identify measures of coverage, nonresponse and misclassification in Appendix A, Table A. Measures are available for farms producing different types of commodities, including vegetables and fruits.

26. Has NASS identified bias or difference in response rates across demographic groups or economic classes? If so, how does the agency address this?

Data users can identify measures of coverage, nonresponse, and misclassification in Appendix A, Table A. Measures are available for producer demographic categories, such as race, ethnicity, gender, as well as farm size classes.

27. Is there any data validation by local entities?

NASS data analysts across the United States review individual reports as well as published aggregates. NASS does not provide any data users outside the agency access to the data before published reports are generated accessible to all data users.

28. Where can I find Census of Agriculture data?

You can find Census of Agriculture data online at www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus. A good place to start can be with the full report. NASS organizes published data items into tables sorted by chapter. Chapter 1, listed as “U.S. by Table”, provides national-level data while Chapter 2, “States by Table”, provides a comprehensive summary of agricultural data by state. You can use the index to identify where data items are located. To view data for a select state, county, or congressional district, you can also use the links on the lefthand side of the page, listed under “Find current data by...”. In addition to the Census Full Report, the Census of Agriculture page has links to related online resources, such as census highlights and subject series. Finally, information is also available through [Quick Stats](#), NASS’ online searchable online database that enables users to build queries and download data. NASS provides tips for navigating census data in their “[How to Find Census of Agriculture Data Sources](#)” video.

29. Does the Census of Agriculture delineate data by state/county for region-specific trends?

Yes. Census data is available at the national, state, and county level. Special tabulations by zip code and Congressional district for the 2022 Census of Agriculture will be published later this year.