

1. HISTORICAL OUTLINE

The first agriculture census in the United States of America was taken in 1840 as part of the sixth decennial census of population. After the 1920 census, the census interval was changed to every five years, resulting in a separate mid-decade census of agriculture being conducted in 1925, 1935, and 1945. The agriculture census continued to be taken as part of the decennial census through 1950. From 1954 to 1974, the census was taken for the years ending in 4 and 9. In 1976, Congress changed the five-year data collection cycle to years ending in 2 and 7, to coincide with other economic censuses, cycle that continues to this day. The 2012 Census of Agriculture (CA) is the twenty-eighth federal census of agriculture and the fourth to be conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

2. LEGAL BASIS AND ORGANIZATION

Legal framework

The CA is required by law under the Census of Agriculture Act of 2002, 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 five years, covering the years ending in 2 and 7. The CA includes each State, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa.

Institutional framework and international collaboration

The NASS of the USDA is the government agency with responsibility for the CA. Farmers are required by law to respond to the CA. Throughout development of the census, NASS sought advice and input from the data user community. Integral partners included the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics, state departments of agriculture and other state government officials, federal agency officials, land grant universities, agricultural trade associations, media, and various community-based organizations.

Census staff

The NASS employs 230 full-time personnel for the purpose of carrying out the CA Program. The NASS entered into an agreement with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) to collect data for the CA 2012.

3. REFERENCE DATE AND PERIOD

Reference day: 31 December 2012, for inventory items such as livestock.

Reference period: the calendar year 2012 (from 1 January to 31 December 2012), for items on crops and land areas, farm labour, financial information and agricultural production methods.

4. ENUMERATION PERIOD:

The enumeration was conducted from December 2012 to July 2013.

5. SCOPE OF THE CENSUS AND DEFINITION OF THE STATISTICAL UNIT

The **census scope** covered agricultural activities (crop and livestock production).

The **statistical unit** for the CA 2012 was the farm, an operating unit defined as any place from which USD 1 000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year.

6. GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Available to the county or county-equivalent level.

7. CUT-OFF THRESHOLD AND OTHER EXCLUSIONS

Agricultural holdings that do not normally produce and sell USD 1 000 or more of agricultural products per year or do not have the potential were not tabulated as farms.

8. METHODOLOGY

Methodological modality for conducting the census

The classical approach was used in the CA 2012.

Frame

NASS maintains a list of farmers and ranchers from which the CML is compiled.

Complete and/or sample enumeration methods

The CA 2012 was an enumeration of all known agricultural holdings meeting the USDA definition of a farm.

Sample design (if sampling was used)

No sampling used.

¹ The census results related to the United States of America bear only upon the continental territory of the country (without considering U.S. Territories and Outlying Areas).

Data collection method(s)

Data collection was done primarily through the mail-out/mail-back method; however, this was supplemented with Electronic Data Reporting (EDR) via the Internet, as well as personal enumeration for special classes of records in the census operations. Personal enumeration involved the use of both CATI and CAPI.² Beginning in March 2013, CATI was used to follow up on nonresponse for NML nonrespondents.

Questionnaire(s)

Seven regionalized versions of the main report form (questionnaire) were used for the CA 2012. The report form versions were designed to facilitate reporting on the crops most commonly grown within each report form region. Additionally, an American Indian report form was developed to facilitate reporting for operations on reservations in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. All of the forms allowed respondents to write in specific commodities that were not listed on their form.

The CA 2012 covered all 16 core items recommended to be collected in the WCA 2010.

9. USE OF TECHNOLOGY

CAWI, CAPI and CATI methods were used for census data collection. Optical scanning was used for data capture of paper questionnaires. An online database enabled users to retrieve customized tables with census data at the national, state and county level.

10. DATA PROCESSING AND ARCHIVING

The completed forms were scanned and Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) was used to retrieve categorical responses and to identify the other answer zones in which some type of mark was present. The edit system determined the best value to impute for reported responses that were deemed unreasonable and for required responses that were absent. The complex edit ensured the full internal consistency of the record. After tabulation and review of the aggregates, a comprehensive disclosure review was conducted. Cell suppression was used to protect the cells that were determined to be sensitive to a disclosure of information.

11. CENSUS DATA QUALITY

NASS conducted an extensive program to follow-up all non-response. NASS also used capture-recapture methodology to adjust for under-coverage, non-response, and misclassification. To implement capture-recapture methods, two independent surveys were required—the 2012 Census of Agriculture (based on the Census Mail List) and the 2012 June Agricultural Survey (based on the area frame). Historically, NASS has been careful to maintain the independence of these two surveys.

12. DATA DISSEMINATION

The complete data series from the 2012 Census of Agriculture is available from the NASS website free of charge in multiple formats, including Quick Stats 2.0 – an online database to retrieve customized tables with Census data at the national, state and county levels. The 2012 Census of Agriculture provides information on a range of topics, including agricultural practices, conservation, organic production, as well as traditional and specialty crops.

13. DATA SOURCES

United States Department of Agriculture, National Agriculture Statistics Service (USDA, NASS). 2019. Census of Agriculture. In: *USDA, NASS* [online]. United States. [Cited 30 July 2019]. <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2012/>

14. CONTACT

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² Enumerators at the NASS National Operations Center in St. Louis, MO conducted CATI data collection. In addition, enumerators under contract with NASS through the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) conducted telephone and personal interviews with respondents.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA – CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE 2012 – MAIN RESULTS¹

NUMBER OF HOLDINGS AND AREA, BY LEGAL STATUS		
	Holdings	Area (ha)
Total	2 109 303	370 096 212
Family or individual	1 828 946	227 608 837
Partnership	137 987	63 162 034
Corporation	106 716	53 124 255
Other	35 654	26 201 086

LAND TENURE		
	Holdings	Area (ha)
Total	2 109 303	370 096 212
Land owned	1 973 527	228 071 298
Land rented or leased from others	666 945	142 024 914

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLDINGS BY LAND SIZE CLASSES		
	Holdings	Area (ha)
Total	2 109 303	370 096 212
0,4–4 ha	223 634	403 403
4–20 ha	589 549	6 113 637
20–28 ha	153 698	3 609 669
28–40 ha	184 942	6 152 886
40–56 ha	166 381	7 806 764
56–72 ha	129 026	8 218 182
72–88 ha	84 317	6 742 802
88–105 ha	63 636	6 124 741
105–202 ha	198 085	28 580 256
202–404 ha	142 555	40 070 836
404–809 ha	91 273	50 619 939
809 ha and over	82 207	205 653 097

LAND USE		
	Holdings	Area (ha)
Total	2 109 303	370 096 212
Cropland	1 551 654	157 702 115
Harvested cropland	1 288 875	127 461 651
Other cropland	n.a.	30 240 464
Land under temporary meadows	141 537	5 181 128
Cropland used for cover crops	381 453	14 723 286
In cultivated summer fallow	61 442	5 724 508
Land with failed crops	97 248	4 611 542
Pastureland and rangeland other than cropland and woodland	1 176 156	168 069 703
Woodland, forest and underbrush	840 399	31 166 018
Other land	1 338 485	13 158 377

NUMBER OF HOLDER'S HOUSEHOLDS, BY SIZE	
	Number
Total	2 109 303
1 person	300 435
2 persons	1 070 365
3 persons	294 277
4 persons	250 753
5 persons and over	193 473

HIRED MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES WORKING ON THE HOLDING	
	Number
Total managers	67 939
Total hired labour	2 736 417

IRRIGATION		
	Holdings	Area irrigated (ha)
Holdings with irrigated land	296 303	22 590 455

HOLDERS, BY SEX AND AGE	
	Number
Total	2 109 303
Male	1 821 039
Female	288 264
Under 25 years	10 714
25–34 years	109 119
35–44 years	214 106
45–54 years	186 605
50–54 years	279 431
55–59 years	306 011
60–64 years	302 041
65–69 years	251 976
70 years and over	449 300

LIVESTOCK		
	Holdings	Head
Total holdings with livestock	n.a.	
Cattle	913 246	89 994 614
Sheep	88 338	5 364 844
Goats	128 456	2 621 514
Pigs/swine	63 246	66 026 785
Horses	504 795	3 621 348
Mules, burros and asses (donkeys)	98 379	292 590
Llamas	15 296	76 086
Alpacas	9 353	140 601
Poultry (1 000 head)	n.a.	n.a.
Layers	198 272	350 716
Broilers	42 226	1 506 277
Pullets for laying flock replacement	26 749	110 297
Ducks	21 115	5 019
Geese	10 286	106
Turkeys	19 956	100 792
Other	2 213	372
Other animals	n.a.	
Deer	4 042	231 431
Mink	267	953 321
Rabbits	13 420	400 049
Elk	1 199	38 061
Other livestock	1 956	
Insects		
Bees (hives)	38 261	3 282 570

MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT USED ON THE HOLDING		
	Holdings	Units
Total tractors of all kinds	1 670 342	4 178 300
Other (machine-powered)	n.a.	
Trucks, including pickups	1 587 889	3 297 894
Grain and bean combines, self-propelled	295 742	346 632
Cotton pickers and strippers, self-propelled	15 089	20 227
Forage harvesters, self-propelled	64 162	72 389
Hay balers	577 443	731 771

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