

# Preliminary Report *Highlights*

# U.S. Farms and Farmers

Issued February 2014

A farm is “any place from which \$1,000 of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the Census year.”

## Farms: Numbers, Acreage, Size

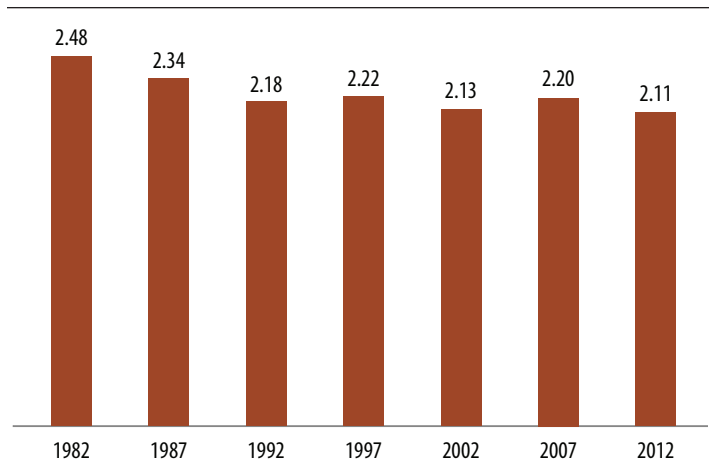
	<u>2007</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>% change 2007 - 12</u>
<b>No. of Farms</b>	2,204,792	2,109,363	-4.3*
<b>Land in farms (acres)</b>	922,095,840	914,603,026	-0.8
<b>Avg farm size (acres)</b>	418	434	+3.8*

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture, *Preliminary Report*.

- In 2012, the United States had 2.1 million farms – down 4.3 percent from the last agricultural Census in 2007. This continues a long-term trend of fewer farms (Fig. 1).
- Between 2007 and 2012, the amount of land in farms in the United States declined from 922 million acres to 915 million acres. This decline of less than one percent was the third smallest decline between Censuses since 1950.
- In 2012, the average farm size was 434 acres. This was a 3.8 percent increase over 2007, when the average farm was 418 acres.
- Middle-sized farms declined in number between 2007 and 2012. The number of large (1,000 plus acres) and very small (1 to 9 acres) farms did not change significantly in that time.

Fig. 1

**Number of U.S. Farms, 1982 - 2012** (millions)



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture, *Preliminary Report*.

### Understanding the Numbers

\* = statistically significant change

The 2012 Census of Agriculture *Preliminary Report* contains a measure of relative reliability (the coefficient of variation) for every data item published. This Highlights document does not include these numbers, but it shows through an asterisk (\*) every number that is a statistically significant change from the 2007 Census to the 2012 Census (i.e., two or more standard errors).

Practical significance and statistical significance are not necessarily the same thing. Some changes that are statistically significant may be of high practical importance, others may be inconsequential in practice. But it is important to know what the data say to know how to use them. Look for the asterisk to know which changes are statistically significant.

To learn more about statistical significance and Census methodology, go to the frequently asked questions at [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov).



United States Department of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Statistics Service

[www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)  
(800)727-9540

## Value of Agricultural Sales

	<u>2007</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>% change 2007 - 12</u>
<b>All Products</b> (\$ billions)	\$297.2	\$394.6	32.8*
<b>Crops</b> (\$ billions)	\$143.6	\$212.4	47.9*
<b>Livestock</b> (\$ billions)	\$153.6	\$182.2	18.7*

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture, *Preliminary Report*.

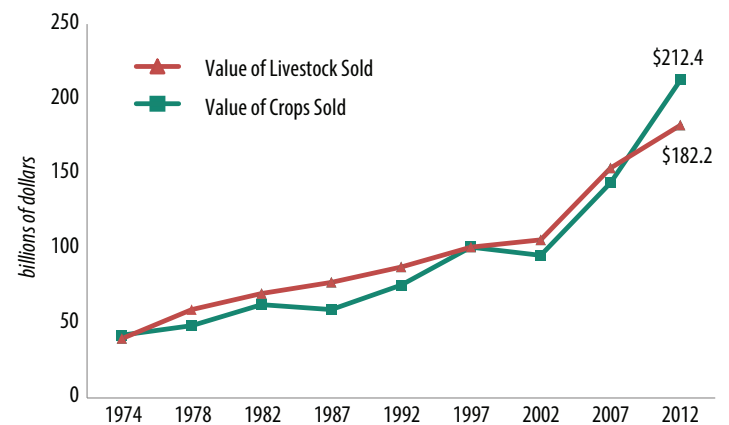
- In 2012, the market values of crops, livestock, and total agricultural products were each record highs.
- U.S. farms sold nearly \$395 billion in agricultural products in 2012. This was 33 percent – \$97.4 billion – more than agricultural sales in 2007.
- Crop sales were \$68.7 billion more in 2012 than 2007 (a 48 percent increase) and livestock sales were up \$28.6 billion (a 19 percent increase).
- In 2012, crop sales exceeded livestock sales (Fig. 3) for only the second time in Census history; the other time was in 1974.
- Per farm agricultural sales averaged \$187,000 in 2012. This was an increase of more than \$52,000 (or 39 percent) over 2007.
- From 2007 to 2012, the percent of farms with sales and government payments of \$1 million or more increased, but most farms in the United States are small – 75 percent had sales of less than \$50,000 in 2012. (Fig. 4)

### About the Census of Agriculture

The Census of Agriculture accounts for all U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The 2012 Census *Preliminary Report* released in February 2014 provides an early look at some Census results.

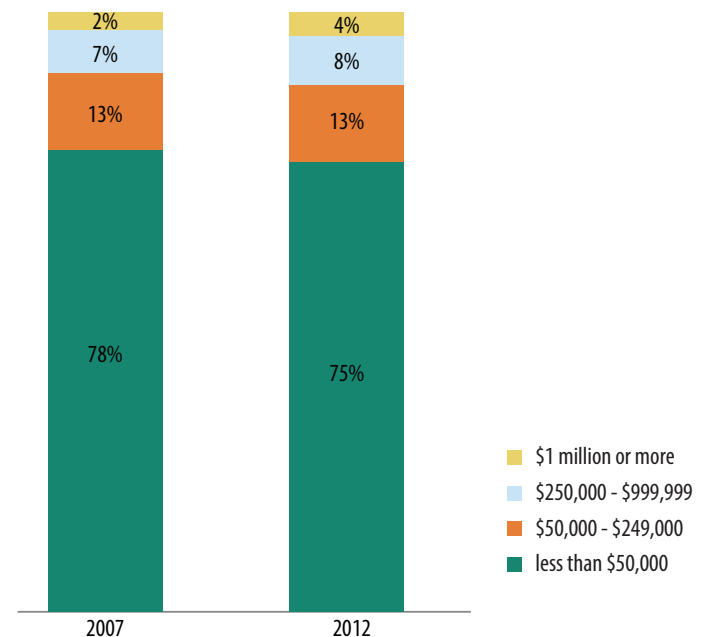
This document highlights some *Preliminary Report* results. The full report, to be released in May 2014, will provide comprehensive data at national, state, and county levels on many additional aspects of American agriculture. Access the *Preliminary Report*, learn more about Census methodology, and find final results at [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov).

Fig. 3  
Value of U.S. Crop and Livestock Sales, 1974 - 2012



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture, *Preliminary Report* and prior Census of Agriculture data.

Fig. 4  
U.S. Farms by Economic Class, 2007 and 2012



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture, *Preliminary Report*.

## U.S. Farmers: Selected Characteristics

The 2012 Census Preliminary Report focuses on principal operators (the person primarily responsible for the day-to-day operation of the farm). Details for all farm operators will be available in the full report.

### Among 2.1 million principal farm operators in 2012:

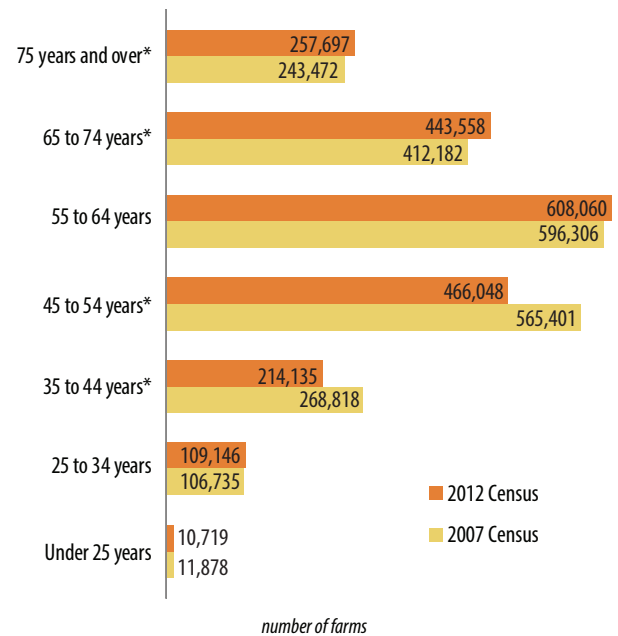
- 92% non-Hispanic white, 8% minority
- 86% men, 14% women
- 78% in current operation 10 years or more, 22% in operation less than 10 years
- 75% had 2012 agricultural sales of less than \$50,000, 25% had sales of \$50,000 or more
- 48% called farming their primary occupation, 52% had a different primary occupation
- 6% under 35 years old, 61% 35 to 54 years, and 33% 65 and older

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture, Preliminary Report.

- In 2012, the average age of principal farm operators was 58.3 years, up 1.2 years since 2007, and continuing a 30-year trend of steady increase. The older age groups all increased in number between 2007 and 2012. (Fig. 5)
- In 2012, the number of beginning farmers – on their current operation less than 10 years – was down 20 percent from 2007. Nearly 172,000 farmers were on their current operation less than 5 years.
- 1.0 million operators considered farming their principal occupation in 2012. The number who identified something other than farming as their primary occupation was 9 percent lower in 2012 than 2007.
- The Census counted more minority-operated farms in 2012 than in 2007 (Fig. 6). Hispanic principal operators increased by 21 percent.
- In 2012, more than 90 percent of female farmers operated farms with sales less than \$50,000. More than a third of Asian farmers operated farms with sales of \$50,000 or more. (Fig. 7)

Fig. 5

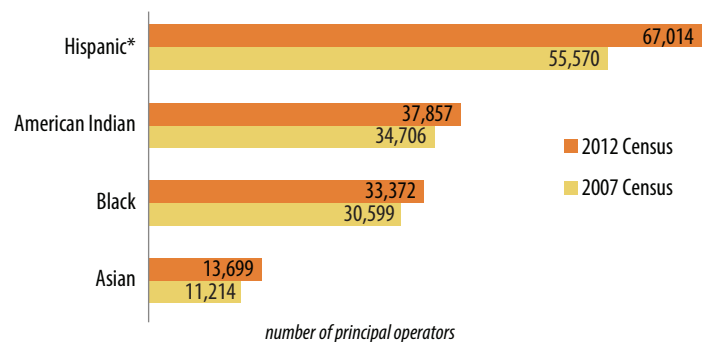
### Principal Operators by Age Group, 2007 and 2012



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture, Preliminary Report.

Fig. 6

### Minority Principal Operators, 2007 and 2012



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture, Preliminary Report.

Fig. 7

### Share of Farms by Economic Class for Selected Groups, 2012

Principal Operator	Sales < \$50,000	Sales ≥ \$50,000
All Farms	75%	25%
Female	91%	9%
Hispanic	85%	15%
American Indian	92%	8%
Black	94%	6%
Asian	65%	35%

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture, Preliminary Report.

## Farms and Farming by State

- Between 2007 and 2012, the number of farms decreased in 34 states but increased in 16 states. In several southeastern and mid-western states, the decrease in number of farms was statistically significant. (Fig. 8)
- The amount of land in farms decreased in 31 states but increased in 19 states (Fig 9).
- In 25 states, both the number of farms and the amount of land in farms went down. In 10 states, both went up (see New England, Florida, and some western states on the two maps).
- The states ranked “top 10” were generally the same in 2012 as in 2007, although states changed position within the rankings. Ohio and Colorado are new to the lists.

### 2012 Top 10 in . . .

#### . . . number of farms

Texas  
Missouri  
Iowa  
Oklahoma  
California  
Kentucky  
Ohio†  
Illinois  
Minnesota  
Wisconsin

#### . . . total ag sales

California  
Iowa  
Texas  
Nebraska  
Minnesota  
Kansas  
Illinois  
North Carolina  
Wisconsin  
Indiana

#### . . . crop sales

California  
Iowa  
Illinois  
Minnesota  
Nebraska  
North Dakota  
Indiana  
Texas  
Kansas  
Ohio†

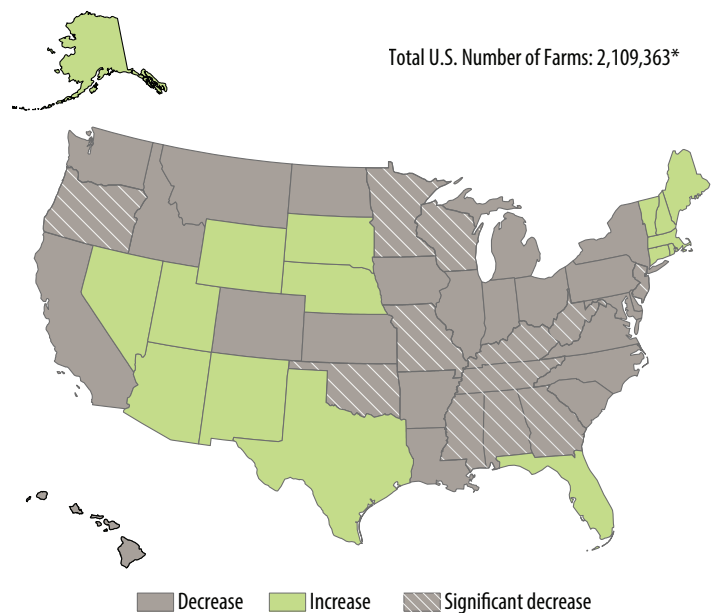
#### . . . livestock sales

Texas  
Iowa  
California  
Nebraska  
Kansas  
North Carolina  
Minnesota  
Wisconsin  
Georgia  
Colorado†

†Not in Top 10 in 2007.

Fig. 8

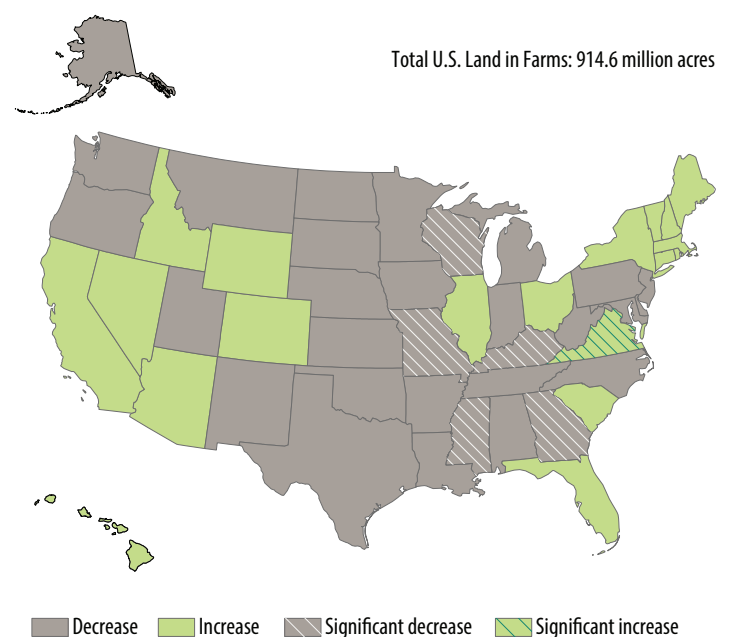
### Change in Number of Farms, 2007 to 2012



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture, Preliminary Report.

Fig. 9

### Change in Land in Farms, 2007 to 2012



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture, Preliminary Report.