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National Agricultural Statistics Service



News Release

Cooperating with the Montana Department of Agriculture
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2007 Census Snaps a Picture of Montana's Agriculture

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Every five years, the Census of Agriculture takes a snapshot of Montana's agriculture. The 2007 Census of Agriculture also provides a look at demographic data for Montana, other states, and the U.S.

The 2007 Census of Agriculture counted 29,524 farms in Montana, up almost 6 percent from 2002. The total number of acres in farms and ranches increased 3 percent from the 2002 Census to 61.4 million acres. The average size of Montana's farms and ranches decreased 60 acres from 2002 to 2,079 acres. The farmland definition changed in 2002. Operations with 100 or more acres of pasture and no other agricultural activity were included as farms, increasing both the number of farms and land in farms.

The 2007 Census revealed shifts in the number of operations by size category from 2002. The 2007 Census showed the number of operations in Montana dropped in the two largest size groups from the 2002 Census, while the number of small operations increased. The number of operations with 2,000 or more acres decreased 4 percent from 2002 to 6,856 operations and the number of operations with 1,000 -1,999 acres dropped 3 percent to 2,935 operations. The number of operations in size group categories below 1,000 acres all increased from the 2002 Census. The largest increase in the number of farms was in the 180 – 499 acres with 4,464 farms, up 500 farms from 2002. The largest number of farms was in the 2,000 or more acres category, 6,856 farms, followed by 5,465 farms in the 10–49 acre category.

The 2007 Census showed that 53 percent of Montana's farms sold less than \$10,000 worth of agricultural products in 2007, compared with 50 percent in 2002. Forty-one percent of the agricultural operators recorded sales of less than \$2,500 in 2007, compared with 36 percent in 2002.

The market value of agricultural products sold was 2.8 billion dollars, up 49 percent from 2002. The total farm production expenses were 2.4 billion dollars in 2007, up 29 percent from 2002. The net cash farm income was 827 million dollars, up from 350 million dollars the previous Census. The number of farms with net gains was up 6 percent to 15,031, while the number of farms with net losses also grew 6 percent to 14,493 farms.

The 2007 census revealed other interesting facts about Montana's agriculture, such as:

- 51 percent of all farm operators consider farming or ranching to be their principal occupation.
- 60 percent of principal farm operators worked 1 or more days off the farm compared with 50 percent in 2002.
- Montana's farmers and ranchers are getting older. The average age is 57.8 years compared to 55.7 in 2002, with 58 percent of the principal farm operators 55 years old and older.
- 76 percent of Montana's principal operators have been on their present farm for 10 years or more.
- Montana has 1,482 Native American operators, 5 percent of Montana's total principal operators.
- 63 percent of farms have internet access and 38 percent have high speed internet access.
- 77 percent of farms are individually or family operated. Corporations account for 12 percent of the farms with 96 percent of the corporations being family held.
- The value of land and buildings more than doubled from 2002 Census to 47.6 billion dollars.
- 207 farms had organically produced commodities. The value of sales of organically produced commodities was 8.8 million dollars.

These facts and more are available from the 2007 Census of Agriculture Quick Stats on the NASS website at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>.

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