



ARIZONA NEWS RELEASE

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Census of Agriculture Information Available

Phoenix - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) announced today the availability of the results from the 2002 Census of Agriculture. The 2002 Census of Agriculture is the Nation's largest agricultural information-gathering project. Census of Agriculture data provide consistent and detailed production, economic, demographic and environmental data including facts on number and type of farms, land use, value of sales and government payments, production expenses, hired labor, computer and Internet use, livestock and poultry inventory and sales, aquaculture, irrigation, crop acreage and production, gender and race of operator, production contracts, number of people in farm households, farm injuries, tenure of operator, chemical use, value of land and buildings, production contracts, organic acreage and a myriad of other topics.

"The 2002 Census of Agriculture serves as the most comprehensive source of data describing U.S. agriculture. The results track changes and trends and provide details covering all commodities and counties," said Steven Manheimer, Director of Arizona Agricultural Statistics.

Census information was collected during 2002, first by mailing a questionnaire to more than two million farms and ranches in the U.S. Extensive followup was also conducted to contact producers who did not respond by mail. Preliminary demographic data were released in February 2004 but the publication released today contains the final results of the Census information collected during 2002.

The Census is conducted every five years and some of the more significant changes from 1997 to 2002 include:

- Land in farms continued to decrease and totaled 26.6 million acres, a drop of two percent.
- The Census count of farms totaled 7,294 in Arizona, a 14 percent decrease.
- Total cropland acres also declined to 1.26 million acres, a drop of seven percent.

- Arizona continues to have some of the largest farms in the Nation. The average size of an Arizona farm or ranch increased by 451 acres from 1997 to an average size of 3,645 acres. However, the average size of a farm with harvested cropland was 284 acres, a 5 percent decline compared to 1997.
- The market value of agricultural products sold continued to increase compared to 1997. Sales totaled \$2.4 billion, a 22 percent increase. A total of 85 percent of all sales came from 396 of the largest farms who typically have sales above \$1.0 million.
- The average age of an agricultural producer in Arizona was 54.9 years.

The information will be available on the internet by visiting www.nass.usda.gov or you can contact Arizona Agricultural Statistics to obtain a printed copy. “Being able to publish this extensive data series would not be possible without the help of the Nation’s agricultural producers. We are grateful for their assistance,” adds Manheimer.

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