

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Ranking of Congressional Districts report presents selected statistics ranked by congressional districts from the 1997 Census of Agriculture. The census of agriculture, conducted every five years, is a comprehensive source of statistics about the Nation's farms and ranches, and the only source of comparable detailed data at the county level.

### **Purpose And Tabular Presentation**

Data are presented by congressional district for all States, except Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming, which are "at large" States. The State total is presented for these seven States. The statistics presented in this report include:

- Operator characteristics
- Farm characteristics
- Selected livestock inventories
- Selected crops harvested

### **How Farms Were Assigned to Congressional Districts**

The census of agriculture asked farm operators to report the principal State and county of agricultural activity for the farm operation, but not the congressional district. For this report, farms were assigned to congressional districts according to the reported State and county of agricultural activity. Approximately 1.9 million farms (98 percent) were assigned to the appropriate congressional district by a computer algorithm. However, about 22,000 farms (less than two percent) had to be manually assigned because the correct congressional district was not readily apparent. The majority of these 22,000 farm operations were located in counties that contained multiple congressional districts. The respondent resided in a county different from the farm, and that county also contained multiple congressional districts. Several factors were used to determine the most likely district to assign these farms. These factors included land area size, presence of urban or rural land, and other relevant information..

### **History**

For more than 150 years, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, conducted the census of agriculture. However, the 1997 Appropriations Act transferred the responsibility from the Bureau of the Census to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). The 1997 Census of Agriculture is the first census conducted by NASS.

The census of agriculture is taken to obtain agricultural statistics for each county, State, and the Nation. The first agriculture census was taken in 1840 as part of the sixth decennial census of population. From 1840 to 1950, the agriculture census was taken as part of the decennial census. A separate mid-decade census of agriculture was conducted in 1925, 1935, and 1945. From 1954 to 1974, a census of agriculture was taken for the years ending in 4 and 9. In 1976, Congress authorized the census of agriculture to be taken for 1978 and 1982 to adjust the data reference year so that it coincided with other economic censuses. This adjustment in timing established the agriculture census on a 5-year cycle collecting data for years ending in 2 and 7.

### **Census Uses**

The census of agriculture is the leading source of statistics about the Nation's agricultural production and the only source of consistent, comparable data at the county, State, and national levels. Census statistics are used to study historical trends, assess current conditions, and plan for the future. Many national and State programs use census data to design and allocate funding for extension service projects, agricultural research, soil conservation programs, and land-grant colleges and universities. Private industry uses census statistics to provide a more effective production and distribution system for the agricultural community.

### **Authority and Area Covered**

The census of agriculture is authorized by the "Census of Agriculture Act of 1997," Public Law 105-113 (Title 7, United States Code, Section 2204g). The law directs the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a census of agriculture in 1998 and in every fifth year after, covering the prior year. The census of agriculture includes each State, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

### **Related Information**

Detailed census of agriculture information on commodities; farm operator characteristics; gross sales; expenditures; use of chemicals, fertilizers, and irrigation; land use; ownership; and tenure of operator is available at the county, State, and national level. The information is in printed and electronic formats (CD-ROM.) For more information, call 1-800-727-9540

Please visit our website at <http://www.usda.gov/nass> for additional information.