

On: 2002 Census of Agriculture Release

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CENSUS RESULTS SHOW CHANGES IN LOUISIANA AND U.S. AGRICULTURE

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, June 3, 2004 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released data from the 2002 Census of Agriculture for the U.S. and all fifty states today. The Census of Agriculture, conducted every five years, is the nation's largest agricultural information-gathering project. The first Census of Agriculture was conducted in conjunction with the 1840 population census.

Louisiana farms dropped in number from 30,425 in 1997 to 27,413 in 2002, a decrease of 11 percent, according to Dave Frank, Director of the Louisiana Agricultural Statistics Service. Land in farms dropped 6 percent, to 7.83 million acres. The largest farms, those of 2000 or more acres, increased in number by 2 percent. The smallest farms, those of under ten acres, increased fractionally; all other size groups decreased in number, with farms of 50 to 179 acres showing the largest decrease, at 15 percent.

In terms of gross value of sales, only the smallest category, those with less than \$2,500 in sales, increased. Numbers of farms in all other sales classes were down. Nearly two thirds of all Louisiana farms had a gross value of sales less than \$ 10,000. Net cash farm income across all farms averaged \$14,000 in 2002. Reflecting the tough economic times caused by low prices and weather related losses, only 42 percent of Louisiana farms posted net gains in cash farm income for 2002. The average net gain per farm posting a net gain was \$ 52,448. The average net loss per farm posting a net loss was \$ 13,862.

The average Louisiana farm, at 286 acres, increased in size by 11 acres over the period 1997 through 2002. The average value of land and buildings per farm was up 31 percent, to \$ 444,007. The average value per acre for land in Louisiana farms increased 24 percent, to \$ 1,534. The average Louisiana farmer was a white male. The average age of the primary operator was 55.1 years, up 1.6 years since the 1997 Census.

At the U.S. level, the number of farms dropped nearly 4 percent, to 2,128,982 farms. Land in farms was down almost 2 percent, to 938.28 million acres. At the U.S. level, the trend in farm number changes was similar to Louisiana. The largest size category, more than 2,000 acres, showed an increase of nearly 5 percent. The next-smallest size category, 10 to 49 acres, increased by 6 percent. All other size groups showed drops in number of farms.

At the U.S. level, only the smallest and largest sales groups, those with less than \$ 2,500 in gross value of sales, and those with \$ 500,000 or more in gross value of sales increased in numbers. Fifty-nine percent of U.S. farms had less than \$ 10,000 in sales during 2002. The average net income per farm at the U.S. level was \$ 19,032. Forty-seven percent of U.S. farms posted a net gain in 2002, the average being \$ 56,679. Of those farms posting a net loss, the average was \$ 13,937.

The average U.S. farm, at 441 acres, increased in size by 10 acres since the 1997 Census. The average value of land and buildings per farm was up 29 percent, to \$ 537,833. The average value per acre for land in U.S. farms was up 25 percent from 1997, to \$ 1,213. Much like the Louisiana farmer, the average U.S. farmer was a white male. The average age of the U.S. primary operator was 55.3 years, up 1.3 years since the 1997 Census.

All reports from the 2002 Census of Agriculture will be available free through the NASS web site at www.usda.gov/nass/ For additional information regarding the Census, call the NASS Hotline at 1-800-727-9540.