

NEWS RELEASE



NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

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2002 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE REVEALS INCREASE IN NEBRASKA'S WOMEN PRINCIPAL OPERATORS

LINCOLN, Neb., March 18, 2005 -- The 2002 Census of Agriculture indicated a 2 percent increase in the number of Nebraska farms and ranches operated by women since 1997. A total of 3,005 farms in Nebraska were reported as having a woman as the principal operator in 2002 according to USDA's Nebraska Agricultural Statistics Service. Women operated 1.95 million acres of land in 2002, a decrease of 2 percent from 1997. Seventy-eight percent of the women principal operators were full owners of the land they operated. Nearly all women principal operators in Nebraska, 93 percent, own at least part of the land they operated.

Nebraska ranked 29th in the U.S. in the number of women as principal farm operators. Of the 49,355 farms in Nebraska, 6 percent have a woman as the principal operator. Women principal operators were reported in every county in the state. The top three counties with farms operated by a woman were Lancaster with 142 farms, Lincoln with 84 farms, and Holt with 82 farms. The three counties with the most acreage operated by women were Cherry with 291,951 acres, Sheridan with 116,808 acres, and Lincoln with 106,633 acres.

The 2002 Census also indicated that women operators in Nebraska are older than principal operators in general. The average age of a woman principal operator in Nebraska is 59.7 years, compared to 53.9 years for all principal operators. Looking at market value of agricultural products sold by women-operated farms in Nebraska, women produced \$101 million in livestock, poultry and their products, and an additional \$48.8 million in crops.

“Although both men and women have always been involved in agriculture, prior to the late 1970s, census statistics were not collected to differentiate male and female farm operators,” said Mark Harris, director of Nebraska Agricultural Statistics. “The actual number of women operators and the amount of land they operated were first reported in the 1978 Census of Agriculture. We are dedicated to accurately report the statistics on women farmers and we are working hard to ensure this growing constituency is counted and recognized for their contribution to agriculture.”

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