

Dale R. King
State Statistician

This year we celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the 4-H and the 75th Anniversary of the FFA in West Virginia. The opportunities these organizations offer our young men and women to participate in the diverseness of Agriculture is innumerable. Their membership have, and continue to produce leaders in nearly all facets of Agriculture. In commemoration of their anniversary milestones, we congratulate the FFA and 4-H for their significant contributions to agriculture and also for making the young participants better citizens of our state and country and better stewards of our natural resources.

West Virginia agriculture is at the crossroads of both local and global demand for agricultural products and services. Meeting the challenges of a changing, competitive world market is the primary focus of the state's efforts to enhance farm income, protect and conserve agricultural resources and to develop new opportunities. Producers are also realizing that there is strength in numbers. By cooperating in various enterprises, (e.g. pooling of feeder calves and market lambs) some farmers are able to leverage their inputs and increase their profits. There are groups in the state working to assist producers in choosing projects that are right for them and their farm circumstances. Specialty crops and niche markets are also being utilized as producers search for the best plan for their business. Producers around the world are producing food and fiber for sale to the highest bidder; therefore, it is imperative that the producer knows what the customer wants and works to produce that product.

The information in this bulletin was made possible by the voluntary but essential cooperation of thousands of farmers and agribusinesses in West Virginia who

respond to our surveys. The citizens of the state owe them a debt of gratitude for taking valuable time to complete our questionnaires. Their continued cooperation is vital to the West Virginia Agricultural Statistics Service's mission of providing timely, accurate and useful statistics in service to West Virginia Agriculture.

A special thanks goes to the field and telephone enumerators who have spent many hours collecting data from our farmers. These enumerators are our ambassadors to the agricultural community throughout the state.

The Internet has become a key source for information and statistics about a multitude of subjects - including U.S. and West Virginia Agriculture. Those with access to the Internet can also get all the information in this publication from our <http://www.nass.usda.gov/wv> Web site. National releases can be accessed at our <http://www.usda.gov/nass/> Web page. Free e-mail subscriptions are offered for many of the reports so that they will be automatically delivered to your electronic mailbox shortly after the report is released. The staff of the West Virginia Agricultural Statistics Service is dedicated to serving the agricultural data needs of all users and we welcome your questions and comments.

Finally, the year 2002 is the year of **The Census of Agriculture**. Data will show the structure and needs of farms of various sizes and specialties, farming trends, complete information on all agricultural production by county, and how to improve farming efficiencies. Census of Agriculture forms will be mailed in December 2002. **The participation of all our farmers is required: YOU MAKE IT KNOWN - AGRICULTURE COUNTS!**

Sincerely,

Dale R. King
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