

## **Geographic Method of Tabulation**

Data are provided by the mailed ZIP Code that was included in the address label of each census report form. When the mailed ZIP Code and the reported agricultural production are in a different State, the data are tabulated as "other" ZIP Code within the State where the agricultural production was located. See Limitations of ZIP Code Data for a detailed explanation.

## **ZIP Code Definition**

ZIP Codes primarily identify areas within the United States to simplify and speed the distribution of mail. Although data based on ZIP Codes may be used for geographic and demographic purposes, the data should be used with caution, since ZIP Code alignments do not necessarily conform to boundaries of cities, counties, States, or other jurisdictions.

During census mail list development, the census mail list records went through a series of computer operations that 1) checked the validity of the ZIP Code and post office name match, 2) inserted ZIP Codes or post office names into records missing one of these two items, and 3) standardized spelling of post office names. This activity occurred during late 2016 and 2017.

It is important to note that the data presented here are based only on the ZIP Codes boundaries in the census year. ZIP Code directories are revised annually to reflect both the expansions and contractions within existing ZIP Codes.

## **Limitations of ZIP Code Data**

Data are limited to farm counts for selected items, because of the large number of ZIP Codes involved. Publishing farm counts is not considered a release of confidential information and eliminates the need for disclosure analysis. Disclosure analysis involves reviewing all data tables before publication to identify and suppress data that would disclose information concerning an individual operation.

**Farm location vs. mailed ZIP Code.** The 2017 Census of Agriculture, like all agricultural censuses since 1969, employed the mail out/mail back method of enumeration. Additional data collection methods included Computer-Assisted Self Interview on the internet and personal enumeration. In most cases, the producer's mailing address and mailed ZIP Code (ZIP Code in the address label of the census report) were the same as the location of the farm operated. Therefore, the vast majority of farms were tabulated in the ZIP Codes where they were located. However, in some instances, the producer's farm was located outside the mailed ZIP Code. Consequently, these farms are not counted in the ZIP Codes of their physical location.

**Reported State vs. Mailed State.** The farm counts were tabulated by mailed ZIP Code within reported State, i.e., the State in which the farm was physically located. In a case where the producer's mailing address was in a State different than the State in which the farm was located, the ZIP Code in the address would not belong to the set of ZIP Codes for the reported State. In this situation, farms that reported an out-of-state ZIP Code were tabulated and published as an additional, distinct ZIP Code, 99999, in the stub and appear after the ZIP Codes for the reported State.

**Data Comparability.** The 2017 Census of Agriculture Zip Code tabulation utilized the updated mailing address. These updates were made from information provided by the respondents. The 2007 Census of Agriculture Zip Code tabulation was based upon the original mailing address, updates were not captured for this product. This improved methodology is better reflective of the producer's location, but may result in differences by Zip Code between 2017 and 2007.

**Geographic differences within State.** More commonly, the reported State and the mailed State were the same, but the ZIP Code where the farm was physically located may have been different than the mailed ZIP Code. Since the census did not request that the producer report the ZIP Code in which the farm was located, these cases cannot be identified in the tables. The mailed ZIP Code is the best available approximation of the physical location for farms published at the ZIP Code level.

**Reasons for farm location outside mailed ZIP Code.** Listed below are a few of the reasons mailed ZIP Codes may not correspond to the farm location.

- The farm producer(s) did not have a residence at the farm or considers their primary residence to be elsewhere and received their census report at their nonfarm address.
- The producer picked up mail at a post office box number located in a post office which had a ZIP Code different than that of the farm.