



Sheep and Goat Farming

ACH12-19/January 2015

94 percent of farms are family or individually operated.

Three states...

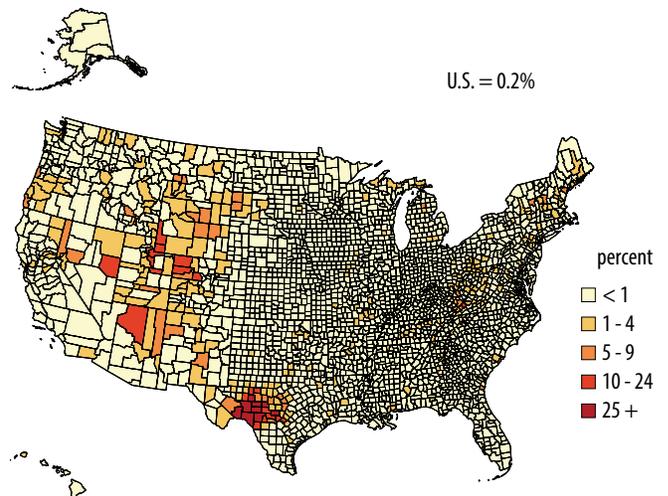
... accounted for 34 percent of 2012 sales of sheep, goats, and the milk, wool, and mohair they produced.

Top States in Sales (\$ millions)

Texas	122.1
California	108.1
Colorado	87.2
Wyoming	51.3
South Dakota	43.6
Iowa	43.0
Idaho	42.2
Utah	36.1
Oregon	31.6
Montana	31.2

In 2012, combined sales of U.S. sheep, goats, and their products (milk, wool, and mohair) totaled \$939.7 million, accounting for 0.2 percent of total U.S. agriculture sales. Three states – Texas, California, and Colorado – accounted for just over a third of sheep and goat industry sales. The 2012 Census of Agriculture provides a comprehensive picture of the industry, which involved 114,756 farms in 2012.

Sales of Sheep, Goats, and their Products as Percent of Agriculture Sales, by County, 2012



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

About the Numbers

A slight change in how the 2007 and the 2012 agriculture censuses counted sheep and goat products means the sales data are not directly comparable. Sales totals for 2007 include “sheep, goats, and all their products,” whereas 2012 sales totals only include “sheep, goats, sheep and goat milk, wool, and mohair.”

Industry Size, Value, and Location

Industry sales in 2012 consisted of sales of sheep and lambs (\$663.6 million), goats (\$152.1 million), sheep and goat milk (\$92.2 million), wool (\$28.9 million), and mohair (\$2.8 million). Combined sales were about a third higher in 2012 than in 2007, the last time the agriculture census was conducted.

Sheep and Lambs. U.S. farmers had a combined inventory of 5.4 million sheep and lambs at the end of 2012, down 8 percent from 2007. The number

Top Counties: Sheep and Lamb Inventory (thousand head)

Weld, CO	204.7
Kern, CA	114.6
Tulare, CA	93.5
Fresno, CA	67.2
Apache, AZ	63.9
Solano, CA	58.3
Imperial, CA	56.7
Crockett, TX	55.1
Minidoka, ID	55.0
Converse, WY	54.6

Does not include counties withheld to avoid disclosing individual data.

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

of farms with sheep and lambs increased 6 percent in that time. The top states in 2012 sheep and lamb sales were California (\$84.8 million), Colorado (\$80.3 million), and Texas (\$64.4 million).

The top states in wool sales in 2012 were Wyoming (\$3.1 million), Montana (\$2.9 million), and Utah (\$2.8 million), accounting for 30 percent of total U.S. wool sales.

Goats. The combined U.S. goat inventory was 2.6 million at the end of 2012, down 17 percent from 2007. The number of farms with goats decreased 11 percent. The top three states in goat inventory and sales in 2012 were Texas (878,900 head, \$49.5 million in sales), California (140,000 head, \$8.5 million in sales), and Missouri (103,600 head, \$6.5 million in sales). Eight of the top ten counties in goat inventory were in Texas.

Of the total goat inventory, 513,500 were milk goats, up 24 percent from 2007. Wisconsin, California, and Iowa had the largest inventories of milk goats. These same states also had the highest combined sheep and goat milk sales, accounting for 39 percent of the U.S. total.

Production Costs

Farms specializing in sheep and goat production (that is, farms with more than half of sales coming from sheep, goats, milk, wool, and mohair) had \$642.5 million, or 68 percent, of the industry's sales. Such farms had \$1.2 billion in production costs, with the purchase of feed the largest expense (\$316 million, or 27 percent of total production costs). Per farm average costs were \$15,974.

Farm Characteristics

Ninety-two percent of farms engaged in sheep and goat farming were family or individually operated in 2012, accounting for 66 percent of sales. Partnerships and corporations each accounted for 16 percent of sales. (Table 1) Three fourths of sheep and goat farms were 49 acres or smaller.

Table 1
Sheep and Goat Farms by Type of Operation, 2012

	% of Operations	% of Sales
Family / Individual	92	66
Partnerships	4	16
Corporations	3	16
Other	1	2
All	100	100

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

Producer Characteristics

The 2012 Census of Agriculture identified characteristics of those responsible for day-to-day operations of farms specializing in sheep and goats. These farmers on average were slightly younger (56.5 years old) than principal operators overall (58.3 years old). Twenty-seven percent were women, nearly double the 14 percent of principal operators overall who were women. American Indians and Alaska Natives were 8 percent of principal operators of sheep and goat farms and 2 percent of principal operators of all farms.

Sheep and goat producers were more likely than other producers to derive income from non-farm sources. Ninety-one percent received less than a fourth of their income from farming. Thirty-nine percent considered farming their primary occupation. (Table 2)

Table 2
Sheep and Goat Producers: Key Characteristics, 2007 and 2012
(principal operators of farms specializing in sheep and goat production)

	2007	2012	All Farms 2012
	percent		
Gender			
Male	74	73	86
Female	26	27	14
Age			
Under 45 years	22	19	16
45 to 64 years	54	53	51
65 years and older	24	28	33
Primary Occupation			
Farming	36	39	48
Other	64	61	52
Percent of Income from Farming			
< 25%	91	91	70
25% to 49%	3	3	8
50% to 74%	3	3	9
75% to 100%	3	3	13
Average Age (years)	54.8	56.5	58.3

Principal operator is the person responsible for day-to-day operation of the farm. A farm "specializing in sheep and goat production" has more than half of its sales come from that commodity.

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

To learn more about sheep and goat farming, the 2012 Census of Agriculture, and how to access national, state, and county data, go to:

www.agcensus.usda.gov