

What is 'Ag Statistics' All About?

Our mission is to provide timely, accurate and useful statistics in service to Pennsylvania and U.S. agriculture.

The Pennsylvania Statistical Office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS-PA) is a joint federal/state office of *USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)* and the *Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA)*. The office is funded and staffed by both federal and state resources. This cooperative arrangement is much more efficient than operating separate and duplicate federal and state agencies to measure Pennsylvania agriculture. Their mission is to provide timely, accurate and useful statistics in service to Pennsylvania and U.S. agriculture.

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is a network of 46 field offices (including the Harrisburg office), serving all 50 states and Puerto Rico through cooperative agreements with state departments of agriculture or universities. These field offices regularly survey thousands of farm operators, ranchers, and agri-businessmen who voluntarily provide information on a confidential basis. Consolidating these reports with field observations, objective yield measurements, and other data, statisticians then produce state statistics. These statistics are forwarded to NASS headquarters in Washington, D.C., where they are combined and released to the public.

The Internet site contains agricultural statistics, an on-line data base, all reports, links to other pertinent sites and even a Kids Page targeted to education on agricultural topics. The national website is at www.usda.gov/nass while the Pennsylvania homepage is at www.nass.usda.gov/pa. For more information, contact us via email at nass-pa@nass.usda.gov or call 717-787-3904.

As part of USDA, the federal program includes the **Census of Agriculture** conducted every five years and an **Annual Statistics Program**. The Ag Census publishes all agricultural commodities at the state and county level with farm counts by zip code. The Annual Statistics Program provides more timely state level statistics but it is limited to major crop and livestock commodities and fewer data series at the county level. The College of Agriculture at Penn State cooperates with NASS-PA on special studies to measure various aspects of Pennsylvania agriculture, such as economic status, Integrated Pest Management, etc.

As a bureau within PDA, NASS-PA supports special projects as deemed necessary by the Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture. PDA makes it possible to publish average custom machinery rates and the monthly average cost of milk production (along with the Milk Marketing Board). The state funds most of the county level statistics which expands the county series to include: corn for grain and silage, wheat, dry alfalfa hay, dry other hay, dry all hay, all hay forage, barley, oats, soybeans, sorghum, tobacco, potatoes, apples, peaches, milk production, milk cows, cattle, sheep, hogs, broilers, number of farms and cash receipts.

Confidentiality is guaranteed to anyone providing information to NASS-PA regardless if it is acting in the federal or state capacity. According to federal law, the mail list can never be given or sold to any other entity, public or private (this includes other government agencies). Individual data is exempt from requests under the Freedom of Information Act and exempt from subpoena. Data is only published at an aggregate level so that no one can derive information about any single operation.