



Agricultural Resource Management Survey

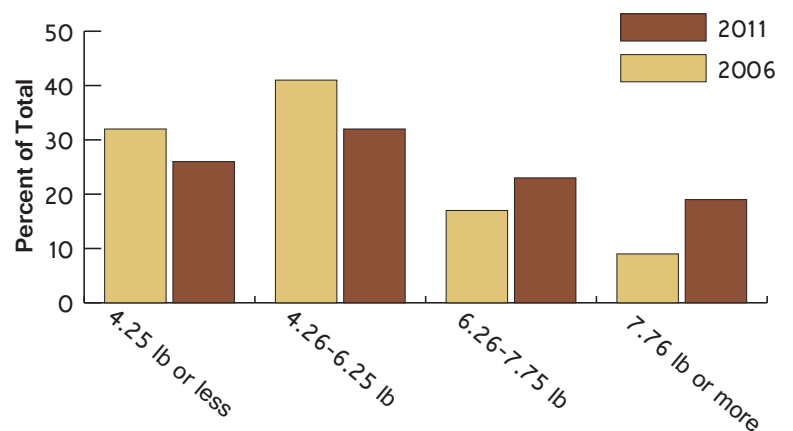
Broiler Highlights

In 2012, USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service and Economic Research Service conducted the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) of the U.S. broiler industry. During the first three months of 2012, trained enumerators conducted personal interviews with more than 2,000 broiler growers in the 17 largest broiler-producing states. The farmers provided information about their operating costs and farm-related income. Broiler producers were also asked about feed, housing, and sales during 2011. The following results are highlights of production practices and resource use.

Broiler Weight

ARMS results indicate that U.S. broiler production is shifting toward larger birds. Forty-two percent of birds produced in 2011 fell into the two largest classes, compared to 26 percent just five years before (Fig. 1). The shift reflects continuing changes in markets for broilers (toward more processed products, and more exports of poultry and poultry products). Larger birds require longer production cycles — 61 days, on average, for the largest class, compared to 38 days for the smallest — and require more feed per pound of weight gain.

Figure 1: U.S. Broiler Production by Weight



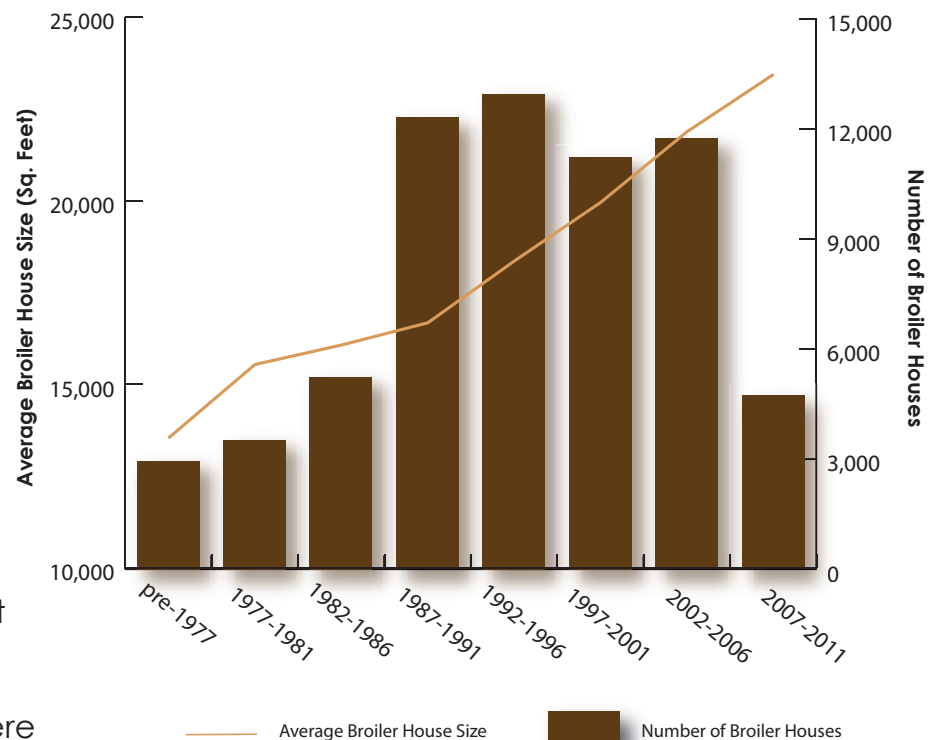
Smaller birds (less than 4.26 pounds) often go to fast food and food service sectors, while birds in the next larger class (4.26-6.25 pounds) go to retail groceries in tray pack or bagged forms. Birds in the two largest classes may be marketed to retail groceries, but are also often deboned and further processed into poultry products for several different sectors.

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Broiler Housing

Broiler houses have gotten steadily larger over time (Fig. 2). Houses built during the 1980s were typically about 16,000 square feet (400 feet long by 40 feet wide). The industry standard grew to 20,000 square feet (500 by 40) by 2000. Houses built in 2007-2011 averaged over 23,000 square feet. Many retained the 500 foot length, but were 50, 55, or 60 feet wide, while the largest new houses were nearly 40,000 square feet (600 by 66). When it comes to the year built, 31 percent of today's broiler houses were built since 2000, and another 39 percent were built in the 1990s. The rest of U.S. broiler houses were built prior to the 1990s.

Figure 2: Broiler Houses in Use in 2011, by Year Built



Farm Labor and Broiler Production

ARMS results show that small operations, those with one or two broiler houses, relied on labor from the operator and the operator's family (usually a spouse), and often combined broiler production with off-farm employment in 2011. Operations with more broiler houses relied more on hired labor in addition to that provided by the farm family, and the total family commitment increased toward 50 hours a week from less than 40 (Table 1).

While the farm family's labor commitment increased as the broiler operation grew larger, it did not rise proportionately with broiler production. The hours required, per 1,000 pounds of live-weight production declined sharply as operations added capacity and production.

Family labor, including that of the operator, was not paid a salary, and was therefore not included in cash expenses, unless the farm was incorporated. Hired labor is a cash expense, and the cost of hired labor per 1,000 pounds of live-weight production rose on larger farms as more hired labor was used.

Table 1: Labor Commitment, 2011

Number of Houses	Primary Operator	All Operators & Family	Hired Labor	All Operator & Family Labor (hours)	Hired Labor Expense (\$)
	<i>Average Weekly Hours</i>			<i>Per 1,000 pounds produced</i>	
1-2	28	37	4	2.27	1.47
3-4	33	42	9	1.12	2.23
5-6	38	49	20	0.74	3.00
7-8	40	50	28	0.55	3.78
9-10	38	51	48	0.55	5.68
>10	34	48	64	0.32	5.26

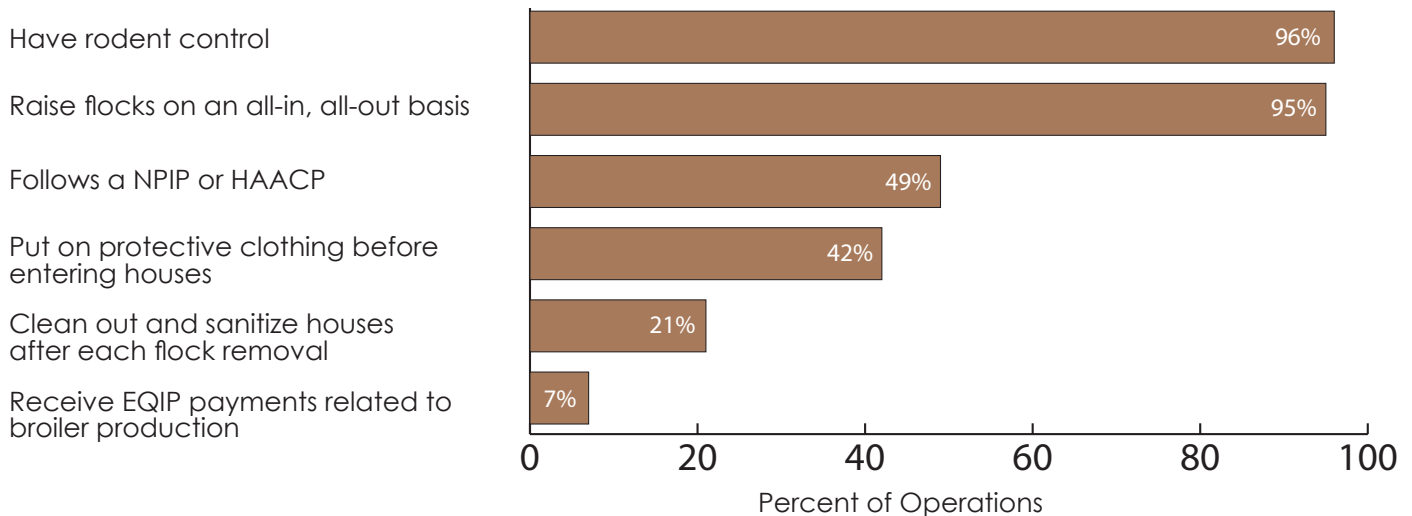
Broiler Industry Production Practices

Several practices were widespread on broiler operations in the United States in 2011, according to ARMS results. For example, almost all had specific practices to control rodent and wild bird access to facilities, and almost all rotated flocks on an all-in, all-out basis (Fig. 3).

Nearly half of broiler operations reported that they follow the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) or a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Plan, which are designed to improve animal health, food safety and food quality. A fifth of operations fully cleaned out and sanitized their houses after each flock removal.

Nearly half of broilers that died on the farm were disposed of through composting, while incineration was used for another quarter. USDA may provide support for incineration and composting facilities, as well as litter management practices, through payments made under the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Seven percent of contract growers received EQIP payments related to broiler production in 2011.

Figure 3: Production Practices, 2011

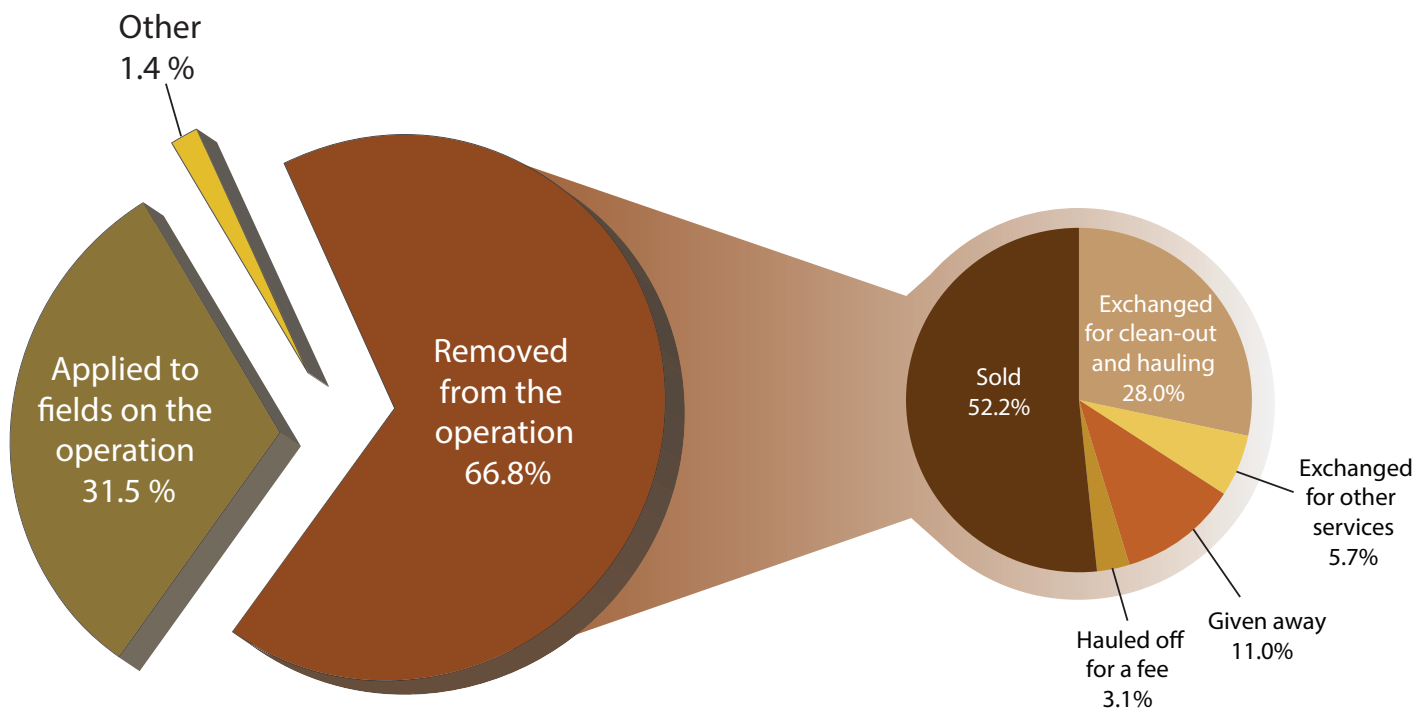


Litter Handling

Two-thirds (66.8%) of litter was removed from broiler operations in 2011 (Fig. 4), up from 61 percent in 2006, and just under a third (31.5%) was applied to fields on the broiler farm as fertilizer.

Litter has increasing value. More than half (52.2%) the litter removed from broiler farms in 2011 was sold, compared to 36 percent in 2006. Only 11 percent of litter was given away for free, compared to 21 percent in 2006. Prices received for litter depend on local demand and on prices for commercial fertilizer, which were much higher in 2011 than in 2006.

Figure 4: Litter Handling Practices, 2011*



**Due to rounding, the totals may not add up to 100 percent*

For additional information about ARMS and other broiler industry reports, visit:

www.nass.usda.gov
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