



NEWS RELEASE

**Women Operators
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Census of Agriculture Reveals a Nationwide Increase in Women Principal Operators

The 2002 Census of Agriculture indicated a 13.4 percent increase in the number of farms nationwide operated by women since 1997, according to the North Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service. A total of 237,819 farms in the U.S. were reported as having a woman as the principal operator in 2002. Women operated 59,383,557 acres of land in 2002, an increase of 16.5 percent from 1997. In North Dakota, 2,494 farms had women principal operators, up 68 percent from 1997. These farms totaled 1,217,118 acres of land.

A farm and ranch is defined as any establishment from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were sold or would normally be sold during the year. Government payments are included as sales. The annual estimate includes farms with their entire acreage enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program or other government programs.

"The 2002 Census of Agriculture shows the growing interest and participation of women in U.S. agricultural production," commented Ron Bosecker, Administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). "Census of Agriculture results show the contribution women farmers and ranchers make to the agricultural industry at the national level, the state level, and the county level."

Of the 30,619 farms in North Dakota 8 percent have a woman principal operator. Out of the 53 counties in the State, women principal operators were reported in every county. The top three counties for farms operated by a woman principal operator were Walsh with 128 farms; Stutsman with 113 farms; and Grand Forks with 102 farms. The three counties with the most acreage operated by women were McKenzie with 81,000 acres; Stutsman with 53,433 acres; and Grant with 43,969 acres.

Looking at market value of agricultural products sold by women-operated farms in North Dakota, women produced \$18.2 million in crops and an additional \$10.5 million in livestock, poultry and their products. The top three counties for market value of agricultural products sold by women-operated farms were Ward with \$3.85 million sold; Traill with \$1.53 million, and Stutsman with \$1.45 million.

"Although both men and women have always been involved in agriculture, prior to the late 1970s census statistics were not collected to differentiate male and female farm operators," said David Knopf, USDA-NASS-North Dakota Agricultural Statistics. "The actual number of women operators and the amount of land they operated was first reported in the 1978 Census of Agriculture. We are dedicated to accurately reporting the statistics on women farmers and we are working hard to ensure this growing constituency is counted and recognized for their contribution to agriculture."

NASS conducts the census of agriculture every five years and it is the only source of consistent, comparable and detailed data for every county in America. NASS also collects and provides a vast array of production, economic, demographic and environmental facts about U. S. agriculture through regularly scheduled weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual survey reports. For more census information, visit NASS online at www.usda.gov/nass/ and click on "Census of Agriculture" for aggregate facts and figures.

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