



State of Utah

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News Release

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UDAF Reacts to Release of 2017 Agriculture Census

(Salt Lake City) – With today’s release of the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agriculture Statistic Service’s (USDA NASS) 2017 Census of Agriculture, federal, state and industry groups now have updated data necessary to making informed decisions about agriculture, food and rural development.

“Census data gives us a critical snapshot of important facts and trends that impact policy and decisions for the next several years,” said LuAnn Adams, commissioner for the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food. “I am pleased at the support Utah producers give to USDA as we consistently have one of the highest response rates in the nation at 75%.”

The Census of Agriculture is a count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. Even small plots of land – whether rural or urban – growing fruit, vegetables or some food animals count if \$1,000 or more of such products were raised and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the Census year.

Taken only once every five years – the last representing 2012 data – the Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures. Full census data can be viewed at the USDA NASS website at:

<https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/index.php>

Following are some highlights from Utah’s portion of the data:

- **Farm and Land in Farms:** While the number of Utah farm land dropped from 10,974,396 acres in 2012 to 10,811,604 acres in 2017, the number of farms actually increased from 18,027 in 2012 to 18,409 in 2017, pointing to a steady growth in urban farming.
- **Farmland Production:** Orchard land grew by 7.3% between censuses, with Utah County and tart cherries seeing the largest portion of that growth. Vegetable farm land grew by 9.3% mostly in Weber and Cache Counties and with pumpkins and onions leading the way. Pumpkins indicate a growing interest in agri-tourism experiences.

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- **Economic Data:** The market value of raw agriculture products sold in Utah is also up 1.2% reaching a little over \$1.8 billion, crops seeing a 2.3% increase and livestock a 2.9% increase since 2012. However, when agriculture manufacturing is included, Utah's agriculture industry actually jumps to \$21 billion in total economic output, as noted from a 2017 study done by Utah State University researchers.
- **Top Producing Counties:** Beaver (\$258 M), Utah (\$203 M), Millard (\$180 M), Sanpete (\$172 M), and Cache (\$163 M) Counties account for about half of the state's raw agricultural production.
- **Top Utah Products:** Utah's largest commodity is beef, accounting for 20.6% of all raw agricultural sales. Close behind is cow milk at 19.4%. Other crops such as hay (15%), pork (12.6%), and poultry and eggs (11.3%) round out the top five.
- **Top Agriculture Expenses:** Labor costs saw a significant jump of 18% over the previous five years, while animal feed was down 21% over the same time period. Livestock purchases also jumped 24%.
- **Renewable Energy:** Utah agriculture producers more than doubled their investments in solar panel and geothermal renewable energies on their farms.
- **Organic Agriculture:** The number of organic farms is up by 63% and so too are the earnings of those farms going from \$9.1 million in 2012 to \$30.8 million in 2017.

USDA NASS will be releasing more in-depth state and county profile data on May 30.

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