



Women Farmers

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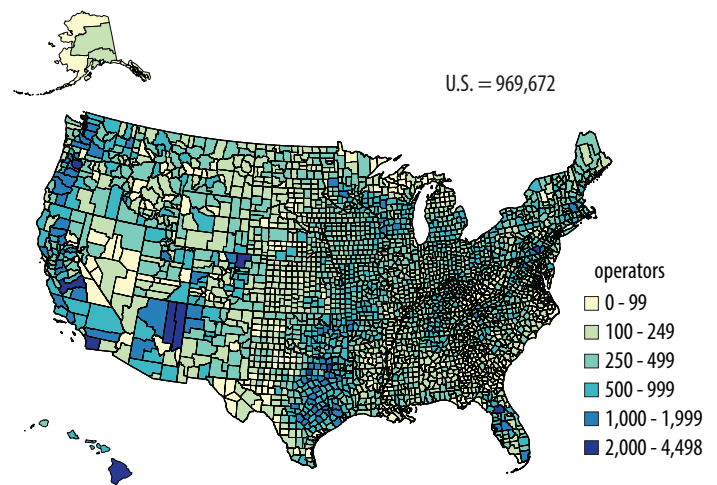
Control 7 percent of U.S. farmland, account for 3 percent of sales.

14 percent ...

... of the nation's 2.1 million farms had a female principal operator in 2012.

In 2012, the number of women farmers in the United States was 969,672. This was a 2 percent decrease in women farmers since 2007, when the last agriculture census was conducted. Nationally women were 30 percent of farmers, but in states in the Northeast, Southwest, and West women comprise larger shares. Although Texas had the most women farmers, Arizona had the highest proportion of women farmers (45 percent of all farmers in the state).

Women Farm Operators, by County, 2012



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

Principal Operators

Of total female farmers, 288,264 were principal operators, that is, the person in charge of the farm's day-to-day operations. Farms with women principal operators decreased 6 percent between 2007 and 2012; the total number of farms and principal operators declined 4 percent in that time. (Table 1)

Table 1
Women Farm Operators, 2007 and 2012

	2007	2012	% change
Women farm operators	985,192	969,672	-2%
Total farm operators	3.3 million	3.2 million	-3%
Women as % of total	30%	30%	
Women principal operators	306,209	288,264	-6%
Total principal operators	2.2 million	2.1 million	-4%*
Women as % of total	14%	14%	

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

For more information on women farmers, see <http://bit.ly/REGprofiles>.

*Statistically significant change. See <http://bit.ly/AgCensusFAQs>

Women principal operators tend to be older than principal operators overall. Only 4 percent of women principal operators were under 35 years old in 2012, compared to 6 percent of all principal operators. The average age of women principal operators was 60.1 years, nearly two years more than the average age overall. Women principal operators increased their Internet access in 2012, and now match the access rate of all principal operators. Women operators are less likely to report farming as their primary occupation, as well as to work off the farm. (Table 2)

Table 2
Women Principal Operators, 2007 and 2012

	Women		All Principal Operators, 2012
	2007	2012	
	(percent)		
Age			
< 35 years	4	4	6
35 to 64 years	62	59	61
65 years+	34	37	33
Primary occupation			
Farming / Other	40 / 60	43 / 57	48 / 52
Worked off farm			
Yes/No	59 / 41	57 / 43	61 / 39
Years on present farm			
0 - 4	13	11	8
5 - 9	21	17	14
10 +	66	72	78
Internet access			
Yes / No	55 / 45	70 / 30	70 / 30
Average age (years)	58.8	60.1	58.3

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

Farm Size and Sales

Women principal operators sold \$12.9 billion in agricultural products in 2012, including \$6.0 billion in crop sales and \$6.9 billion in livestock sales. They operated 62.7 million acres of farmland. Sales by women represented 3.3 percent of total U.S. agriculture sales, and women operated 6.9 percent of U.S. farmland.

Farms with women operators tend to be smaller than farms overall, with fewer acres and lower sales. Eighty-two percent of farms with a woman principal operator had fewer than 180 acres in 2012, and 76 percent had sales of less than \$10,000 in 2012. (Table 3)

Table 3
Farms with Woman Principal Operator, by Farm Size and Sales, 2012 (percent)

	Woman-operated Farms	All Farms
Farm Size		
< 50 acres	54	39
50 to 179 acres	28	30
180 to 999 acres	15	23
1,000 acres or more	3	8
Total	100	100
Farm Sales		
Less than \$10,000	76	56
\$10,000 to \$49,999	15	19
\$50,000 to \$249,999	6	13
\$250,000 to \$999,999	2	8
\$1,000,000 or more	1	4
Total	100	100

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

Top Commodities

About a fourth of women farmers specialized in combination crop farming (including hay production) in 2012. The next largest categories were beef cattle farming and ranching and combination livestock farming (including horse farming). (Table 4)

Table 4
Top Farms by Commodity Specialization^a, 2012 (woman principal operator)

	No. of Farms	% of Farms
Combination crops ^b	74,989	26
Beef cattle	66,714	23
Combination animals ^b	63,390	22
Sheep and goats	19,677	7
Grains and oilseeds	16,609	6

^aMore than half of a farm's sales come from that commodity.

^bFarms with no single majority commodity and farms specializing in miscellaneous commodities.

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

To learn more about women farmers and their farms, the 2012 Census of Agriculture, and how to access national, state, and county data, go to:

www.agcensus.usda.gov