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Pacific Region Farm News

Cooperating with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and the Nevada and Hawaii Departments of Agriculture
Pacific Regional Office · P.O. Box 1258 · Sacramento, CA 95812 · (916) 498-5161 · www.nass.usda.gov/ca

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PRELIMINARY 2012 CENSUS RESULTS PROVIDE A SNAPSHOT OF CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE

USDA Releases a First Look at 2012 Census of Agriculture Results

SACRAMENTO – Today the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released the 2012 Census of Agriculture preliminary results providing a first look at state and national data.

The 2012 Census reported little change in land in farms, a more diverse principal operator population and several historic changes in value of sales for U.S. agriculture producers from 2007 to 2012. The report included information on farm numbers, land in farms and farmer demographics. At the national level:

- The United States had 2.1 million farms, down 4.3 percent in 2012. The land in farms declined less than one percent, from 922 million acres to 915 million.
- In 2012, the value of agriculture products sold totaled $394.6 billion, up 33 percent ($97.4 billion) from 2007. For only the second time in Census history crop sales ($212.4 billion) exceeded livestock sales ($182.2 billion).

"One of the most important takeaways to remember about the Census of Agriculture is that the information is used for decision-making by producers as well as all those who serve farmers, ranchers and rural communities – federal, state and local governments, agribusinesses, trade associations and many others," said Vic Tolomeo, Director of the USDA-NASS, Pacific Region. "When we look at the data for California, we can all use it as a snapshot in time to see how California agriculture is changing over time and how it compared to the rest of the country."

As an example, the preliminary 2012 Census data show the following key trends for California:

- In 2012, California's number of farms decreased to 77,864, down 4 percent from 2007.
- The land in California farms increased slightly to 25.6 million acres.
- In 2012, the value of agricultural products sold totaled $42.6 billion in California, compared to 33.9 billion in 2007.
- The number of California farmers who reported farming as their primary occupation is up 4 percent from 2007.

"The release of the preliminary 2012 Census of Agriculture results is only a first look at the data and NASS is eager to publish the final report this May," said NASS Administrator Cynthia Clark. "The 2012 Census was not conducted in a typical crop year, and drought had a major impact on U.S. agriculture, affecting crop yields, production and prices. NASS is still reviewing all 2012 Census items to the county level and therefore data are preliminary until published in the final report."

Conducted since 1840, the Census of Agriculture accounts for all U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. When available in May, the final report will provide even more detailed information for the U.S. and California at the county level. The publication will also provide new insights into the agriculture industry reporting new or expanded data on Internet access, regional food systems, biomass production, agro-forestry and equine.

For more information about the Census, including access to the 2012 Census of Agriculture preliminary report and the full report when it is released in May, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

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