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USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS) conducts high-quality, objective economic research to inform and enhance public and private decision making on emerging issues in agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America.

*Ag and Food Statistics: Charting the Essentials* covers key food and agricultural indicators and illustrates the scope of ERS’s work through a series of charts and maps. This booklet provides a sample of those maps and charts available on the ERS website at www.ers.usda.gov/essentials.

Organized into nine topics, *Charting the Essentials* anticipates questions, such as: How much do agriculture and related industries contribute to the U.S. economy? What economic forces are shaping rural America? What are the top destinations for U.S. agricultural exports? What percent of income do U.S. households spend on food?

*Charting the Essentials* provides a resource for public officials, researchers, educators, students, journalists, and anyone looking for current information on these topics.

Visit the ERS website where you can view and download these charts and maps, as well as a variety of reports and other products, such as Charts of Note and *Amber Waves* online magazine.
Agriculture and its related industries account for 10.5 percent of U.S. employment...

**Employment in agriculture, food, and related industries, 2021**

- **21.1 million jobs**
  - 2.6 million jobs in food services, eating and drinking places (5.9% of U.S. employment)
  - 3.3 million jobs in food and beverage stores (1.7%)
  - 0.9 million jobs in forestry, fishing, and related activities (0.5%)
  - 2.0 million jobs in food, beverage, and tobacco manufacturing (1.0%)
  - 2.0 million jobs in textile, apparel, and leather manufacturing (0.2%)
  - 0.4 million jobs in farms (1.3%)

Food ranked third behind housing and transportation in U.S. households' expenditures in 2021.

Share of U.S. household consumer expenditures by major categories, 2021

- Food, 12.4%
- Personal insurance, pensions, 11.8%
- Healthcare, 8.1%
- Entertainment, alcoholic beverages, 6.2%
- Housing, 33.8%
- Transportation, 16.4%
- Education, reading, 2.0%
- Apparel, 2.6%
- Savings, 3.6%
- Other, 3.1%

Note: "Other" includes personal care products, tobacco, and miscellaneous expenditures.
Rural Economy

Rural unemployment rates were lower and population growth stronger than in urban areas during the COVID-19 pandemic, but poverty rates remained higher in rural areas. Despite overall rural population growth from 2020 to 2021, population change varied across rural America.

The gap between rural and urban poverty rates persists.

U.S. rural and urban poverty and unemployment rates, 2000–21

Poverty and unemployment rate (percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rural poverty</th>
<th>Urban poverty</th>
<th>Rural unemployment</th>
<th>Urban unemployment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Rural/urban status is based on 2013 county nonmetro/metro delineations as determined by the Office of Management and Budget.
Losses to rural population reversed in 2021…

**U.S. population change in metro and nonmetro areas, 1985–2021**

Percent change from previous year

![Graph showing population change from 1985 to 2021 for metro and nonmetro areas.](chart)


… but this varied across the United States.

**U.S. nonmetro county population change, 2020–21**

![Map of U.S. showing population change in nonmetro counties.](map)

Rural areas vary in the industries that underpin their economies.

ERS county economic typology, 2015

Agricultural production is a major use of land, accounting for over half of the U.S. land base.

Major land uses in the United States, 1949–2012

*Nonagricultural special uses include rural parks and wilderness areas, rural transportation areas, and defense/industrial lands. Agricultural special uses include farmsteads and farm roads.

Five States—Nebraska, California, Arkansas, Texas, and Idaho—account for just over half of the Nation’s irrigated acres.

USDA’s funding for major working lands conservation programs has more than doubled over the past 25 years while funding for the Conservation Reserve Program has stayed fairly constant.

Major USDA conservation program expenditures, fiscal years 1996–2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Billion constant 2021 dollars</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

*Note:* Working land programs include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), program-related technical assistance, and predecessor programs. Predecessors of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program include the Wetlands Reserve Program, Farmland Protection Program, and part of the Grassland Reserve Program. CSP expenditures in 2019 and 2020 reflect obligations under CSP contracts signed prior to the 2018 Farm Act that had originally been budgeted as ongoing obligations during the term of the contract. Data for 2022 reflect enacted spending. Values adjusted to 2021 dollars using the Gross Domestic Product Implicit Price Deflator.

Early 20th century agriculture was labor intensive, and it took place on many small, diversified farms. Much of today's agricultural production takes place on large, specialized farms.

The number of farms has leveled off at about 2.01 million …
… but agricultural output has grown, along with improvements in agricultural productivity.

**U.S. agricultural output, inputs, and total factor productivity, 1948–2019**

![Graph showing trends in total agricultural output, total factor productivity, and total farm inputs from 1948 to 2019.](image)

Net farm income has trended up since 2016…

U.S. gross farm income, production expenses, and net farm income, 2002–22F


… while off-farm income continues to be important to total farm household income, especially among small-scale producers.

Median income of farm households, by income source and farm type, 2021

Note: Farm type reflects annual gross cash farm income (GCFI) which includes sales of crops and livestock, Government payments, and other farm-related income (including fees received by operators from production contracts).
Agricultural Production and Prices

Markets for major agricultural commodities are typically analyzed by looking at supply-and-use conditions and the implications for prices. Many interactions and relationships exist between and among different commodities. For example, corn production and prices affect feed costs in the livestock sector.

U.S. crop production is concentrated in California and the Midwest, while livestock production is more spread out across the country.

Market value of crops sold in 2017

Market value of livestock, dairy, poultry, and their products sold in 2017

Corn and soybean acreage has increased since 1990, while fewer acres are planted with wheat.

U.S. planted area: Corn, wheat, soybeans, and upland cotton, 1990–2022

Agricultural prices trended upward in 2021 …

U.S. prices received by farmers, 1991–2021


… bringing crop and animal/animal product cash receipts higher as well.

Gross cash farm income components, inflation adjusted, 2002–22F


AGRICULTURAL TRADE

The leading U.S. agricultural exports are grains and feeds, soybeans, livestock products, tree nuts, fruits, vegetables, and other horticultural products. The leading U.S. imports are horticultural and tropical products. China, Mexico, Canada, Japan, and the European Union are major U.S. trade partners.

The United States typically exports more agricultural goods by value than it imports, but imports have grown more rapidly than exports over the past decade…

U.S. agricultural trade, 2001–21

Note: Calendar year values in nominal U.S. dollars.
... and the nominal value of U.S. agricultural exports showed strong growth in 2021, driven by gains in all major commodity groups, with the largest gains in grains and feeds.

China, Mexico, and Canada were top destinations for U.S. agricultural exports in 2021.

Top five markets for U.S. agricultural exports, 2001-21

Overseas customers account for 40 percent or more of the total market for U.S. fruits and tree nuts, oilseeds, and food grains such as rice and wheat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Export value share of production, 2011–21</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food grains</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grain and oilseed milling products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oilseeds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruits and tree nuts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meat products</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feed grains</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preserved fruit and vegetables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sugar and confections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vegetables and melons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dairy products</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bakery products</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweeteners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

ERS’s Food Availability data estimate the amount of food available for human consumption in the United States by measuring the supply of foods moving through the U.S. marketing system. A second data series—Loss-Adjusted Food Availability—adjusts for losses from farmgate to fork—such as damaged products, spoilage, and plate waste—to more closely approximate actual consumption.

Food availability data track changes in U.S. diets over time.

Per capita availability of caloric sweeteners in the U.S. trended down over the last 2 decades—led by a steady decline in corn sweeteners consumption…

U.S. per capita caloric sweetener availability, 1970–2021

Note: Corn sweeteners include high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), glucose syrup, and dextrose. Edible syrups include sorgo (sweet sorghum), maple and sugarcane syrup, edible molasses, and edible refiners’ syrup.
...while the mix of dairy products available for U.S. consumption after adjusting for losses shifted to include more cheese and less fluid milk …

U.S. per capita loss-adjusted availability of dairy products, 1981 and 2021

Cup-equivalents per day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1981</th>
<th>2021</th>
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<td>1.0</td>
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- Yogurt
- Other dairy
- Frozen dairy
- Cheese
- Fluid milk

*One cup-equivalent for dairy is: 1 cup milk or yogurt; 1 1/2 ounces natural cheese or 2 ounces of processed cheese or 1/3 cup shredded cheese; 1 cup frozen yogurt or 1 1/2 cups ice cream; 2 cups cottage cheese.

Note: Loss-adjusted food availability data are proxies for consumption. "Other dairy" includes evaporated milk, condensed milk, dry milk products, cottage cheese, and half and half. Half and half data were discontinued in 2002 and are not included in "Other dairy" for 2021.


... and per capita availability of red meat, poultry, and seafood varied over time …

U.S. per capita availability of beef, pork, chicken, and fish/shellfish, 1910–2021

Pounds per person

- Beef
- Pork
- Chicken
- Fish and shellfish*

*Fish and shellfish data are only available through 2019.

… with a variety of vegetables available for consumption.

U.S. per capita vegetable availability, 2001–20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Legumes</th>
<th>Dark green</th>
<th>Other vegetables</th>
<th>Red and orange, excl. tomatoes</th>
<th>Starchy, excluding potatoes</th>
<th>Potatoes</th>
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<td>2001</td>
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Note: **Legumes**: dry edible beans, dry peas. **Dark green**: broccoli, collard greens, escarole, kale, mustard greens, romaine and leaf lettuce, spinach, turnip greens. **Other vegetables**: artichokes, asparagus, beets, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, head lettuce, okra, onions, radishes, snap beans, squash. **Red and orange, excluding tomatoes**: bell peppers, carrots, chili peppers, pumpkin, sweet potatoes. **Starchy, excluding potatoes**: green peas, lima beans, sweet corn.

Even large swings in farm commodity prices result in modest changes in food prices ...

Change in all-food CPI, intermediate foods and feeds PPI, and field crop prices, 2002–21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual percent change</th>
<th>All-food CPI</th>
<th>Intermediate foods and feeds PPI</th>
<th>Field crop prices*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020</td>
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</table>

*Calendar year production-weighted average for corn, wheat, and soybeans.
Note: PPI = Producer Price Index, CPI = Consumer Price Index.
... as much of U.S. consumers’ retail food dollar pays for processing, retailing, and foodservice costs.

2021 nominal food dollar by industry group

Note: Other includes agribusiness (2.2 cents) and legal and accounting (1.8 cents).

Spending on food-away-from-home continued to outpace food-at-home spending in 2021.

Food-at-home and food-away-from-home expenditures in the United States, 1961-2021

Note: Values are in nominal dollars.
ERS monitors the food security of U.S. households through an annual, nationally representative survey. While most U.S. households are food secure, a minority of U.S. households are food insecure—they struggle to afford enough food for all household members. Some experience the more severe very low food security, where food intake of one or more members is reduced and normal eating patterns are disrupted.

U.S. households in the middle-income quintile spend about 12 percent of their incomes on food, but the lowest-income families spend just over 30 percent.

Some of these families may find themselves facing food insecurity…

Prevalence of food insecurity by selected household characteristics, 2021


… and seek support from USDA’s food and nutrition assistance programs.

Inflation-adjusted spending on USDA food and nutrition assistance programs, fiscal years 1980–2021

Note: Child nutrition includes the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and Special Milk Program; it does not include State administrative expenses. Other includes spending not elsewhere classified, including Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer and the Farmers to Families Food Box Program in 2020-21 and meals served through the NSLP/SBP Seamless Summer Option in Q4 of 2021. Inflation adjusted using the Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index. Data are as of April 2022 and subject to revision. Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from USDA, Food and Nutrition Service and USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service.
Participation in SNAP—the largest of these assistance programs—varies across States, reflecting differences in need and program policies.

Percent of population receiving SNAP benefits in fiscal 2021

Note: SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
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