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# Ag and Food Statistics: Charting the Essentials



## *A message from the Under Secretary*

A year ago, USDA's Economic Research Service launched a new online product, *Ag and Food Statistics: Charting the Essentials*, which provides a set of key indicators on food, agriculture, and rural America in a collection of charts and maps.

Which country, for example, is the top destination for U.S. agricultural exports? How much of the retail food dollar goes to farmers? What are the most commonly consumed vegetables? How much of our Nation's land is occupied by nonmetro (rural) counties?

The *Essentials* charts and maps have been well received by public officials, researchers, educators, and journalists. "Excellent" is how one congressional staffer described the collection. "A gold mine," reported a professor of agricultural economics who uses the charts in his classes. A prominent food blogger tweeted her thousands of followers to alert them to this web product. And individual charts and data from the collection have turned up in major media outlets.

This booklet presents some examples of what you'll find on the ERS website, where 70 charts and maps, each with accompanying text, are grouped into nine topics (listed below). They are at [www.ers.usda.gov/essentials](http://www.ers.usda.gov/essentials) and are updated as new data become available.

I hope that current *Essentials* users will continue to find this resource valuable and informative, and that new users will benefit from the contents of this product.

*Catherine E. Woteki*

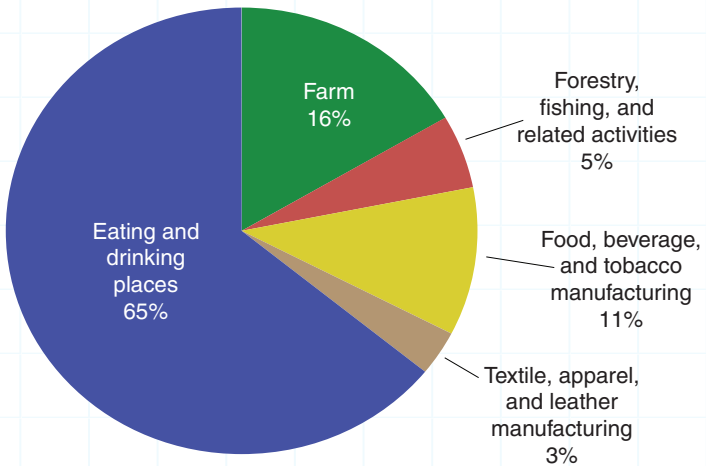
**Catherine E. Woteki, Ph.D.**

Chief Scientist and Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics

Ag and Food Sectors and the Economy  
Land and Natural Resources  
Farming and Farm Income  
Rural Economy  
Agricultural Production and Prices  
Agricultural Trade  
Food Availability and Consumption  
Food Prices and Spending  
Food Security and Nutrition Assistance

# Farm jobs account for 16 percent of agriculture and food-related employment.

Employment\* in agriculture and related industries, 2012



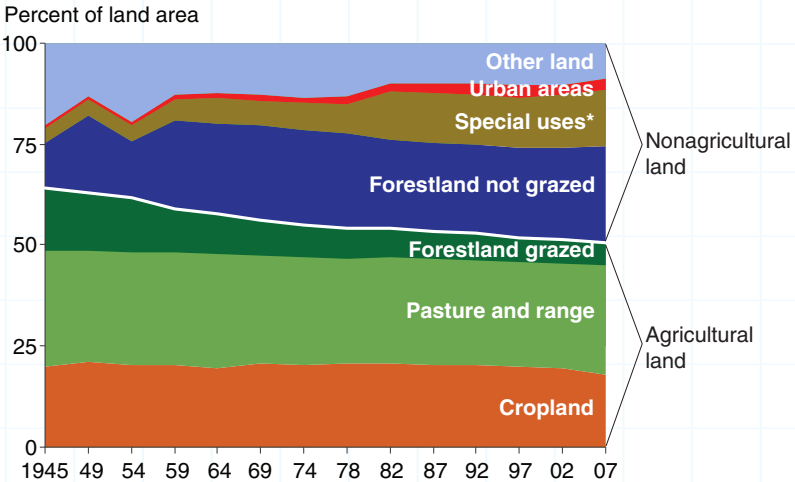
\*Full- and part-time jobs.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Nearly a tenth of U.S. jobs are in agriculture and food-related industries—16.5 million in 2012.

# While declining over time, agricultural lands still account for about half of the U.S. land base.

Major land uses in the United States, 1945-2007



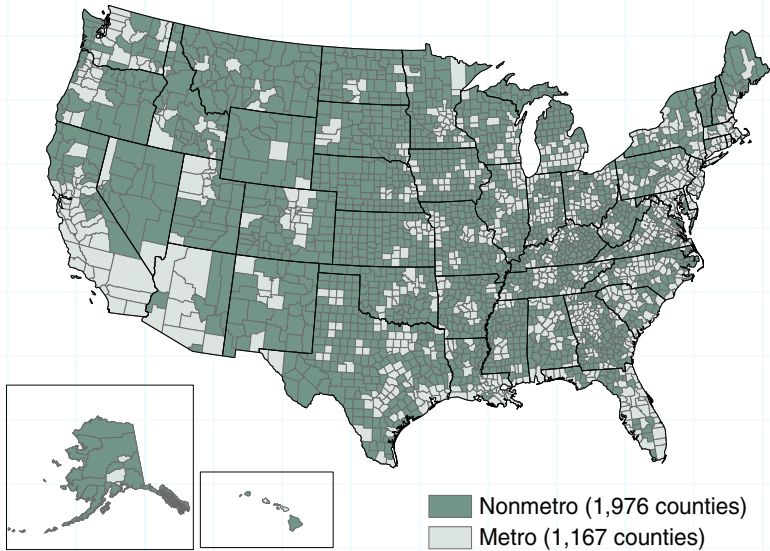
\*Special uses includes rural parks and wilderness areas, rural transportation, defense/industrial lands, and farmsteads.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the Major Land Uses series.

Individual land parcels often shift from cropland to pasture and back as economic conditions change.

Close to 46 million people—about 15 percent of U.S. residents—live in rural (nonmetro) counties.

Metro and nonmetro counties, 2013

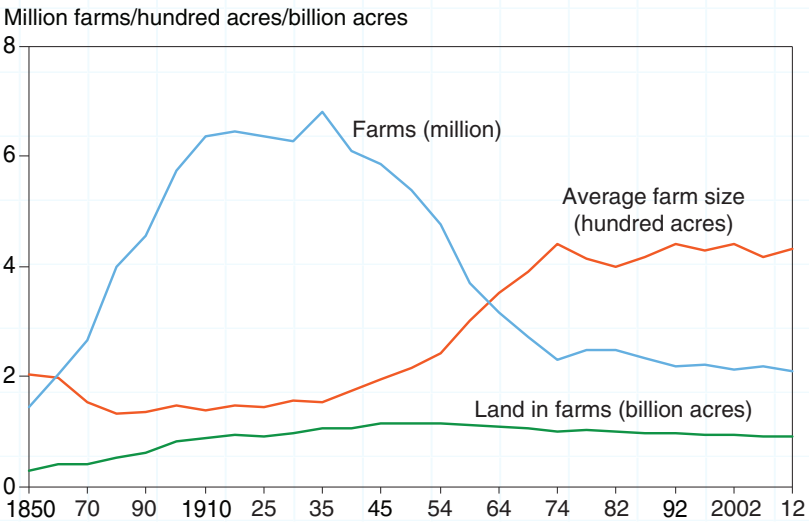


Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Census Bureau.

Nonmetro areas make up 72 percent of the Nation's land and are home to 57 percent of farms.

# Today's farms are fewer (about 2 million) and bigger (about 400 acres per farm).

**Farms, land in farms, and average acres per farm, 1850–2012**

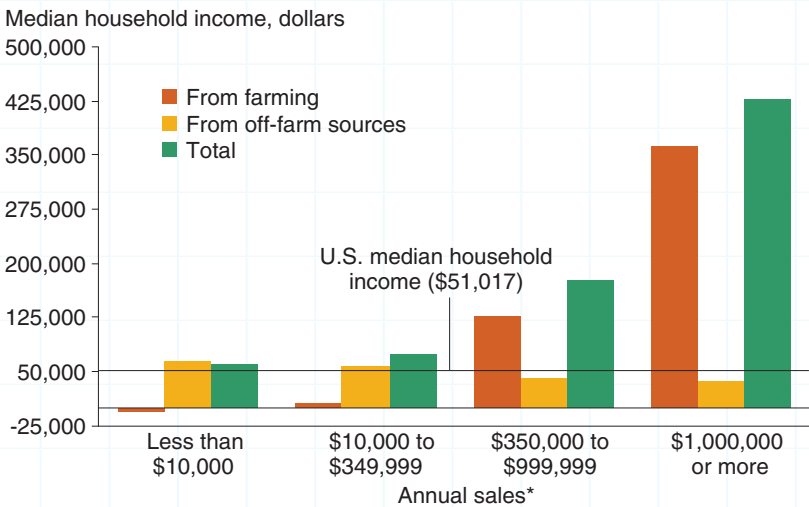


Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Census of Agriculture.

The number of U.S. farms peaked at 7 million in 1935.

# Most farm households report incomes above the median for all U.S. households.

**Household income of farm operators by source and sales class, 2012**



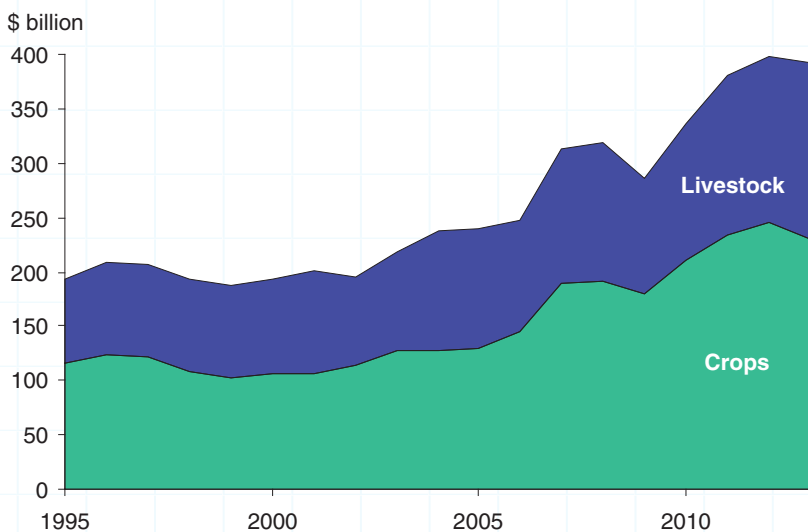
\*Sales = Gross cash farm income (the sum of the farm's crop and livestock sales, government payments, and other farm-related income).

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service and USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Agricultural Resource Management Survey and U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.

Farms with sales less than \$10,000 account for 53 percent of farms, but only 1 percent of production.

## Value of farm commodities dipped in 2013, as increased corn and soybean production drove down prices.

Value of U.S. agricultural production, 1995-2013



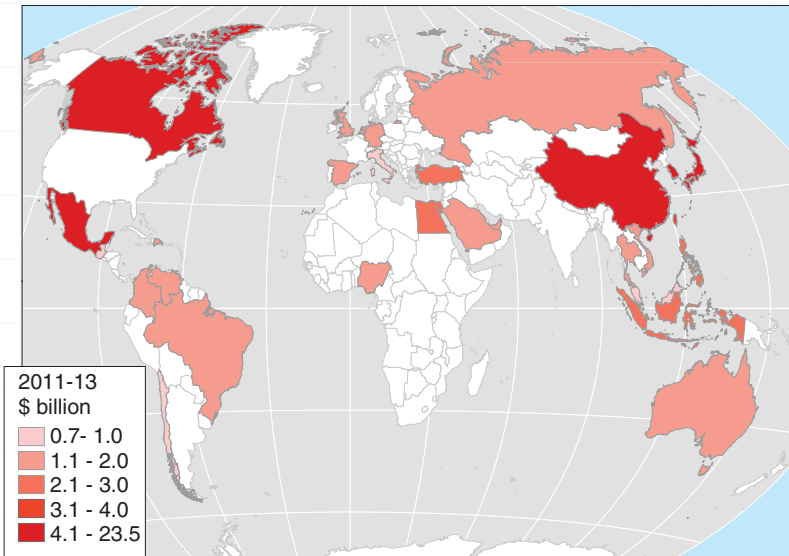
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations using data from ERS and USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Quick Stats Database.

Corn, cattle, and soybeans were 39 percent of the farm value of U.S. agricultural production in 2013.



# China was the top destination for U.S. agricultural exports in 2013.

Top U.S. agricultural export destinations, 2011-13 average

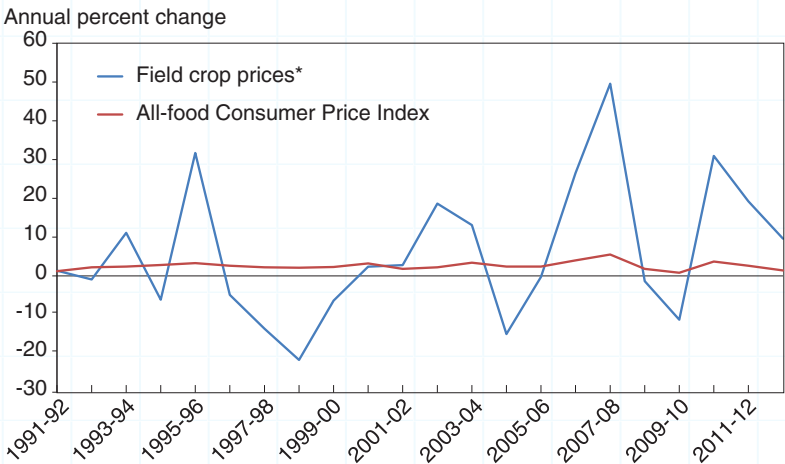


Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations based on data from U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Foreign Trade Database.

U.S. agricultural exports to China nearly doubled from \$13.1 billion in 2009 to \$25.9 billion in 2013.

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

**Change in all-food CPI and field crop prices, 1991-2013**



\*Production-weighted average farm price of corn, wheat, and soybeans.  
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Over the last decade, food prices have posted annual increases of between 0.8 and 5.5 percent.

...as much of Americans' retail food dollar covers processing, retailing, and food-service costs.

2012 Food dollar (nominal): Industry group



Note: "Other" includes two industry groups: Advertising plus Legal & Accounting.  
 Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, Food Dollar Series.

Farm production costs accounted for 9.7 cents of the food dollar in 2012.

## Like to see more?



**View the complete *Essentials* on the ERS website.**

This collection of charts and maps presents essential information on the farm sector, food spending and prices, food security, rural communities, and the interaction of agriculture and natural resources.

- Organized by topic – choose among nine categories
- Contains 70 charts and maps
- Includes descriptive text with each chart
- Charts and maps periodically updated

**[www.ers.usda.gov/essentials](http://www.ers.usda.gov/essentials)**

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