



Alaska Facts

on
agriculture & natural resources



Alaska, by far the biggest state in the union, is a diverse land. Alaska's temperatures vary widely — and wildly — from region to region and season to season, affecting its agricultural production.

Alaska's coastal regions have less extreme temperature swings from season to season. For instance Homer, on the mainland coast, has an average maximum temperature in July of 60.6 degrees Fahrenheit; in January, it's 28.9. But in Fairbanks, the average max temperature in July is 72.4 degrees, compared to -1.5 in January.

Alaska Fast Facts

Motto: "North to the Future"

Flag: dark blue background with eight stars -- the North Star and the Big Dipper.

Name: derived from an Aleut word "Alyeska," which means "great land."

Capital: Juneau, which can only be reached by air or water.

Flower: Forget-me-not

Gem: Jade

Sport: Dog mushing

Bird: Willow ptarmigan

Fish: King salmon

Tree: Sitka spruce

Mineral: Gold

Land Mammal: Moose

Marine Mammal: Bowhead whale

Insect: Four-spot skimmer dragonfly, which eats mosquitos.

Soil: Tanana, found in Fairbanks area



Most of Alaska's agriculture lands are located in the Matanuska Valley north of Anchorage and the Tanana Valley east of Fairbanks. The Matanuska Valley is known for mild summers and moderate winters, while the Interior's Tanana Valley sees hot summers and very cold winters.

One interesting facet of Matanuska Valley farming goes back to the Great Depression. A federal program designed to help Midwestern farmers start over on fertile Alaska land brought "pioneer" farm families to Alaska in the mid 1930s. While many of those farms failed, the potential for farming the sheltered valley was realized. In the 1950s, replacement "colonists," as they had come to be known, were recruited from Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Some of them prospered and the Matanuska Valley's famous monster vegetables became legend. Some of the original and replacement Colonists' family members still farm in Alaska.

Speaking of monster vegetables, how about a 100-pound cabbage? The Alaska State Fair record is 105.6 pounds. Summer days of nearly constant daylight allow some crops to be nurtured to enormous size. Other

jumbo crops include a world-record 18.99 pound carrot and a 75.75 pound rutabaga, another world record.

Alaska doesn't find itself in the U.S. production rankings very often. Its agricultural production is quite small, especially considering it is by far the biggest state — more than 365 million acres. Fewer than 1 million acres are farmed, and only about 29,000 acres were in cropland in 2006. An estimated 15 million acres of land in Alaska have soils suitable for farming.

Alaska's farmers supply less than 2 percent of the food consumed in their state, and 40 percent of the feed supplied Alaska animals. To highlight its products, the state promotes its homegrown products with a distinctive Alaska Grown label. With so much of Alaska's food brought into the state on trucks, in planes and on ships, the label trumpets the freshness of the Alaska-grown product.

Alaska Miscellany

- Regions of Alaska: Far North, Interior, Southwest, Southcentral, Southeast
- Largest city: Anchorage, population 278,700, according to 2006 estimates.
- Alaska covers 570,380 square miles
- State population: 670,000, according to 2006 estimates.
- Population density: 2.6 person for each each square mile, minus lakes, rivers, etc.
- Alaska is divided into boroughs, instead of counties or parishes.

There are 16 organized boroughs, but some areas of the state are not included in any municipal form of government, either borough or one of Alaska's 149 incorporated cities. There are also more than 229 federally recognized tribal governments.

• Alaska has 318 different soil types in seven of the twelve soil orders.

• Alaska has 100 volcanoes and volcanic fields that have been active within the last 1.5 million

years. More than 40 of these have been active in historic time. These make up about 80 percent of all active volcanoes in the U.S.

• Alaska's oil production is 25 percent of the total United States production.

• Alaska was purchased from Russia on March 30, 1867 for \$7.2 million. Alaska became the 49th state on Jan. 3, 1959.

• Alaska is one-fifth the size of the contiguous United States; 488 times larger than the state of Rhode Island; larger than the three next-largest states combined.

• Alaska leads the nation in quantity of commercial seafood landings. In 2007, more than 200 million salmon were harvested.

• Permafrost is more than 2,000 feet deep on Alaska's North Slope.

• A pingo is an ice mound that develops as tundra lakes fill with silt and sediments. As permafrost encroaches from the sides of the lake, excess water bulges upward as it freezes, forming a pingo.

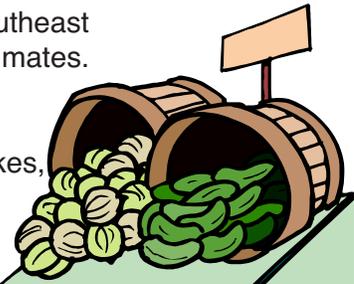
• The Tongass National Forest, at 16.9 million acres, is the largest national forest.

• Forests cover 129 million acres of Alaska, about one third of the state.

• Alaska is the northernmost, easternmost and westernmost of the United States (because the Aleutian Chain crosses the International Dateline into the Eastern Hemisphere).

• Ninety percent of Alaska land is owned by a government agency.

• Alaska has three million lakes.



Alaska Ag Product Facts — 2006

Crop Production

Hay	22,000 tons
Barley	157,000 bu.
Oats	28,000 bu.
Potatoes	18.6 million lbs.
Head lettuce	1 million lbs.
Cabbage	845,000 lbs.
Carrots	1.67 million lbs.
Other veg.	2 million lbs.

Livestock Production

Beef	1.5 million lbs.
Dairy	9.8 million lbs.
Hogs	477,000 lbs.
Sheep	16,000 lbs.
Reindeer	220,000 lbs.

Other Farm Products

Wool	5,800 lbs.
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Most info was obtained from State of Alaska or USDA-Alaska sources. Other sources included Alaska Forestry Association.