



UPDATE ON ALASKA PEONY INDUSTRY

AND

DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE  
PEONY PROGRAMS

# ALASKA PERFECT PEONY, FRITZ CREEK ALASKA





# 14<sup>TH</sup> SEASON, ALASKA'S FIRST COMMERCIAL FARM





# ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING AND ENCOURAGING

- ALASKA GROWN
- CERTIFIED AMERICAN GROWN
- WESTERN UNITED STATES AGRICULTURE TRADE ASSOCIATION (WUSATA)
- ASSOCIATION OF SPECIALTY CUT FLOWER GROWERS (ASCFG)
- SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FLORISTS (SAF)
- FLORIST REVIEW
- CALIFORNIA CUT FLOWER ASSOCIATION (Fed Ex)
- NESBITE





# CLOSER · FRESHER · BETTER ·

## THE ALASKA GROWN PROGRAM

- The Alaska Grown Program has been around for over 30 years and is supported by the Alaska Division of Agriculture
- The 2nd oldest state-branded marketing program in the nation, Alaska Grown was created by the local agriculture industry to highlight products grown in Alaska, and help consumers identify which products are locally grown, raised, and produced
- 92 Alaska Grown members are peony producers





# CERTIFIED AMERICAN GROWN

- ❑ OVER 56% USA CUT FLOWER GROWERS BELONG TO CAG
- ❑ 2020 INVITED BACK TO WHITE HOUSE
- ❑ ANNUAL FLY IN



## 2019 CAG FLY IN





# FIRST LADY'S LUNCHEON CAG SPONSOR

2020 MAY 12TH

APGA 2019







ALASKA  
PEONIES  
ARE FAMOUS

# FEATURED ON ALASKA TV REGULARLY

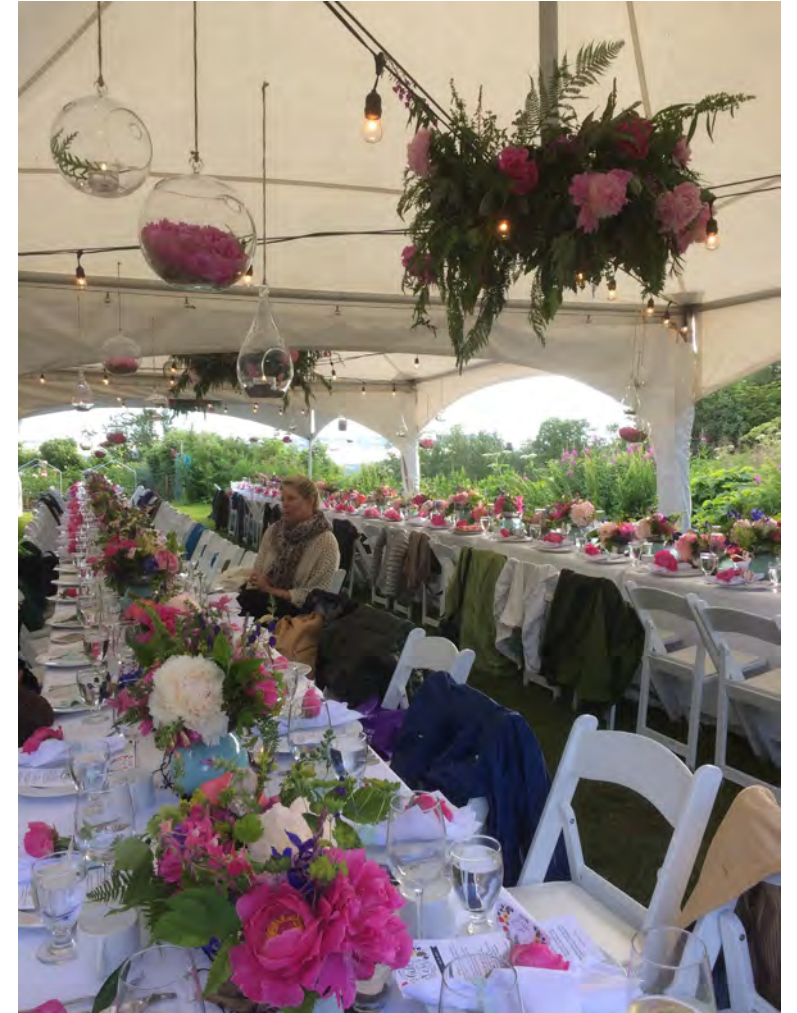




# SENATOR MURKOWSKI WEEKLY REPORT INVITED TO WHITE HOUSE FOR FUTURE OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE



# SCENIC PLACE PEONIES







WE WON!!!!



# World Trade Day & National Small Business Exporter Summit

## Alaska Perfect Peony State of Alaska



2017 SPOKANE WASHINGTON  
**OUTSTANDING  
EXPORTER**

*Tammy Marquez-Oldham*

Tammy Marquez-Oldham  
President, NASBITE International





# Bouquet for President Obama





## MAGAZINES



### LOOKING BACKWARD & FORWARD



**SOUTH OF THE BORDER** Along with a whole team of AIFD designers from Mexico, Rocío Silva AIFD and Jose Luis Silva AIFD gave a lively and enthusiastic floral interpretation of monuments and festivities from traditional Mexican culture. The stage opened on a pyramid like those found widely in southern Mexico, adorned with decorative tiles. Larger tiles were built on Styrofoam squares with floral foam appliques; others were made using Oasis Floral Foam Tiles (floral foam adhered to a plastic backing), which come in large sheets divisible into smaller squares. A parade of models carrying vibrant bouquets recalled the festival of Xochiquetzal—goddess of flowers, beauty, and love.



32 [www.flowersandmagazine.com](http://www.flowersandmagazine.com)





## PEONIES BY THE NUMBERS

200 B.C.

The earliest written record of peony praise, found in Chinese literature, describing the flower as a medicinal herb.

5 years

The average number of years it takes for a peony plant to be strong enough to produce a commercial harvest.

**50 years**

The potential  
lifetime of a single  
peony plant.

4 dollars

Average price  
of a single Alaskan  
peony stem.

3,000

Number of registered cultivated varieties.

10 dollar

Average price of  
a peony root.

fetish for flowers."

Farming, of course, is never an easy endeavor. But in Alaska, it's like an extreme sport. Winters cloaked in darkness give way to a deluge of melting snow and then a fast and furious 90-day growing season. Peony farmers are up with the sun—3 a.m.—racing to snip flowers before they bloom, which is triggered by the long hours of daylight. "I'm a nervous wreck in summer," says Beth Van Sandt, who owned a travel agency before starting her farm, Scenic Place Peonies. "I harvest three times a day."


Soil quality is an even bigger hurdle. Geologically speaking, Alaskan soil is among the youngest on earth. "You can't just roll

out good soil like a rug," explains Holloway. "It takes time to build." Farmers counteract soil acidity with lime to build more neutral, fertile growing beds.

Jan Hanscom, who operates one of the northernmost peony farms in Alaska, has an even bigger challenge than poor soil: permafrost. When she started clearing the trees on her Fairbanks property to open up farmland, she didn't think it would be any different than any other piece of land. After a few years of cultivation, as the permafrost—no longer insulated by trees—warmed and melted, the ground literally gave way underneath her. Sinkholes 4 feet deep now dot her land. "Our fields almost look like the surface of the moon," says Hanscom. Despite the ankle twisters, she continues farming, knowing to expect a certain amount of plant loss.

Challenges aside, Alaska's peony industry is shaping up to be a success story. There are now more than 75 peony farms across the state, most of which sell 100 percent of what they cut. Collectively, the farmers exported an estimated 150,000 stems in 2015, twice as many as the previous year. LaFriniere's been approached by a polipourti company looking for 20,000 dried peonies for a major hotel chain, "but I'm still selling out of most of the fresh ones."

before it, this one is farmer-driven—even if it is in its formative years. “We’re like teenagers,” says Hanscom. “Our agriculture is just a few years old, but we’re very proud of what we’ve built.”

Of course, farming peonies in Alaska also has its personal rewards. LaPrinere's farm sits high up in the Homer Hills, with Grewingk Glacier glistening in the distance and the peonies growing tall and robust across her 22 acres. When she's working in the field, LaPrinere doesn't see the beauty—almost. But just before harvest, the landscape can still floor her, she says: "There's a moment just before the flowers open where it looks like the world is holding its breath." 

Clockwise from top left: Halibut Cove on Kachemak Bay; 'Monsieur Jules Elie'; Shoultz's creative signage. Right: LaFrisiere with harvest

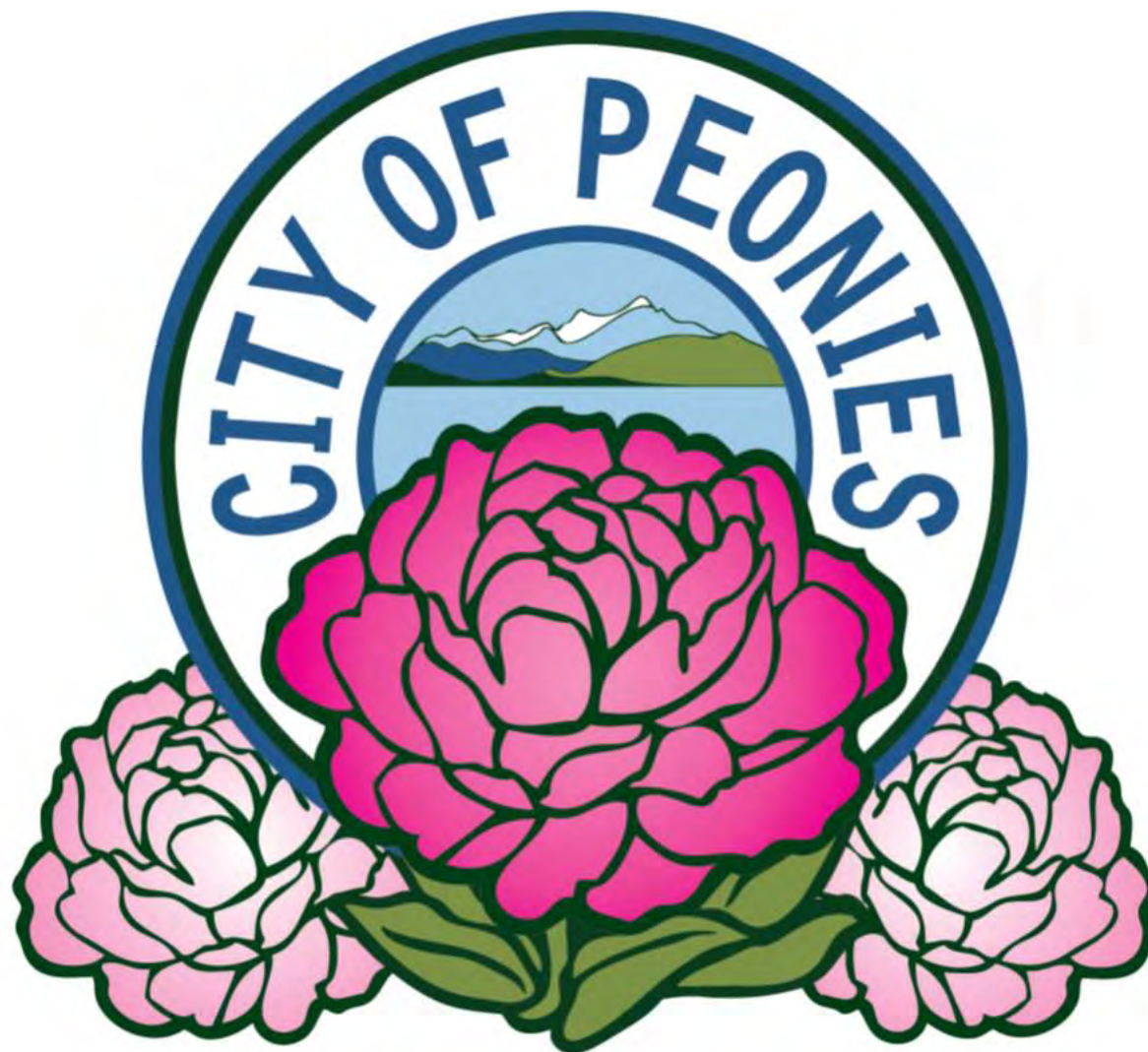


**ORDER STRAIGHT FROM THE FARMS**

**Polar Peonies:** The north-most peony farm in Alaska, where Hanscom and her farming partner, Carolyn Chapin, cultivate on permafrost. [polarpeonies.com](http://polarpeonies.com).

APGA 20





HOMER  ALASKA



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SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FLORISTS

TRAVIS—FLORISTS REVIEW

DEBRA PRINZING—SLOW FLOWERS



# JULY IS NATIONAL CUT FLOWER MONTH SPONSORED BY SENATOR MURKOWSKI



17 PERCENT INCREASE IN SALES



# BY FAR THE DIVISION OF AG IS MOST EFFECTIVE



## STATE OF ALASKA PEONY PROGRAMS

HOW THE ALASKA DIVISION  
OF AGRICULTURE SUPPORTS  
THE LOCAL PEONY INDUSTRY



State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Agriculture  
1801 S Margaret Dr, Ste 12  
Palmer, AK 99645  
(907) 745-7200

# KEY DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE STAFF: PEONY PROGRAMS



**Johanna Herron**  
Inspection & Market Services Manager



**Curtis Knight**  
Development Specialist I



**Lyssa Frohling**  
Development Specialist I



**Amanda Swanson**  
WUSATA Coordinator



**Mia Kirk**  
Development Specialist I



**Kathryn Smeenck**  
WUSATA Intern



**Devynn Maclure**  
TASC Project Assistant



**Chris Secary**  
Natural Resource Specialist II



**Janelle Curtis**  
Agricultural Inspector





## WESTERN UNITED STATES AGRICULTURAL TRADE ASSOCIATION (WUSATA)

- The Western United States Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA) provides programs and services to Western U.S. agribusinesses to educate, connect, and compete in the international export market
- The Global Connect Program offers opportunities to explore export markets
- The Fund Match Program helps qualifying companies compete in international markets by reimbursing eligible marketing and promotional activities up to 50% of cost
- The Alaska Division of Agriculture works with WUSATA to facilitate
- Key Staff: Johanna Herron, Amanda Swanson, Kathryn Smeenk



SEVERAL LARGE NEWSPAPER ARTICLES HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED FROM THIS OUTREACH PLUS CONTINUED NEGOTIATIONS WITH CANADIAN BUYERS



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- ❑ The Alaska Division of Agriculture works with WUSATA to facilitate Outbound Buying Missions where qualifying Alaska agribusinesses can travel overseas to meet one-on-one with foreign buyers and promote their products at international trade shows; as well as Inbound Buying Missions where buyers are brought to Alaska for one-on-one meetings and other special events
  - ❑ In August 2019 Alaska hosted a Canada Nursery Inbound Trade Mission through WUSATA in partnership with Washington and Hawaii where Alaska peony producers were able to meet one-on-one with Canadian buyers creating relationships between Canadian buyers/ distributors and Alaskan cut flower producers

# PHYTOSANITARY INSPECTION & CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

- The Alaska Division of Agriculture, in cooperation with United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine, helps to facilitate the export of agricultural plants and plant products into international markets via phytosanitary inspection and certification
- The intent is to certify that the agricultural commodities for export meet the plant health requirements of the country of destination
- Depending upon the importing country, these requirements may vary. For example, some countries may require an Import Permit in addition to a phytosanitary inspection and certificate
- It is important to check with a Division Authorized Certification Official (ACO) in advance to determine up to date specific country import requirements and to schedule an inspection. Neither USDA-APHIS-PPQ nor State of Alaska require certification of any exports, rather provides the certification of plants and plant products as a service to exporters
- Key Staff: Johanna Herron, Mia Kirk, Curtis Knight, Chris Secary, Janelle Curtis





U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURAL TRADE OFFICE

미국농업무역관

ANIMAL & PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE

미국동식물검역소



INDONESIA, MALAYSIA, SOUTH KOREA AND VIETNAM



CERTIFIED  
AMERICAN  
GROWN  
  
WUSATA





# HUGE INDUSTRY



# MIAMI AIRPORT INSPECTION STATION





# ALASKA GATEWAY TO WORLD WIDE SHIPPING



9.5 HOURS  
FROM 90% OF  
WORLD

IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT  
PHYSOSANITARY PERMITS



# STATE-RUN GRANT PROGRAMS FOR PEONIES DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE





# SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM (SCBG)

- The USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant is made available to all state departments of agriculture to sub award producers and agricultural organizations
- SCBG occurs annually with the award amount varying from year to year
- Specialty crops are a variety of vegetable and fruit products, as well as medicinal herbs or spices, cut flowers, and even honey
  - Items that are not considered specialty crops are grains, dairy products, or fiber crops (i.e. hemp and cotton)
- Grant intent: to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increasing consumer access or consumption, increasing sustainable production practices, increasing food safety handling practices, understanding ecological threats from microbial or chemical sources, or enhancing the economy as a result of crop development, among other outcomes
- Projects are strictly monitored to ensure that they are for the benefit of the whole specialty crop industry, and that results are shared with fellow producers
- Local peony growers are encouraged to apply
- Since 2011, The Alaska Division of Agriculture has awarded 10 grants worth over \$322,000 directly towards the peony industry in Alaska.
- Key Staff: Johanna Herron, Lyssa Frohling



# Specialty Crop Block Grants





# XANTHOMANOS

# BOTRYTIS





# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIALTY CROPS PROJECT (TASC)



- The USDA Foreign Agriculture Services TASC Grant Program seeks to address sanitary, phytosanitary and technical barriers that prohibit or threaten the export of U.S. specialty crops
- The Alaska Division of Agriculture was awarded the TASC grant in 2018 and the project will run through 2021
- The overall goal of the Alaska Division of Agriculture's TASC project, Eliminating Pest-Related Trade Barriers for the Alaska Grown Peony Trade Industry, is to develop treatments and strategies to control insect and microbiological pests so that pest-free, high-quality Alaska Grown peonies enter key export marketing channels
- The three-year project is researching Juvenile Thrip Morphological Identification, and Pre-Harvest and Post-Harvest Treatment Strategies for the elimination of Thrips pests
- Results from this research will be disseminated to Alaskan growers to increase the export of Alaska Grown peonies in the international cut-flower industry
- Partners: Washington State University, USDA Agricultural Research Service- Parlier, California, Dr. Pat Holloway, and the University of Alaska Fairbanks
- Key Staff: Johanna Herron, Janelle Curtis, Curtis Knight, Devynn Maclure, Todd Steinlage



# FUMIGATION



# Herbicides

- Round up
- Gallant
- Versatill
- Buster (Busta) Rodger says OK on foliage and doesn't build up in soil as possibly Round Up does
- Simaflow 500



CHRYSANTHEMUM FOR PYRETHRUM







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## FEDERAL STATE MARKETING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (FSMIP)

- FSMIP is a USDA program that offers grants to state governments assist in exploring new market opportunities for U.S. food and agricultural products, and to encourage research and innovation aimed at improving the efficiency and performance of the marketing system
- In 2007 the Division of Agriculture was awarded a FSMIP grant
- This project explored opportunities for successful and profitable marketing and exporting of Alaska Grown peonies
- Capitalized on the growing popularity of peony production in Alaska and explored potential markets for the already established crops
- The project launched the coordinated effort of the state's peony growers to work together and form what eventually became the Alaska Peony Growers Association
- **FSMIP can only be granted to State agricultural agencies**



# FSMIP GRANTS



# CHICAGO BIG SHOW DID IT FOR US 2020 DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE INVOLVED IN DALLAS PMA SHOW





## AT LEAST 16 REALITY SHOWS





# TOUR GROUPS EDUCATION CRUISE SHIPS





# AGRITOURISM

## KY FARM BUREAU

Senate Bill 217

APGA 2019







# 2017 Census of Agriculture Data Release

## Alaska

For more information contact:  
Suzan Benz, USDA/NASS/AK  
(907)745-4272  
[suzan.benz@usda.gov](mailto:suzan.benz@usda.gov)

2017 CENSUS OF  
AGRICULTURE



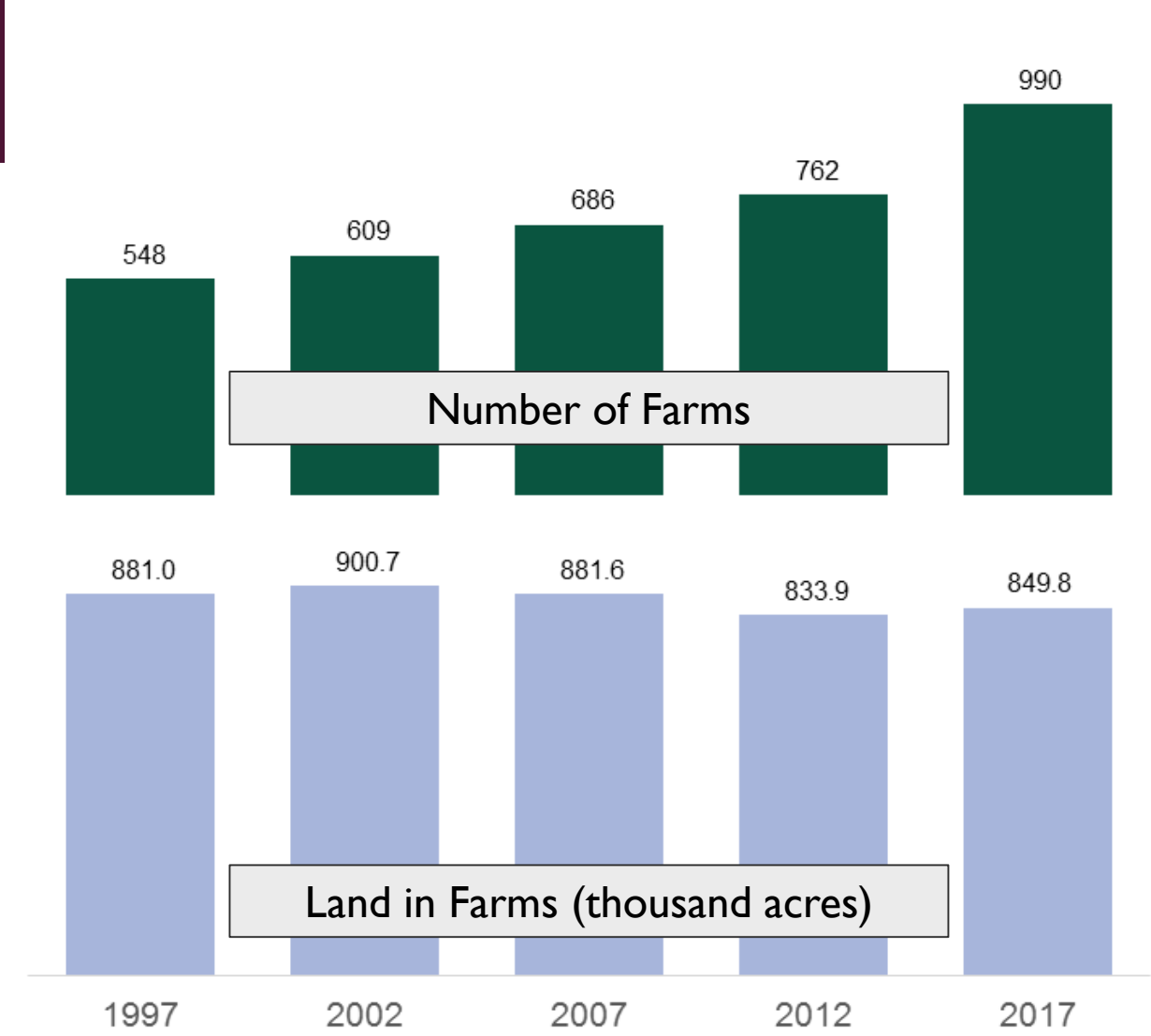
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Statistics Service

[www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](http://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus)



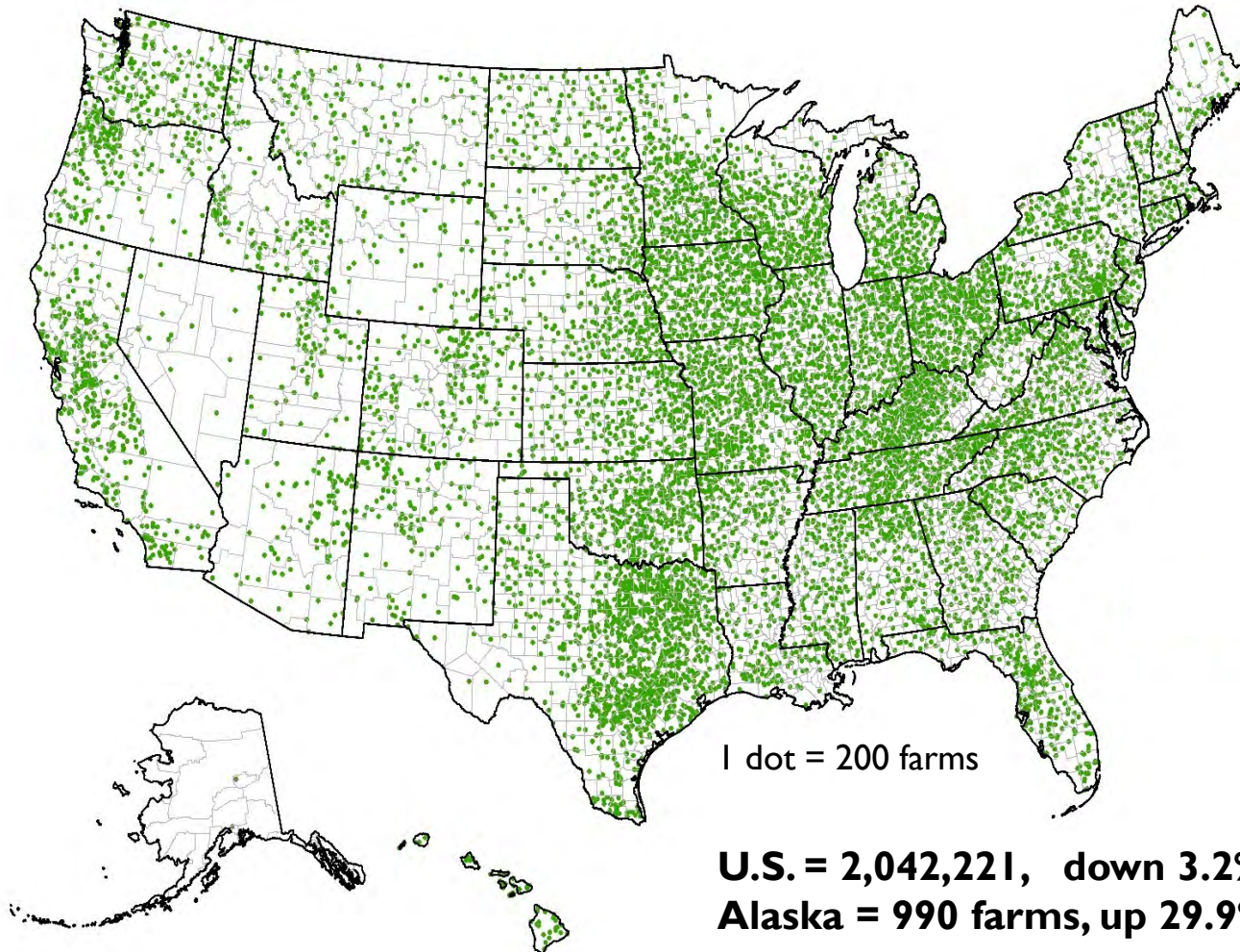
# NUMBER OF FARMS AND LAND IN FARMS, 1997-2017

2012	2017	% change
Number of Farms		
762	990	+29.9
Land in farms (thousand acres)		
833.9	849.8	+1.9
Average farm size (acres)		
1,094	858	-21.6



# NUMBER OF FARMS, 2017 & 2012

By County/Area



Top Area	2017	2012
Anchorage	350	291
Fairbanks North Star	274	217
Kenai Peninsula	260	162
Juneau	60	52
Aleutian Islands	46	40
State total	990	762



## RANKING OF MARKET VALUE OF AG PRODUCTS SOLD, 2017

Item	Farms	Sales (\$1,000)	Rank by Sales	Percent of Total Sales
Total sales	990	70,459	(X)	100.0
Aquaculture*	53	35,157	1	49.9
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod	351	16,874	2	23.9
Vegetables, potatoes	268	5,925	3	8.4
Other crops and hay	183	(D)	4	(D)
Cattle and calves	86	2,234	5	3.2
Other animals and other animal products	114	(D)	6	(D)
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans , dry peas	25	815	7	1.2
Hogs and pigs	61	756	8	1.1
Poultry and eggs	177	(D)	9	(D)

(D) – data withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual farms

49

\* Aquaculture includes mariculture sales and value of releases from private non-profit hatcheries



Open Immediately  
*Fresh Cut Flowers*

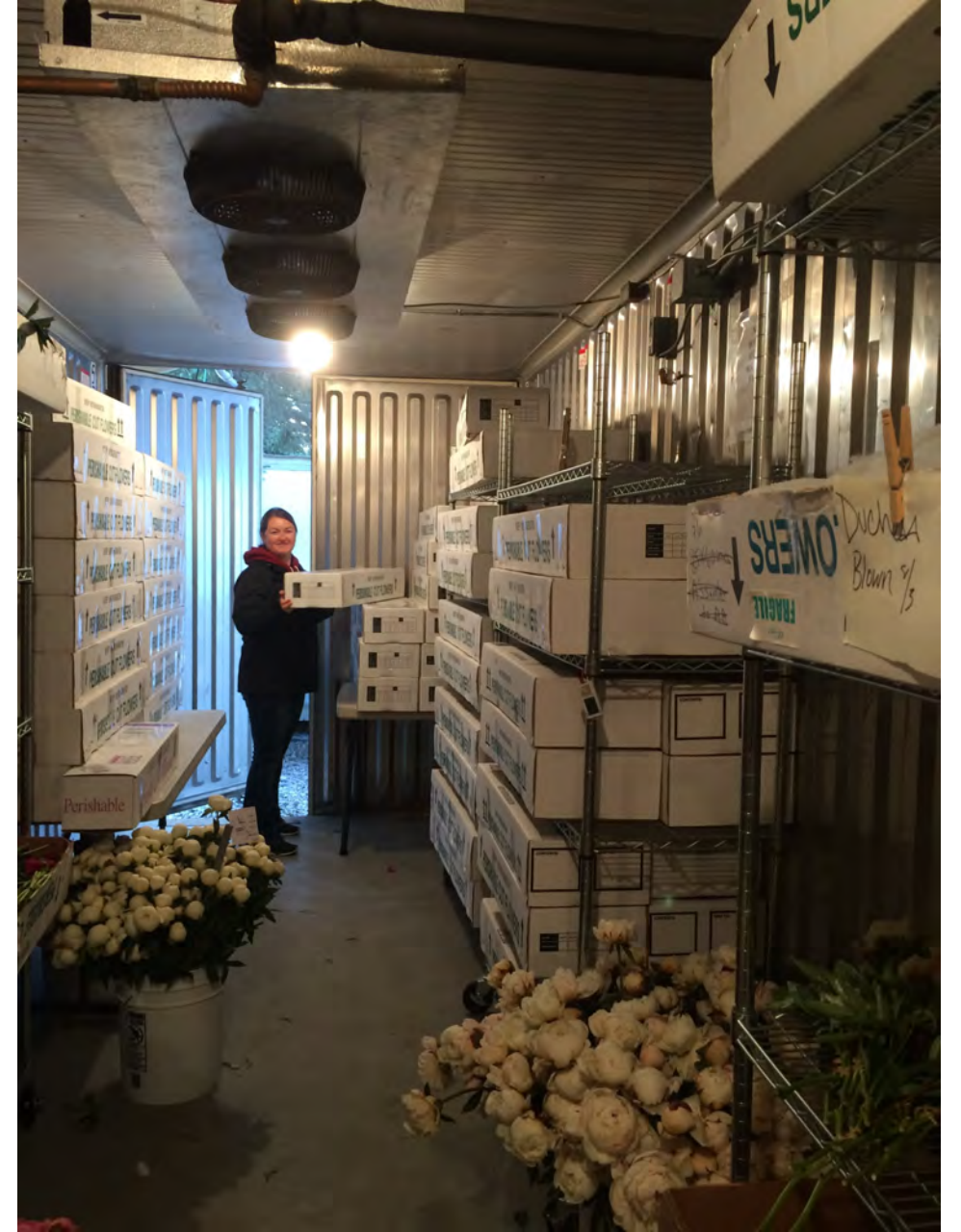






















# GRADING





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## HANGING OUT IN THE PEONY FIELDS

