

- Measure the usage of modern technologies such as conservation practices, organic production, renewable energy systems, internet access, and specialized marketing strategies;
- Develop new and improved methods to increase agricultural production and profitability;
- Plan for operations during drought and emergency outbreaks of diseases or infestations of pests;
- Analyze and report the current state of food, fuel, and fiber production in the United States; and
- Make energy projections and forecast needs for agricultural producers and their communities.

LEGAL AUTHORITY

The 2017 Census of Agriculture is required by law under the “Census of Agriculture Act of 1997,” Public Law 105-113 (Title 7, United States Code, Section 2204g). The law directs the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a census of agriculture every fifth year. The census of agriculture includes each State, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa.

FARM DEFINITION

The census definition of a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year. The definition has changed nine times since it was established in 1850. The current definition was first used for the 1974 Census of Agriculture and was used in each subsequent census of agriculture. This definition is consistent with the definition used for current USDA surveys. The farm definition used for each U.S. territory varies. The report for each territory includes a discussion of its farm definition.

DATA COMPARABILITY

Most commodity data are comparable between the 2017 and 2012 censuses. Changes were made to the 2017 census that affect the comparability for some data items. Demographic data, for the 2017 Census of Agriculture, are not fully comparable to 2012 and earlier census data due to terminology and definition changes. Dollar figures are expressed in current dollars and have not been adjusted for inflation or deflation. In general, data for censuses since 1974 are not fully comparable with data for 1969 and earlier censuses due to changes in the farm definition. See Appendix B, General Explanation and Census of Agriculture Report Form, Data Changes for a detailed

discussion of these changes.

REFERENCE PERIOD

Reference periods for the 2017 Census of Agriculture were similar to those used in the 2012 Census of Agriculture. Reference periods used were:

- Crop production is measured for the calendar year, except for a few crops such as avocados, citrus, and olives for which the production year overlaps the calendar year. See Appendix B, General Explanation and Census of Agriculture Report Form for details.
- Livestock, poultry, and machinery and equipment inventories, and market value of land and buildings are measured as of December 31 of the census year.
- Crop and livestock sales, other farm-related income, direct sales income, income from federal farm programs, Commodity Credit Corporation loans, Conservation Reserve, Farmable Wetlands, Conservation Reserve Enhancement, and Wetlands Reserve Program participation, farm expenses, chemical and fertilizer use, irrigated acreage, and hired farm labor data are measured for the calendar year.

TABLES AND APPENDICES

Chapter 1. Table 1 shows U.S.-level historical data through the 1987 census and tables 2 through 52 show detailed U.S.-level data usually accompanied by historical data from the 2012 census. Tables 53 through 70 show detailed producer and farm operation data for the 2017 census only. Tables 71 through 77 show detailed U.S.-level data cross-tabulated by several categories for the 2017 census only.

Chapter 2. State-level data are presented in 57 tables in 2 different table formats - State and State summary. Most tables include 2012 historical data. State tables include general data for all States within the U.S. The State names are listed in alphabetical order in the column headings. State summary tables provide comprehensive data for all States reporting a data item.

Appendix A. Provides information about data collection and data processing activities and discusses the statistical methodology used in conducting and evaluating the census. Table A summarizes coverage, nonresponse, and misclassification adjustment for selected items for the U.S. Table B provides reliability estimates of U.S. totals for selected items. Table C summarizes coverage, nonresponse, and misclassification adjustment for selected items at the State level. Table D provides total number of