



Who Needs the Agricultural Census?

The Agricultural Census is conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service every five years. The current ongoing Agricultural Census has a 2012 reference year. The Census surveys all known farm operators and provides a detailed picture of what U.S. farms and ranches produce, the value of that production, and the characteristics of the operations where production happens. It is the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every state and county in the U.S.

Everyone who provides goods and services to and makes policy affecting farmers, ranchers and rural communities is guided by the Census of Agriculture.

Banks need the Ag Census to benchmark structures, technologies and other characteristics that make farm/ranch operations a good credit risk.

Agribusiness relies on Ag Census data. Knowing trends in where and how crops or animals are produced allows agribusinesses to anticipate needs, site plants, stores, and offices, and market appropriately. Without a federal census, dozens *each* of farm equipment manufacturers, fertilizer producers, food processors and others would have to gather their own intelligence at *far* greater burden to U.S. farmers and ranchers and without the openness, wide access, transparency, cost-effectiveness and efficiency of a single federal effort.

Ag census data make federal programs work for communities. The numbers are used for such things as to: guide plant protection from invasive pests; target loan funds to beginning farmers, minority and other special farm populations; develop land uses by county for zoning and land protection policies, and allocate support, outreach, technical assistance, educational, conservation, and other support funds to States.

The Ag Census profiles States' and counties' agricultural economies. Census data are the basis for estimating agricultural exports by State. They inform State and local decisions on infrastructure investment, land use, and agri-environmental standards.

Research on farming, economic growth, and agricultural sector trends depends on Ag Census data. The data, collected since 1840, form an invaluable and illuminating time series that tells the story of American economic development.

Last but not least: **Ag Census data should be playing a heavy role in helping Federal and State legislatures make knowledge-based farm policy decisions.**