



United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service
New England Field Office



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United States Department of Agriculture
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New England Field Office
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Number of Farms in US declines, but not in New England

Concord, NH - The number of farms in the US totaled to 2.1 million farms in 2012, a decrease of 4 percent from 2007, according to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) in the 2012 Census of Agriculture Preliminary Report. "Nationally, the number of farms may have declined however, across the New England States, the number of farms actually increased 5 percent from 2007, up to 34,878 farms" accordingly to Gary Keough, USDA NASS State Statistician for the New England States.

This preliminary report contains just a fraction of information that will be available in the full report that is scheduled to be released later this spring. The preliminary report contains US and State level number of farms, total land in farms, total market value of crops and livestock farms by size as well as demographic information like the average age, number of principal farm operators by age group and years on their current farm, number of men and women principal farm operators, as well as number of farmers by race and ethnicity. "The preliminary report tells us what some of the overall trends are but we have to wait for the full report to identify some of the factors influencing the trends", says Keough. "For example, the total land in New England farms increased 4 percent to 4.211 million acres. This is the continuation of a trend that started around 2002. But land in farms includes crop land, pastureland, woodland, and other land that can include streams, ponds, wetlands, and land in buildings. In some States, it also includes coastal areas used for producing shellfish and farm raised fish. We won't know which of these factors are influencing the trend until the full report comes out."

Other highlights include:

- The number of beginning farmers, those with less than 10 years experience on their current farm, increased in New England but decrease at the US level. "While the nationally the numbers declined 19.6 percent from 2007, in New England the number of beginning farmers increased by 401 farmers. Those with less than 5 years experience increased by 549 but we also found a decrease of 148 with for those between 5 and 9 years." added Keough.
- The average age of New England farmers was 57.6 years, up from 56.5 years in 2007.
- The number farms with women principal operator increased to 9,695, up 15 percent. The percent of farms with women principal operators was 28 percent, up from 25 percent in 2007.
- Farms with sales of \$1 million or more, at 507, increase 16 percent. Farms with \$250,000 to \$999,999 in sales decrease 2 percent. Farms with \$50,000 and \$249,000 in sales increased 4 percent and farms with less than \$50,000 in sales increased 6 percent.

The full preliminary report is available at www.agcensus.usda.gov

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Massachusetts: Number of farms at 7,755 is up 1% from 2007. Land in farms at 523,517 is also up 1 percent from 2007. The average farm size was 68 acres and the median farm size was 23 acres.

FARMS AND LAND IN FARMS	2012 Total	2007 total	2012 as percent of 2007
Farms number	7,755	7,691	101%
Land in farms acres	523,517	517,879	101%
Average size of farm acres	68	67	101%
Median size of farm acres	23	24	

Farms by size. The number of farms with less than 50 acres increased and accounted for 68 percent of all farms. The number of farms with between 50 and 999 acres decreased. The number of farms with 1,000 acres or more increased slightly but still accounts for less than 1 percent of all farms.

Farms by size:	2012 Total	2012 Percent of all farms	2007 total	2007 Percent of all farms	2012 as percent of 2007	Net Change
1 to 9 acres	2,322	30%	2,199	29%	106%	123
10 to 49 acres	2,913	38%	2,885	38%	101%	28
50 to 179 acres	1,833	24%	1,903	25%	96%	-70
180 to 499 acres	574	7%	586	8%	98%	-12
500 to 999 acres	81	1%	90	1%	90%	-9
1,000 acres or more	32	<1%	28	<1%	114%	4

Market value of sales. Total Market value of sales was up slightly from 2007 but less than 0.5 percent. The crop sales increased 5 percent while livestock sales decreased 13 percent.

Market value of agricultural products	2012 Total	2012 Percent of total	2007 total	2007 Percent of total	2012 as percent of 2007
Total sold \$1,000	492,211		489,820		100%
Average per farm dollars	63,470		63,687		100%
Crops, including nursery and greenhouse crops \$1,000	382,915	78%	364,481	74%	105%
Livestock, poultry, and their products \$1,000	109,296	22%	125,338	26%	87%
Government payments \$1,000	8,124		4,603		176%

Farms by economic class. The distribution of farms by economic class changed slightly from 2007. Farms with less than \$50,000 sales accounted for 84% of all farms in 2012, the same as in 2007. The number of farms with between \$250,000 and \$999,000 was the only class to show a decrease, down 10 farms or 3 percent.

Farms by economic class:	2012 Total	2012 Percent of all farms	2007 total	2007 Percent of all farms	2012 as percent of 2007	Net Change
Less than \$50,000	6,528	84%	6,483	84%	101%	45
\$50,000 to \$249,999	820	11%	797	10%	103%	23
\$250,000 to \$999,999	318	4%	328	4%	97%	-10
\$1,000,000 or more	89	1%	83	1%	107%	6



Demographics

Average age of the principal operator was 57.8 years compared to 56.3 years in 2007.

Age group: The number of principal farm operators under 35 increased as did the number 55 and older. The number of principal farm operators between 35 and 55 decreased as did those 75 and over. The reason for the decrease in 45 to 54 may not be solely people leaving farming. Compare the number in 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 in 2007. I believe there were not enough farmers in the 34 to 44 group in 2007 to move into the 45 to 54 age group to show an increase.

Age group:	2012 Total	2012 Percent of total	2007 total	2007 Percent of total	2012 as percent of 2007	Net Change
Under 25 years	60	1%	49	1%	122%	11
25 to 34 years	359	5%	292	4%	123%	67
35 to 44 years	655	8%	972	13%	67%	-317
45 to 54 years	1,933	25%	2,237	29%	86%	-304
55 to 64 years	2,415	31%	2,227	29%	108%	188
65 to 74 years	1,556	20%	1,204	16%	129%	352
75 years and over	777	10%	710	9%	109%	67

Years on present farm. This is the closest thing we have for estimating the number of beginning farmers. Beginning farmer is typically defined as a person who has been farming less than 10 years. In this table farmers that could have been farming on one farm and moved to a new farm should be counting only the years on the new farm. However, this occurrence should be low.

Beginning farmers made up 25 percent of all principal farm operators compared to 26 percent in 2007. The percentage of farmers with between 5 and 9 years on the current farm decreased 10 percent from 2007. It was the only group to show a decline.

Years on present farm:	2012 Total	2012 Percent of total	2007 total	2007 Percent of total	2012 as percent of 2007	Net Change
2 years or less	328	4%	326	4%	101%	2
3 or 4 years	507	7%	442	6%	115%	65
5 to 9 years	1,119	14%	1,249	16%	90%	-130
10 years or more	5,801	75%	5,674	74%	102%	127

Women Farmers. Women principal farm operators accounted for 32% of the principal farm operators, up from 29 percent in 2007. The number of male principal farm operators decreased 4 percent from 2007.

Sex of operator:	2012 Total	2012 Percent of total	2007 total	2007 Percent of total	2012 as percent of 2007
Male	5,248	68%	5,465	71%	96%
Female	2,507	32%	2,226	29%	113%