



2007 Agricultural Census Tidbit: Dominant Farm Organizational Structure in Florida Is Small Family Farms¹

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Introduction

The 2007 agricultural census data were reported for states and counties throughout the United States in February 2009. National, state, and local policy makers look forward to the census report for several reasons: they use the information to show the importance and size of the industry in their state and counties, and to show the importance of the industry in the state and local economy; and they use the information to make policy decisions. One of the limitations of the agricultural census is that the report, for the most part, is just data with limited or no discussion. This publication is one in a series of five that reorganizes some of the data collected in the census and offers some comments on trends and gaps in the data. The other publications in the 2007 Agricultural Census Tidbit series can be accessed online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

Many Floridians, including those not directly involved in farm production, keep a close watch on the numbers and types of farms in the state. People's interest in this topic is varied, but Floridians who are not farmers may be concerned that *big farms* and

non-family farms represent an increasing percentage of farms in the state, and they may consider this trend to be undesirable.

Census of Agriculture

The Census of Agriculture is conducted every five years and is an attempt by the U.S. government to collect data on the entire U.S farm population in every state. Of course, not all agricultural producers provide the information requested and there is always the possibility for error in the data reported. A farm is defined as a place in which \$1,000 of agricultural products were produced or sold, or typically would have been sold during the census year, including any government payments.

Data in this publication are for 2007 only. While the census has been collecting data on the number of farms by size for years, in 2007 they began collecting information on farm typology. This was done so that farms could be grouped by similar characteristics. In total, eight different categories were tabulated: five under *small farms* and three under *other farms*. Typology characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

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Farm Size and Typology

In 2007 as in the past, Florida data indicated that the primary and dominant organizational structure in Florida agriculture is small farms. The number of farms by acreage categories is reported in Table 2. While the census collects information on farm size in 12 different categories, for this publication the 12 have been combined and reduced to four categories: 1 to 9.9 acres, 10 to 49.9 acres, 50 to 999 acres, and greater than 1,000 acres.

Florida has more than 47,400 farms and of these farms, just over 69 percent are 50 acres or less in size. This ranks Florida as the state with the 4th largest percentage of farms of less than 50 acres. There are several reasons for the relatively small acreage of Florida farms that will be discussed under farm typology, but one obvious reason for relatively small farms is the high-value, intensive nature of commodities produced in Florida. Many sales and much income can be generated from horticulture operations, specialty crops, and some fruit and vegetable crops.

In contrast, Florida only has 2.9 percent of farms greater than 1,000 acres. This places the state in the bottom 20 for farms greater than 1,000 acres. The 2007 census reported the number of farm operations greater than 1,000 acres down, from 1,769 in 2002 to 1,370 in 2007 (a decrease of about 23%). Likewise, farms less than 50 acres increased to over 32,800 in 2007, down from over 28,600 in 2002 (an increase of about 15%). Florida's organizational structure is dominated by small farms, but the acreage in these operations is relatively small. While farms less than 50 acres accounted for 69 percent of farms, acreage in the operations accounted for only five percent of land in farms in 2007. Farms larger than 1,000 acres represent only 2.9 percent of farms in the state but account for 66 percent of land in farms in 2007.

Florida farm typology numbers (Table 3) reveal that the largest number of small farms can be categorized as retirement farms (sales less than \$250,000, with the primary occupation of the landowner reported as "retired"), and residential/lifestyle (sales less than \$250,000, with the landowner's primary occupation reported as

something other than farming). These two categories account for about 60 percent of all small farms in the state. On the opposite end of the scale, only 1.7 percent of farms are considered large (sales between \$250,000 and \$499,999) and 3.1 percent are categorized as very large (sales greater than \$500,000), and only 5.9 percent are structured as nonfamily corporations or as operated by hired managers.

Retirement and residential/lifestyle farms were further reviewed since they are the two largest farm categories in Florida. Data indicated that there are similarities as well as differences when comparing Florida to other southern states (Table 4). For example, 11 of the top 15 states in percentage of farms categorized as retirement were southern states. In terms of residential/lifestyle farms, 11 southern states have a larger percentage of farms identified in this typology category than does Florida. The census does not collect information documenting how individual operators ended up in the typology categories. Local culture, the availability of off-farm employment, or the desire of newcomers to the state to recreate a farming lifestyle like that they remember from their old homes might all be factors influencing retirement and residential/lifestyle typology.

Summary

The dominant organizational structure of agriculture in Florida is individual family farms. Just over 69 percent of Florida agricultural operations are less than 50 acres in size. In terms of farm typology in Florida, the two dominant categories are retirement (23.5%) and residential/lifestyle (34.9%). Together, these two categories account for almost six of every ten agricultural operations in Florida.

References

USDA/NASS. 2007. *2007 Census of Agriculture, United States Summary and State Data*, Volume 1, Geographic Area Series, Part 51. United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Washington, D.C.

USDA/NASS. 2009. *General Explanation and Census of Agriculture Report Form, Appendix B*.

United States Department of Agriculture, National
Agricultural Statistics Service, Washington, D.C.

Table 1. Farm typology definitions.

Type	Category	Sales Conditions	Other Conditions
Small	Limited-resource	< \$100,000	< \$20,000 in income
	Retirement farms	< \$250,000	Operator retired
	Residential / lifestyle	< \$250,000	Primary occupation reported is something other than farming
	Lower-sales farms	< \$100,000	Primary occupation reported is farming
	Higher-sales farms	\$100,000 to \$249,999	Primary occupation reported is farming
Other	Large family farms	\$250,000 to \$499,999	
	Very large family farms	> \$500,000	
	Nonfamily farms		Organized as nonfamily corporations, or operated by hired managers

Table 2. Farm operation by size, ranked by 50 acres or less, 2007.

State	1.0 to 9.9	10.0 to 49.9	50 to 999.9	> 1,000	Total Farms	< 50	> 1,000
	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres		Acres	Acres
	(Value)	(Value)	(Value)	(Value)	(Value)	(%)	(%)
Hawaii	4,813	1,972	621	115	7,521	90.2	1.5
Arizona	9,873	2,657	2,283	824	15,637	80.1	5.3
New Jersey	2,950	4,814	2,455	108	10,327	75.2	1.0
Florida	12,184	20,680	13,229	1,370	47,463	69.2	2.9
Rhode Island	353	484	380	2	1,219	68.7	0.2
Massachusetts	2,199	2,885	2,579	28	7,691	66.1	0.4
California	25,278	28,080	23,220	4,455	81,033	65.8	5.5
Connecticut	1,232	1,894	1,750	40	4,916	63.6	0.8
Oregon	9,546	14,142	12,301	2,564	38,553	61.4	6.7
Washington	9,211	14,790	12,517	2,766	39,284	61.1	7.0
Delaware	651	802	947	146	2,546	57.1	5.7
Utah	4,194	5,127	6,073	1,306	16,700	55.8	7.8

Table 2. Farm operation by size, ranked by 50 acres or less, 2007.

State	1.0 to 9.9	10.0 to 49.9	50 to 999.9	> 1,000	Total Farms	< 50	> 1,000
	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres		Acres	Acres
	(Value)	(Value)	(Value)	(Value)	(Value)	(%)	(%)
New Mexico	6,471	4,405	6,499	3,555	20,930	52.0	17.0
New Hampshire	754	1,405	1,969	38	4,166	51.8	0.9
Idaho	4,891	7,497	10,478	2,483	25,349	48.9	9.8
Nevada	631	898	1,155	447	3,131	48.8	14.3
North Carolina	5,001	20,772	25,478	1,662	52,913	48.7	3.1
Indiana	9,720	19,533	27,779	3,906	60,938	48.0	6.4
Alaska	165	164	305	52	686	48.0	7.6
Maryland	1,554	4,589	6,325	366	12,834	47.9	2.9
Louisiana	3,282	10,394	14,508	1,922	30,106	45.4	6.4
Michigan	4,219	20,726	29,100	1,969	56,014	44.5	3.5
Tennessee	5,814	29,396	42,722	1,348	79,280	44.4	1.7
Ohio	7,767	24,361	41,019	2,714	75,861	42.4	3.6
South Carolina	1,970	8,959	14,073	865	25,867	42.3	3.3
Maine	1,046	2,383	4,527	180	8,136	42.1	2.2
Georgia	3,504	16,243	26,146	1,953	47,846	41.3	4.1
Pennsylvania	5,601	20,267	36,664	631	63,163	41.0	1.0
Alabama	3,374	16,215	27,655	1,509	48,753	40.2	3.1
Virginia	3,530	15,177	27,351	1,325	47,383	39.5	2.8
Illinois	8,603	20,592	39,835	7,830	76,860	38.0	10.2
Texas	21,024	72,837	142,250	11,326	247,437	37.9	4.6
Colorado	4,276	9,359	17,162	6,257	37,054	36.8	16.9
Arkansas	2,581	15,119	28,465	3,181	49,346	35.9	6.4
Vermont	635	1,862	4,343	144	6,984	35.8	2.1
Kentucky	4,579	25,235	53,701	1,745	85,260	35.0	2.0
New York	2,914	8,799	23,600	1,039	36,352	32.2	2.9
Wisconsin	4,861	19,895	51,751	1,956	78,463	31.6	2.5
West Virginia	1,207	5,749	16,328	334	23,618	29.5	1.4

Table 2. Farm operation by size, ranked by 50 acres or less, 2007.

State	1.0 to 9.9 Acres	10.0 to 49.9 Acres	50 to 999.9 Acres	> 1,000 Acres	Total Farms	< 50 Acres	> 1,000 Acres
	(Value)	(Value)	(Value)	(Value)	(Value)	(%)	(%)
Mississippi	2,056	10,234	27,425	2,244	41,959	29.3	5.3
Iowa	8,709	17,824	58,872	7,451	92,856	28.6	8.0
Missouri	3,868	25,186	72,963	5,808	107,825	26.9	5.4
Oklahoma	3,802	18,700	56,343	7,720	86,565	26.0	8.9
Minnesota	3,687	16,927	54,190	6,188	80,992	25.5	7.6
Montana	1,917	5,462	12,354	9,791	29,524	25.0	33.2
Wyoming	652	2,004	5,280	3,133	11,069	24.0	28.3
Kansas	2,123	10,041	41,032	12,335	65,531	18.6	18.8
Nebraska	2,270	6,581	27,659	11,202	47,712	18.6	23.5
South Dakota	920	3,898	16,497	9,854	31,169	15.5	31.6
North Dakota	387	2,268	17,465	11,850	31,970	8.3	37.1

Table 3. Florida farms by typology, 2007.

Type	Category	Number of Farms	% of Florida Farms
Small	Limited-resource	7,798	16.4
	Retirement farms	11,144	23.5
	Residential / lifestyle	16,561	34.9
	Lower-sales farms	6,019	12.7
	Higher-sales farms	877	1.8
Other	Large family farms	821	1.7
	Very large family farms	1,455	3.1
	Nonfamily farms	2,788	5.9

Table 4. Farm typology for retirement and residential / lifestyle categories, ranked by state, 2007.

Rank	State	Retirement		Rank	State	Residential / Lifestyle	
		(Number)	(%)			(Number)	(%)
1	West Virginia	6,420	27.2	1	Utah	6,986	41.8
2	Texas	64,462	26.1	2	Colorado	15,498	41.8
3	South Carolina	6,561	25.4	3	Tennessee	32,824	41.4
4	Alabama	12,350	25.3	4	Indiana	24,744	40.6
5	Virginia	11,967	25.3	5	Oklahoma	35,061	40.5
6	Mississippi	10,357	24.7	6	Texas	99,316	40.1
7	Tennessee	19,385	24.5	7	Ohio	30,434	40.1
8	Georgia	11,367	23.8	8	Missouri	42,987	39.9
9	Oregon	9,126	23.7	9	Kentucky	33,938	39.8
10	Oklahoma	20,447	23.6	10	Alabama	18,948	38.9
11	Florida	11,144	23.5	11	New Jersey	3,987	38.6
12	Kentucky	19,921	23.4	12	West Virginia	9,079	38.4
13	Hawaii	1,744	23.2	13	Louisiana	11,473	38.1
14	Louisiana	6,923	23.0	14	Mississippi	15,960	38.0
15	New Mexico	4,732	22.6	15	South Carolina	9,824	38.0
16	Michigan	12,410	22.2	16	Virginia	17,759	37.5
17	North Carolina	11,712	22.1	17	Idaho	9,494	37.5
18	Washington	8,571	21.8	18	Arkansas	18,434	37.4
19	Missouri	23,491	21.8	19	Wisconsin	28,860	36.8
20	California	17,209	21.2	20	Georgia	17,514	36.6
21	Utah	3,536	21.2	21	Connecticut	1,795	36.5
22	New Jersey	2,124	20.6	22	Michigan	20,279	36.2
23	Arkansas	9,932	20.1	23	Oregon	13,807	35.8
24	Maryland	2,566	20.0	24	Washington	14,066	35.8
25	Ohio	15,071	19.9	25	Pennsylvania	22,563	35.7
26	Connecticut	960	19.5	26	Maine	2,884	35.4
27	New Hampshire	795	19.1	27	New Hampshire	1,472	35.3

Table 4. Farm typology for retirement and residential / lifestyle categories, ranked by state, 2007.

Rank	State	Retirement		Rank	State	Residential / Lifestyle	
		(Number)	(%)			(Number)	(%)
28	New York	6,795	18.7	28	Kansas	23,056	35.2
29	Pennsylvania	11,755	18.6	29	Florida	16,561	34.9
30	Nevada	580	18.5	30	Wyoming	3,824	34.5
31	Idaho	4,644	18.3	31	Nevada	1,074	34.3
32	Montana	5,312	18.0	32	Minnesota	27,722	34.2
33	Kansas	11,690	17.8	33	Massachusetts	2,606	33.9
34	Rhode Island	217	17.8	34	North Carolina	17,917	33.9
35	Alaska	122	17.8	35	Illinois	26,001	33.8
36	Indiana	10,599	17.4	36	Maryland	4,341	33.8
37	Illinois	13,359	17.4	37	Vermont	2,340	33.5
38	Colorado	6,389	17.2	38	Rhode Island	390	32.0
39	Massachusetts	1,301	16.9	39	Iowa	29,045	31.3
40	Maine	1,354	16.6	40	New York	11,249	30.9
41	Vermont	1,162	16.6	41	Alaska	210	30.6
42	Wyoming	1,810	16.4	42	Montana	9,016	30.5
43	Wisconsin	12,300	15.7	43	California	24,566	30.3
44	North Dakota	5,001	15.6	44	Hawaii	2,240	29.8
45	Iowa	13,513	14.6	45	New Mexico	5,914	28.3
46	Minnesota	11,548	14.3	46	South Dakota	8,565	27.5
47	Arizona	2,161	13.8	47	Nebraska	12,927	27.1
48	Delaware	331	13.0	48	North Dakota	8,104	25.3
49	South Dakota	3,515	11.3	49	Arizona	3,639	23.3
50	Nebraska	5,352	11.2	50	Delaware	551	21.6