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USDA Releases 2012 Puerto Rico Census of Agriculture

Washington, June 27, 2014 – Today the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released 2012 Census of Agriculture data for Puerto Rico. This release marks more than a century of agriculture census data collection in Puerto Rico, where the first agriculture census was conducted in 1910.

“The Census is the leading source of statistics about Puerto Rico’s agricultural production and the only source of consistent, comparable data at the municipio level,” said NASS Administrator Joseph T. Reilly. “Conducted in cooperation with the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture and the University of Puerto Rico Extension Service, the 2012 Census of Agriculture provides information on the area’s unique agriculture industry that is gathered at the local level.”

Data highlights from the publication include:

Farms and Farmland

- Number of farms on the island decreased 16 percent from 15,745 in 2007 to 13,159 in 2012. The average size of a Puerto Rico farm increased by 26 percent from 35.4 to 44.5 cuerdas (one cuerda equals 0.97 acre).
- Total farmland in Puerto Rico increased 5 percent to 584,988 cuerdas in 2012, up from 557,530 cuerdas in 2007.
- Cropland harvested increased 10 percent from 116,198 cuerdas in 2007 to 127,372 cuerdas in 2012. Coffee grown in the open accounted for the largest amount of harvested cuerdas with 23,876. Total coffee cuerdas harvested (both coffee grown in the shade or in the open) totaled 33,213 cuerdas in 2012.

Value of Sales

- Total value of agriculture sales for the island increased slightly, up 6 percent from \$516 million in 2007 to \$548 million in 2012.
- At the farm level, the average value of sales increased 27 percent, going from \$32,752 per farm in 2007 to \$41,616 in 2012.
- Milk production was the largest single category of farm sales with \$189 million in 2012, 35 percent of the total value of agriculture sales.

Agricultural Practices

- Irrigated farmland increased 34 percent, from 39,707 cuerdas in 2007 to 53,361 in 2012.
- Organic fertilizer use on farms increased from 295 to 507 farms, a 72 percent increase. These operations used organic fertilizer on 23,809 cuerdas in 2012, more than double the amount of cuerdas in 2007.

“Statistics from the Census of Agriculture allow Congress to more accurately develop and improve farm programs, study historical trends, assess current conditions, and plan for the future,” said Reilly. “And at the local level, agencies such as the Puerto Rico Planning Board and Department of Agriculture use census data to develop policies and programs and as a benchmark to estimate losses and damages caused by natural disasters such as hurricanes, flooding and severe droughts.”

The Puerto Rico Census of Agriculture volume differs slightly from the United States publication to capture tropical commodities and reflect the farm structure on the Island. For example, the Census of Agriculture defines a farm in Puerto Rico as any place from which \$500 or more of agricultural products were produced or sold, or normally would have been sold, during the Census year.

In addition, the Puerto Rico report includes data on tropical commodities not included in other Census publications, such as bananas, cassava, coconuts, orchid plants, palm trees, plantains, etc. The Puerto Rico Census of Agriculture also provides specialty data on agriculture production practices, including coffee dryers, emergency electric generators and greenhouse/hydronic sheds, and on unique operator characteristics such as highest year of school completed, number of persons living in the household and retirement status.

To access the complete 2012 Census of Agriculture results, including data for Puerto Rico and its municipios, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

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