The 2007 Census of Agriculture counted 2,204,792 farms in the United States, a 4 percent increase from 2002. The number of farms nationwide has been on a declining trend since World War II. The latest figure indicates a leveling of this trend, with a net increase of 75,810 farms.

Despite the overall growth in farm numbers nationwide, not all states showed an increase. Eleven states saw declines in the number of farms while 39 states saw their farm numbers increase.
2007 Census of Agriculture

The 2007 Census of Agriculture shows a continuation in the trend towards more small and very large farms.

Most of the growth in U.S. farm numbers came from small operations, where sales of no specific commodity accounted for more than 50 percent of the total value of production. Even though the total number of farms increased nationwide, many individual sectors of production—including grains and oilseeds, horticulture, cattle and hog operations—saw a decline in farm numbers.

Between 2002 and 2007, the number of farms with sales of less than $1,000 increased by 118,000. The number of farms with sales of more than $500,000 grew by 46,000 during the same period.
A Look at New Farms

Underlying the change in farm numbers is the fact that farms are continually entering and exiting agriculture. Since the 2002 Census of Agriculture, 291,329 new farms have begun operation.

Farms that began operation between 2003 and 2007 tended to be smaller and have lower sales than all farms nationwide. New farms, on average, had 201 acres of land and $71,000 in sales. By comparison, the average for all farms in the United Stated was 418 acres and $135,000 in sales.

Operators of new farms were more likely to be engaged in occupations other than farming and to derive income from non-farm sources. The percentage of principal operators who reported farming as their primary occupation was 33 percent for these new farm operators. The average for all principal farm operators was 45 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Farms</th>
<th>New Farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Size</td>
<td>418 acres</td>
<td>201 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Value of Products Sold</td>
<td>$135,000</td>
<td>$71,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and Government Payments &lt;$10,000</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age of Operator</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming as Primary Occupation</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information:

www.nass.usda.gov
www.agcensus.usda.gov
Agricultural Statistics Hotline (800) 727-9540
Concentration in Agriculture

2007 Census of Agriculture results show that concentration of production in agriculture has increased in the last five years. In 2002, 144,000 farms produced 75 percent of the value of U.S. agricultural production. In 2007, the number of farms that produced that same share of production declined to 125,000.

Another way of looking at concentration is the share of agricultural production produced by farms with more than $1 million in sales. In 2007, farms in this sales class produced 59 percent of U.S. agricultural production, while in 2002 farms in this sales class produced 47 percent of all production.

Farm Typology

The 2007 Census of Agriculture uses a typology that classifies farms by sales and operator’s occupation. The census shows that the two largest groups of farms are residential/lifestyle farms (36 percent) and retirement farms (21 percent). Residential/lifestyle farms are those that produced less than $250,000 in sales of agricultural products and where the principal operators reported something other than farming as their primary occupation. Retirement farms are those that produced less than $250,000 in sales and where principal operators who reported that they were retired.

Large family farms (sales between $250,000 and $500,000) and very large family farms (sales over $500,000) made up only 9 percent of all farms. Yet they produced more than 63 percent of the value of all agricultural products sold.

Farm Numbers

www.agcensus.usda.gov