LOUISIANA FARM LABOR

Louisiana: 2022 Census of Agriculture Highlights

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Report in a Snapshot

The 2022 Census of Agriculture (AgCensus) is out, and it has valuable information for the ever-changing profile of the agricultural sector. We present selected information for Louisiana and discuss changes reported between the 2017 and the 2022 AgCensus. Do note that the 2022 Census received responses well below the USDA expected response threshold of 60% so even though we do not notice particular changes in several categories there is more to consider as we discuss Louisiana's producers and their operations. Below are some highlights:

1) **Age Profile:** The percentage of producers under 25 years old has doubled since 2017, indicating a growing interest among younger people in entering the agricultural sector, despite a decrease in the total number of producers.
2) **Off-farm Income:** About 61% of producers report off-farm jobs as their primary source of income, reflecting the diverse and multi-faceted economic lives of modern farmers.
3) **Decision Involvement:** Day-to-day decisions are the predominant concern of operators. The 2022 AgCensus showed even less involvement in succession planning, a multigenerational and long-term decision involvement.
4) **Farm Size:** The highest concentration of farms is in the 10-49 acres and 50-179 acres farm size, suggesting a robust middle sector that continues to form the backbone of the agricultural landscape. However, the number of farms reporting 2,000 acres or more increased by 16%.
5) **Production:** Key industries including livestock, aquaculture, soybean, rice and sugarcane drive the state's agricultural economic sector.
6) **Hired Labor:** Hired labor expenses amounted to 3.4 million accounting for 9.1% of total production expenses.
7) **Tenure:** A significant portion of land operation making up 34% of the total acreage, relies on renting or leasing.

Visit the Farm Labor website to find publications in the series for selected subgroups including female producers, young producers and new and beginning producers.

Producer Characteristics

The 2022 AgCensus reported 42,551 producers, a 2.85% decrease from the 2017 AgCensus (43,798 producers). Most of the producers are male (64.34%) and white (91.58%).

Age

The 2022 census reveals a slight shift in the age distribution among agricultural producers (Figure 1). The data shows a modest increase in the youngest cohort, with producers under 25 years accounting for 2% in 2022 vs 1% in 2017, indicating a growing interest among younger individuals in agricultural production. Conversely, there is also an increase in producers over 65, with those aged 65-74 years rising from 22% to 25% and those 75 years and older from 11% to 13%.

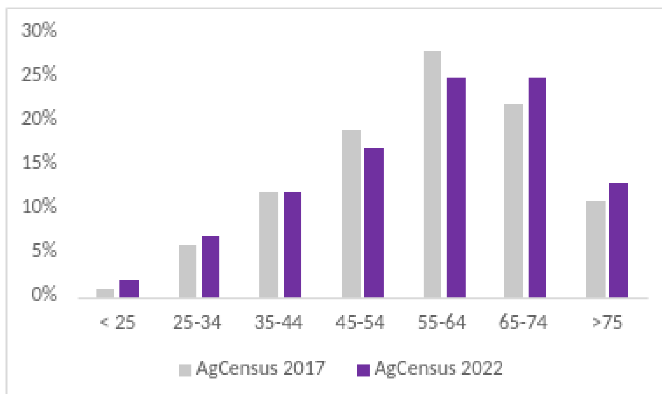

Figure 1: All Producers Age Classification

Considering the ageing of the producer population, the slight increase of young producers is promising. Yet caution is needed in persistent challenges related to land access for the younger farmers and ranchers and succession planning for the older generation.

Occupation

A high number of Louisiana producers report off-farm labor, and many rely on off-farm income to supplement their farming and ranching activities. According to the 2022 AgCensus, of the total 42,551 producers, 60.63% (25,816 producers) list occupations other than farming as their primary work, vs

39.37% (16,735 producers) who primarily engage in farming. Within the group listing non-farming as their primary occupation, 39.73% (16,910 producers) work off-farm for more than 200 days annually, highlighting the substantial reliance on off-farm income sources to sustain livelihoods.

Experience

Taking a closer look at Louisiana producers' experience levels, most of them 67.62% (28,773 producers) have farmed for over 11 years. A total of 6,819 producers (16.03%) have been operating a farm for five years or less, and the remainder 16.35% (6,959 producers) have been operators for six to ten years. This distribution indicates a predominance of experienced farmers within the farming community even as it evolves with significant numbers of producers balancing farming with other professional commitments.

Decision Making

The 2022 AgCensus continued the collection of data on producers' involvement in decision-making across six categories (Table 1).

Table 1. Involvement in Decision Making

Day to day decisions	86%	87%
Land use and/or crop decisions	69%	72%
Livestock decisions	60%	65%
Marketing decisions	53%	NA
Record Keeping/ Financial Management	69%	73%
Estate planning	44%	49%

Undoubtedly involvement in day-to-day decisions tops the list as producers tend to monitor their operations and adjust accordingly. Land use and crop decisions follow; a category we consider as a medium-term goal since any decision taken takes time to materialize. Similarly, with livestock decisions where we notice a drop in involvement from 2017. Those three categories we tend to associate them more with production decisions.

On the other side we associate marketing and finance with the business side of the operation. Involvement in marketing decisions was first recorded on the 2022 AgCensus yet it does not top the list. This is understandable as the data reflect the state, but we do expect variations in marketing by production, e.g., higher involvement in specialty crops and particularly vegetable operations. Record keeping and financial management is among the three top positions but with a slight decrease from the 2017 AgCensus. Estate planning, an area that requires multigenerational involvement is lacking with the 2022 data depicting an even lower involvement.

Facts for Operations

General Facts

The 2022 AgCensus reported 25,006 farms, a 9% decrease from 2017, with a total of 7,986,381 acres land in farms. The average size of the farm increased from 292 to 319 acres.

The highest concentration of farms is between 10-49 acres and 50-179 acres (62% collectively), suggesting a robust middle sector that continues to form the backbone of the agricultural landscape. On the two extremes, the number of farms reporting less than 9 acres decreased by 19% and the number of farms reporting 2,000 acres or more increased by 16%.

Harvested cropland accounted for about 42% of total cropland. Cropland idle or used for cover crops or soil-improvement, but not harvested and not pastured or grazed made up 5.4% of total cropland. A total of 2,985,419 acres were enrolled in crop insurance programs.

Production

Louisiana's key production industries are depicted in Table 2. We follow NAICS to classify the number of farms and land in production.

Table 2. Key Production by NAICS Classification

Production Specialty	Number of Farms	Land in Farms (acres)
All farms	25,006	7,986,381
Aquaculture	723	501,347
Beef cattle	9,687	2,075,491
Broilers	209	46,176
Egg	769	27,406
Horse and other equine	2,221	125,819
Nursery and floriculture	401	19,623
Potato	35	16,007
Rice	525	809,399
Sheep and goat	802	19,567
Soybean	1,019	1,102,850
Sugarcane	386	784,084
Tree nut	436	53,229
Vegetable and melon	657	23,096

Production expenses amounted to 3.7 billion of which hired labor had a 9.1% share. Contract labor share was 1.4%.

Ownership and Tenure

According to the 2022 AgCensus, 17,102 farms (68%) are fully owned and 5,666 are partially owned, accounting for about 23% of the total farms. Looking closely to land in farms, 31% of land in farms is fully owned and 49% is partially owned.

However, 2,238 farms, a significant portion of operations are making up 37% of rented or leased land underscoring the ongoing challenge of land access for many producers.

Economic Class by Market Value of Ag Products Sold and Government Payments

Economic class by market value of ag products sold and government payments offer insights into the financial health of the operations (Table 3).

Table 3. Selected Information on Economic Class by Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold and Government Payments

	Number of Farms	Market value and Gov. Payments (in $1,000)
Total	25,006	4,939,940
Less than $1,000	6,231 (25%)	940
$1,000- $9,999	8,872 (35%)	37,200
$10,000 -$49,999	5,056 (21%)	117,566
$50,000 -$99,999	1,374 (5%)	96,172
$100,000- $249,999	1,017 (4%)	156,955
$500,000- $999,999	639 (3%)	465,832
$1 million-$2.5 million	728 (3%)	1,155,299
$2.5 million-5 million	361 (1%)	1,209,900
$5 million or more	187 (<1%)	1,511,954

Louisiana has 25% of operations below the $1,000 threshold, a slight decrease from the 28% reported in 2017. This decrease may be linked to the observed increase in farm size, suggesting a consolidation trend where smaller farms are either growing or merging into larger operations. We observe a positive shift in higher tiers, with farms earning $50,000 or more annually increasing from 17% to 19%. Notably the operations reporting more than $1 million are driving the respective industries. Particularly the number of operations reporting more than 5 million more than tripled since 2017. This growth in higher-earning farms aligns with the increase in larger farm sizes, indicating that larger operations are likely driving much of the sector's economic gains. Variations are reported by production specialty (Table 4).

Table 4. Selected Information on Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold by Key Production by NAICS Classification

Production Specialty	Value of Products Sold (in $1,000)
All farms	4,807,123
Aquaculture	151,119
Beef cattle	225,807
Broilers and other	740,296
Egg	105,631
Horse and other equine	16,753
Nursery and floriculture	151,306
Potato	26,357
Rice	516,554
Sheep and goat	1,909
Soybean	568,863
Sugarcane	1,264,752
Tree nut	6,504
Vegetable and melon	19,209

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