

IOWA FOOD AND FARM FACTS



Local Food

- ◆ Iowans spend an estimated \$9 billion on food each year; 90—95% of this food is imported into the state.
- ◆ On an acres per capita basis, Iowa has 83 percent fewer fresh vegetable acres than the national average.
- ◆ According to research by Iowa State University, farmers markets in Iowa also contribute an estimated \$59.4 million in gross sales to the state economy, generating \$17.8 million in payroll and nearly 600 jobs in the state.
- ◆ 29% of Iowa school districts surveyed by USDA say they participate in farm to school activities.
- ◆ As of spring 2018, there are 14 members of the Iowa Regional Food Systems Working Group actively serving 70 Iowa counties with local food-related programming.
- ◆ A 2011 ISU study showed that if producers grew enough produce to meet metropolitan demand for 28 fresh fruits and vegetables would generate \$39.96 million in farm-level sales and a net job gain of 343 statewide.



Iowa Farms

- ◆ Eighty-five percent (or 30.5 million acres) of Iowa's total land base is used for agriculture.
- ◆ Iowa had 86,900 farms in 2017; the average farm size was 351 acres.
- ◆ Women make up 8% of Iowa's principal farm operators, and non-whites comprise less than 1%.
- ◆ Average age of principal operators was 57.1 in 2012, up from 56.1 in 2007.



Crops and Livestock Production

- ◆ Agricultural products generated \$30.8 billion in sales in 2012; 96.3% of total sales came from corn, soy, hogs, cattle, and eggs.
- ◆ In 2017, Iowa was home to 4 million cattle and calves, 22.8 million hogs, 12.1 million turkeys, 165,000 sheep and lambs, and 31,000 goats.

Iowa Commercial Horticulture

The 2015 survey of commercial horticulture in Iowa was conducted by ISU's Local Foods Program in partnership with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. The results were released in 2017, and may be viewed at this link: <https://bit.ly/2vbR4Q7>. The most recent prior survey was done in 2000.

Some highlights from the survey results:

- ◆ The majority of Iowa's edible horticulture farmers are new (10 years or fewer) to horticulture production, although some may have farmed commodity crops prior to engaging in horticulture production.
- ◆ However, while beginning horticulture farmers are replacing retiring horticulture growers in terms of number (a trend contrary to commodity agriculture), these new horticulture farmers are not farming as many acres.
- ◆ Most horticulture farms are 2 acres in size (the median farm size), unchanged in the past 15 years. What has changed is the average horticulture farm size, which decreased from 13 acres in 2000 to roughly 8 acres in 2015.
- ◆ The top five crops in 2015 based on the number of (responding) farms producing them were tomatoes, pumpkins, cucumbers, green beans, and winter squash. In 2000, sweet corn was the top crop, followed by tomatoes, green beans, cucumbers, and sweet peppers.
- ◆ Melon production declined markedly from 2000 to 2015, with possible causes being high labor costs, volatile markets, local land development, and competition from melon producers in other states and countries.
- ◆ By contrast, grape production was up significantly from 2000 to 2015, a change attributed to the rise in wine grape production.

Results from the 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture:

- ◆ In 2012, the USDA counted 962 farms in Iowa raising vegetables for sale on 7,724 acres. That was an increase in farms from 2007 (881) but a decrease in acres (9,544).
- ◆ The 2012 ag census recorded 752 orchards on 2,974 acres; these figures were similar to 2007 data.
- ◆ Fruits and vegetables make up 12% of total farm receipts.
- ◆ Iowa's top five fruits (by acre): grapes, apples, watermelon, cantaloupe, and pears.
- ◆ Iowa's top five vegetables (by acre): sweet corn, pumpkins, potatoes, green peas, and squash.
- ◆ Fruits and vegetables were grown in 957,773 square feet of greenhouses in 2012, and generated \$7.3 million in total sales.

Sources

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