Kalamazoo
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2026

FEASIBILITY *Report*

REGENERATIVE
INCUBATOR FARMER PROGRAM

An analysis of incubator farms to ensure the development of a stable, successful long-term program for the next generation of farmers.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Michigan's agricultural sector has been in a period of consistent decline over the past century. Since 2002, the state has lost 7,734 farms and 670,889 acres of farmland, and has the fewest farms among Midwest states. Alongside Wisconsin, Michigan has seen some of the region's most significant losses in farmland. Kalamazoo County reflects this pattern directly, having lost 100 farms (a 14% decline) between the 2017 and 2022 Census of Agriculture.

The decline is not just in acreage but in agricultural diversity. Michigan is the nation's second most agriculturally diverse state, yet it has lost specialty crop acreage at nearly twice the national rate, including an 11% drop in "vegetables, potatoes, and melons" and "non-citrus fruits and nuts." As a part of Michigan's farm economy and identity, the loss in specialty crops highlights the urgency of training a new generation of producers equipped to manage and sustain diversified, regenerative operations.

Additionally, the median age of farmers in the United States is now 58.1, and more than 40% of the nation's farmland is held by farmers 65 and older. While Michigan has seen a modest increase in young producers, farmers under 35 consist of only 10.4% of the overall demographic. As it stands, the pipeline for new farmers remains too small to offset the coming wave of retirements and land transitions.

In an effort to address the key barriers to farming, programs have been established throughout the country that offer essentials such as land access, capital, training, infrastructure, and marketing. These programs, known as incubator farms, support aspiring farmers by providing the experience and resources needed to launch successful farm businesses.

Incubator farms are typically organized into land-access incubators, training-focused incubators, or urban incubators. Land-access incubators target aspiring farmers of previous farm management experience, and mainly offer access to land with less oversight. Training programs, on the other hand prioritize comprehensive, hands-on instruction and classroom learning combined with experience on the farm. These training programs are designed for beginners, and feature intensive first-year coursework covering agricultural concepts and the development of a farm business plan. Urban incubators can utilize both a land-access or training-focused approach; however, they emphasize methods of production such as high tunnels, greenhouses, and concentrate on more compact food production.

While incubator farms have been traditionally managed by nonprofits and educational institutions, conservation districts across the United States have begun launching and managing their own incubator farms. As part of this growing initiative in supporting our next generation of farmers, the Kalamazoo Conservation District (KCD) seeks to develop a Regenerative Incubator Farmer Program that supports beginning farmers through a 4-stage framework from initial interest in regenerative agriculture to eventual farm proprietorship and long-term stability.

Incubator farm programs differ extensively in their structure and target demographics; however, after assessing Kalamazoo County and the resources currently available, a training-focused approach appears to be the most feasible model for the program. Currently, Kalamazoo County does not have the prerequisites needed for a land-access incubator, and while programs like the MSU Organic Farmer Training Program offer valuable introductory experience, there is minimal comprehensive hands-on growing, making a transition to an incubator farm program difficult.

PROPOSED MODEL

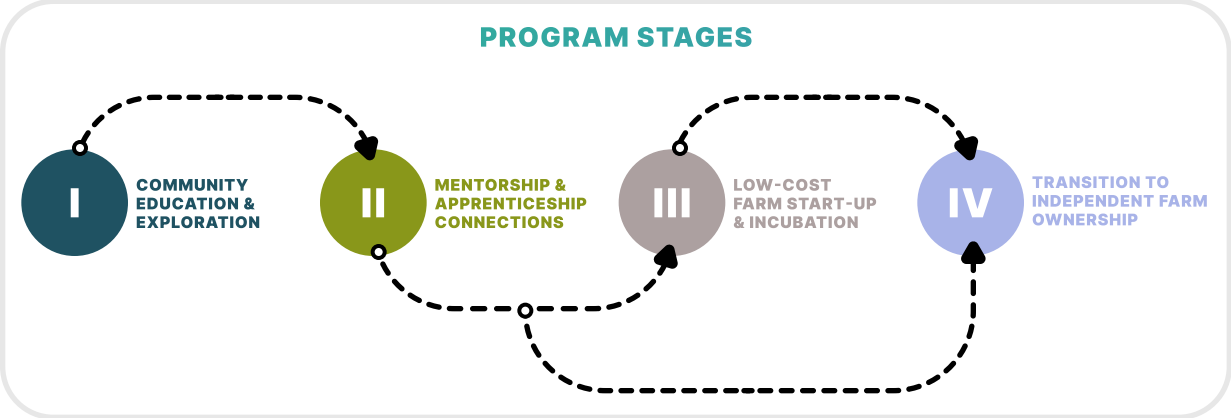
The Kalamazoo Conservation District has identified 4 key stages essential to promoting the success of beginning farmers, which will serve as a framework for the proposed program. The first stage, Community Education & Exploration, introduces community members to agriculture, food systems, conservation, and farm business concepts through workshops, training courses, and other informational sessions.

The second stage, Mentorship and Apprenticeship Connections, helps individuals move from interest to practical learning by connecting them with local producers for mentorship, shadowing, apprenticeship, and relationship-building.

The third stage, Low-Cost Farm Start-Up and Incubation, is available to participants who have completed an apprenticeship and are ready to take the next step. This stage provides beginning farmers the opportunity to start and operate an agricultural enterprise at relatively low cost, while continuing to receive technical assistance and practical support.

The fourth stage, Transition to Independent Farm Ownership or Long-Term Stability, is available to participants who have completed the first two stages and want to continue directly toward farm ownership, rather than pursuing additional incubation time. Here, farmers connect with local partners to move toward independent farm ownership, long-term leasing, or other stable operating arrangements.

The 4-stage program will be implemented through both a rural and urban track, allowing participants to pursue regenerative farming in a setting best suited to their future goals and circumstances. The rural track would ideally provide access to an estimated 15–30-acre parcel of farmland during the Low-Cost Farm Start-Up and Incubation stage. The urban track, by contrast, emphasizes compact production methods such as high tunnels and greenhouses, offering an accessible entry point for participants interested in smaller urban operations. While the 2 tracks differ in production setting and scale, both follow the same 4-stage progression from an initial interest to eventual long-term farm stability.



STUDY LIMITATIONS

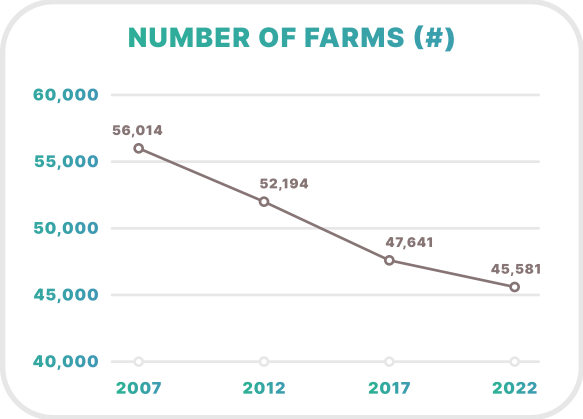
This study draws on interviews with representatives from both current and former incubator farm operations, as well as secondary research on local, regional, and national agricultural trends. Interviews with representatives from former operations reflect a snapshot in time rather than a comprehensive view of the program, which may result in some bias into the findings. Additionally, as interviews reflect individual perspectives, responses may highlight opinions that are not fully consistent or representative of the program as a whole.

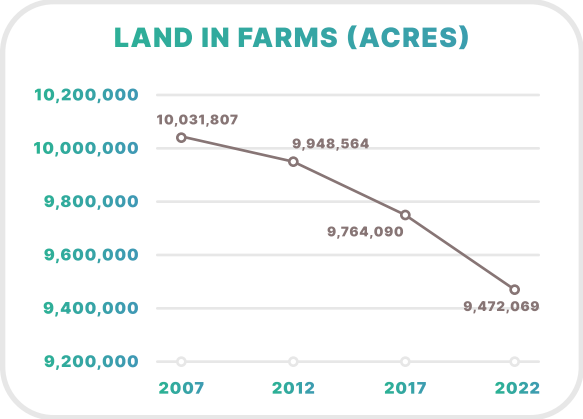
Moreover, with the Regenerative Incubator Farmer Program in early development, detailed financial budgeting assumptions and operational costs cannot yet be made with confidence. However, existing resources on equipment and operational costs such as the 2026 Michigan State University Custom Work Rates, provide a reasonable basis for general cost estimates depending on the direction of the program.

INTRODUCTION

The Kalamazoo Conservation District (KCD) aims to develop a Regenerative Incubator Farmer Program that supports beginning farmers through a 4-stage pathway from initial interest in regenerative agriculture to eventual farm proprietorship and long-term stability. This study attempts to analyze and assess the need and scope for the Regenerative Incubator Farmer Program and investigate the key barriers and facilitators in the development of a stable, successful long-term program.

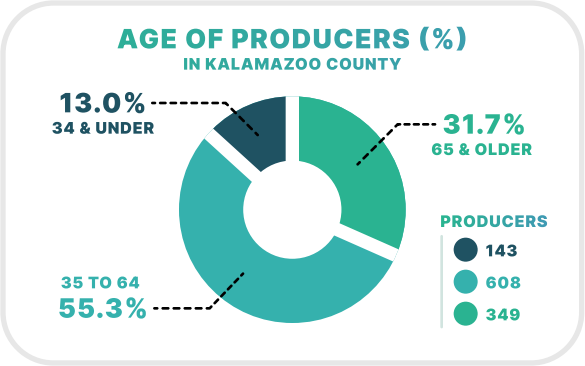
According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture (USDA NASS, 2024), there are 45,581 farms in the state of Michigan, a decrease of 2,060 farms since 2017. In Kalamazoo County, the number of farms decreased from 707 to 607, resulting in a 14% decrease in farms. Moreover, agricultural land acreage in Michigan declined by 292,021 acres. Over the past 2 decades, the Census of Agriculture has shown a consistent trend of agricultural decline, with a loss of 670,889 acres of farmland and 7,734 farms since 2002.





As of 2026, the state of Michigan has the fewest farms in the Midwest and saw some of the largest overall declines in farmland alongside Wisconsin. Michigan has seen a 2.99% decline in farmland, following closely behind Wisconsin with a decline of 3.73%. Although Michigan is the second most agriculturally diverse state after California, it has lost specialty crop acreage at nearly twice the rate of the United States, including an 11% decline in “vegetables, potatoes, and melons” and “non-citrus fruits and nuts,” compared to a 6% national decline (Bardenhagen et al., 2025). This loss in Michigan’s diversified agricultural background highlights the need for a new generation of producers trained in regenerative, diversified operations.

In addition to the loss of farmland, the aging population of farmers is a growing concern for the agriculture sector in the United States. With the median age of farmers at 58.1, over 40% of the nation's farmland is owned by farmers 65 and older. Of the approximately 1,100 producers in Kalamazoo County, 608 are ages 35 to 64 and 349 are ages 65 and older.



While the trend of land loss and an aging population remains consistent, the state of Michigan has had a slight increase in young producers from 2017 with 10.4% of Michigan's agricultural producers under the age of 35. In an effort to promote the longevity and success of Michigan's agriculture sector, the KCD Regenerative Incubator Farmer Program will provide a clear, step-by-step pathway for aspiring farmers who may lack access to training, mentorship, land, equipment, or capital.

Furthermore, the KCD Regenerative Incubator Farmer Program will incorporate regenerative practices that address natural resource concerns "through soil health, water management, and biodiversity to improve the productivity and prosperity of agriculture, communities, and ecosystems" (USDA NRCS, 2025). By reducing these barriers, the KCD can support the new generation of producers in establishing sustainable, regenerative agriculture operations in Michigan.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This feasibility study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data to assess the feasibility of the KCD Regenerative Incubator Farmer Program.

Quantitative data was sourced from the 2022 Census of Agriculture alongside county surveys and data from sources such as the USDA and MSU Extension to establish a foundational understanding of agricultural trends at the state and county level, including the changes in farm numbers, land use, costs, and producer demographics in Kalamazoo County and the state of Michigan.

Alongside quantitative data, the study drew on the insights and experiences of representatives from current and former incubator farmer programs at the regional and national level to identify the key barriers and facilitators in developing a successful incubator farmer program.

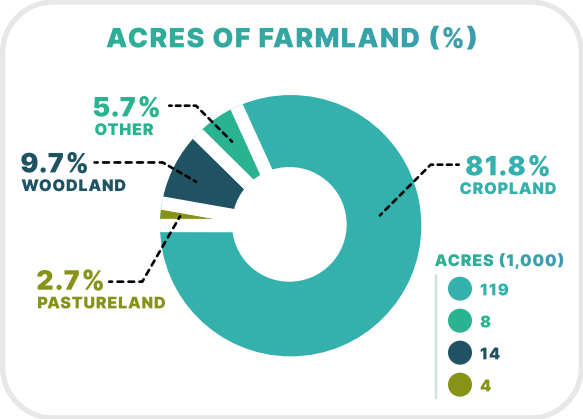
INTERVIEWS

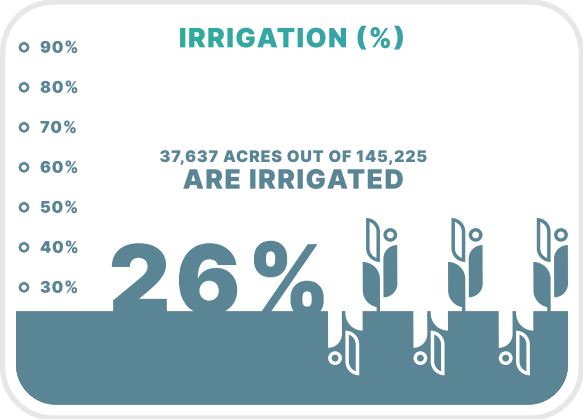
ANN OLSON	STRENGTHEN ND
ANNA KISS MAUSER-MARTINEZ	CITY FRESH
BEN SOMMERS	LANSING ROOTS
CAITLIN KENNEY	NESFP FIELD NETWORK
EMILY ELAM	RURAL ACTION
FATIMA LEE	NEW CITY URBAN FARM
JACKIE RODABAUGH	WASATCH COMMUNITY GARDENS
JAMES DEDECKER	NORTH FARM MSU
KEVIN HESS	NEW CITY URBAN FARM
KOFFI KPACHAVI	GREAT LAKES INCUBATOR FARM
KRISTEN MCIVOR	GOSS INCUBATOR FARM
LANCE KRAAI	NEW CITY URBAN FARM
MADDIE JUDGE	WASATCH COMMUNITY GARDENS
MARIEL BORGMAN	MSU EXTENSION
MCKAYLE LAW	WASATCH COMMUNITY GARDENS
MEGAN LANGLEY	STRENGTHEN ND
MICAH ANDERSON	VIVA FARMS
NATHAN HARKLEROAD	ALBA FARMERS
PEARCE JENSEN	BIG RIVER FARMS
RACHEL BAIR	KVCC FOOD INNOVATION CENTER
RITCHIE WAI	FARMERS RISING
ROWAN STEELE	HEADWATERS FARM BUSINESS INCUBATOR
RYAN SPARKS	FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SAMMIE MIKOLITIS	NEW CITY URBAN FARM
SETH RILEY	FARLEY CENTER COLLABORATIVE FARM
STEFANIE STAUFFER	TILIAN FARM DEVELOPMENT CENTER

KALAMAZOO COUNTY AGRICULTURE

LAND & FARMS

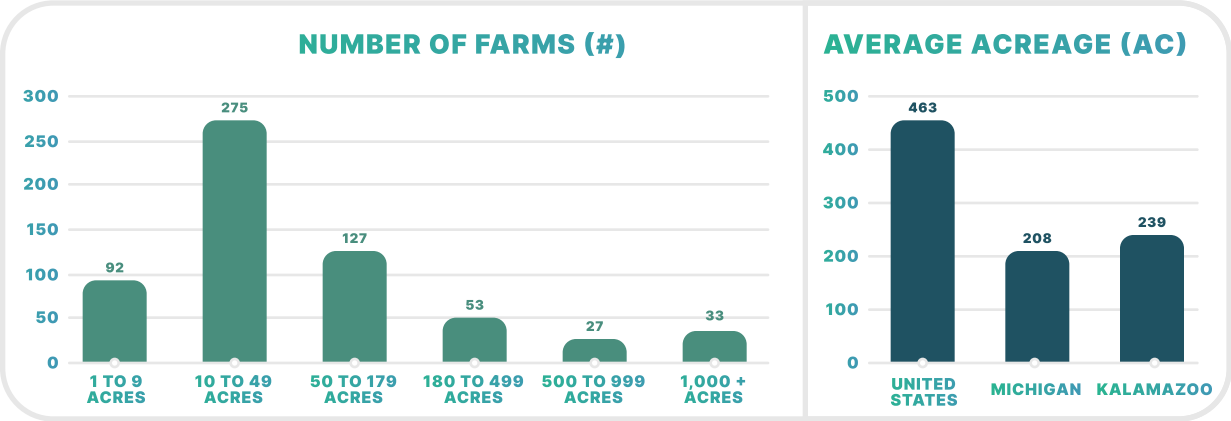
According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Kalamazoo County has 145,225 acres of land in farms. Of this total, 118,836 acres (82%) are cropland, 3,991 acres (3%) are pastureland, and 14,121 acres (10%) are woodland. The remaining 8,277 acres (roughly 6%) are made up of farmsteads, buildings, and other farm-related uses. Moreover, 37,637 acres of farmland in the county are irrigated, making up 26% of the total farmland in the county.





The average farm size in Kalamazoo County is 239 acres, about half of the national average of 463 acres, and slightly higher than the state average of 208 acres. Across the state of Michigan, the median farm was 50 acres. In general, Michigan farms are notably smaller than the national average, likely reflecting the state's focus on high-value production, along with a large share of part-time or hobby operations (Knudson, 2025).

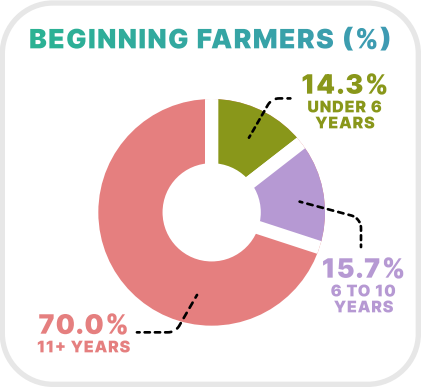
Kalamazoo County's agricultural revenue grew 44% between 2017 and 2022, rising from $236,922,000 to $340,333,000; however, total farm production expenses grew at an identical rate over the same period, suggesting how gains in farm revenue were largely offset by rising input and operating costs. This dynamic, combined with the 14% decline in the number of farms, suggests that the county's agricultural growth has been concentrated among fewer, larger operations rather than across all farms



As the average farm size grows and the number of individual operations shrinks, land access for beginning farmers becomes increasingly tied to leasing arrangements rather than land ownership. Regionally, farmers expanding their operations in the Midwest rely on leasing more than ownership. The Midwest is home to 797,637 landlord entities, representing 38% of the national total. Among the 5 USDA regions (Atlantic, South, Midwest, Plains, and West), the Midwest makes up the largest share of the overall total. These landlords lease out 73.9 million acres for agricultural use, accounting for 21% of all rented farmland nationwide.

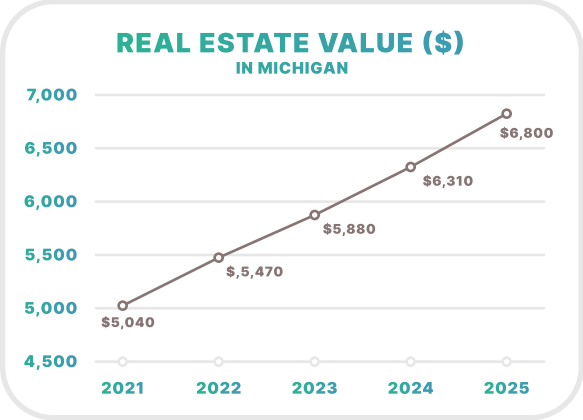
COST OF LAND

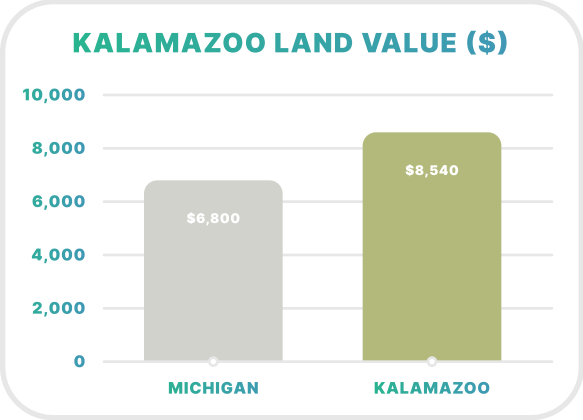
Beginning farmers are more likely to farm exclusively owned land: 40% of beginning farmers are considered full owners of their properties. This is likely a result of beginning farmers starting farms later in life, so they generally had more capital and financing options to purchase land outright to begin their operation (Ayoub, 2025). In the United States, 30% of producers identified as beginning farmers. In contrast to the average age of all farmers (58.1), beginning farmers had an average age of 47.1. Of these beginning farmers, only 24% were under the age of 35.



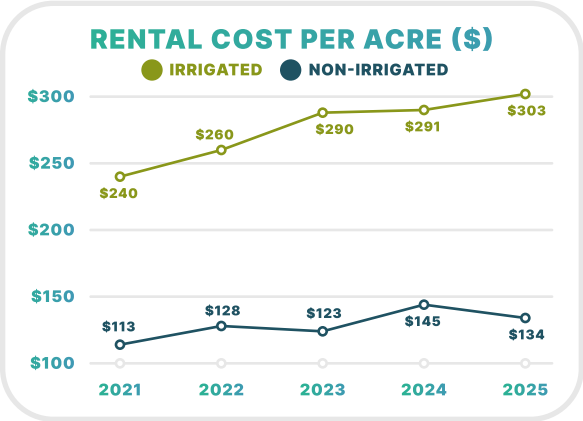
As farmers under the age of 35 represented only 9% of all U.S. farmers, the cost of land is a significant concern for young producers and the future of agriculture (USDA NASS, 2024). As stated by the USDA Land Values 2025 Summary, Michigan has had a farm real estate increase of 7.8% between 2024 and 2025, the highest increase in farm real estate value among all U.S. states. Since 2021, the value has risen from $5,040 to $6,800 in 2025, underlining a systemic problem for young producers (USDA NASS, 2025).

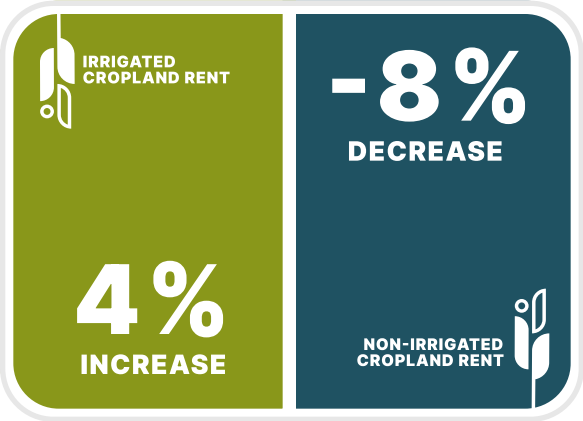
Moreover, farmland sales across Kalamazoo County averaged $8,540 per acre, or 26% higher than the state average. With some properties selling as high as $18,191 per acre, Kalamazoo County's high land prices present a major barrier preventing the the younger generation from entering the agriculture sector (Geswein Farm & Land Realty, 2025).





For many young and aspiring farmers, leasing land is the only viable option when considering entering farming as a business. Although leasing comes with its own major issues, short-term costs are typically less exorbitant. According to USDA Quickstats data compiled by MSU Extension (LaPorte, 2025), non-irrigated cropland rent in Kalamazoo County decreased by 8% from 2024 to 2025, falling to $134.00 per acre, while irrigated cropland rent increased by 4% over the same period, reaching $303.00 per acre.

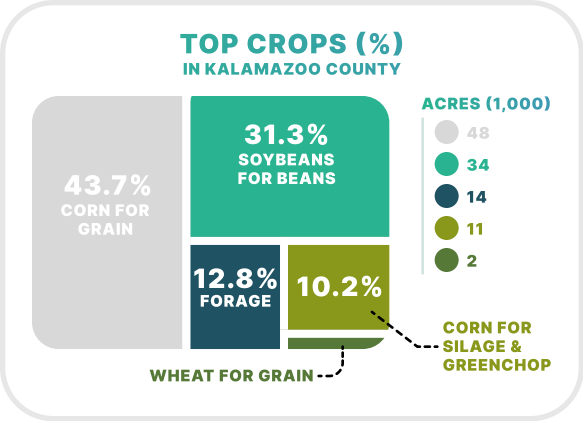


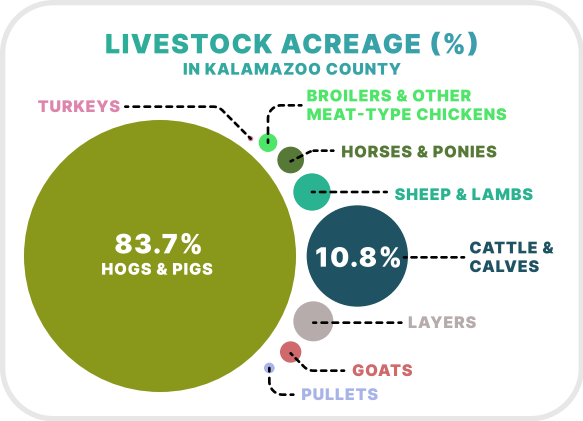


SPECIALTY CROPS

As the second most agriculturally diverse state in the nation, Michigan holds a unique position as "there are only so many places in the United States capable of consistent specialty crop production, especially for fruit" (Bardenhagen et al., 2025). Of the 7.5 million acres utilized for crop production, 93% is allocated to commodity crops like corn, wheat, and soybeans. "The remaining 545,594 acres are devoted to specialty crop systems across 10,088 farms" (Klammer & Miller, 2024).

Located in Southwest Michigan, Kalamazoo County follows this pattern with the majority of crop acreage being dedicated to corn (grain, silage, greenchop), soybeans (beans), forage (hay, haylage), and wheat (grain). Kalamazoo County is ranked 5th in the state for the market value of agricultural products sold for crops, and ranked 19th for livestock, poultry, and products. In terms of livestock, the vast majority of the inventory is hogs and pigs, making up 84% of Kalamazoo's livestock inventory.





LOCAL FOOD

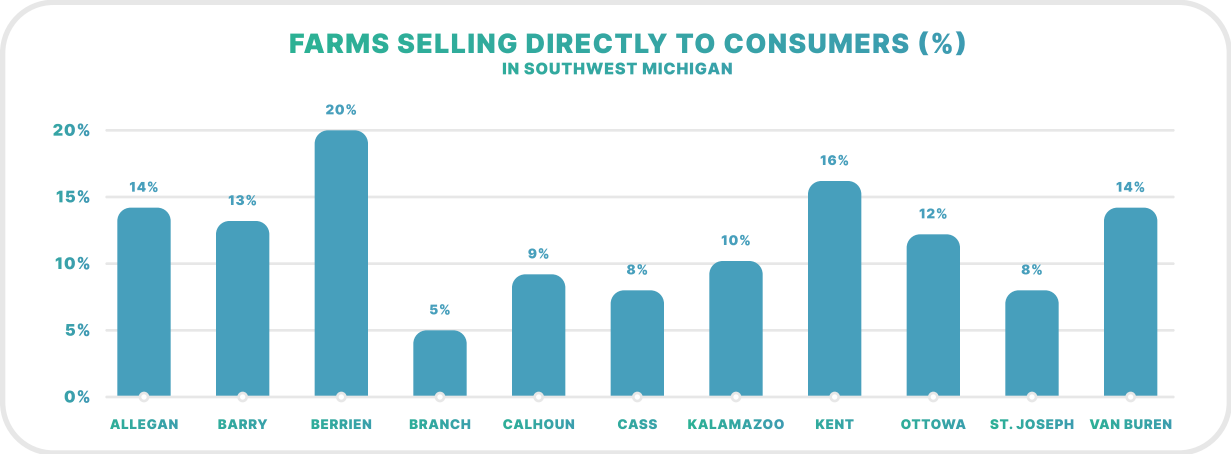
According to the 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey, Michigan is ranked 4th in the nation for total direct food sales (USDA NASS, 2022). While Michigan is considered one of the best states for local food commodities, local and regional sales account for only a small fraction of overall produce purchases. As reported in the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, only 11.6% of Michigan's farms sold directly to consumers, making up approximately 1.1% of agricultural sales within the state. When the value of food directly sold to local and regional retail markets, institutions, and food hubs is included, local food makes up only 5% of Michigan's total agricultural sales (USDA NASS, 2024).

DEFINITION

LOCAL FOOD

> According to the 2008 Farm Bill, which guides the USDA, "local food" is food grown and transported fewer than 400 miles or within the same state.

Kalamazoo County falls slightly below the state average, with 10% of farms selling directly to consumers. Furthermore, only 4% of farms in Michigan sell directly to local and regional retail markets, institutions, and food hubs. While the number of farms selling directly to retail markets, institutions, and food hubs has increased from 12 to 24, the same cannot be said for food sold directly to consumers. The number of farms selling directly to consumers in Kalamazoo County declined by 43 farms, from 104 to 64, between 2017 and 2022. As a result, the share of farms selling directly to consumers declined from 15% to 10%.



INCUBATOR PROGRAM MODELS

Incubator farm programs are agricultural business incubators that typically combine farming and business management education with hands-on training, and offer affordable access to land and infrastructure. By addressing the key barriers to farming, these supports help aspiring farmers gain the experience and resources needed to launch a successful agricultural business. Incubator farm programs come in a variety of frameworks to address different demographics and concerns, and while every program differs, there are a few common traits that construct the foundation of these programs.

Incubator farms are generally organized into 3 separate categories: land-access incubators, training-focused incubators, and urban incubators. Incubator farms that focus on land-access often market toward a demographic with previous farm management experience. These incubators prioritize participants who struggle to access land but already have the necessary experience to begin farming without additional mentorship. Land-access incubators typically offer shared infrastructure like tractors, wash/pack stations, walk-in coolers, and irrigation systems.

DEFINITION

BUSINESS INCUBATOR

> A business incubator is an organization or program designed to support the growth and development of early-stage or start-up businesses by providing resources, services, and support that reduce the risks of starting a new venture.

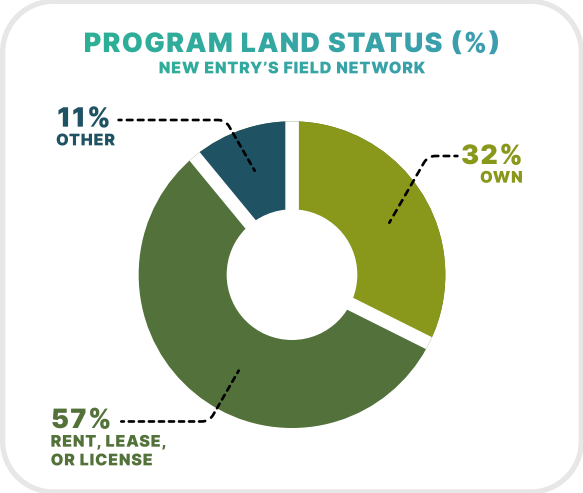
Training-focused incubators prioritize comprehensive, hands-on instruction and classroom learning combined with experience on the farm. These training programs are designed primarily for beginners, and feature intensive first-year coursework covering agricultural principles and business plan development. Training-focused incubators often are divided into 2 sections: the training course and the incubator. Training courses range from 7 to 10 months, and have a mix of online and in-person classes, eventually leading into more hands-on experience in the growing season. After the training course, participants usually have the option to continue to the incubator, where they can commonly lease between 1/8th of an acre to up to 5 acres. Incubator farms often have 1-year leases, and they can be renewed for approximately 3 to 5 years.

Urban incubators usually operate within or directly adjacent to city limits on smaller parcels of land. These programs frequently have fewer than an acre of land, and they emphasize methods of production such as high tunnels, greenhouses, and more compact food production methods. Urban incubator farms can utilize both a land-access or training-focused approach, offer more flexible land-access with lighter oversight, and have fewer formal requirements.

NEW ENTRY'S FIELD NETWORK

The FIELD Network (Farm Incubation and Education through Land-Based skills Development), by the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project at Tufts University, is a "nationwide network of agricultural training programs that share a common purpose of using land-based experiential learning to create new pathways to careers in agriculture and farm ownership" (NESFP). New Entry aids in the development of relationships and resource sharing between incubator programs, apprenticeship programs, and other programs related to fostering the next generation of farmers.

As part of the FIELD Network, New Entry holds an annual conference called the National FIELD School. The National FIELD School conference "brings together organizations from across the U.S. and Canada that are committed to building resilient farming communities, empowering new farmers, and ensuring equitable access to sustainable agriculture" to participate in workshops, networking, and peer-to-peer learning on running successful incubator and apprenticeship programs (NESFP). The FIELD School 2026 conference is October 19–21, 2026, at the Cork Factory Hotel in Lancaster, PA.



According to the 2024 FIELD Network Census Report, 32% of programs own their property, 57% rent, lease, or license, and 11% have a different method of land-access. Among the programs that are included in the census report, there is an average of 46 acres per program. In terms of former participants, 34% are still farming 5+ years after program completion, 16% are now primary farm operators, 13% have achieved secure land tenure, and 15% are currently employed as farm workers (NESFP, 2024).

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NOTE

In the following section, categories with a tilde (~) indicate non-applicable data. Programs differ in organizational structure, and many do not fit into a single, standardized format.

MICHIGAN INCUBATOR PROGRAMS

Although there have been attempts to develop long-term incubator farm programs within the state of Michigan, there are currently no programs that are considered established. According to New Entry, for a program to be considered established, it needs to be in operation for a minimum of 6 years. In Michigan, there have been approximately 5–7 incubator farm programs; however, the majority have ceased operations due to a lack of funding, management turnover, and an overambitious scope.

TILIAN FARM DEVELOPMENT CENTER — 2011

Tilian Farm Development Center was a farm business incubator on 44 acres of preserved farmland in Ann Arbor Township, MI. Tilian launched in 2011 as a program of the Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP), in partnership with Ann Arbor Township, which leased the land to Tilian for a nominal fee. Management of Tilian was later transferred from FSEP to Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS). The program faced persistent structural challenges, including management concerns and an absence of long-term funding, and eventually ceased operations in 2019.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
44	1/4 - 1 AC	YES

LANSING ROOTS — 2013

Lansing Roots was a roughly 10-acre incubator farm program by the Greater Lansing Food Bank (GLFB), launched around 2013, to give refugees, immigrants, and other limited-resource residents the opportunity to develop small farm businesses. Lansing Roots faced 2 major barriers during its operation: inconsistent funding and a broad demographic. The broad demographic of refugees, immigrants, low-income residents, and minority farmers stretched the program's resources across a wide range of needs, from translators to consistent oversight and management. The program eventually ceased operations in 2018.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
10	1/4 - 3/4 AC	YES

NORTH FARM MSU 2013

North Farm was a 5-acre incubator farm program of the Michigan State University Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center (UPREC) in Chatham, MI. The program was launched in 2013, and was aimed at farmers who already had substantial agricultural experience and were ready to start their own farm businesses. The North Farm stopped accepting new incubator participants after 2021, though existing participants were allowed to remain in the program through 2025.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
5	~	NO

TOLLGATE FARM MSU 2018

Tollgate Farm, part of MSU Extension, briefly launched a farm business incubator in 2018. However, due to staff turnover, the program lost momentum and ceased operations soon after. Participants who were grandfathered into the program continued through at least 2020, with examples such as the Root to Rise Farm, though little information is available.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
~	~	NO

NEW CITY URBAN FARM 2026

New City Urban Farm, managed by New City Neighbors, has recently begun developing an urban incubator farm program on 3/4th of an acre. Once the program opens, participants will have access to 1/4-acre plots on a property totaling 3/4 acre. New City Urban Farm is also in collaboration with Michigan State University's Organic Farmer Training Program (OFTP), and acts as the hands-on learning experience for the Grand Rapids location.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
3/4	1/4 AC	YES

GREAT LAKES INCUBATOR FARM (GLIF) 2022

The Great Lakes Incubator Farm (GLIF) is a 15-acre program of the Grand Traverse Conservation District (GTCD), located on the historic Meyer Farm property in Grand Traverse County. GLIF was established in 2022 with the help of a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant, and welcomed its first cohort in 2023. As part of the program, GLIF offers both a training program and an incubator farm program. The training program is a 7-month long course in which 5 participants work directly alongside the Farm Manager to help run a functioning farm business, learning hands-on production and business skills. In addition to the training program, GLIF offers a 3-year incubator farm; however, the majority of participants go directly to transitioning to farms through MIFarmLink.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
15	~	YES

REGIONAL INCUBATOR PROGRAMS

Although Michigan does not currently have any long-term incubator farm programs, the broader Midwest region has generally seen greater success. There are 11 incubator farm and apprenticeship programs that operate as part of the FIELD Network across the Midwest, ranging from well-established initiatives to more recently developed ones.

CITY FRESH 2024

City Fresh's New Farmer Incubator program launched in 2024, opening the George Jones Farm to aspiring farmers. City Fresh currently has 5 acres dedicated to the incubator farm program, and has around 4 farmers per cohort. In addition, there are 4 hoop houses, a walk-in cooler, and irrigation. City Fresh works alongside Oberlin College and Lorain County Community College to support the incubator farm.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
5	~	YES

BIG RIVER FARMS 2005

Big River Farms is a 33-acre incubator farm run by The Food Group, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit near Marine on St. Croix, MN. The program launched around 2005 and focuses on immigrant, refugee, Indigenous, and other historically underserved communities. Like other programs, Big River Farms offers both a training program and an incubator program. The training program is a 10-month course with roughly 22 winter classroom sessions and spring field sessions. Participants may also enter an apprenticeship with a local farmer. After completing the training program, participants can continue in the incubator program for up to 5 years.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
33	1/2 - 2 AC	YES

FARLEY CENTER FARM INCUBATOR 2010

The Farley Center Farm Incubator was a 25-acre incubator farm program of the Linda and Gene Farley Center for Peace, Justice and Sustainability, located on the Farley family's land in the Town of Springdale, near Verona, WI. The incubator program launched in 2010 and has shifted from an incubator model to a collaborative farm. As a collaborative farm, new and experienced farmers from immigrant and refugee backgrounds share land, tools, and marketing support. The Linda and Gene Farley Center for Peace, Justice and Sustainability manages a cemetery alongside the farm, which covers approximately 80% of the farm's operating cost.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
25	~	NO

FARMERS RISING 2024

The Farmers Rising incubator farm at its Caledonia, IL location focuses on livestock. Farmers Rising is currently the only livestock-specific farm incubator in the Midwest, while also offering incubator participants the opportunity to engage in crop production. Farmers Rising also offers a farm business training program called Take Root, which can be taken prior to or concurrently with the incubator. Farmers Rising does not have a specific program duration or time limit for incubator participants.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
13	~	YES

WELL-ESTABLISHED INCUBATOR PROGRAMS

According to New Entry's FIELD Network, a program must have been operating for at least 10 years to be classified as well-established. Many programs, however, considerably exceed the minimum requirement and have been in operation for over 20 years. As well-established programs, these organizations commonly offer irrigation, greenhouses, walk-in coolers, wash/pack stations, and an array of equipment related to farming. Moreover, these programs often incorporate training programs that work alongside the incubator.

AGRICULTURE & LAND-BASED TRAINING ASSOCIATION 2001

The Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA) is a 100-acre farm incubator program located in the Salinas Valley, CA. ALBA was founded in 2001 and remains one of the oldest active incubator programs within the United States. Through its FEED (Farmer Education and Enterprise Development) program, ALBA provides Latino immigrants with the opportunity to develop the skills and resources necessary to launch their own farm businesses. FEED is organized into 2 stages, a 1-year PEPA (Programa Educativo para Pequeños Agricultores) training program and the OFI (Organic Farm Incubator). Of the 18 to 24 graduates of PEPA, roughly half choose to continue to the OFI. The program lasts up to 5 years, and does not require prior experience.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
100+	1/2 - 5 AC	NO

NEW ENTRY SUSTAINABLE FARMING PROJECT 1998

The New Entry Sustainable Farming Project (NESFP) has a 20-acre incubator farm program located in Beverly, MA. New Entry, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, was founded in 1998 in partnership with Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. To join the incubator farm program, applicants must demonstrate prior farming experience, complete New Entry's Farm Business Planning Course, and submit a full farm business plan for review. Once accepted, farmers may lease up to 1 acre of land for up to 3 growing seasons. After their 3 years, New Entry helps participating farmers transition to independent farmland of their own. New Entry also manages the FIELD Network, which supports incubator and beginning-farmer programs across the country through resource sharing and technical guidance.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
20	1/4 - 1 AC	YES

VIVA FARMS 2009

Viva Farms, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit established in 2009, owns and leases over 100-acres of land for its farm business incubator and training program between Skagit and King counties, WA. Viva Farms structures its support around what it calls the essentials for beginning farmers: land, capital, training, infrastructure and equipment, marketing and community. Entry into the incubator requires completion of the Practicum in Sustainable Agriculture, an 8-month training program covering hands-on crop production and farm business management. As part of the incubator program, Viva Farms manages multiple locations that vary in demographic focus. Depending on the location, Viva Farms offers between 1/8th of an acre for market gardens up to 20 acres for mechanized cultivation.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
100+	1/8 - 20 AC	~

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS & INCUBATORS

Traditionally, incubator programs have been the result of nonprofit initiatives and educational institutions. In recent years, however, a growing number of conservation districts have begun launching and managing incubator programs of their own. This emerging pattern can be seen with the Great Lakes Incubator Farm that the Grand Traverse Conservation District operates in Northwest Lower Michigan. Other conservation districts that have started implementing incubator farm and training programs include the Bennington County Conservation District (BCCD) in Vermont, Prince George's Soil Conservation District (PGSCD) in Maryland, Pierce Conservation District (PCD) in Washington State, and the Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District (CSWCD) in New Mexico.

HEADWATERS FARM BUSINESS INCUBATOR 2013

The Headwaters Farm Business Incubator, owned and managed by the East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District (EMSWCD), is a 60-acre incubator farm program located near Gresham, Oregon. Founded in 2013, the Headwaters Farm Business Incubator generally offers between 1/3th of an acre up to 5.5 acres, although there are no strict limits on land and it highly depends on the farmer's needs. Participants may remain in the program for up to 5 years, during which they gain access to shared infrastructure, equipment, technical assistance, and a network of conservationists, business strategists, and fellow farmers. While the program requires applicants to have a minimum of 3 years of prior farm experience and a farm business plan, there are several programs near Portland that offer aspiring farmers opportunities to build the experiences required to apply, and many participants arrive at the incubator having completed one of these programs.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
60	1/3 - 5.5 AC	NO

GOSS FARM BUSINESS INCUBATOR 2021

The Goss Farm Business Incubator, managed by the Pierce Conservation District in Washington State, is a 4.5-acre incubator program leased from Washington State University Extension at the Goss Research Farm near Sumner, WA. The program prioritizes farmers historically excluded from land access and farm ownership, including women and BIPOC growers. The Goss Incubator Farm operates as an extension of the conservation district's Farm Foundations Training Program, a free, part-time training course for beginning farmers, and gives preference to incubator applicants who have completed the course prior to applying.

ACREAGE	INDIVIDUAL PLOTS	LEASED
4.5	~	YES

KCD INCUBATOR PROGRAM MODEL

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In an effort to promote regenerative agriculture, local food systems, and support future generations of farmers, the Kalamazoo Conservation District seeks to develop a program that reduces barriers to entry for aspiring farmers by providing education, mentorship, land access, equipment access, hands-on learning, and connections to financing and property acquisition opportunities.

This program will address the specific gaps identified in Kalamazoo County's current agricultural support landscape. While introductory resources like the MSU Organic Farmer Training Program exists, no comprehensive pathway currently guides aspiring farmers from initial interest to land access and independent operation. The program's goals are to:

- Increase access to agricultural education for Kalamazoo County residents
- Support beginning farmers in both urban and rural settings
- Create structured pathways for farm business development
- Lower barriers related to land, equipment, experience, and capital
- Strengthen relationships between aspiring farmers, established producers, landowners, and partner organizations
- Promote long-term farm viability, local food production, and conservation-minded land stewardship
- Expand opportunities for historically underserved and underrepresented communities in agriculture

Together, these goals position the program as a long-term investment in the county's agricultural and food system, one that helps ensure the county's farmland, food systems, and farming community remain healthy for generations to come.

The proposed program is built around an urban and rural track, each of which contains a 4-stage progression that guides participants from initial interest to independent farm ownership. Participants choose between an urban track and a rural track based on their production goals, available resources, and long-term vision. While the 2 tracks differ in production, setting, scale, and infrastructure needs, each follows the same 4-stage progression and is supported by the same underlying framework of education, mentorship, technical assistance, and transition planning.

RURAL TRACK
The rural track provides access to an estimated 15–30-acre parcel of farmland during the Low-Cost Farm Start-Up & Incubation stage, supporting field-scale regenerative production.

URBAN TRACK
The urban track emphasizes compact production methods such as high tunnels and greenhouses, offering an accessible entry point for participants interested in smaller-scale, urban-based operations.

Within each track, participants move through 4 sequential stages, each addressing a distinct phase in a beginning farmer's development. After completing the first 2 stages, participants are given the opportunity to either transition directly toward independent farm ownership or continue on to the incubator stage.

I. COMMUNITY EDUCATION & EXPLORATION
The first stage introduces community members to agriculture, food systems, conservation, and farm business concepts through workshops, training courses and information sessions. This stage requires no prior experience and serves as the primary entry point into the program.

II. MENTORSHIP & APPRENTICESHIP CONNECTIONS
The second stage moves participants from interest to practical learning by connecting them with local producers for mentorship, shadowing, apprenticeship, and relationship-building.

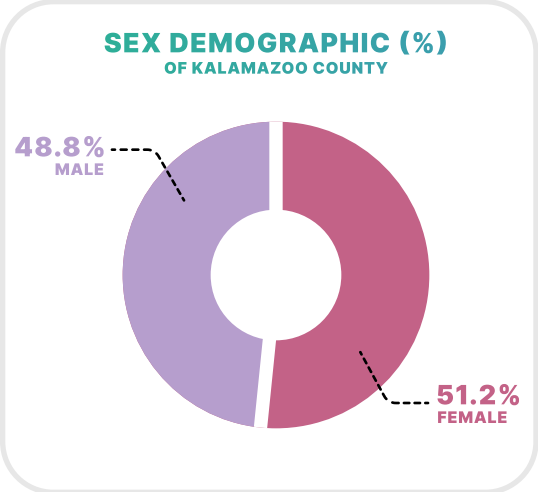
III. LOW-COST FARM START-UP & INCUBATION
The third stage provides beginning farmers with the opportunity to start and operate an agricultural enterprise at relatively low cost, with continued assistance and practical support.

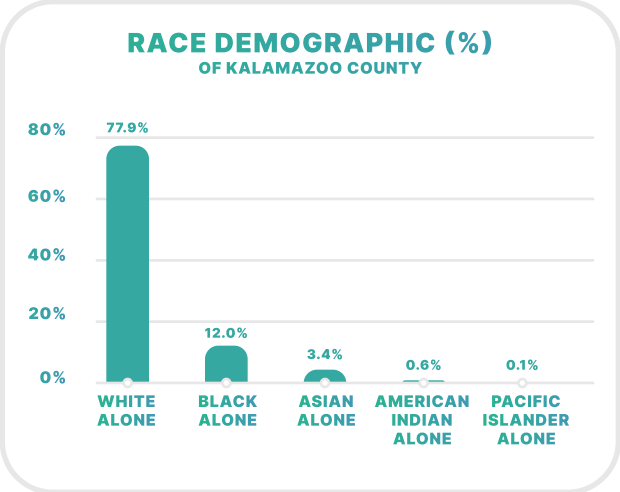
IV. TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENT FARM OWNERSHIP OR LONG-TERM STABILITY
The fourth and final stage connects participants with local partners to move toward independent farm ownership, long-term leasing, or other stable operating arrangements.

DEMOGRAPHIC OF KALAMAZOO COUNTY

Per the U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, Kalamazoo County had an estimated population of 263,795 as of July 1, 2025. Kalamazoo County's population is relatively young, with 20.8% of persons under 18 years and 18.3% of persons 65 years and over. By sex, Kalamazoo County's population is 51.2% female and 48.8% male.

The county's population is 77.9% White alone, 12.0% Black alone, 3.4% Asian alone, 0.6% American Indian and Alaska Native alone, and 0.1% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, with 5.9% identifying as 2 or more races. Hispanic or Latino residents make up 6.4% of the population (a category that can overlap with the race categories listed above); White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, residents make up 73.2% of the county.





According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Kalamazoo County's agricultural producers are overwhelmingly White, with 1,083 of approximately 1,100 producers identifying as White (roughly 98% of the total). The remaining producers included 7 who identify as Black or African American, 6 who identify as more than one race, 2 who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 2 who identify as Asian. By sex, producers are 64.5% male and 35.5% female.

This demographic profile reflects a broader national pattern in which farm ownership and operation remain disproportionately White and male, highlighting the importance of intentional outreach and equitable access in the design of the KCD Regenerative Incubator Farmer Program to ensure it reaches historically underrepresented and limited-resource producers.

SITE & LAND ANALYSIS

An ideal incubator farm site would range between 15–30-acres and include reliable irrigation infrastructure, on-site facilities such as storage and wash/pack space, and access to shared equipment. Additional considerations include suitable soil quality for regenerative production, proximity to markets, participants, and transportation routes. Parcel searches should account for the fact that Kalamazoo County is predominantly composed of deep, well-drained sandy loam soil.

As part of the urban track, a potential location is Farmstead Flats. Farmstead Flats is an approximately 4-acre property located on 6338 Lovers Ln, Portage, MI 49002. The property offers greenhouses, a large heated and insulated barn with concrete floors, and basic infrastructure, with 3,600 square feet of heated indoor flex space, 6,500 square feet of greenhouse space, and 2–3-acres of outdoor growing space. Additional infrastructure includes barns and other facilities, electrical access, existing farm equipment, irrigation and water access, and road access.

While the urban track has a specific location in mind, the rural track is less set in stone, with no single parcel currently identified. Instead, the rural track relies on an ongoing land search process, guided by the site criteria outlined above. The Kalamazoo Conservation District and the KCD Regenerative Incubator Farmer Program Steering Committee will work to identify a 15–30-acre parcel in the future.

CURRENT RESOURCES

MSU ORGANIC FARMER TRAINING PROGRAM (OFTP)

The MSU Organic Farmer Training Program (OFTP) guides aspiring and beginning farmers through a blend of on-farm and online activities from February to November. The program involves field visits to more than 20 sustainable farms, interactive online classes, and 5 days of hands-on learning. Each week follows a different theme, with the goal, as MSU describes it, of giving graduates "the working knowledge of farming, soils, marketing, community engagement, business and nonprofit management." There are currently 3 learning sites for the program: Keep Growing Detroit, MSU Student Organic Farm in East Lansing, and the New City Farm in Grand Rapids. There are plans to expand the Organic Farmer Training Program to locations such as Kalamazoo; however, there are no confirmed plans as of the writing of this study.

BEGINNING FARMER CURRICULUM

The Beginning Farmer Curriculum, developed by MSU Extension alongside beginning farmer educators and partners from across the state of Michigan, offers a solid foundation for beginning farmer training programs. The curriculum includes modules on a total of 10 topics, including:

LAND ACCESS

Explores various ways to find and access urban or rural farmland, including leasing, owning, cooperative ownership, and partnerships.

SOIL HEALTH

Teaches learners to assess soil using their senses, observations, and testing. Participants explore how soil affects crops, develop management plans, and use crop rotation to improve long-term soil health.

PRODUCE SAFETY

Participants explore the farm through the lens of food safety and learn how to assess and mitigate risks to ensure safe fruits and vegetables.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

Learn to identify common plant diseases, insects, nutritional disorders, and weeds in vegetable crops through field walks and classroom instruction.

POLLINATORS

Explores the role of insects in pollination and the pollination needs of different vegetables through hands-on, field-based learning and classroom discussion.

FARM FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Provides resources to learn about farm record keeping, accounting concepts, and using financial information to support farm growth and assess financial health over time.

PRODUCE MARKETING

Introduces market types relevant to beginning farmers, helping them identify options that align with their capacity and interests while outlining the requirements for entering those marketplaces.

URBAN AGRICULTURE & POLICY

Explores the civic and community impacts of urban farming, preparing participants to engage with policies, elected officials, and neighborhood associations while considering environmental, economic, and social benefits for a successful urban farm.

PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING *(FACILITATOR-FOCUSED)*
Provides interactive learning opportunities and guidance for educators to connect new farmers with experienced mentors, supporting the formation of sustainable learning communities focused on agricultural livelihoods and land management.

ENGAGING DIVERSE FARMERS *(FACILITATOR-FOCUSED)*
Provides an instructional guide on best practices for addressing interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics on farms as a way to build healthy work cultures, team ethics, and greater operational efficiency.

The materials of the curriculum are organized into modules that can be used alone or in conjunction with other modules. This format allows for classes or individuals to choose topics that best fit their needs.

ORGANIZATIONS & NETWORKING

Building connections with local, regional, and national organizations will be vital in the development of an incubator farm program in Kalamazoo County. Through partnerships, funding opportunities, and other forms of collaboration, the Kalamazoo Conservation District is working to grow a stronger community centered on local food.

LOCAL TO KALAMAZOO

KALAMAZOO VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE (KVCC)
Kalamazoo Valley Community College is a 2-year public community college within Kalamazoo, MI. As part of the Sustainable Horticulture Program, KVCC offers sustainable farming education at the ValleyHUB Food Innovation Center.

VALLEYHUB
ValleyHUB is the urban farm, food hub, and education center based at KVCC's Food Innovation Center. The Food Innovation Center was built in 2015 as part of the Bronson Healthy Living Campus, a collaboration between Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Bronson Healthcare, and Integrated Services of Kalamazoo. In addition to its role in KVCC's Sustainable Horticulture Program, ValleyHUB connects local farmers and makers to local markets to get more local food onto local plates

STRYKER CORPORATION

Stryker Corporation is a major medical technology company based in Portage, MI. Stryker Corporation designs, manufactures, and sells specialty surgical equipment, neurotechnology, and other medical instruments. Moreover, Stryker Corporation has farmland located at its headquarters; however, it may not be feasible for an incubator program due to a lack of a stable, long-term future. A director of Stryker Corporation, Ronda E. Stryker, founded the Stryker Johnston Foundation alongside with her husband Bill Johnston.

KALSEC

Kalsec, headquartered in Kalamazoo, MI, is an international leader in innovative natural food and beverage ingredients and solutions. Kalsec is a certified B Corp and, according to its website, is committed to making ethical and sustainable decisions that serve consumers, customers, employees, communities, and the environment.

EDISON NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

The Edison Neighborhood Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1968 to serve the “most populous and diverse neighborhood in Kalamazoo.” The neighborhood is home to the Kalamazoo Farmers Market and several parks, and the association also supports the Edison Business Association for local businesses.

PORTAGE ZHANG FARMERS MARKET

The Portage Zhang Farmers Market opened in 2016, offering “locally grown produce, artisan baked goods, gourmet cheeses and mushrooms, locally roasted coffee, pasture-raised meats, beautiful flower bouquets, handmade soaps, unique art, and a variety of fantastic food trucks from more than 35 dedicated vendors” (City of Portage Parks & Recreation). As of 2026, the Portage Zhang Farmers Market has moved to a permanent location 125 East Centre Avenue.

CAN-DO KALAMAZOO

Can-Do Kalamazoo is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit business incubator focused on growing and scaling local businesses through programs that assist in licensing, business planning, marketing, labeling, and more. Originally a rentable commercial kitchen for food entrepreneurs, the nonprofit now helps businesses of all kinds, not just those in the food industry.

PFC NATURAL GROCERY & DELI

The PFC Natural Grocery & Deli is Kalamazoo's community-owned, consumer cooperative natural grocery store. Founded in 1970, the grocery store is owned by roughly 4,200 community members. The store offers natural and organic groceries, bulk foods, and local products, and has a full deli with a salad bar, sandwiches, wraps, baked goods, hot soup, and other deli items.

LOCAL TO MICHIGAN

MI FARMLINK

MIFarmLink, an online-platform that connects farmers in need of land with landowners looking to lease or make their land available for agriculture. Founded by Becky Huttenga and now operated under the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, it helps aspiring and beginning farmers find land while helping retiring farmers keep their land in agricultural use rather than losing it to development.

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN LAND CONSERVANCY

The Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit land trust established in 1991, serving the counties of Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren. Since 1991, SWMLC has protected more than 20,000 acres of “dunes, wetlands, forests, savannas, prairies, farms and vineyards” (SWMLC). Farmland and agricultural land protection are explicitly part of its focus alongside habitat conservation.

MSU EXTENSION

Michigan State University Extension is present in all 83 Michigan counties and serves farmers, families, small business owners, and community members with research-backed programs and expertise. In Kalamazoo County, MSU Extension is headquartered at 201 W. Kalamazoo Ave, Kalamazoo, MI.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

PFIZER

Pfizer is a multinational pharmaceutical and biotechnology corporation headquartered in New York City, NY. Founded in 1849, Pfizer is one of the world’s largest pharmaceutical companies, developing and manufacturing medicines, vaccines, and other biopharmaceutical products across areas including immunology, cardiovascular disease, and infectious disease. Pfizer’s roots in Michigan trace back to its acquisition of the Upjohn Company (founded in Kalamazoo in 1886), giving Pfizer a strong presence in Portage, MI. The corporation operates its largest manufacturing site worldwide, here in Portage, MI.

GRANTS & PROGRAMS

STATE & FEDERAL FUNDING

BEGINNING FARMER & RANCHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (USDA)

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program exists to "help beginning farmers and ranchers in the United States and its territories enter and/or improve their successes in farming, ranching, and management of nonindustrial private forest lands, through support for projects that provide education, outreach, and technical assistance to give beginning farmers and ranchers the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to make informed decisions for their operations and enhance their sustainability" (USDA).

MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
$49,999	**$750,000**

RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT (USDA)

The Rural Business Development Grant exists to "promote economic development and job creation projects through the awarding of grant funds to eligible entities. Applications will compete in 2 separate categories, business opportunity grants and business enterprise grants, for use in funding various business and community projects that serve rural areas" (USDA).

MINIMUM	MAXIMUM ~
$10,000	**$500,000**

LOCAL FOOD PROMOTION PROGRAM (USDA)

The Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) is part of the USDA's Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP), and is focused on helping local and regional food entities that serve as intermediaries in the development, coordination, and expansion of producer-to-consumer marketing, local and regional food markets, and local food enterprises. LFPP offers 4 types of projects: 24-month Planning, 36-month Implementation, 24-month Turnkey Marketing and Promotion, and 24-month Turnkey Recruitment and Training

MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
$25,000	**$500,000**

FARMERS MARKET PROMOTION PROGRAM (USDA)

Alongside the Local Food Promotion Program, the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) is part of LAMP and funds the direct-to-consumers side of the market. The program aids projects that support producer-to-consumer markets such as farmers markets, roadside stands, agritourism activities, community-supported agriculture programs, and online sales. FMPP offers 4 types of projects: 36-month Capacity Building, 36-month Community Development Training and Technical Assistance, 24-month Turnkey Marketing and Promotion, and 24-month Turnkey Recruitment and Training.

MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
$50,000	**$500,000**

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE RESEARCH & EDUCATION (USDA)

The Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) program is a producer-driven, decentralized competitive grants and education programs operating in every state and island protectorate. Managed by USDA NIFA, the program is divided into 4 regions: North Central, Northeast, South, and West. Since its launch in 1988, SARE has invested more than $500 million in projects that help farmers and ranchers improve profitability, protect natural resources, and strengthen rural communities.

MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
$10,000	$250,000

INSTITUTIONAL & COMMUNITY FUNDING

KALAMAZOO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Kalamazoo County Foundation (KZCF) is a philanthropic institution focused on WHEN (Wealth, Housing, Education, Neighborhoods); wealth is attainable and people have resources to meet their needs and invest in their futures, housing is affordable, available, and safe for every individual and family, education is accessible and learners are supported on their journeys, neighborhoods are vibrant and community spaces nurture health, safety, and strong connections. The KZCF has 3 separate types of grants: Multi-year General Operations Grants, Annual Responsive Grants, and Capital Grants.

MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
$5,000	$175,000

HEALTHY LIVING & SUSTAINABILITY FUND (BRONSON HEALTH)

The Healthy Living and Sustainability Fund by the Bronson Health Foundation focuses on supporting the development of transformational systems and technology around waste and energy reduction, as well as catalyzing growth of local/regional food sourcing, mobility, and housing innovation and other dimensions of physical and environmental well-being.

MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
~	~

LOCAL INITIATIVES SUPPORT CORPORATION KALAMAZOO (LISC)

LISC Kalamazoo is a local branch of the national 501(c)(3) nonprofit Local Initiatives Support Corporation, working to transform distressed urban neighborhoods into healthy communities of choice and opportunity. LISC Kalamazoo provides grant funding to assist organizations developing affordable housing, commercial and retail space, and community facilities, as well as other community development activities.

MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
~	~

W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, based in Battle Creek, Michigan, is one of the largest private foundations in the United States. Its funding primarily comes from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Trust. The foundation supports children, families, and communities as they work to create conditions that help vulnerable children succeed as individuals and as contributors to society.

MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
~	~

STRYKER JOHNSTON FOUNDATION

The Stryker Johnston Foundation is a private family foundation based in Kalamazoo, MI. It partners with organizations working to dismantle the systems and structures that create intergenerational poverty, with a particular focus on Black communities, communities of color, and others who have historically been left out or left behind. The Stryker Johnston Foundation focuses on 4 interconnected strategic pillars: education, health, economic opportunity, and housing.

MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
~	~

CONSUMERS ENERGY FOUNDATION

Consumers Energy Foundation is the official philanthropic arm of Consumers Energy, Michigan's largest energy provider. It provides grants primarily to Michigan 501(c)(3) organizations, municipalities, and federally recognized tribal governments operating in or benefiting Michigan communities served by Consumers Energy. The foundation has 3 priorities: People, Planet, and Prosperity. These priorities focus on reducing poverty, preserving Michigan's land, water, and air, and driving economic development.

MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
$5,000	$50,000

CONCLUSION

Kalamazoo County currently faces a critical crossroads for its agricultural future. The county has lost 100 farms since 2017, a 14% decline that mirrors the broader loss of Michigan's agricultural base, and the producers who remain are aging faster than new farmers are entering the field. The KCD Regenerative Incubator Farmer Program, built on a mixed-approach model that pairs comprehensive training with a clear pathway to land access and eventual ownership, offers a response to these challenges.

While the program remains in the early planning phase, the KCD Regenerative Incubator Farmer Program's 4-stage structure lays the groundwork for a sustainable, long-term investment in the county's agricultural future. As the Kalamazoo Conservation District, alongside the steering committee, continues to refine site selection, funding partnerships, and program logistics, this feasibility study affirms that the need for such a program is well-documented, and the proposed model is in line with practices from established incubator farms nationwide.

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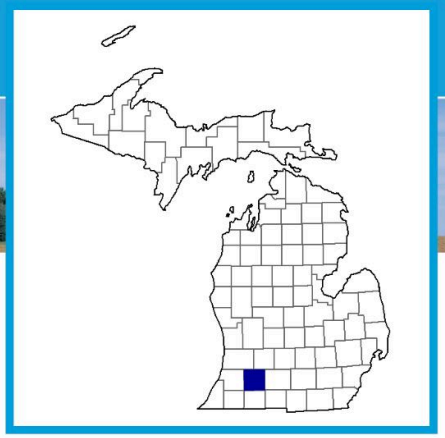
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2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE *County Profile*





Kalamazoo County
Michigan

Total and Per Farm Overview, 2022 and change since 2017

	2022	% change since 2017
Number of farms	607	-14
Land in farms (acres)	145,225	+5
Average size of farm (acres)	239	+22
Total	($)	
Market value of products sold	340,333,000	+44
Government payments	1,410,000	-47
Farm-related income	9,294,000	-2
Total farm production expenses	277,249,000	+44
Net cash farm income	73,788,000	+30
Per farm average	($)	
Market value of products sold	560,680	+67
Government payments [a]	16,394	-6
Farm-related income [a]	34,810	+5
Total farm production expenses	456,752	+68
Net cash farm income	121,563	+52

3 Percent of state agriculture sales

Share of Sales by Type (%)

Crops	72
Livestock, poultry, and products	28

Land in Farms by Use (acres)

Cropland	118,836
Pastureland	3,991
Woodland	14,121
Other	8,277

Acres irrigated: 37,637
26% of land in farms

Land Use Practices (% of farms)

No till	18
Reduced till	15
Intensive till	16
Cover crop	10

Farms by Value of Sales

	Number	Percent of Total [b]
Less than $2,500	192	32
$2,500 to $4,999	47	8
$5,000 to $9,999	57	9
$10,000 to $24,999	69	11
$25,000 to $49,999	44	7
$50,000 to $99,999	32	5
$100,000 or more	166	27

Farms by Size

	Number	Percent of Total [b]
1 to 9 acres	92	15
10 to 49 acres	275	45
50 to 179 acres	127	21
180 to 499 acres	53	9
500 to 999 acres	27	4
1,000+ acres	33	5

2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE *County Profile*

Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold

	Sales ($1,000)	Rank in State [c]	Counties Producing Item	Rank in U.S. [c]	Counties Producing Item
Total	**340,333**	**10**	**83**	**411**	**3,078**
Crops	**245,005**	**5**	**83**	**266**	**3,074**
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas	95,200	21	80	650	2,917
Tobacco	-	-	-	-	267
Cotton and cottonseed	-	-	-	-	647
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes	1,260	48	81	779	2,831
Fruits, tree nuts, berries	3,558	19	82	291	2,711
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod	136,969	3	80	28	2,660
Cultivated Christmas trees, short rotation woody crops	136	33	75	270	1,274
Other crops and hay	7,881	9	82	439	3,035
Livestock, poultry, and products	**95,328**	**19**	**83**	**699**	**3,076**
Poultry and eggs	97	50	82	1,364	3,027
Cattle and calves	7,274	27	82	1,470	3,047
Milk from cows	63,233	15	71	187	1,770
Hogs and pigs	22,980	10	82	297	2,814
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk	403	13	80	493	2,967
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys	318	28	73	823	2,907
Aquaculture	-	-	30	-	1,190
Other animals and animal products	1,022	14	83	246	2,909

Producers [d] 1,100

Sex	
Male	709
Female	391
Age	
<35	143
35 – 64	608
65 and older	349
Race	
American Indian/Alaska Native	2
Asian	2
Black or African American	7
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	-
White	1,083
More than one race	6
Other characteristics	
Hispanic, Latino, Spanish origin	11
With military service	81
New and beginning farmers	335

Percent of farms that:

Have internet access	87
Farm organically	1
Sell directly to consumers	10
Hire farm labor	32
Are family farms	95

Top Crops in Acres [e]

Corn for grain	48,036
Soybeans for beans	34,370
Forage (hay/haylage), all	14,021
Corn for silage/greenchop	11,203
Wheat for grain, all	2,235

Livestock Inventory (Dec 31, 2022)

Broilers and other meat-type chickens	539
Cattle and calves	14,030
Goats	725
Hogs and pigs	108,243
Horses and ponies	1,017
Layers	2,622
Pullets	152
Sheep and lambs	1,968
Turkeys	34

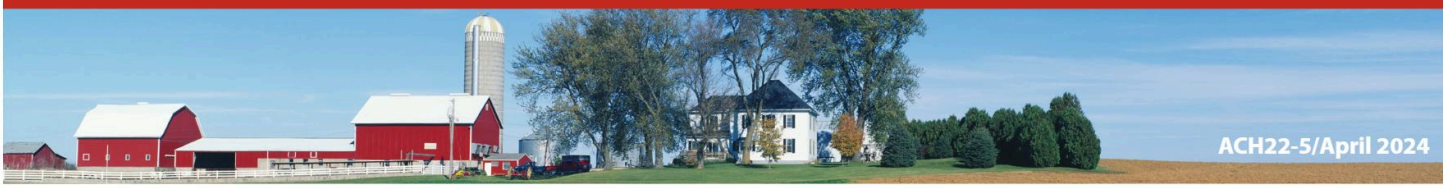
[a] Average per farm receiving. [b] May not add to 100% due to rounding. [c] Among counties whose rank can be displayed. [d] Data collected for a maximum of four producers per farm. [e] Crop commodity names may be shortened; see full names at www.nass.usda.gov/go/cropnames.pdf. [f] Position below the line does not indicate rank. (D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual operations. (NA) Not available. (Z) Less than half of the unit shown. (-) Represents zero.

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2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE *Highlights*

Young Producers

Nearly 1 in 10 U.S. producers are ages 34 or younger



In 2022, the United States had 296,480 young producers (those under the age of 35), accounting for 9% of the country's 3.37 million producers. Eighty-one percent of young producers started farming in the last 10 years, and 64% reported having a primary occupation other than farming. Young producer-operated farms accounted for 15% of U.S. agriculture sales and 12% of U.S. farmland.

296,480 producers

105 million acres

$80 billion agriculture sales

Number and Location

In 2022, the ag census counted 3.4 million producers involved in decision making on the 1.9 million farms and ranches across the United States. Overall, the number of producers decreased 0.8% from the previous census. The number of producers under the age of 35 increased 3.9% from the previous census, compared to a 12% increase in producers 65 years of age or older, and a 9% decrease in producers 35-64 years of age.

The share of young producers was higher in the Northern states. States with the highest percentage of young producers as a share of total producers included Pennsylvania, Indiana, North Dakota, Nebraska, Ohio, New York, and South Dakota.

Counties with the highest proportion of young producer-operated farms were largely in the Great Lakes, Northern Great Plains, and Northeast regions; counties with the lowest proportion were in the Mississippi Delta and Southeast regions.

Number of Producers, By Age and All U.S.

	2017	2022	% change
<35	285,439	296,480	+3.9
35-64	1,960,353	1,783,571	-9
65+	1,154,042	1,293,993	+12.1
All U.S.	3,399,834	3,374,044	-0.8

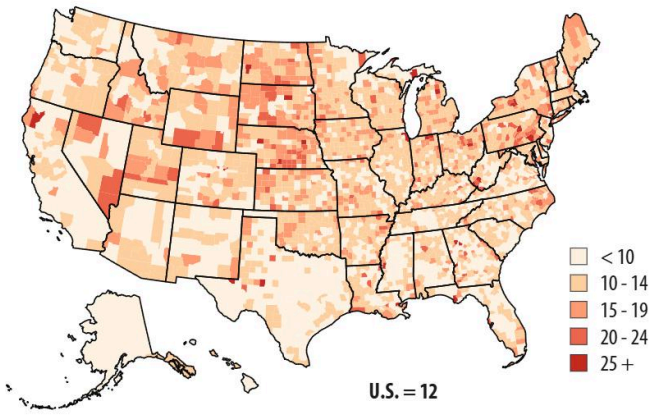
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The percent of Texas producers under the age of 35, representing 24,900 producers – the highest number of young producers in any state.

Top States, Young Producers, 2022 (as % of total state producers)

Pennsylvania	12.7
Indiana	11.7
North Dakota	11.3
Nebraska	11.2
Ohio	11.1
New York	11.0
South Dakota	10.5
Michigan	10.4
Iowa	10.3
Connecticut	10.2

Young Producer-Operated Farms as Percent of Total Farms, by County, 2022



Two counties had more than 1,000 young producers: Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, (2,057 producers) and LaGrange County, Indiana (1,294 producers).

SNAPSHOT

Young Producers, 2022

Number = 296,480

	Young	All U.S.
	(percent)	
Sex		
Male	64	64
Female	36	36
Years farming		
10 or less	81	30
11 or more	19	70
Lived on their farm	64	70
Worked off farm		
No days	21	38
1 to 199 days	28	22
200+ days	52	40
Primary occupation		
Farming	36	42
Other	64	58
Race		
American Ind/Alaska Native	1.9	1.7
Asian	0.7	0.7
Black/African American	0.9	1.2
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Isl	0.1	0.1
White	94.9	95.4
More than one race	1.5	0.9
Hispanic	4.0	3.3
With military service	2	9
Average age (years)	28.6	58.1

About the Census

The Census of Agriculture, conducted once every five years, is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. Results from the 2022 ag Census, as well as previous censuses, are available online at national, state, and county levels.

See the searchable database Quick Stats, downloadable PDF reports, maps, and a variety of topic-specific products.

www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus

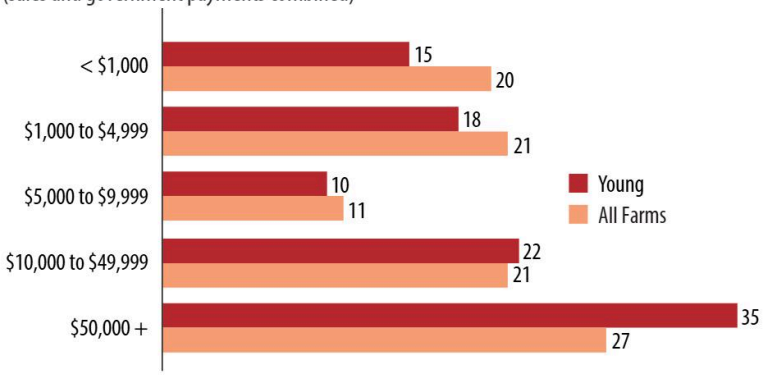
Producer Characteristics

Young producers were much more likely to be a beginning farmer (81% of young producers had farmed 10 years or fewer, compared with 30% of all producers). Young producers were also more likely to work off the farm. Half of young farmers reported working off the farm 200 days or more per year and were less likely to report farming as their primary occupation (36% compared to 42% of all U.S. producers). In terms of gender, ethnicity, and race, young farmer demographics were similar to those of all U.S. producers.

Farm Characteristics

Young producer-operated farms sold $80 billion in agricultural products in 2022, with 49% ($39 billion) in crop sales and 51% ($41 billion) in the sales of livestock, poultry, and livestock and poultry products. These farms accounted for 15% of total U.S. agriculture sales. They received $1.3 billion in government payments in 2022.

Young Producer-Operated and U.S. Farms by Economic Class, 2022 (percent)
(sales and government payments combined)



No. of Producers on Farm	Young Producer-Operated Farms	All U.S.
	(percent of total)	
One	17	40
Two	41	47
Three	22	7
Four	13	4
Five +	6	2

Thirty-five percent of young producer-operated farms had sales and government payments of more than $50,000 per year compared to 27% of all U.S. farms. Forty-three percent of young producer-operated farms had sales and government payments of less than $10,000 in 2022 compared to 52% of all farms.

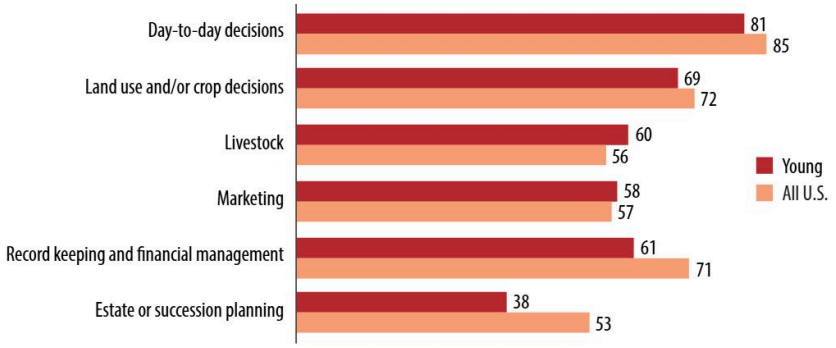
17

The percent of young producer-operated farms that had only one producer on the farm, versus 40% of all U.S. farms.

Farm Decision Making

The 2022 Census of Agriculture collected data on producer decision making. Young producers were most involved in day-to-day decisions and land use/crop decisions. Young producers were also more likely to make decisions regarding livestock and marketing compared to all U.S. producers

Types of Decisions Made, Young and All U.S. (percent)



Source: USDA NASS, 2022 Census of Agriculture.

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2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE *Highlights*

New and Beginning Producers

One third of U.S. farms had a producer who had farmed for 10 or fewer years



In 2022, the United States had 1,011,715 producers who identified as beginning farmers. A beginning farmer is anyone who has farmed for 10 or fewer years. They accounted for 30% of the country's 3.37 million producers. The largest share of beginning farmers was in states along the East and West coasts. The average age of a beginning farmer was 47.1, much younger than the average age of all farmers (58.1). In fact, 24% of beginning farmers were under 35, while farmers under 35 represented only 9% of all U.S. farmers.

1,011,715 producers

196 million acres

$122 billion agriculture sales

Number and Location

In 2022, the ag census counted 3.4 million producers involved in decision making for the 1.9 million farms and ranches across the United States. Overall, the number of producers decreased 0.8% from the previous census. The number of producers operating any farm for 10 or fewer years increased 11%, while farms with a new and beginning producer increased 5% from the previous census.

States along the East and West coasts had a high share of farms with beginning producers compared to farms in the Midwest. Rhode Island accounted for the largest share of beginning producers at 41%. Overall, 630,116 U.S. farms (33%) had a beginning producer.

The number of new and beginning producers aged 65 and over increased 32.8% from 2017, while the largest share of new and beginning producers were between the ages of 35-64 years old.

	2017	2022	% change
Total Number of Beginning Producers	908,274	1,011,715	11
Age <35	234,128	241,324	3
Age 35-64	562,045	621,521	11
Age 65+	112,101	148,870	33

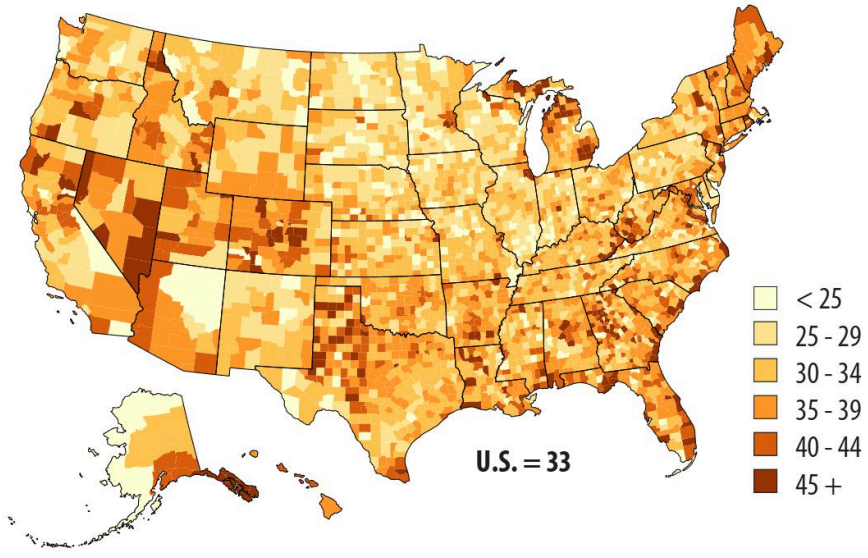
Number of Producers, by Years on Any Farm, All U.S.

	2017	2022	% Change
<6 years	474,198	481,821	1.6
6 - 10 years	434,076	529,894	22.1
11 years or more	2,491,560	2,362,329	-5.2
All Producers	**3,399,834**	**3,374,044**	**-0.8**

Top States, Beginning Producer-Operated Farms, 2022 (as % of total state farms)

Rhode Island	41.4
Alaska	38.7
Maine	35.9
Colorado	35.6
New Hampshire	35.3
Hawaii	35.2
Georgia	34.4
Idaho	34.1
Nevada	33.9
Florida	33.9

Farms with New and Beginning Producers as Percent of Total Farms, by County, 2022



United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service

www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus

SNAPSHOT

Beginning Producers, 2022

Number = 1,011,715

	Beginning	All U.S.
	(percent)	
Sex		
Male	59	64
Female	41	36
Age		
<35	24	9
35 - 64	61	53
65+	15	39
Lived on their farm	64	70
Worked off farm		
No days	24	38
1 to 199 days	25	22
200+ days	51	40
Primary occupation		
Farming	28	42
Other	72	58
With military service	7	9
Hispanic	4.4	3.3
American Indian	1.5	1.7
Asian	1.0	0.7
Black	1.3	1.2
Native Hawaiian	0.1	0.1
White	94.9	95.4
More than one race	1.0	0.9
Average age (years)	47.1	58.1

Forty percent of all farms had one producer in 2022, while 27% of farms with a new and beginning producer were operated by a single producer. Beginning producers were much less likely to be present on farms with only a single producer.

About the Census

The Census of Agriculture, conducted once every five years, is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. Results from the 2022 ag census and previous censuses are available online at national, state, and county levels.

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Producer Characteristics

Beginning producers were more likely to be female than producers overall; 41% of beginning producers were female compared to 36% of all U.S. producers. Almost three-quarters (72%) of beginning farmers reported a primary occupation other than farming (compared to 58% of all U.S. producers), and the majority (51%) worked off the farm 200 days or more.

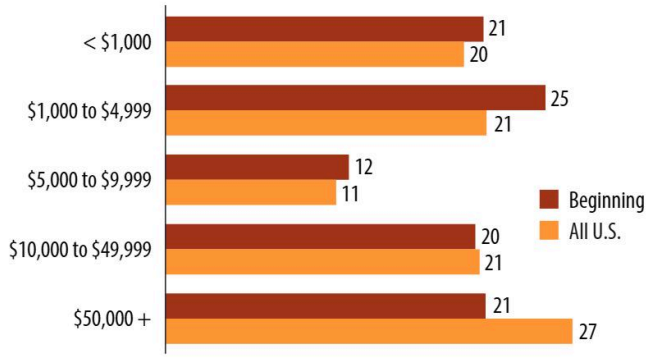
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The percent of beginning producers who were under 35, compared to 9% of all U.S. producers.

Farm Characteristics

Farms with at least one beginning producer sold $122 billion in agricultural products in 2022, with 49% ($60 billion) in crop sales and 51% ($62 billion) in the sales of livestock, poultry, and livestock and poultry products. These farms accounted for 23% of total U.S. agriculture sales. They received $2.2 billion in government payments in 2022.

Farms with a Beginning Producer and All U.S. Farms by Economic Class, 2022
(percent) (sales and government payments combined)



Twenty-one percent of farms with a beginning producer had sales and government payments of more than $50,000 per year compared to 27% of all U.S. farms. Farms with a beginning producer were more likely to produce less than $10,000 in sales and government payments (58%) compared to all U.S. farms (52%).

Farms and Land

Farms with beginning producers accounted for 196 million acres of land, 22% of the U.S. total. The majority of farms with beginning producers (51%) were less than 50 acres in size. The average size of farms with a beginning producer was 312 acres, compared to 463 acres for all U.S. farms.

Farm Size in Acres	With Beginning Producer	All U.S.
	(percent of total)	
1 to 9	17	12
10 to 49	34	30
50 to 179	26	28
180 to 499	12	15
500 +	10	15

Seventy-four percent of farms with a beginning producer were operated by farmers who own all the land they operate, while 9% were operated by farmers who rent all their land. The other 17% of farms with beginning producers had both owned and rented land.

81

The percent of farms with beginning producers that have internet access.

Farm Specialization[a]

Farms with a beginning producer were mostly similar to all U.S farms in terms of specialization. Farms with a beginning producer were less likely to specialize in oilseed and grain production (14%) compared to all U. S. farms (17%), and more likely to specialize in specialty crops (14% compared to 10% nationally).

	% of Farms
Oilseed and grain	14
Specialty crops	13
Vegetables	3
Fruits, tree nuts and berries	6
Greenhouse, nursery, floriculture	4
Other crops	22
Beef cattle	26
Dairy cattle and milk	1
Hogs and pigs	2
Poultry and eggs	6
Sheep and goat	6
Other animal	10

[a] *Refers to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). More than half of a farm's sales come from the commodity.*

Source: USDA NASS, 2022 Census of Agriculture.

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2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE *Highlights*

Farmland Ownership and Tenure

Results from the 2024 Tenure, Ownership, and Transition of Agricultural Land (TOTAL) Survey



In 2024, more than 2 million landowners rented out 347.8 million acres of land for agricultural purposes. Of these landowners, 13% were farmers who owned and operated farms and ranches as well as rented out farmland (operating landlords) and 87% were landlords who do not operate farms (non-operating landlords). Most landowners acquired their land prior to 2014. Non-operating landlords intend to sell relatively little land in the next five years, about 5 percent of owned acres.

2.1 million landlords

348 million owned acres rented out

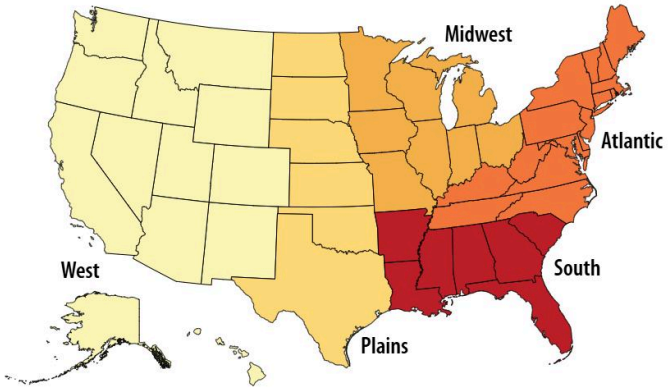
$34 billion rent received

Number and Location

Nationally, the Plains, West and Midwest regions comprised 87% of the agricultural land rented out. The Plains region, with 149.4 million acres, had the largest share of owned agricultural land rented out (43% of US total).

The number of landlords (operating landlords and landlord only entities combined) totaled 2.1 million in 2024, up 2% from 2014. The largest number of landlords, or 38% of all landlords, was in the Midwest region with nearly 800,000 landlords.

TOTAL Regions, 2024



Owned Acres Rented Out and Landlord Entities by Region, 2024

	Acres *million*	% of Total *percent*	Landlord Entities *number*	% of Total *percent*
Atlantic	20.2	6	423,742	20
South	24.9	7	215,440	10
Midwest	73.9	21	797,637	38
Plains	149.4	43	435,235	21
West	79.4	23	220,436	11
United States	**347.8**	**100**	**2,092,491**	**100**

Landlord Ownership Arrangements

Non-operating landlords include entities who rent out land under a variety of ownership arrangements (privately owned, trust, family legal entity, non-family legal entity, and other). An entity may consist of more than one person.

Privately owned land was the largest share (38%) of all agricultural land rented out by non-operating landlords, followed by trusts (27%) and family owned legal entities (26%). Of the total non-operating landlord entities, most had an ownership type of privately owned (67%) or trust (17%). Just under 35,000 non-operating landlords rented out land under more than one ownership arrangement.

Landlord Entities, Ownership Type and Owned Acres Rented Out, 2024

	Number of Landlord Entities	Owned Acres Rented Out *(millions)*	Owned Acres Rented Out *(percent of total)*
Operating Landlords	**262,448**	**71.8**	**21**
Non-operating Landlords[a]	**1,830,043**	**276.1**	**79**
Privately owned	1,234,261	104.8	38
Trust	308,823	73.5	27
Family legal entity	191,352	73.1	26
Non-family legal entity & other	61,016	15.9	6
Multiple types of ownership	34,592	8.7	3
Total	**2,092,491**	**347.8**	**100**

[a] *Non-operating landlords may have more than one arrangement.*

59

The percent of land rented out to others that is cropland.

United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service

www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus

SNAPSHOT

Non-Operating Landlord Entities, 2024

Number of Non-operating Landlords = 1,830,043
Total Acres Rented to Others = 276,082,757

	Principal Landlords	Acres Rented to Others
	(percent)	
Sex		
Male	65	61
Female	35	39
Age		
< 55	12	9
55-64	18	14
65-74	33	33
75-84	25	28
85+	11	15
Occupation		
Farm or Ranch Work	4	10
Other than farming/ ranching	38	32
Not in paid workforce	57	57
Education		
Less than High School	3	1
High School	25	18
Some College	23	20
4-year college graduate and beyond	49	60
Retired from Farming/Ranching		
Retired	34	45
Not Retired	14	15
Never farmed	52	40

About the TOTAL Survey

The 2024 Tenure, Ownership, and Transition of Agricultural Land (TOTAL) Survey, a special study as part of the 2022 Census of Agriculture program, was conducted to collect data from landowners and landlords of agricultural land to learn more about the rented land and who owns the land. The TOTAL survey collected data in all states on landlords' acres rented out, income, expenses, assets, debt, demographics, land transfer plans, and more. NASS conducted TOTAL in collaboration with USDA's Economic Research Service. To learn more about the 2024 TOTAL survey, the 2022 Census of Agriculture, and how to access census data, go to: www.agcensus.usda.gov

Demographic Characteristics

More than a third of non-operating landlords were 75 and over, and they rented out over 40% of total acres, received more than 40% of the rent, and held more than 40% of the total asset value of land and buildings.

Older landlords held little debt, around 20% of debt owed by non-operating landlords. Landlords aged 64 or less held the majority of debt.

Principal Landlords: Value of Land and Buildings, Rent Received, Operating Expenses and Debt by Age of Landlord.

	Value of Land and Buildings	Rent Received	Operating Expenses	Debt
Total	$1,378 billion	$27 billion	$9 billion	36 billion
Age		*Percent of Total*		
< 55	11	9	17	31
55 to 64	15	16	16	20
65 to 74	31	31	30	28
75 to 84	28	29	24	17
85+	15	15	13	4

69.2
The average age of principal landlord.

Economics of Land Ownership

In 2024, landlords received $34.1 billion in rent payments up 9% from 2014. Their operating expenses were $12.0 billion, and their debt related to the land they rented out was $50.7 billion. The value of the land and buildings they rented out was $1.7 trillion, up 47% from 2014.

In 2024, 88% of acres rented out by operating landlords, and 95% of acres rented out by non-operating landlords, were fully paid for, which is comparable to 2014.

Total Assets, Rent Received, Expenses, and Debt Related to Acres Rented Out by Region, 2024 ($ billion)[a]

	Value of Land and Buildings	Rent Received	Operating Expenses	Capital Expenses	Debt
Atlantic	136.0	2.0	1.2	0.8	6.5
South	132.8	2.7	0.9	0.4	4.5
Midwest	631.6	15.3	4.6	1.1	18.2
Plains	463.9	8.9	3.2	0.8	11.7
West	295.1	5.2	2.2	1.5	9.7
United States	**1,659.4**	**34.1**	**12.0**	**4.6**	**50.7**

[a] *Combined total of operating landlords and non-operating landlords*

The $12.0 billion in 2024 operating expenses include both ownership expenses (for example, interest, taxes) and production expenses (for example, fertilizer, feed, fuels, repairs, insurance, wages). For the United States, 71% of operating expenses were ownership, and 29% were production expenses. Capital expenditures totaled $4.6 billion. Capital expenditures are items such as land purchased, land improvements and purchases of equipment.

Source: USDA NASS, 2022 Census of Agriculture.

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How did landlords acquire the land they rent out?

Non-operating landlords acquired the majority of their land through inheritance, trusts, and gifts. Operating landlords and operators of owned farmland acquired the majority of their land through purchases (from non-relatives, relatives, or at auction).

Share of Acres Acquired by Each Method

	Non-operating Landlord	Operating Landlord	All Owned Farmland
Purchased			
Non relative	25	38	33
Relative	14	19	24
Auction	2	2	3
Other Means			
Inherited	40	35	29
Through a trust	11	4	7
Gift or donation	3	1	2
Other	4	2	3

New for 2024, the TOTAL survey asked respondents to report the most recent year land was acquired through each method used. For all methods, the majority of landowners reported their most recent acquisition of land was prior to 2014. Landowners acquiring land via a trust had the highest number reporting acquisition in 2014 or more recent years.

All Owned Farmland, Most Recent Year Land Acquired, by Land Acquisition Method

	2019-2024	2014-2018	Prior to 2014
		Percent of Method	
Purchased			
From a non relative	17	15	68
From a relative	15	15	72
At an auction	18	14	68
Other Acquisition Methods			
Inherited through a will	19	14	67
Acquired through a trust	25	25	50
Received as a gift/ donation	15	8	77
Obtained in some other way	16	12	72

A Look Ahead: Transition of Agricultural Land Ownership

Landlords and operating owners of farmland plan to sell or gift a small share of owned acres in the next five years. Less than 5% of owned farmland is expected to transition to others through sales or gifts. 10% of owned farmland is or will be placed in trust in the next five years, and another 15% is or will be written into a will in the next five years.

Five Year Transition Plans: Number of Acres Planned For Transition, (millions)

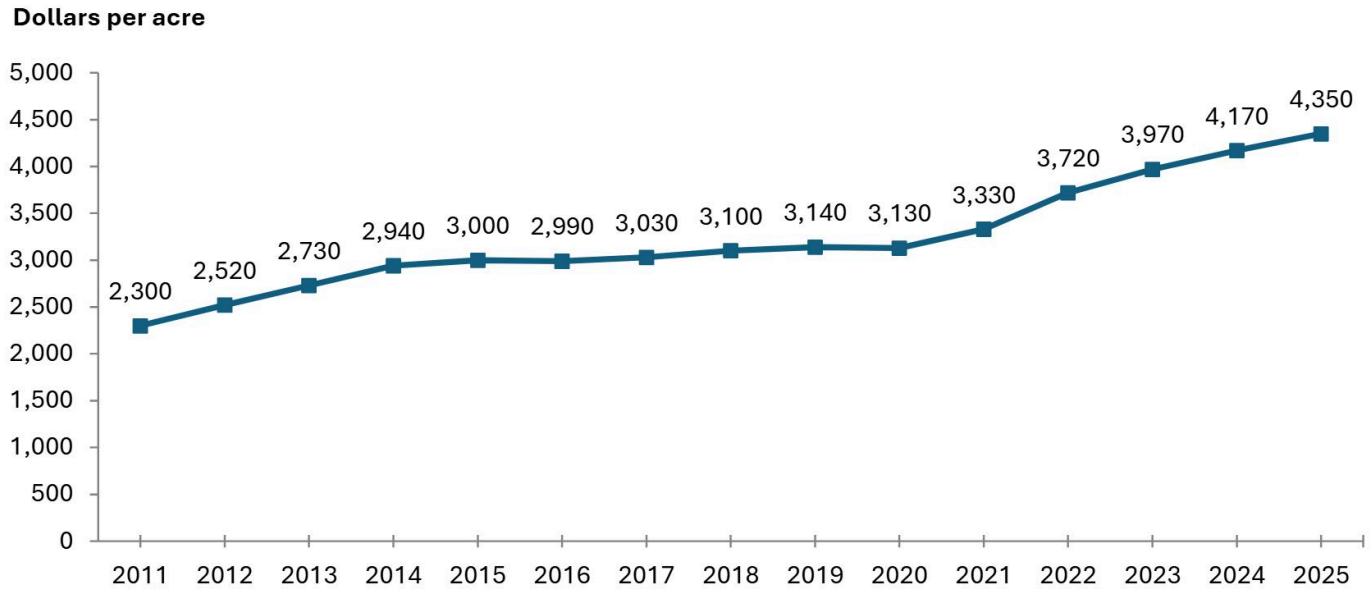
	Non-operating Landlord	All Owned Farmland
Transition to others		
Sell to a non relative	12.8	22.8
Sell to a relative	2.9	12.8
Gift or donate	2.2	7.4
Put or keep in a trust or will		
Trust	59.5	91.5
Will	108.7	135.2

Non-operating landlords were asked to report transition plans beyond a five year horizon as well. Regardless of time frame, non-operating landlords plan to transition ownership (as a share of owned acres rented out) through wills (42%) and trusts (26%), or sell to a relative (2%), a non-relative (7%) or gift/donate (2%). Landlords may have indicated more than one method through which they intended to transfer land. 20% of non-operating landlords indicated no plans for transitioning owned acres.

Source: USDA NASS, 2022 Census of Agriculture.

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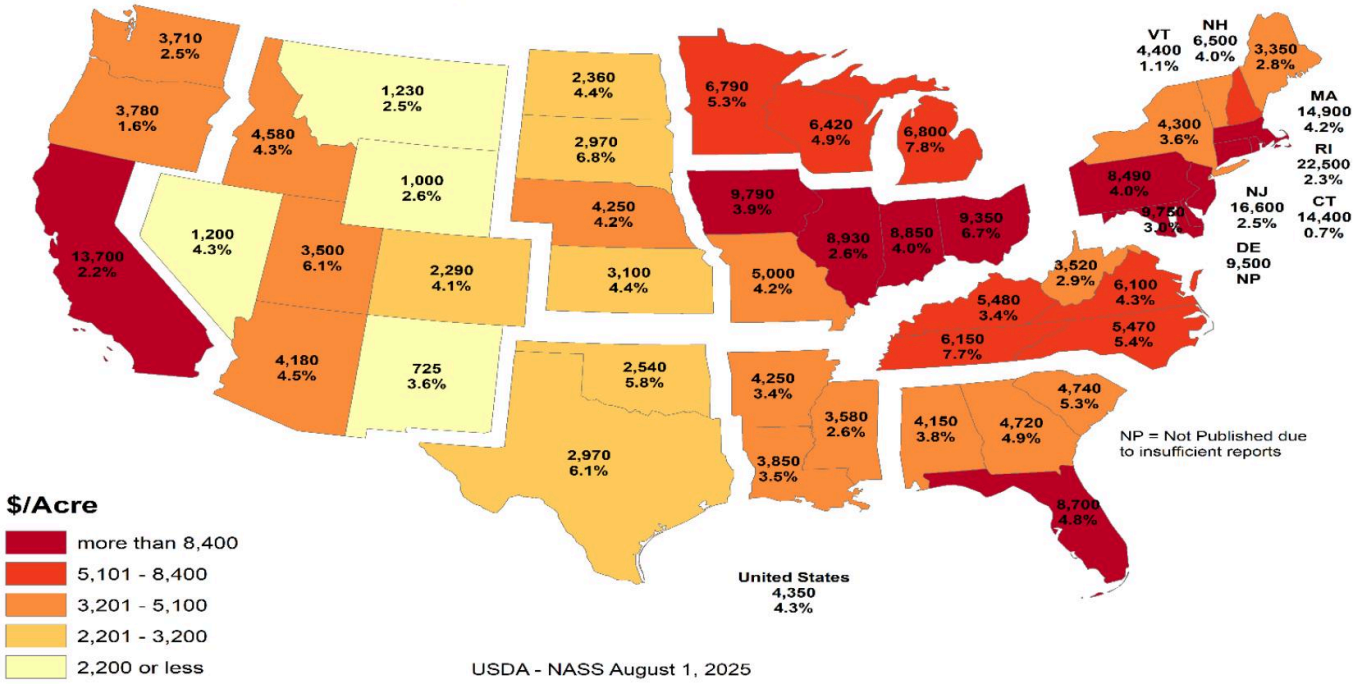
Average Farm Real Estate Value – United States: 2011-2025



USDA - NASS
August 1, 2025

2025 Farm Real Estate Value by State

Dollars per Acre and Percent Change from 2024



Land Values 2024 Summary (August 2025)
USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service

Farm Real Estate Average Value per Acre – Regions, States, and United States: 2021-2025

Region and State	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Change 2024-2025
	(dollars)	(dollars)	(dollars)	(dollars)	(dollars)	(percent)
Northeast	6,050	6,580	6,890	7,070	7,300	3.3
Connecticut	12,400	13,500	13,900	14,300	14,400	0.7
Delaware	9,140	9,570	9,520	(D)	9,550	(X)
Maine	2,750	3,090	3,170	3,260	3,350	2.8
Maryland	8,430	9,350	9,260	9,470	9,750	3.0
Massachusetts	12,900	14,000	13,800	14,300	14,900	4.2
New Hampshire	5,350	5,770	5,940	6,250	6,500	4.0
New Jersey	13,500	14,200	16,000	16,200	16,600	2.5
New York	3,460	3,720	3,960	4,150	4,300	3.6
Pennsylvania	7,020	7,660	8,020	8,160	8,490	4.0
Rhode Island	17,400	18,900	20,100	22,000	22,500	2.3
Vermont	3,660	3,860	4,140	4,350	4,400	1.1
Lake States	5,050	5,680	6,070	6,330	6,690	5.7
Michigan	5,040	5,470	5,880	6,310	6,800	7.8
Minnesota	5,000	5,780	6,110	6,450	6,790	5.3
Wisconsin	5,150	5,640	6,120	6,120	6,420	4.9
Corn Belt	6,360	7,220	7,650	7,930	8,250	4.0
Illinois	7,440	8,220	8,420	8,700	8,930	2.6
Indiana	6,700	7,400	8,260	8,510	8,850	4.0
Iowa	7,420	8,880	9,250	9,420	9,790	3.9
Missouri	3,760	4,230	4,610	4,800	5,000	4.2
Ohio	6,720	7,380	8,040	8,760	9,350	6.7
Northern Plains	2,180	2,570	2,860	3,050	3,200	4.9
Kansas	1,970	2,420	2,750	2,970	3,100	4.4
Nebraska	2,910	3,450	3,820	4,080	4,250	4.2
North Dakota	1,730	1,920	2,140	2,260	2,360	4.4
South Dakota	2,060	2,390	2,630	2,780	2,970	6.8
Appalachian	4,270	4,600	4,900	5,320	5,590	5.1
Kentucky	4,120	4,520	4,930	5,300	5,480	3.4
North Carolina	4,750	4,860	4,850	5,190	5,470	5.4
Tennessee	4,290	4,740	5,160	5,710	6,150	7.7
Virginia	4,600	4,950	5,300	5,850	6,100	4.3
West Virginia	2,820	3,080	3,300	3,420	3,520	2.9

See footnote(s) at end of table.

--continued

Farm Real Estate Average Value per Acre – Regions, States, and United States: 2021-2025 (continued)

Region and State	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Change 2024-2025
	(dollars)	(dollars)	(dollars)	(dollars)	(dollars)	(percent)
Southeast	4,340	4,720	5,020	5,490	5,750	4.7
Alabama	3,290	3,520	3,660	4,000	4,150	3.8
Florida	6,240	6,920	7,320	8,300	8,700	4.8
Georgia	3,630	3,900	4,270	4,500	4,720	4.9
South Carolina	3,790	4,070	4,360	4,500	4,740	5.3
Delta States	3,320	3,540	3,660	3,810	3,930	3.1
Arkansas	3,570	3,800	3,920	4,110	4,250	3.4
Louisiana	3,270	3,490	3,600	3,720	3,850	3.5
Mississippi	3,030	3,240	3,370	3,490	3,580	2.6
Southern Plains	2,160	2,360	2,530	2,720	2,880	5.9
Oklahoma	1,900	2,070	2,210	2,400	2,540	5.8
Texas	2,230	2,440	2,610	2,800	2,970	6.1
Mountain	1,330	1,470	1,550	1,600	1,660	3.8
Arizona [1]	3,660	3,860	3,780	4,000	4,180	4.5
Colorado	1,700	1,910	2,150	2,200	2,290	4.1
Idaho	3,550	3,990	4,190	4,390	4,580	4.3
Montana	985	1,110	1,180	1,200	1,230	2.5
Nevada [1]	1,050	1,110	1,120	1,150	1,200	4.3
New Mexico [1]	635	658	671	700	725	3.6
Utah [1]	2,680	2,890	3,040	3,300	3,500	6.1
Wyoming	836	917	968	975	1,000	2.6
Pacific	6,710	7,440	7,850	8,040	8,210	2.1
California	11,300	12,600	13,100	13,400	13,700	2.2
Oregon	2,950	3,280	3,500	3,720	3,780	1.6
Washington	3,070	3,350	3,510	3,620	3,710	2.5
United States [2]	3,330	3,720	3,970	4,170	4,350	4.3

(D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual operations.
(X) Not applicable.
[1] Excludes American Indian Reservation land.
[2] Excludes Alaska and Hawaii.

2017 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE *Highlights*

Direct Farm Sales of Food

Results from the 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey



ACH17-27/April 2022

In 2020, farmers produced and sold $9 billion of local edible food commodities directly to consumers, retailers, institutions, and intermediaries. Direct farm sales of food increased by 3% from 2015. The number of operations selling locally produced food decreased by 12%. Intermediaries and institutions accounted for 46% percent of direct food sales while direct-to-consumer sales accounted for 33%. Direct farm sales included both fresh foods and processed or value-added products such as bottled milk, cheese, meat, wine, and jams.

147,307 farms

$9 billion local food sales

$4.1 billion sold through institutions and intermediate markets

Number and Location

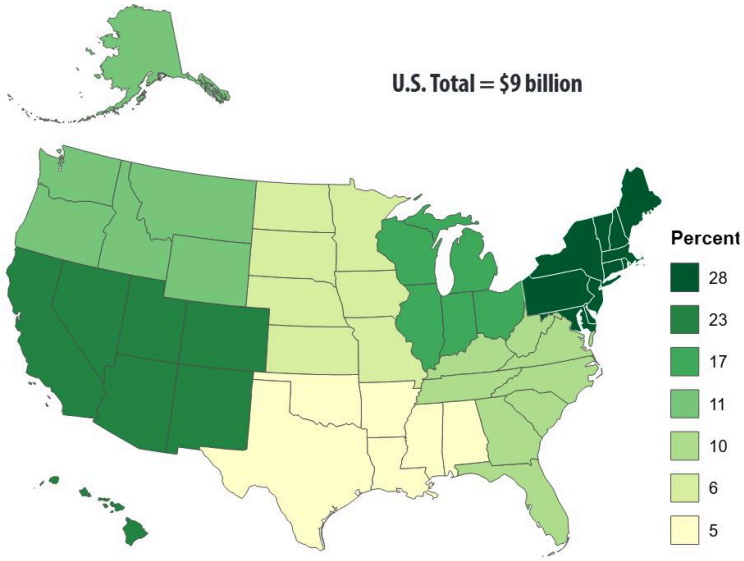
California, with $1.4 billion in direct farm sales, accounted for 16% of the U.S. total. At the regional level, the 11-state northeastern region had the largest share of direct sales with $2.5 billion, which accounted for 28% of the U.S. total. Four of the top 10 states are in the northeastern region.

Top States in Direct Farm Sales ($ million)

California	1,432
Pennsylvania	600
New York	584
Michigan	555
Maine	342
Washington	323
Texas	273
Oregon	255
Massachusetts	254
Florida	247

California also led the country in the number of farms selling food directly with 14,308 farms, which accounted for 10% of the U.S. total. Texas was the only other state with more than 10,000 farms selling directly. Regionally, the southwest and northeast had the most farms engaged in direct sales of food (25,644 and 26,707 farms, respectively).

Direct Farm Sales of Food by Regional Share, 2020



What is local?

A locally or regionally produced agricultural food product that is transported less than 400 miles or within the state it is produced.

Farms sell directly to:
Consumers - Includes sales through farmers markets, onsite farm stores, roadside stands, Community Supported Agriculture arrangements, online sales, pick-your-own operations, mobile markets, and other means.

Retailers - Includes supermarkets, supercenters, restaurants, caterers, independent grocery stores, and food cooperatives.

Institutions - Includes schools, colleges, universities, and hospitals.

Intermediate markets - Includes intermediary businesses such as wholesalers, distributors, processors and more.

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service

www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus

SNAPSHOT

Producers with Direct Sales of Food, 2020

Number=299,238*

	Direct Sales	All U.S. (Census 2017)
	(percent)	
Sex		
Male	57	64
Female	43	36
Age		
<35	11	8
35-64	56	58
65+	33	34
Primary Occupation		
Farming	49	42
Other	51	58
With military service	9	11
Hispanic	4	3
Race		
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.3	2.3
Asian	1.9	0.7
Black/African American	1.2	1.4
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Isl	0.6	0.2
White	96.2	96.2

**Data collected for up to four producers per farm, may report more than one race per producer.*

About 300,000 individuals were involved in making decisions for the farms that sold food directly in 2020. Producers of farms that sold local food directly were more likely than all U.S. farms to be female and age 34 or younger.

About the Survey

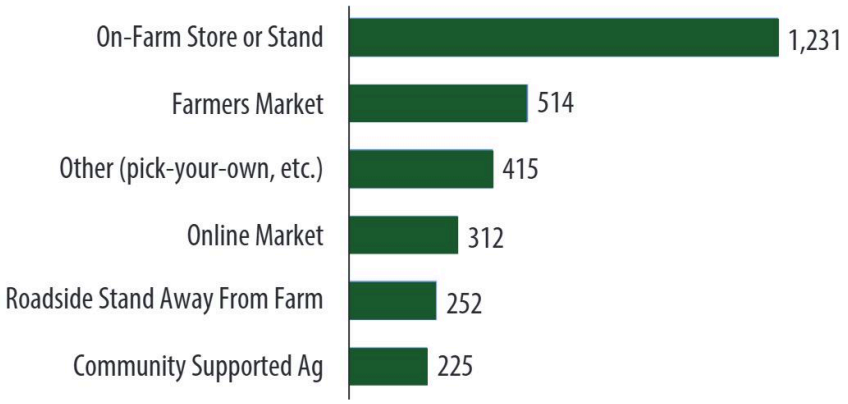
The 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey was designed to collect data related to the marketing of foods directly from farm producers to consumers or retailers who then sell directly to consumers. The primary purpose of the Local Food Marketing Practices Survey was to produce statistics on the number of farms that market food directly, the value of these direct sales, and the marketing practices used in conjunction with direct sales. The survey was administered in all 50 states.

The 2020 data as well as results of previous NASS Local Food surveys are available in the NASS Quick Stats database at www.quickstats.nass.usda.gov, or at www.nass.usda.gov/go/local-food.

Direct-to-Consumer Sales

Seventy-seven percent of farms with direct sales sold directly to consumers. Of the $2.9 billion in direct-to-consumer sales, on-farm stores and farmers markets accounted for $1.7 billion (59%).

Direct-to-Consumer Sales by Marketing Practice, 2020 ($ million)



Among farms selling directly to consumers, 42% sold fresh food products while 75% sold processed or value-added products.

52% **The share of direct-to-consumer sales that were fresh food products.**

Other Direct Sales

There were 40,675 farms selling food to institutions and intermediary businesses with $4.1 billion in direct sales. Fresh commodities accounted for 56% of the total sales. Of the 40,675 farms, 19,655 (48%) sold fresh commodities, while 22,533 (55%) sold processed or value-added commodities. Fewer farms (24,137) sold directly to retailers than to individual consumers, institutions, or intermediaries. Sixty-two percent of sales to retailers such as grocery stores and restaurants were fresh foods.

The majority (57%) of farms marketing food directly were located in metropolitan counties. These farms accounted for 62% of all direct food sales. Approximately 78% of farms selling food directly sold all of their directly-marketed food within a 100-mile radius of the farm.

Direct Farm Sales of Food by Type of Buyer, 2020 and 2015

	2020 Sales* ($ billion)	2015 Sales ($ billion)
Consumer	2.9	3.0
Retailer	1.9	2.3
Institutions and Local Intermediary Businesses	4.1	3.4
Total Direct Farm Sales	**9.0**	**8.7**

**May not add to total due to rounding.*

Source: USDA NASS, 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey.

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