



# Press Release

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Texas Agricultural Statistics Service

P.O. Box 70

Austin, Texas 78767-0070

(512) 916-5581

On: 2002 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

For Information Contact:  
Robin O. Roark

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## CENSUS REVEALS TWO-THIRDS OF BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN PRINCIPAL OPERATORS OWN THEIR FARM

Austin . . . According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, land ownership is high among Black or African American principal operators nationwide. Two-thirds of all Black or African American principal operators in the U.S. are full owners of the farms they operate. Ninety-one percent of Black or African American principal operators own at least a portion of the land they operate. Black or African American operators represent 1.4 percent of all principal farm operators in the U.S. and 2.6 percent of all principal farm operators in Texas.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), released the 2002 Census of Agriculture results in June 2004. Conducted every five years, the census of agriculture is the only source of consistent, comparable and detailed data for every county in America. To better serve and meet the needs of Black and African American farmers and ranchers in Texas, organizations that support programs benefitting small farms such as the Texas Department of Agriculture, national agricultural advocacy groups, state credit unions, 1890 Land-Grant universities, and State cooperative organizations, all use census of agriculture data.

"The 2002 Census of Agriculture is an excellent resource for understanding the facts on minority farmers and ranchers in the U.S.," said Ron Bosecker, NASS Administrator. "New methodology used for the 2002 Census of Agriculture has greatly improved representation of small and minority operated farms and ranches compared to prior censuses. This improved methodology allows for a truly representative picture of the agriculture and farming population in each state and county."

In 2002, the number of Black or African American principal operators counted nationwide increased to 29,090, up 8.6 percent from 26,785 in 1997. Of those Black or African American principal operators, 5,979 were in Texas. In Texas the county with the largest percentage of Black or African American farmers was Freestone with 4.0 percent. The average age of Black or African American principal operators in Texas was 59.1 years, 2.2 years older than the state average of 56.9 years for all principal operators. Among Black or African American principal operators, 58 percent listed farming as their primary occupation.

In addition to the principal operator, information was gathered on up to two additional operators for the first time in the 2002 Census of Agriculture. When three operators per farm could be reported, a total of 30,605 farms in the U.S. had Black or African American operators in 2002. Of that total, 6,223 farms were in Texas. Nationwide, farm land operated by Black or African American operators totaled over 3.8 million acres. Of this acreage, 808,203 acres were reported in Texas. Freestone County had the most reported acreage operated by Black or African American operators with 40,709 acres. Black or African American farms in Texas averaged 130 acres. This is more than the national average of 115 acres.

"We value the contribution all farmers and ranchers in Texas make to America's food and fiber system," said Robin Roark, USDA-NASS-Texas Agricultural Statistics Service. "In 2002, Black or African American farmers sold nearly \$507 million in agricultural products nationwide and \$54 million statewide."

Census results are available for free on the NASS Web site at [www.usda.gov/nass/](http://www.usda.gov/nass/) or may be purchased by calling 1-800-727-9540. NASS collects and provides a vast array of production, economic, demographic and environmental facts about U. S. agriculture through regularly scheduled weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual reports.