



Press Release

PR-79-05

Texas Agricultural Statistics Service

P.O. Box 70

Austin, Texas 78767-0070

(512) 916-5581

On: 2002 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

For Information Contact:

Robin Roark

For Release: IMMEDIATELY (March 18, 2005)

nass-tx@nass.usda.gov

2002 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE REVEALS A NATIONWIDE INCREASE IN WOMEN PRINCIPAL OPERATORS

Austin The 2002 Census of Agriculture indicated a 13.4 percent increase in the number of farms nationwide operated by women since 1997. A total of 237,819 farms in the U.S. were reported as having a woman as the principal operator in 2002. Women operated 59,383,557 acres of land in 2002, an increase of 16.5 percent from 1997. In addition, 84 percent of the women principal operators were full owners of the farms they operated. Nearly all women principal operators in the U.S., 95.4 percent, own at least part of the land they operated. In 2002, 82 percent of women principal operators in Texas were full owners of the farms they operated. These farms totaled 6,822,596 acres of land. An additional, 13 percent of women principal operators owned part of the land they operated.

“The 2002 Census of Agriculture shows the growing interest and participation of women in U.S. agricultural production,” commented Ron Bosecker, Administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). “Census of Agriculture results show the contribution women farmers and ranchers make to the agricultural industry at the national level, the state level, and the county level.”

Texas ranked first among states for farms operated by a woman principal operator with 27,192 farms. Of the 228,926 farms in Texas, just under 12 percent have a woman principal operator. Women principal operators were reported in all 254 Texas counties. The top three counties for farms operated by a woman principal operator were Harris County with 427 farms; Parker County with 426 farms; and Denton County with 420 farms. The three counties with the most acreage operated by women were Culberson County with 346,209 acres; Brewster County with 334,817 acres; and Hudspeth County with 274,279 acres.

The 2002 Census provided the first facts on computer and internet use by farmers and ranchers on a county-by-county basis. As a result, the Census revealed that nationwide women principal operators were more likely to use computers for business and have Internet access than male principal operators. However, according to the Census, in Texas 37 percent of both women-operated farms and male-operated farms used

(Over, please)

computers for business. In addition, 49 percent of women-operated farms had Internet access, compared to 50 percent of male-operated farms.

Data from the Census also revealed some common characteristics of women principal operators throughout the State. Most women principal operators in Texas had worked 10 or more years on their present farm. In addition, 70 percent of the women lived on their farm and 55 percent listed farming as their primary occupation. The 2002 Census also indicated that women operators in Texas are slightly older than principal operators in general. The average age of a woman principal operator in Texas is 59.3 years, compared to 56.9 years for all principal operators.

Looking at market value of agricultural products sold by women-operated farms in Texas, women produced \$346,924,000 in livestock, poultry and their products, and an additional \$137,951,000 in crops. The amount sold by women-operated farms accounts for 3.4 percent of Texas' total market value of agricultural products sold. The top three counties for market value of agricultural products sold by women-operated farms were Shelby County with \$20,633,000 sold; Nacogdoches County with \$20,004,000 sold, and Gonzales County with \$14,933,000 sold.

“Although both men and women have always been involved in agriculture, prior to the late 1970s census statistics were not collected to differentiate male and female farm operators,” said Robin Roark, USDA-NASS-Texas Agricultural Statistics. “The actual number of women operators and the amount of land they operated was first reported in the 1978 Census of Agriculture. We are dedicated to accurately reporting the statistics on women farmers and we are working hard to ensure this growing constituency is counted and recognized for their contribution to agriculture.”

NASS conducts the census of agriculture every five years and it is the only source of consistent, comparable and detailed data for every county in America. NASS also 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 survey reports. For more census information, visit NASS online at www.usda.gov/nass/ and click on “Census of Agriculture” for aggregate facts and figures, or call 1-800-727-9540.