



2007 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Farmers by Age

The fastest growing group of farm operators is those 65 years and over.

A long term trend observed in the Census of Agriculture is the aging of farm operators. The average age of the principal farm operator has increased roughly one year in each census cycle, from 50.3 in 1978 to 57.1 in 2007. The majority of farm operators are between 45 and 64, but the fastest growing group of farm operators is those 65 years and older.

In addition to the more than 2 million principal operators, the new data show the 2007 Census counted an additional 1.1 million operators on farms.* These second and third operators on average are younger than the principal operators. However, this group of operators also showed an increase in average age between 2002 and 2007.

	2007	2002	% Change
All Farm Operators	3,281,534	3,053,801	+7
Under 45 Years	732,322	851,091	-14
45 to 64 Years	1,725,777	1,527,742	+13
65 Years and Older	823,435	674,968	+22
All Principal Farm Operators	2,204,792	2,128,982	+4
Under 45 Years	387,431	489,365	-21
45 to 64 Years	1,161,707	1,081,787	+7
65 Years and Older	655,654	557,830	+18

* Before 2002, the Census of Agriculture collected detailed demographic data on only one operator per farm. Since 2002, the census has taken a more comprehensive approach, counting all operators and collecting detailed demographic information on up to three operators per farm. The principal operator is the person in charge of day-to-day decisions for the farm or ranch.

U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Agricultural Statistics Service



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How Do They Compare?

Older farm operators on average produce a lesser value of products than younger operators. They are less likely to report Internet access and off farm work. Most of them have established farming operations — only 4 percent report starting the operation in the last four years.

FARM/RANCH OPERATIONS	Under 45 Years	45 to 64 Years	65 Years and Older
Average Size of Farm	375 acres	439 acres	408 acres
Average Value of Sales	\$160,022	\$152,734	\$88,142
Average Government Payments Received	\$3,385	\$3,889	\$3,286
Sales & Government Payments <\$10,000	56%	58%	58%
Farms with Internet Access	68%	63%	39%

FARM/RANCH OPERATORS	Under 45 Years	45 to 64 Years	65 Years and Older
Male	87%	87%	84%
Derive <50% of Income from Farming	78%	79%	82%
Farming as Primary Occupation	38%	41%	57%
Worked Off Farm	81%	72%	42%
4 Years or Less on Present Farm	24%	9%	4%
Operator Owns All Farm Acres	59%	68%	77%

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What Do They Produce?

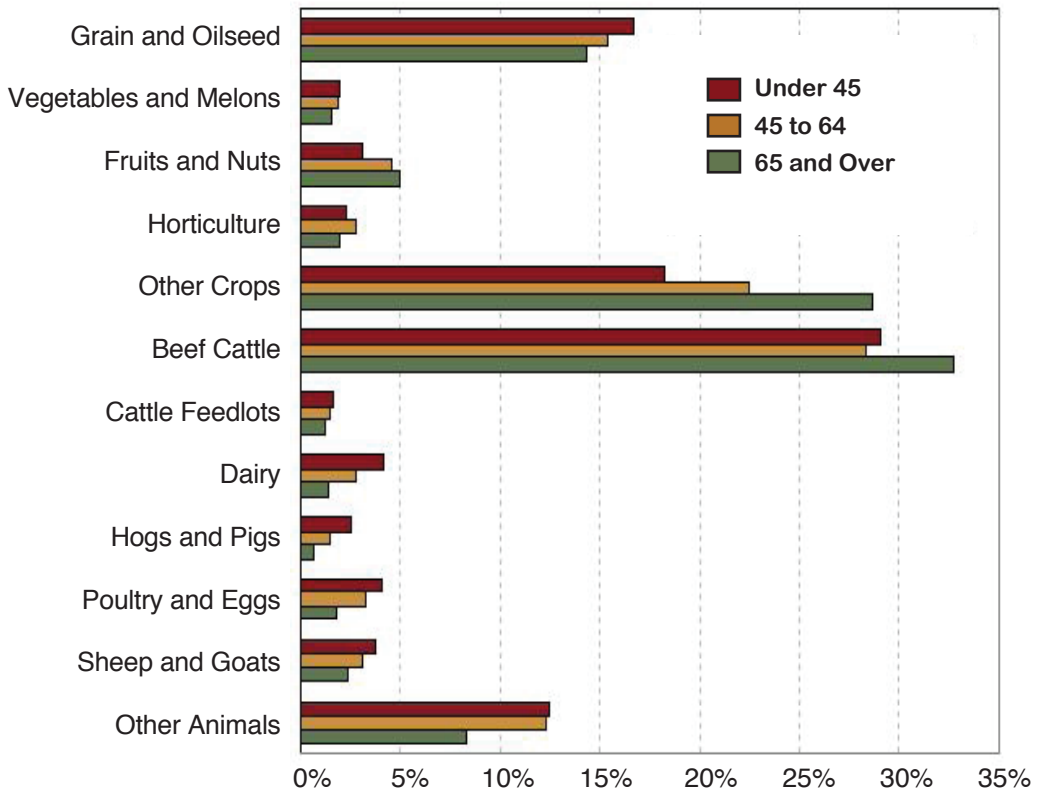
Older operators are more likely to operate certain types of farms than younger operators. Operators over 65, for example, are more likely to have beef cattle operations than younger operators. While the average age of all principal operators is 57.1, the average age does vary depending on the type of farm operation.

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) categorizes farms by the commodities which constitute a majority of the sales of the operation. The two lowest average age operation types are hog farming (average age of 50.5) and dairy farming (average age of 51.6). The three farm types with an average age higher than the average age of all principal operators are beef cattle farming and ranching (57.8), fruit and tree nut farming (59.1), and other crop farming (59.5). Other crop farms include hay farms and farms where no single crop comprised more than 50 percent of sales.

The 2007 Census of Agriculture shows a significant difference in the number of farmers at opposite ends of the age spectrum.

In 2007, there were 54,147 operators under the age of 25 and 289,999 operators 75 years and over.

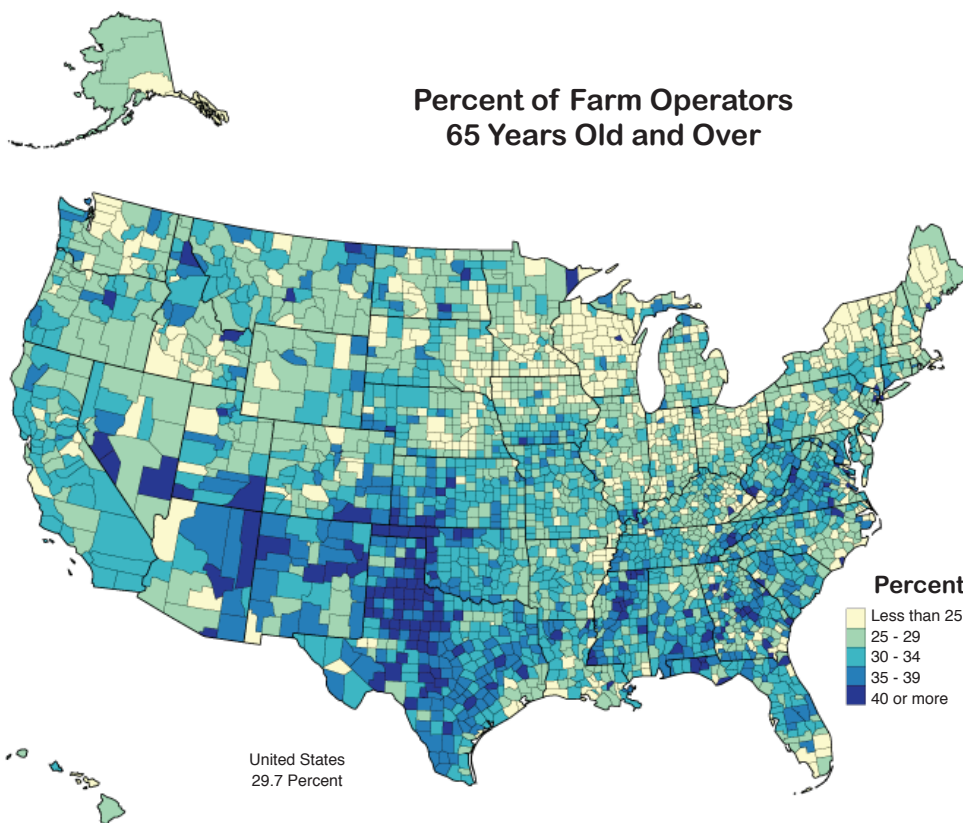
Percent of Farms by North American Industry Classification System



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Where Do They Farm?

The percentage of principal operators 65 years and over is highest in the South and West. The states with the highest percentage of older principal operators are New Mexico (37 percent), Arizona (35 percent), Texas (35 percent), Mississippi (34 percent) and Oklahoma (33 percent). There are 23 states where the percentage of principal farm operators 65 years and over is 30 percent or more. The states with youngest average age principal operators are Indiana, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Minnesota and Delaware.



For more information:

www.nass.usda.gov

www.agcensus.usda.gov

Agricultural Statistics Hotline
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