



# 2007 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

## American Indian Farmers

### Reservation Pilot Program

Part of the reason for the dramatic increase in the number of American Indian farmers is a change in the way the 2007 Census of Agriculture counted farm operators on reservations in the Southwestern United States. In 2002, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service conducted a pilot program to count American Indian operators on reservations in three states — North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana — rather than simply counting a single reservation as a single farm operation.

In 2007, the pilot program was extended throughout the United States. The majority of the increase in the number of American Indian operators occurred in just two states: Arizona and New Mexico, where the count increased from 694 in 2002 to 12,929 in 2007.

U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Agricultural Statistics Service



### American Indian or Alaska Native Farm Operators

The 2007 Census of Agriculture shows that U.S. farmers and ranchers are becoming more diverse and that the number of American Indian or Alaska Native farm operators continues to rise.

The 2007 Census counted a total of 79,703 American Indian or Alaska Native operators on 61,472 farms and ranches across the United States. More than a quarter of these operators also reported another race. The count of American Indian or Alaska Native operators grew 88 percent from 2002, significantly outpacing the 7 percent increase in U.S. farm operators overall.

There were a total of 55,889 American Indian operators who reported American Indian or Alaska Native as their only race in 2007. Of these, 34,706 were principal operators, up 124 percent from 2002.\*

|                                     | 2007      | 2002      | % Change |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| <b>All Farm Operators</b>           | 3,281,534 | 3,053,801 | +7       |
| American Indian Farm Operators      | 79,703    | 42,304    | +88      |
| American Indians as % of Total      | 2.4%      | 1.4%      | +71      |
| <b>All Principal Farm Operators</b> | 2,204,792 | 2,128,982 | +4       |
| American Indian Principal Operators | 34,706    | 15,494    | +124     |
| American Indians as % of Total      | 1.6%      | 0.7%      | +116     |

\* 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.

# 2007 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

*The states with the highest percentage of American Indian principal farm operators are:*

1. Arizona
2. New Mexico
3. Nevada
4. Oklahoma
5. Montana

## How Do They Compare?

When compared to all farms nationwide, those with American Indian or Alaska Native principal operators tend to be smaller in terms of sales but significantly larger in size. These operations are also less likely to have Internet access.

| FARM/RANCH OPERATIONS                 | All Farms | American Indian-Operated Farms |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|
| Average Size of Farm                  | 418 acres | 1,431 acres                    |
| Average Value of Sales                | \$134,807 | \$40,331                       |
| Sales & Government Payments <\$10,000 | 58%       | 78%                            |
| Farms with Internet Access            | 57%       | 42%                            |

Since 2002, the number of American Indian principal operators who are women grew 318 percent, to 29 percent of the total number of American Indian principal operators. All women American Indian operators increased 169 percent, to 41 percent of the total number of American Indian operators.

American Indian farm operators are more likely than their counterparts nationwide to report farming as their primary occupation and they are likely to derive a larger portion of their overall income from farming. They are also more likely to own all of the land that they operate, rather than renting or leasing land.

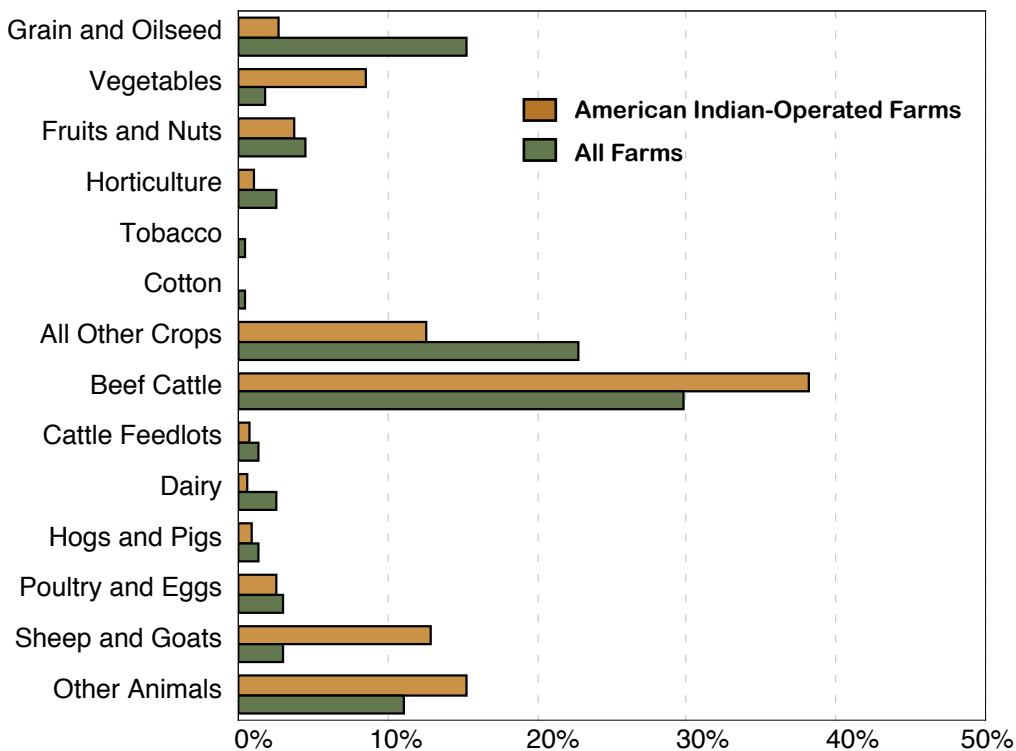
| FARM/RANCH OPERATORS               | All Operators | American Indian Operators |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Male                               | 86%           | 71%                       |
| Derive <50% of Income from Farming | 80%           | 73%                       |
| Farming as Primary Occupation      | 45%           | 51%                       |
| Operator Owns All Farm Acres       | 69%           | 81%                       |
| Worked Off Farm                    | 65%           | 63%                       |
| 4 Years or Less on Present Farm    | 10%           | 11%                       |
| 65 Years or Older                  | 30%           | 30%                       |
| Average Age of Operator            | 57.1          | 56.6                      |

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## What Do They Produce?

38 percent of all American Indian-operated farms are classified as beef cattle farms and ranches, compared to 30 percent of all farms. Another 13 percent are classified as sheep and goat farms, compared to 3 percent of farms overall. And, while 15 percent of farms overall are classified as grain and oilseed farms, only 3 percent of American Indian-operated farms fall into this category.

**Percent of Farms by North American Industry Classification System**



## Every Voice Counts

In conducting the 2007 Census of Agriculture, the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) placed a special emphasis on outreach to traditionally under-represented populations, including small, minority, female and limited-resource farm operators.

Working in partnership with community-based organizations nationwide, NASS engaged in an extensive effort to make sure the 2007 Census mailing list included all farms and ranches, regardless of size, location or type of operation. NASS also partnered with these groups to provide hands-on assistance and support to local producers — including non-English speakers — in filling out their Census forms. In addition, NASS targeted its media outreach efforts towards publications and broadcast outlets that reach small, minority and non-English-speaking producers.

The 2007 Census of Agriculture marked the first time NASS attempted to collect a Census report from individual farm operators on American Indian reservations in all states. In 2002, reservations were counted as a single farm and reservation officials supplied counts of individual operators. NASS will issue a follow-up report about agricultural activity on American Indian reservations in the spring of 2009.

NASS is committed to continuing its outreach to all underserved populations.

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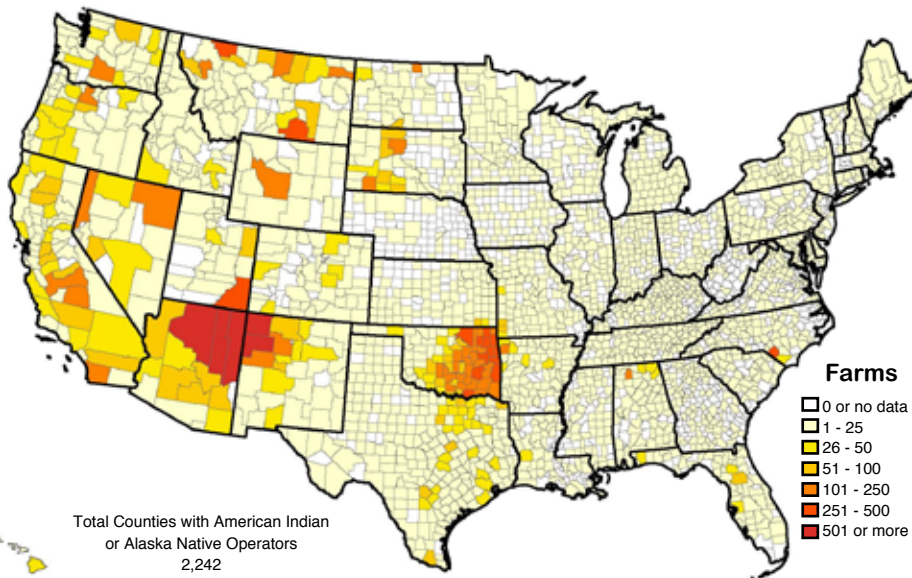
## Where Do They Farm?

The percentage of American Indian principal operators is highest in the Western United States. The states with the highest percentage of American Indian principal operators are Arizona (53.9 percent), New Mexico (21.5 percent), Nevada (12.5 percent), Oklahoma (8.1 percent) and Montana (5.0 percent).

In 33 states, American Indians and Alaska Natives comprise less than 1 percent of all principal operators.



Number of Farms with American Indian or Alaska Native Operators



For more information:

[www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov)

[www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)

Agricultural Statistics Hotline  
(800) 727-9540

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