

I.6 Farmer Demographics

There appears to be a trend toward fewer young people choosing farming as an occupation. Between 1987 and 1997 there were fewer farmers in the younger age categories and an increase in the oldest category. The percent of California farmers over 70 increased from 13% to almost 20%. Meanwhile, the percent of the state population over 70 increased from 7% in 1987 to 8% in 1997.

TABLE 12

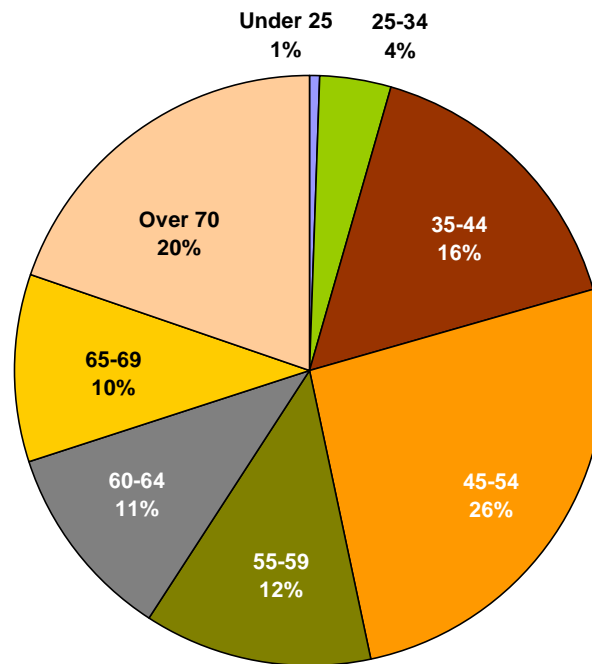
Farm Operators by Age Group, 1987, 1992, 1997

CALIFORNIA								
	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	Over 70
Number								
1987	539	6,327	16,613	19,368	10,336	10,636	8,619	10,779
1992	417	4,288	14,232	19,223	8,818	9,279	8,222	13,190
1997	382	3,000	11,754	19,440	9,261	8,110	7,510	14,669
Percent								
1987	0.6	7.6	20.0	23.3	12.4	12.8	10.4	13.0
1992	0.5	5.5	18.3	24.7	11.4	11.9	10.6	17.0
1997	0.5	4.0	15.9	26.2	12.5	10.9	10.1	19.8
UNITED STATES								
	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	Over 70
Number								
1987	35,851	242,688	411,153	454,910	247,908	247,908	191,435	255,906
1992	27,906	178,826	381,746	429,333	213,315	216,524	188,165	289,485
1997	20,850	128,455	371,442	466,729	222,736	204,618	179,858	317,171
Percent								
1987	1.7	11.6	19.7	21.8	11.9	11.9	9.2	12.3
1992	1.4	9.3	19.8	22.3	11.1	11.2	9.8	15.0
1997	1.1	6.7	19.4	24.4	11.7	10.7	9.4	16.6

Sources:

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture*, 1987-1992.
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

FIGURE 11

California Farm Operators by Age Group, 1997

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

- In the case of family farms that transcend generations, anecdotal information suggests that many family farms remain in the name of the oldest family members, even if they are less actively involved in farming than younger members. This trend may place an upward bias on age estimates since about three-quarters of California's farms are family owned.
- In 1997, about 19% of U.S. farm operators described themselves as retired.

■ Almost half of California farm operators do not consider farming their principal occupation and many spend more days employed off the farm than on it. In contrast, about 40% did not report any days spent employed off the farm.

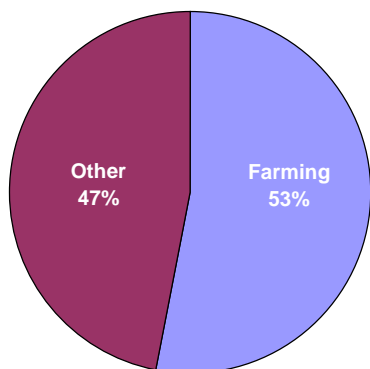
TABLE 13
Farm Operators by Number of Days Employed off the Farm: 1987, 1992, 1997

CALIFORNIA								
	None	Any	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-199	200 or More	Not Reported
Number								
1987	32,051	47,085	4,991	2,832	3,417	4,897	30,948	4,081
1992	32,118	41,278	4,478	2,500	2,892	4,727	26,681	4,273
1997	31,588	37,919	4,309	2,489	2,756	4,353	24,012	4,619
Percent								
1987	38.5	56.6	6.0	3.4	4.1	5.9	37.2	4.9
1992	41.4	53.1	5.8	3.2	3.7	6.1	34.4	5.5
1997	42.6	51.2	5.8	3.4	3.7	5.9	32.4	6.2
UNITED STATES								
	None	Any	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-199	200 or More	Not Reported
Number								
1987	844,476	1,115,560	135,116	64,915	70,622	107,701	737,206	127,723
1992	801,881	992,773	110,437	54,743	60,100	101,923	665,570	130,646
1997	755,254	1,042,158	107,680	57,277	61,268	106,654	709,279	114,447
Percent								
1987	40.4	53.4	6.5	3.1	3.4	5.2	35.3	6.1
1992	41.6	51.6	5.7	2.8	3.1	5.3	34.6	6.8
1997	39.5	54.5	5.6	3.0	3.2	5.6	37.1	6.0

Sources:

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture*, 1987-1992.
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

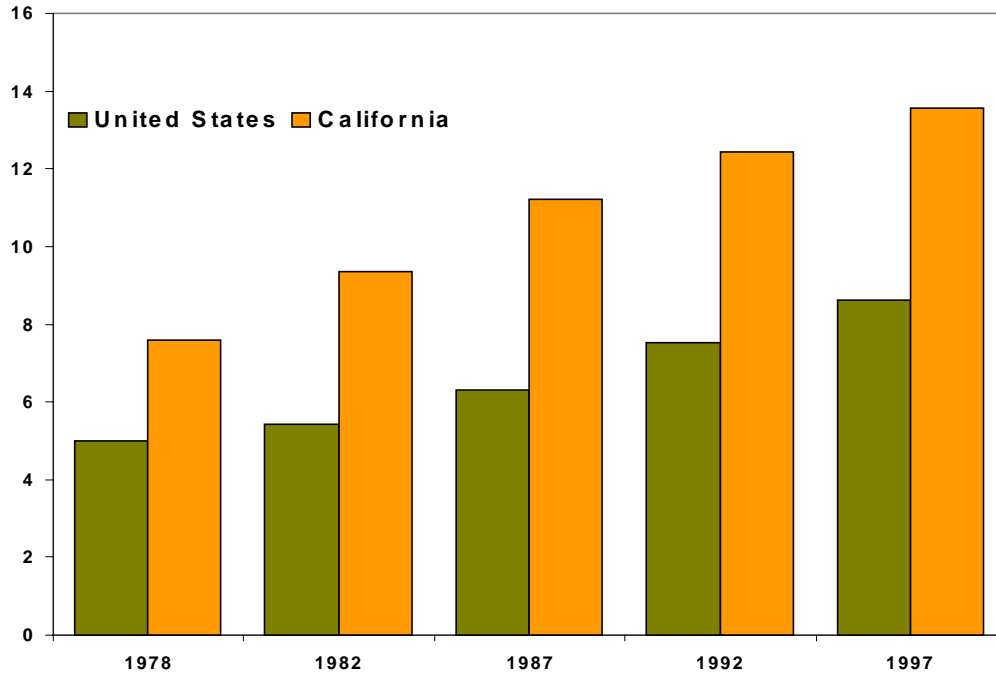
FIGURE 12
California Farmers by Principal Occupation, 1997



■ The percent of California farmers who consider farming their principal occupation increased from 50.4% to 53% between 1987 and 1997, while that ratio for the United States decreased from 54.5% to 50.3%.

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

FIGURE 13

Females as a Percent of Farm Operators, 1978-1997*Sources:*

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture, 1978-1992*.
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

- The number of women reported as the principal farm operator almost doubled in California between 1978 and 1997. This number has been increasing in California and in the United States, though California has consistently had a greater ratio of female to male farm operators than the national average. In 1997, 13.6% of California farms and 8.6% of U.S. farms reported a female principal operator, compared with 7.6% and 5% in 1978.

TABLE 14

Farm Operators by Ethnicity, 1987, 1992, 1997

	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian or Pacific Islander	Other*	Not Reported
CALIFORNIA							
Number							
1987	58,051	300	3,471	375	3,321	223	17,476
1992	54,428	244	3,883	448	3,221	176	15,269
1997	55,228	261	4,515	481	3,316	491	9,834
Percent							
1987	69.8	0.4	4.2	0.5	4.0	0.3	21.0
1992	70.1	0.3	5.0	0.6	4.1	0.2	19.7
1997	74.5	0.4	6.1	0.6	4.5	0.7	13.3
UNITED STATES							
Number							
1987	1,414,279	22,856	17,476	6,984	7,775	1,470	616,919
1992	1,336,050	18,661	20,956	8,136	7,955	955	532,587
1997	1,574,098	18,184	27,717	10,316	8,489	1,677	271,378
Percent							
1987	67.7	1.1	0.8	0.3	0.4	0.1	29.5
1992	69.4	1.0	1.1	0.4	0.4	0.0	27.7
1997	82.3	1.0	1.4	0.5	0.4	0.1	14.2

* According to the *Census of Agriculture*, "other" is primarily limited to persons native to or of ancestry from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

Sources:

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture*, 1987-1992.
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

■ California also has a greater share of farm operators with Hispanic, Asian, and Pacific Islander origins than the United States average. The biggest change in *Census of Agriculture* data on ethnicity is the percentage increase in those reporting their ethnicity, although 13% of California farmers and 14% of U.S. farmers still did not report their ethnic background in the most recent Census. The 1997 *Census of Agriculture* reported making “special efforts” to capture the number of minority farmers in California.