

I California Farms and Farmers

Over a quarter of California's landmass is used for agriculture. Just over half of the 27.7 million acres of agricultural land is pasture and range and about 39% is cropland. Most California farms are small in terms of cash receipts and total sales, and are family or individually operated. California has a greater share of female farm operators and farmers with Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander backgrounds than the United States as a whole. As the state's population has grown, agricultural land has been converted to residential, industrial and commercial uses, yet agriculture remains a vibrant industry.

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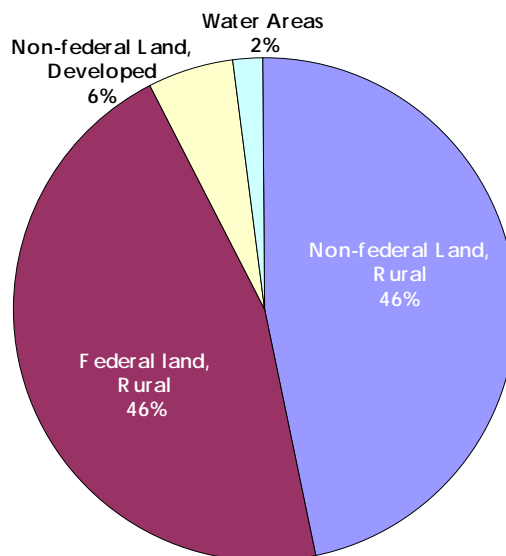
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I.1 Land Use

About 92% of California’s 99.8 million acres is in rural uses. This rural area is divided evenly between federal and non-federal ownership. The federal land mostly includes national forest, national parks and wildlife areas, and “other land.”¹ Roughly 11% (5 million acres) of the federal rural land is grassland pasture and range used for agriculture.

¹ Other land is defined by the National Agricultural Statistics Service as “marshes, open swamps, bare rock deserts, rural transportation areas, defense and industrial areas, farmsteads, and farm roads and lanes.”

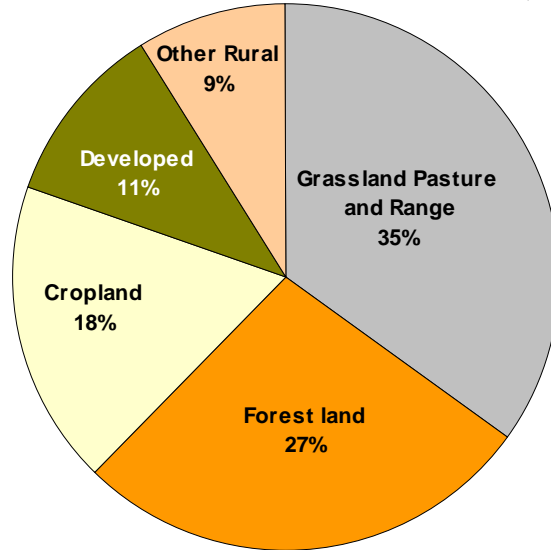
FIGURE 1
Federal and Non-federal Land Use in California, 1997



Source: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, *Natural Resources Inventory*, 2000.

FIGURE 2

Non-federal Land Use in California, 1997



■ Of California’s 53 million acres of non-federal land, about 80% is grassland pasture and range, forest land, and cropland. Most of California agriculture is located on non-federal land.

Source: USDA, National Resources Conservation Service, *Natural Resources Inventory*, 2000.

- About 5.7 million acres of California’s non-federal land are defined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as “developed” for residential, industrial, and commercial use. However, the intensity of use varies widely, with much of this land relatively unpopulated. The California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) defines 3.1 million acres of California’s non-federal land as “urban and built-up”². This suggests that roughly 2.6 million acres of “developed” land in the NRCS survey are still relatively rural, or not mapped by FMMP.

² “Urban and Built-up” land is defined by the FMMP as land occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit to one and one-half acres.

TABLE 1

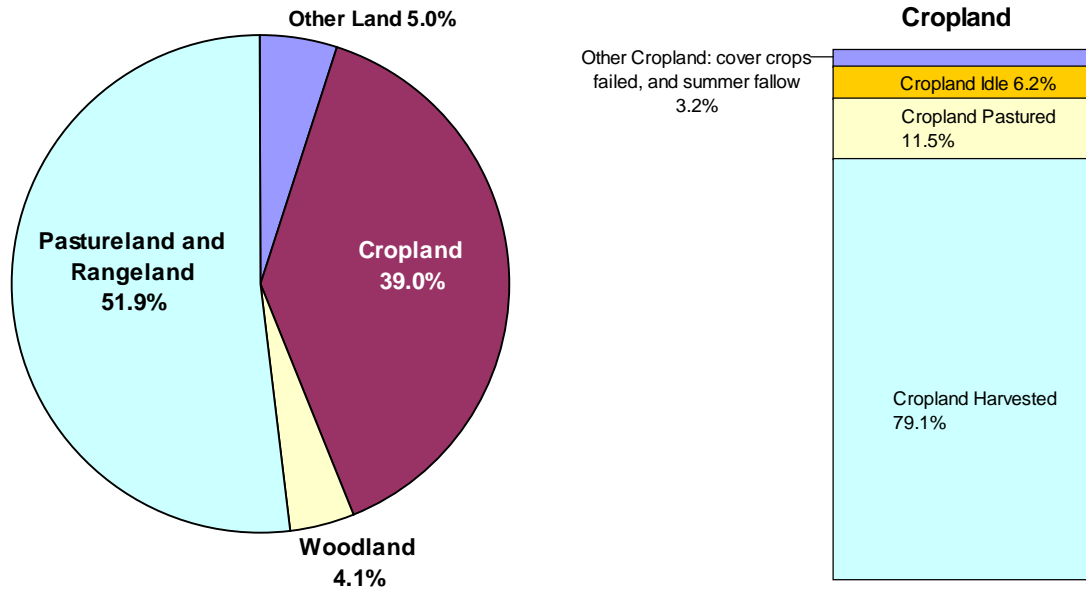
Non-federal Land Developed in California (1,000 acres)

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Total Non-federal Land (NRCS, 1997) | 52,926 |
| Developed Land (NRCS, 1997) | 5,687 |
| Urban and Built-up Land (FMMP, 1998) | 3,079 |

Sources:

1. USDA, National Resources Conservation Service, *Natural Resources Inventory*, 2000.
2. California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2000.

FIGURE 3
Agricultural Land Use in California, 1997
Total Acres 27,698,779



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

- In total, about 27.7 million acres, including 5 million acres of federal grazing land, are used for agriculture in California. Over half is pasture and range, about 39% is cropland, and the remainder is divided between woodland and other land.

TABLE 2

Agricultural Land Use, 1964-1997 (1,000 acres)

| Census Year | Pasture Land and Range Land | Total Cropland* | Other Land** | Woodland including Woodland Pasture | Total Agricultural Land |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| CALIFORNIA 99,823,000 total acres | | | | | |
| 1964 | 20,450 | 11,815 | 1,343 | 3,403 | 37,012 |
| 1969 | NA*** | 11,245 | NA*** | 2,038 | 35,328 |
| 1974 | NA*** | 10,630 | NA*** | 1,522 | 33,386 |
| 1978 | 18,733 | 11,455 | 1,175 | 1,365 | 32,727 |
| 1982 | 17,980 | 11,257 | 1,437 | 1,483 | 32,157 |
| 1987 | 17,111 | 10,895 | 1,241 | 1,351 | 30,598 |
| 1992 | 16,191 | 10,479 | 1,158 | 1,150 | 28,979 |
| 1997 | 14,385 | 10,804 | 1,394 | 1,116 | 27,699 |
| UNITED STATES 2,262,444,000 total acres | | | | | |
| 1964 | 490,307 | 434,232 | 39,671 | 145,976 | 1,110,187 |
| 1969 | NA*** | 458,990 | NA*** | 112,013 | 1,062,893 |
| 1974 | NA*** | 440,039 | NA*** | 92,528 | 1,017,030 |
| 1978 | 436,729 | 453,874 | 36,733 | 91,815 | 1,014,777 |
| 1982 | 418,264 | 445,362 | 36,082 | 87,088 | 986,797 |
| 1987 | 410,329 | 443,318 | 30,929 | 79,894 | 964,471 |
| 1992 | 410,835 | 435,366 | 25,369 | 73,962 | 945,532 |
| 1997 | 396,885 | 431,145 | 32,300 | 71,465 | 931,795 |

*Includes harvested cropland, cropland used only for pastures, and other cropland.

**Houses and barns, lots, ponds, roads and wasteland.

***NA: In 1969 and 1974, the Census of Agriculture aggregated pastureland and other land.

Sources:

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture, 1964-1992*.
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

■ Agricultural land use in California fell by almost 10 million acres between 1964 and 1997, with much of this change coming from decreases in pasture and rangeland. Some changes may be at least partially attributed to changes in land use definitions in the *Census of Agriculture*. Cropland fell by more than one million acres from 1964 to 1974 and has fluctuated since then.

- Despite its reputation as a major fruit, tree-nut and vegetable producer, California has a greater ratio of pasture and range to cropland than the United States as a whole.

TABLE 3

Agricultural Land Use, 1964-1997 (percent)

| Census Year | Pasture Land and Range Land | Total Cropland* | Other Land** | Woodland including Woodland Pasture |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| CALIFORNIA | | | | |
| 1964 | 55.3 | 31.9 | 3.6 | 9.2 |
| 1969 | NA*** | 31.8 | NA*** | 5.8 |
| 1974 | NA*** | 31.8 | NA*** | 4.6 |
| 1978 | 57.2 | 35.0 | 3.6 | 4.2 |
| 1982 | 55.9 | 35.0 | 4.5 | 4.6 |
| 1987 | 55.9 | 35.6 | 4.1 | 4.4 |
| 1992 | 55.9 | 36.2 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| 1997 | 51.9 | 39.0 | 5.0 | 4.0 |
| UNITED STATES | | | | |
| 1964 | 44.2 | 39.1 | 3.6 | 13.1 |
| 1969 | NA*** | 43.2 | NA*** | 10.5 |
| 1974 | NA*** | 43.3 | NA*** | 9.1 |
| 1978 | 43.0 | 44.7 | 3.6 | 9.0 |
| 1982 | 42.4 | 45.1 | 3.7 | 8.8 |
| 1987 | 42.5 | 46.0 | 3.2 | 8.3 |
| 1992 | 43.5 | 46.0 | 2.7 | 7.8 |
| 1997 | 42.6 | 46.3 | 3.5 | 7.7 |

*Includes harvested cropland, cropland used only for pastures, and other cropland.

**Houses and barns, lots, ponds, roads and wasteland.

***NA: In 1969 and 1974, the Census of Agriculture aggregated pastureland and other land.

Sources:

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture, 1964-1992*.
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

- California tends to harvest a greater percentage of its cropland than the United States as a whole. Between 1964 and 1997 there was a net decrease in total cropland and a net increase in harvested cropland, but both statistics fluctuated from census to census.

TABLE 4

Harvested Cropland as a Percent of Total Cropland, 1964-1997

| Census Year | Total Cropland* (1,000 acres) | Harvested Cropland (1,000 acres) | Percent of Total Cropland Harvested |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| CALIFORNIA | | | |
| 1964 | 11,815 | 7,846 | 66.4 |
| 1969 | 11,245 | 7,649 | 68.0 |
| 1974 | 10,630 | 8,307 | 78.1 |
| 1978 | 11,455 | 8,804 | 76.9 |
| 1982 | 11,257 | 8,765 | 77.9 |
| 1987 | 10,895 | 7,676 | 70.5 |
| 1992 | 10,479 | 7,761 | 74.1 |
| 1997 | 10,804 | 8,543 | 79.1 |
| UNITED STATES | | | |
| 1964 | 434,232 | 286,892 | 66.1 |
| 1969 | 458,990 | 273,016 | 59.5 |
| 1974 | 440,039 | 303,002 | 68.9 |
| 1978 | 453,874 | 317,146 | 69.9 |
| 1982 | 445,362 | 326,306 | 73.3 |
| 1987 | 443,318 | 282,224 | 63.7 |
| 1992 | 435,366 | 295,937 | 68.0 |
| 1997 | 431,145 | 309,395 | 71.8 |

*Includes harvested cropland, cropland idled, cropland used only for pastures, and other cropland.

Sources:

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture, 1964-1992*.
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

- California's planted cropland has shifted over time toward higher value crops such as fruits, tree-nuts and vegetables while acres of field crops have decreased. Cotton, wheat and rice are notable exceptions in that harvested acreage for each increased substantially between 1964 and 1997, but peaked during census years in the late 1970's or early 1980's. Rice surpassed its 1982 acreage by about 600 acres in 2000.

TABLE 5

California Harvested Cropland by Category, Census Years 1964-1997 (1,000 acres)

| Category | 1964 | 1969 | 1974 | 1978 | 1982 | 1987 | 1992 | 1997 |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Orchards and Vineyards | 1,520 | 1,588 | 1,770 | 1,892 | 2,158 | 2,153 | 2,246 | 2,582 |
| Hay--all types* | 1,702 | 1,534 | 1,545 | 1,501 | 1,416 | 1,533 | 1,531 | 1,699 |
| Vegetables and Melons | 626 | 676 | 740 | 900 | 895 | 883 | 1,017 | 1,209 |
| Cotton | 759 | 663 | 1,150 | 1,518 | 1,313 | 1,084 | 1,066 | 1,036 |
| Wheat for Grain | 267 | 404 | 703 | 590 | 929 | 562 | 569 | 581 |
| Rice** | 343 | NA | NA | 485 | 567 | 399 | 401 | 514 |
| Barley for Grain** | 1,319 | NA | NA | 874 | 583 | 270 | 204 | 130 |
| Nursery and Greenhouse | 37 | 34 | 45 | 52 | 59 | 67 | 76 | 95 |
| Other Crops*** | 1,273 | NA | NA | 992 | 845 | 725 | 651 | 697 |
| Total Harvested Cropland | 7,846 | 7,649 | 8,307 | 8,804 | 8,765 | 7,676 | 7,761 | 8,543 |

*Hay includes alfalfa, other tame, small grain, wild, grass silage, and green chop varieties.

**Acres of rice and barley were not reported in the Census of Agriculture in 1969 and 1974.

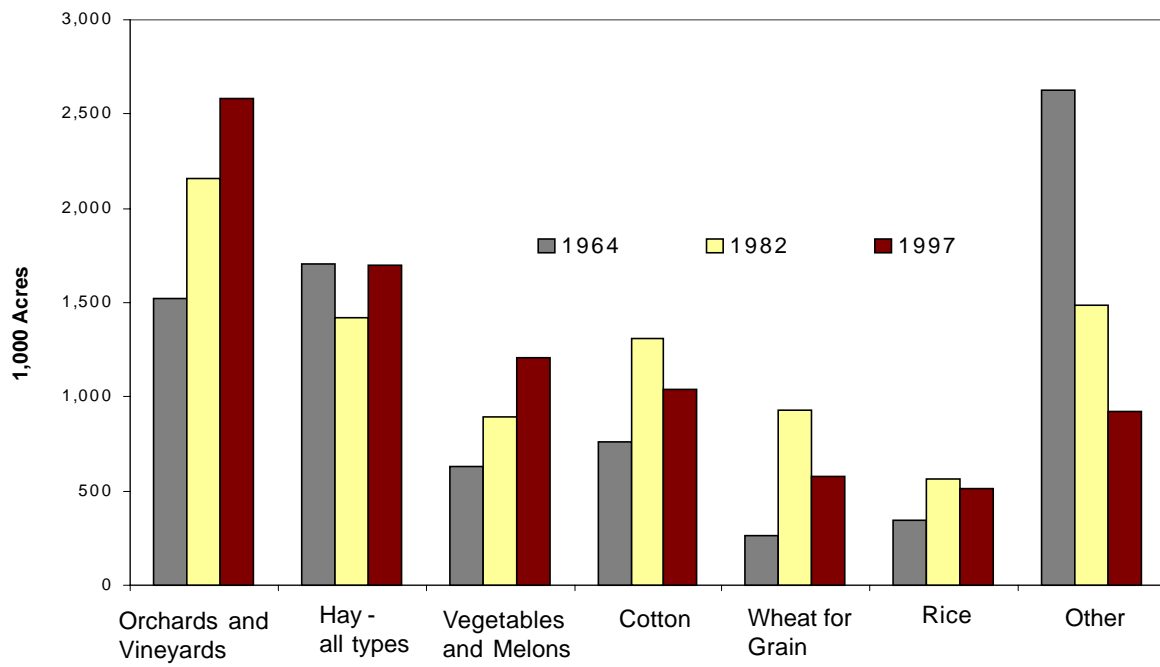
***Acres of other crops were calculated by subtracting all reported categories from Total Harvested Cropland. Other crops include corn, dry beans, peas, potatoes, seed crops, sugar beets, sweet potatoes, and other field crops.

Sources:

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture*, 1964-1992.
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

FIGURE 4

California Cropland Harvested by Crop, 1964, 1982 and 1997



Sources:

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture*, 1964 and 1982.
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

I.2 Farmland Conversion

Conversion of agricultural land to urban uses continues to be a public policy issue in the United States and in California. In California between 1988 and 1998, according to the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), about 420,000 acres (approximately one half of 1% of California’s landmass) were converted to urban and built-up uses. At these conversion rates, about 4.2 million acres would be converted in the next 100 years.

- Of the total acres converted from 1988-1998, 166,000 were formerly cropland (about 1.5% of total cropland) and 76,000 were formerly grazing land. Another 177,000 acres were formerly “other land,” as classified by the FMMP. A significant portion of the “other land” was idled farmland previously removed from agricultural production in anticipation of development. This indicates that the figures for cropland and grazing land conversion may be understated.

TABLE 6

Acres Converted to Urban and Built-up Land by Region, 1988-1998

| Sacramento Valley* | Cropland** | Grazing Land | Other Land*** | Total Acres Converted |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1988-90 | 4,772 | 3,783 | 6,535 | 15,090 |
| 1990-92 | 6,450 | 3,088 | 3,421 | 12,959 |
| 1992-94 | 2,516 | 1,122 | 1,935 | 5,573 |
| 1994-96 | 2,868 | 2,312 | 2,186 | 7,366 |
| 1996-98 | 3,323 | 3,257 | 3,649 | 10,342 |
| Cumulative Total | 19,929 | 13,562 | 17,726 | 51,330 |
| San Joaquin Valley* | Cropland** | Grazing Land | Other Land*** | Total Acres Converted |
| 1988-90 | 5,347 | 1,807 | 5,373 | 12,527 |
| 1990-92 | 16,940 | 442 | 6,576 | 23,958 |
| 1992-94 | 6,817 | 1,369 | 2,093 | 10,279 |
| 1994-96 | 7,867 | 532 | 2,137 | 10,536 |
| 1996-98 | 16,680 | 2,561 | 6,168 | 25,456 |
| Cumulative Total | 53,651 | 6,711 | 22,347 | 82,756 |
| Central Valley* | Cropland** | Grazing Land | Other Land*** | Total Acres Converted |
| 1988-90 | 10,119 | 5,590 | 11,908 | 27,617 |
| 1990-92 | 23,390 | 3,530 | 9,997 | 36,917 |
| 1992-94 | 9,333 | 2,491 | 4,028 | 15,852 |
| 1994-96 | 10,735 | 2,844 | 4,323 | 17,902 |
| 1996-98 | 20,003 | 5,818 | 9,817 | 35,798 |
| Cumulative Total | 73,580 | 20,273 | 40,073 | 134,086 |
| California | Cropland** | Grazing Land | Other Land*** | Total Acres Converted |
| 1988-90 | 40,003 | 20,863 | 57,364 | 118,230 |
| 1990-92 | 39,141 | 14,729 | 45,394 | 99,264 |
| 1992-94 | 23,453 | 10,464 | 20,390 | 54,307 |
| 1994-96 | 25,954 | 13,303 | 19,185 | 58,442 |
| 1996-98 | 37,585 | 17,057 | 34,919 | 89,997 |
| Cumulative Total | 166,136 | 76,416 | 177,252 | 420,240 |

* Sacramento Valley is Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sacramento, Shasta, Solano, Sutter, Tehama, Yolo and Yuba counties. San Joaquin Valley is Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare counties. Central Valley is the sum of the Sacramento and the San Joaquin Valleys.

** Cropland is defined here as all agricultural land that is not classified as grazing land by the FMMP.

*** Other land includes idle land previously removed from agricultural production.

Source: California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2000.

FIGURE 5

Conversion of All Land to Urban and Built-up Uses, 1988-1998

(There are about 99,823,000 total acres in California)

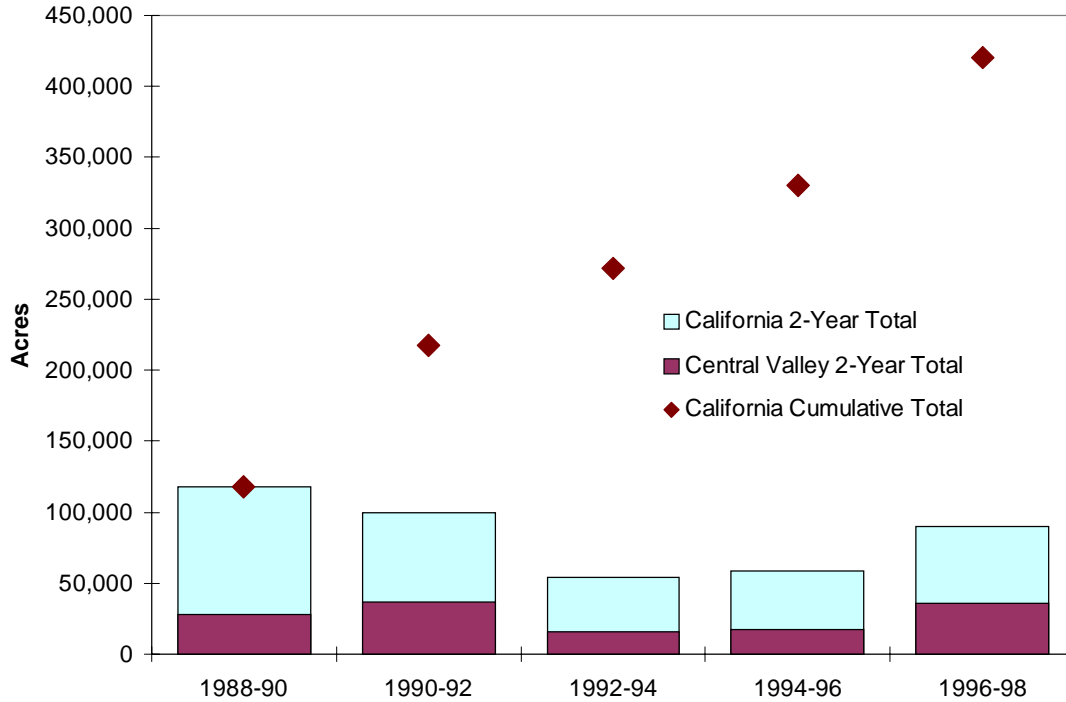
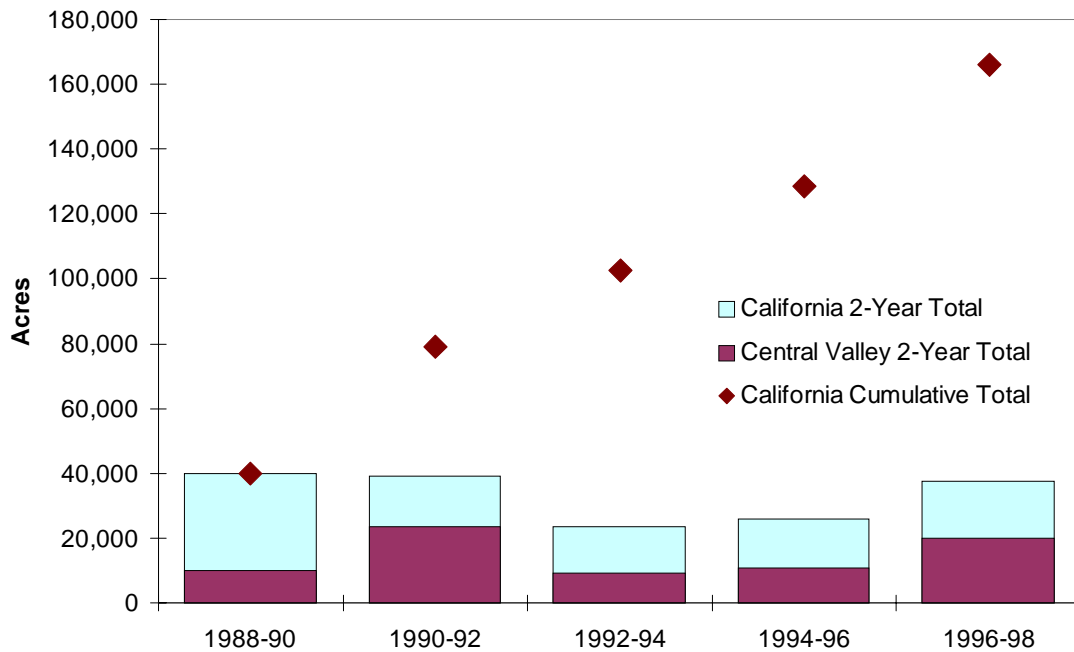


FIGURE 6

Conversion of "Cropland" to Urban and Built-up Uses, 1988-1998

(There are about 11,781,000* acres of cropland in California)



*The FMMP Reports 11,781,000 acres in 1998. The 1997 Census of Agriculture reports 10,804,000 acres.

Source: California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2000.

- Farmland conversion is a topic of particular interest in the Central Valley, which has over half of the state's agricultural land. The Central Valley has had a lower proportion of its cropland and grazing land converted than the rest of the state. The Valley, with about 64% of California's cropland, recorded 44% of statewide cropland conversion between 1988 and 1998. Similarly, Valley grazing land, about 44% of the state total, contributed only 27% of the total grazing land conversions.

TABLE 7

Land Use Recorded by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 1998 (1,000 acres)

| | California | Central Valley | Central Valley as a Percent of California |
|--------------------------|------------|----------------|---|
| Cropland | 11,781 | 7,496 | 63.6% |
| Grazing Land | 14,986 | 6,530 | 43.6% |
| Urban and Built-up Land | 3,079 | 788 | 25.6% |
| Other Land | 13,550 | 5,305 | 39.2% |
| Total Land Inventoried | 44,096 | 20,304 | 46.0% |
| Land Not Inventoried | 55,727 | 6,570 | 11.8% |
| Total Land in California | 99,823 | 26,874 | 26.9% |

TABLE 8

Central Valley Land Converted to Urban and Built-up Uses as a Percent of California Land Conversion, 1988-1998

| | Cropland | Grazing Land | Total Agricultural Land | Other Land | Total Land |
|---------|----------|--------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| 1988-90 | 29% | 27% | 29% | 21% | 23% |
| 1990-92 | 48% | 24% | 42% | 22% | 37% |
| 1992-94 | 47% | 24% | 39% | 20% | 29% |
| 1994-96 | 46% | 21% | 37% | 23% | 31% |
| 1996-98 | 53% | 34% | 47% | 28% | 40% |
| Total | 44% | 27% | 39% | 23% | 32% |

Source: California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2000.

■ Farmland conversion to urban uses is associated with population growth. California’s population increased by about 71% between 1970 and 2000, while the Central Valley’s population doubled. There is general agreement that state population growth will continue, but little consensus on projections of future growth rates.

FIGURE 7
California Population, 1970-2000

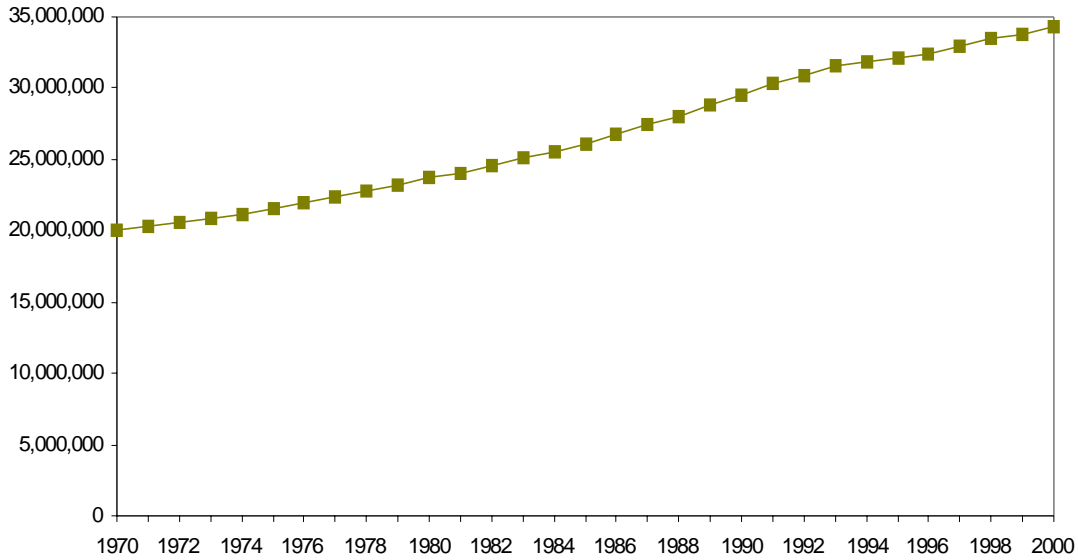
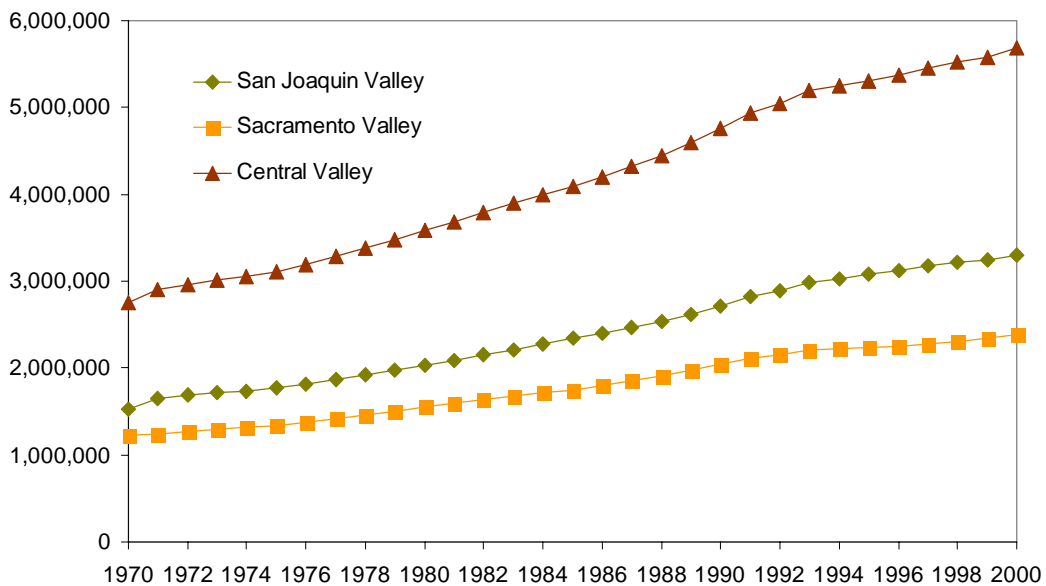


FIGURE 8
Population Growth in the Central Valley, 1970-2000



Source: California Department of Finance, County Population Projections with Race/Ethnic Detail.

I.3 Acres per Farm and Land Ownership

Nationwide, over the last half-century, the number of farms and the total land in farms have decreased, while the size of an average farm has increased. This trend has been less pronounced in California. While the average U.S. farm doubled in acreage between 1954 and 1997, the average California farm increased by about 25%.

However, changes in the *Census of Agriculture's* definition of a “farm” have influenced its statistics for the number of farms and the average farm size. The definition of a farm was changed in 1954, 1959, and 1974, to remove many of the smallest “farms” from census statistics. Each of these definitional changes decreased the reported number of farms and increased the average farm size. Since 1974 a “farm” has been defined in the *Census of Agriculture* as a place that generates agricultural sales of at least \$1,000 annually.

- Under the current *Census of Agriculture* definition, the acreage of the average California farm decreased by 24% between 1974 and 1997.

TABLE 9

Farm Acreage, Number and Acres per Farm, 1940-1997

| Census Year | CALIFORNIA | | | UNITED STATES | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| | Number of Farms | Land in Farms (1,000 acres) | Average Size (acres) | Number of Farms | Land in Farms (1,000 acres) | Average Size (acres) |
| 1940 | 132,658 | 30,524 | 230 | 6,102,417 | 1,065,114 | 175 |
| 1945 | 138,917 | 35,054 | 252 | 5,859,169* | 1,141,615* | 195 |
| 1950 | 137,168 | 36,613 | 267 | 5,388,437 | 1,161,420 | 216 |
| 1954 | 123,075 | 37,795 | 307 | 4,782,416* | 1,158,192* | 242 |
| 1959 | 99,274 | 36,888 | 372 | 3,710,503 | 1,123,508 | 303 |
| 1964 | 80,852 | 37,011 | 458 | 3,154,857 | 1,110,187 | 352 |
| 1969 | 77,875 | 35,328 | 454 | 2,730,250 | 1,062,893 | 389 |
| 1974 | 67,674 | 33,386 | 493 | 2,314,013 | 1,017,030 | 440 |
| 1978 | 73,194 | 32,727 | 447 | 2,257,775 | 1,014,777 | 449 |
| 1982 | 82,463 | 32,157 | 390 | 2,240,976 | 986,797 | 440 |
| 1987 | 83,217 | 30,598 | 368 | 2,087,759 | 964,471 | 462 |
| 1992 | 77,669 | 28,979 | 373 | 1,925,300 | 945,532 | 491 |
| 1997 | 74,126 | 27,699 | 374 | 1,911,859 | 931,795 | 487 |

* Excludes Hawaii and Alaska

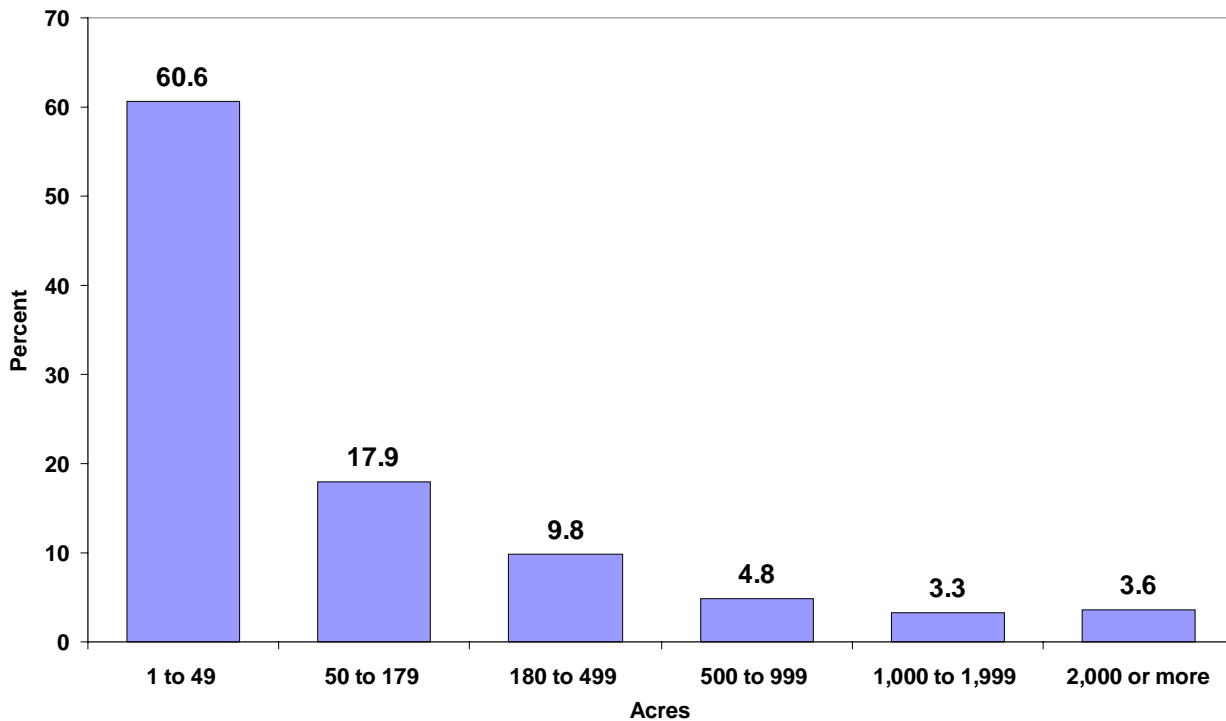
Sources:

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture*, 1940-1992.
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

■ In 1997, more than 75% of California farms were less than 180 acres, yet the “average farm” size was 374 acres. These two statistics highlight the fact that a small percent of large farms account for a large percent of total acreage. These large farms include ranches that graze livestock and may generate relatively little total revenue.

FIGURE 9

Percent of California Farms by Acres per Farm, 1997



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

■ A greater portion of California farmers (72.7%) are full owners of their farms than the United States as a whole (60%). Full ownership in California has been about 2/3 or more since 1940.

TABLE 10

Land Ownership of Farm Operators, 1940-1997

| | All Farm Operators | Full Owners | Part Owners | Tenant | Full Owners | Part Owners | Tenant |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|------------------|----------------|--------|
| CALIFORNIA | | | | | | | |
| Census Year | Number of Farms | | | | Percent of Farms | | |
| 1940 | 132,658 | 89,843 | 13,991 | 28,824 | 67.7 | 10.6 | 21.7 |
| 1945 | 138,917 | 102,948 | 14,106 | 21,863 | 74.1 | 10.2 | 15.7 |
| 1950 | 137,168 | 100,834 | 17,478 | 18,856 | 73.5 | 12.7 | 13.8 |
| 1954 | 123,002 | 88,870 | 18,328 | 15,804 | 72.3 | 14.9 | 12.8 |
| 1959 | 99,232 | 68,489 | 17,756 | 12,987 | 69.0 | 17.9 | 13.1 |
| 1964 | 80,852 | 53,218 | 15,818 | 11,816 | 65.8 | 19.6 | 14.7 |
| 1969 | 77,875 | 53,727 | 14,361 | 9,787 | 68.9 | 18.4 | 12.5 |
| 1974 | 67,674 | 47,339 | 12,377 | 7,958 | 70.0 | 18.3 | 11.7 |
| 1978 | 73,194 | 51,729 | 12,702 | 8,763 | 70.7 | 17.4 | 12.0 |
| 1982 | 82,463 | 60,556 | 12,692 | 9,215 | 73.4 | 15.4 | 11.2 |
| 1987 | 83,217 | 60,639 | 12,218 | 10,360 | 72.9 | 14.7 | 12.4 |
| 1992 | 77,669 | 56,559 | 11,471 | 9,639 | 72.8 | 14.8 | 12.4 |
| 1997 | 74,126 | 53,878 | 10,888 | 9,360 | 72.7 | 14.7 | 12.6 |
| UNITED STATES | | | | | | | |
| Census Year | Number of Farms | | | | Percent of Farms | | |
| 1940 | 6,096,799 | 3,084,138 | 615,039 | 2,397,622 | 50.6 | 10.1 | 39.3 |
| 1945 | 5,859,169 | 3,301,361 | 660,502 | 1,897,306 | 56.3 | 11.3 | 32.4 |
| 1950 | 5,379,250 | 3,091,473 | 840,924 | 1,446,853 | 57.5 | 15.6 | 26.9 |
| 1954 | 4,782,393 | 2,736,941 | 856,931 | 1,188,521 | 57.2 | 17.9 | 24.9 |
| 1959 | 3,703,642 | 2,116,026 | 809,600 | 778,016 | 57.1 | 21.8 | 21.1 |
| 1964 | 3,152,611 | 1,816,259 | 780,781 | 555,571 | 57.6 | 24.8 | 17.7 |
| 1969 | 2,730,250 | 1,705,720 | 671,607 | 352,923 | 62.4 | 24.5 | 12.9 |
| 1974 | 2,314,013 | 1,423,953 | 628,224 | 261,836 | 61.5 | 27.2 | 11.3 |
| 1978 | 2,257,775 | 1,297,902 | 681,112 | 278,761 | 57.5 | 30.2 | 12.3 |
| 1982 | 2,240,976 | 1,325,773 | 656,249 | 258,954 | 59.2 | 29.3 | 11.6 |
| 1987 | 2,087,759 | 1,238,547 | 609,012 | 240,200 | 59.3 | 29.2 | 11.5 |
| 1992 | 1,925,300 | 1,111,738 | 596,657 | 216,905 | 57.7 | 31.0 | 11.3 |
| 1997 | 1,911,859 | 1,146,891 | 573,839 | 191,129 | 60.0 | 30.0 | 10.0 |

Sources:

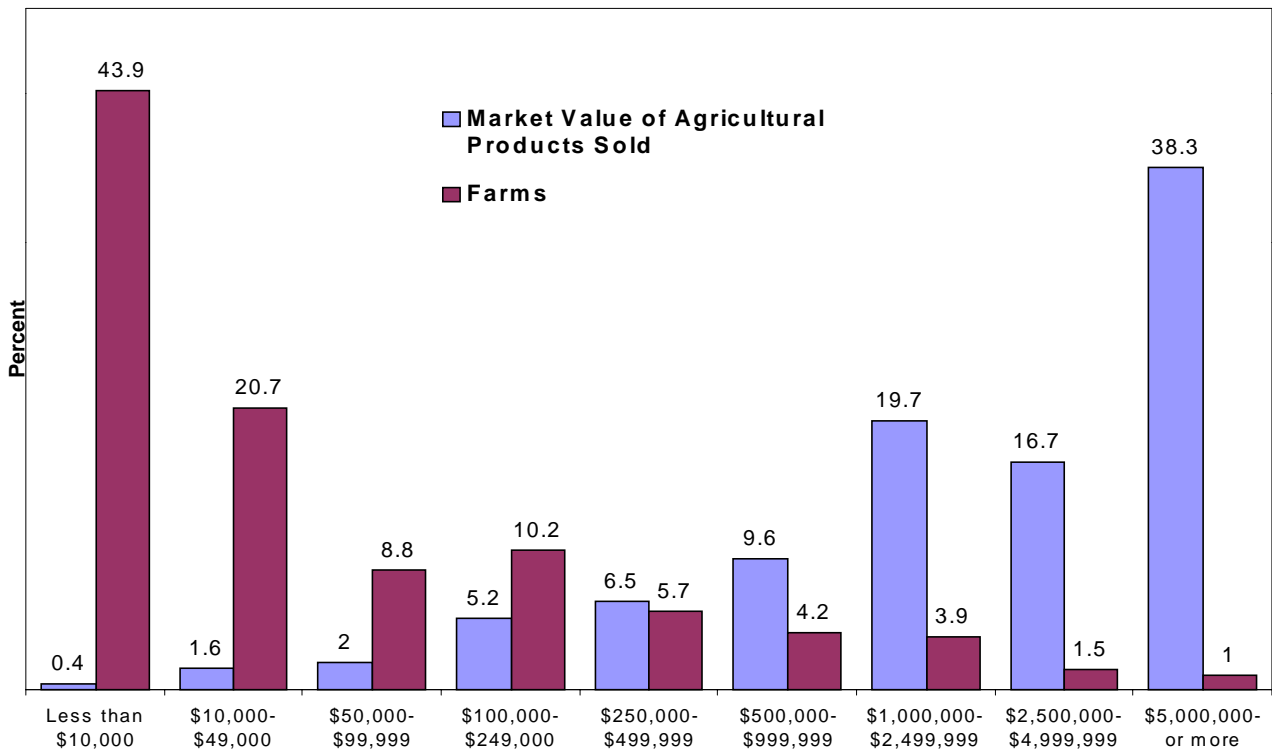
1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture, 1940-1992*.
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.

I.4 Size Distribution by Total Sales

By sales value, California agriculture is comprised of a large number of small farms, while a small number of farms represent most of the sales. The 16% of California farms with sales of more than \$250,000 in 1997 also represented over 90% of total sales value.

FIGURE 10

Share of California Farms and Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold, by Total Sales Category, 1997



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

■ In 1997, almost 44% of California farms sold less than \$10,000 of agricultural products. Most of these farms are operated by retired or part-time farmers. See I.6 for more information on retired and part-time farmers.

I.5 Legal Organization

More than three-quarters of all farms in California are individual or family proprietorships, and another 15% are partnerships.

- About 7% of all California farms are legally organized as corporations. About 85% of these are family held. Non-family held corporations (1% of the farms) produce about 6% of total agricultural sales both in the United States and in California.
- Corporate farms, including those which are family held, are on average much larger than individual or family held proprietorships.

TABLE 11

Legal Organization of Farms, 1997

| | | CALIFORNIA | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------|--------------|
| | | Individual or Family | Partnership | CORPORATION | | Other* | All Farms |
| | | | | Family Held | Not Family Held | | |
| Farms | percent | 76.6 | 14.6 | 6.0 | 1.1 | 1.8 | 100 |
| Average Area | acres | 249 | 708 | 975 | 1,103 | 529 | 374 |
| Total Area | percent | 51 | 28 | 16 | 3 | 3 | 100 |
| Average Sales | (\$1,000) | 130 | 655 | 1,541 | 1,770 | 222 | 311 |
| Total Sales | percent | 32 | 31 | 30 | 6 | 1 | 100 |
| Average Value of Land and Buildings | (\$1,000) | 595 | 1,710 | 3,054 | 3,535 | 1,232 | 941 |
| | | UNITED STATES | | | | | |
| | | Individual or Family | Partnership | CORPORATION | | Other* | All Farms |
| | | | | Family Held | Not Family Held | | |
| Farms | percent | 86.0 | 8.9 | 4.0 | 0.4 | 0.8 | 100 |
| Average Area | acres | 356 | 881 | 1571 | 1507 | 4,378 | 487 |
| Total Area | percent | 63 | 16 | 13 | 1 | 7 | 100 |
| Average Sales | (\$1,000) | 62 | 210 | 603 | 1,395 | 117 | 103 |
| Total Sales | percent | 52 | 18 | 23 | 6 | 1 | 100 |
| Average Value of Land and Buildings | (\$1,000) | 360 | 791 | 1,338 | 1,769 | 1,357 | 450 |

*Other includes cooperatives, estates, trusts, and institutionals.

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

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

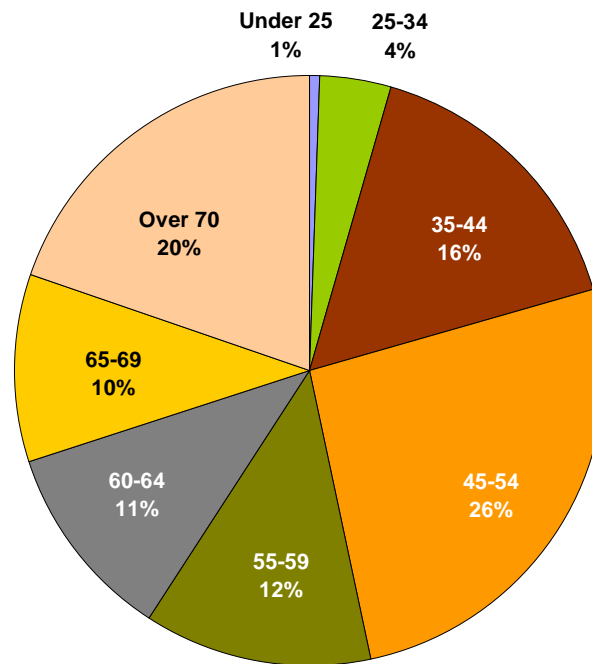
Farm Operators by Age Group, 1987, 1992, 1997

| 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

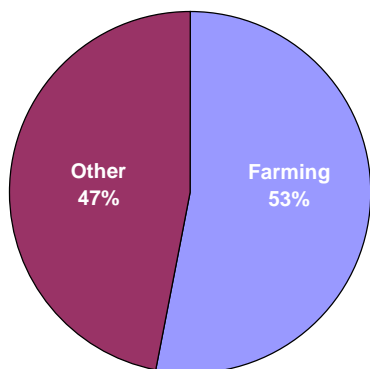
| CALIFORNIA | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---------|-----------|---------|--------|---------|---------|-------------|--------------|
| | None | Any | 1-49 | 50-99 | 100-149 | 150-199 | 200 or More | Not Reported |
| Number | | | | | | | | |
| 1987 | 32,051 | 47,085 | 4,991 | 2,832 | 3,417 | 4,897 | 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

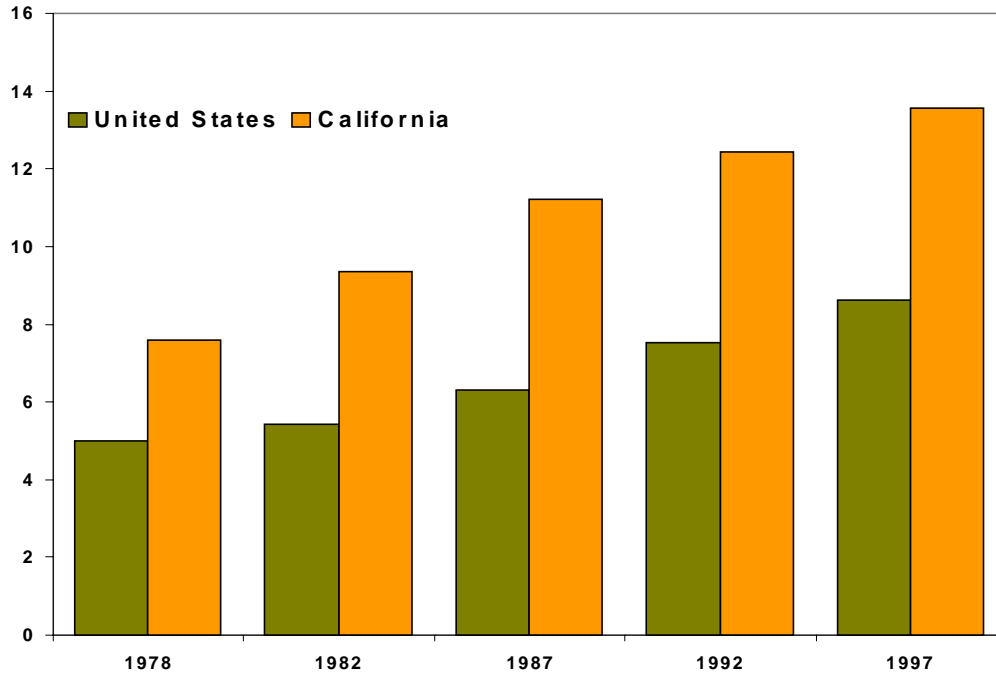
California Farmers by Principal Occupation, 1997



■ 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.