

# Agriculture



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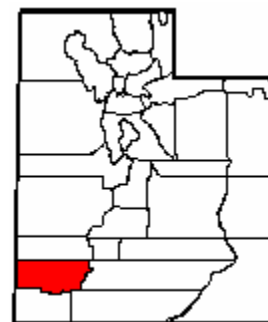
## Size and Scope of Iron County Agriculture 2019

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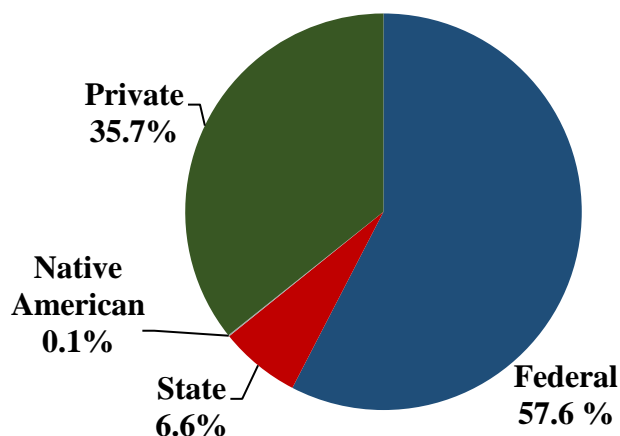


### Location

Iron County is located in the southwestern portion of the state and is bordered by Nevada on the west. Other surrounding Utah counties include Beaver, Garfield, Kane, and Washington. As of 2017, the population was estimated at 51,001. The county seat is Parowan, while the largest city is Cedar City.

### Land Ownership

Figure 1 shows the division of land ownership within the county.



**Figure 1. Iron County Land Ownership**

Source: 2017 Utah Counties Fact Book

The majority of the federally owned ground is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The state-owned ground is primarily under the jurisdiction of the Utah School and Institutional Trust Land Administration (SITLA). Portions of the state-owned land are wildlife preserves. The private ground is primarily farm ground and grazing areas.

The 2017 Census of Agriculture indicated that there were 512,940 acres in farms or ranches in the county with an average size of 1,055 acres and an average value of \$1,955 per acre. The county had 83,441 acres in cropland of which 65,182 acres were harvested and 64,380 were irrigated.

### Growing Season

The growing season in Iron County averages about 4 months. Table 1 displays some of the details on climatology in three areas of Iron County according to the Utah Climate Center (2019).

**Table 1.**  
*Iron County Annual Precipitation and Average Frost-Free Days*

Location	Annual Precip.	Last spring freeze	First fall freeze	Freeze -free period
Cedar FAA Airport	10.7 inches	May 22	Sept. 30	133 days
Modena	10.3 inches	May 31	Sept. 22	115 days
Parowan Power Plant	12.2 inches	May 24	Sept. 28	128 days

## Crop Production

Table 2 displays the major crops grown in Iron County with 2017 yields and total acres harvested.

**Table 2.**  
*Iron County 2017 Crop Acres and Yields*

Primary Crops	Yields	Harvested Acres	Average Yield/Acre
Hay	278,020 tons	59,417	4.7 tons
Wheat	49,060 bu.	596	82 bu.
Corn, Grain	248,153 bu.	1,506	164 bu.
Corn, Silage	83,594 tons	3,311	25.2 tons

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Typical ground preparation for planting alfalfa is begun by spraying Roundup in the fall or early spring to kill the quack grass prior to disking. The ground is then harrowed and planted. The procedure is the same for planting small grains with the exception of using Roundup. Typically, Roundup is not used prior to planting grains, as grains are less susceptible to large weed infestations and producers have the ability to control many weeds within grains more cost effectively using a broadleaf herbicide as

weeds emerge. About 98% of all grain is planted in the spring of the year.

The most prevalent crop rotation practice is to leave alfalfa in for four to five years, plant corn or small grains for one to two years, then replant alfalfa. Producers typically get three to four cuttings of alfalfa each year. About 50% of all inputs (e.g., seed, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.) are purchased locally while the remaining 50% of those are bought in a neighboring county.

The majority of the hay in the county is sold to the dairies in California or exported to China, Japan, or Korea. Approximately 20% is retained for local use, 40% is exported, and 40% is sold into California.

## Irrigation

The majority of irrigation water on the west side of the county (Enterprise and Beryl areas), comes from wells and is almost all irrigated with pivots. On the east side of the county (Cedar and Parowan areas), the majority of the water comes from mountain reservoirs and is put out through wheel lines and pivots. Some of the east side also uses wells for irrigation.

## Livestock Production

Table 3 lists inventories of the major classes of livestock produced in the county as of 2017 compared with 2012 inventories.

**Table 3.**  
**Major Livestock Commodities**

Livestock	2012	2017	% Change
All Cattle	41,442	36,720	-11.4%
Beef Cows	10,884	11,808	8.5%
Milk Cows	8,609	11,357	31.9%
Sheep and Lambs	36,097	42,525	17.8%

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

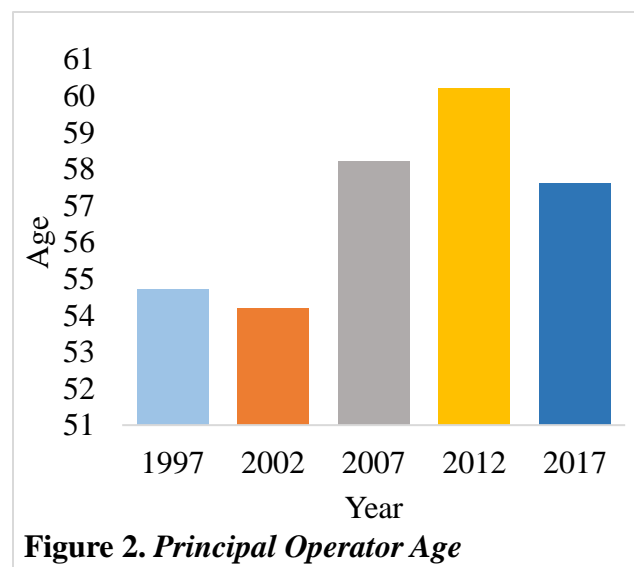
The cattle spend summer on Cedar Mountain and the west desert. They are taken to the west desert in May and on Cedar Mountain in June where they are permitted to remain until October 31. About 25% of cattle are wintered in the desert while the rest of the cows are fed hay in pastures. Most of the calves are fed in the county until January and February and then they are sold and sent to feedlots in the Midwest. Approximately 10% of calves are retained while the rest are sold. The majority of the calves are sold to cattle buyers. Some of the smaller producers use a regional livestock auction in Cedar City. Most of the operations that are big enough to fill a truck prefer to sell to a buyer. A smaller number of producers also use video auctions.

Through the 2007 Census of Agriculture, dairy cow numbers in the county were reported at under 3,000 head. After that time, the numbers increased to over 11,000 as several larger dairies have been built in the area. A good climate and adequate local access to high quality feed (alfalfa and corn) makes Iron County an attractive location for dairy farmers. Several various processors purchase the milk produced in the county including a cheese plant in Beaver and a processing plant in Cedar, while some is taken directly to Las Vegas for processing by companies such as Meadow Gold.

Iron County ranks third in the state for sheep production. The ewes are lambled out at the farms and then the ewes and lambs spend the summer on Cedar Mountain. In the fall, they are brought down to the valleys and the lambs are sold at weaning and shipped to feedlots in California and Colorado. The ewes are bred on the alfalfa fields and spend the winter on desert areas in the western part of the county before being brought back to the farms in April to lamb.

### Farm Income and Age of Operator

Cash receipts from 2017 crops equaled \$54,238,000 and cash receipts from livestock totaled \$79,274,000. Total 2017 cash receipts were \$133,512,000, nearly identical to the previous census of agriculture record from 2012 (\$136,747,000). The average age of the primary farmer or rancher was 57.6 in 2017. Figure 2 below graphs the principal operator age for all USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture years since 1997.



Source: USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

## Sources

United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2019). 2017 Ag Census Data. Retrieved from: [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online\\_Resources/Census\\_Data\\_Query\\_Tool/index.php](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/Census_Data_Query_Tool/index.php)

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Utah Climate Center. (2019). Utah State University. Retrieved July 10, 2019, from <https://climate.usu.edu/>

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