

# Agriculture



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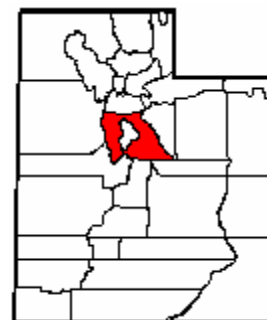
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## Size and Scope of Utah County Agriculture 2019

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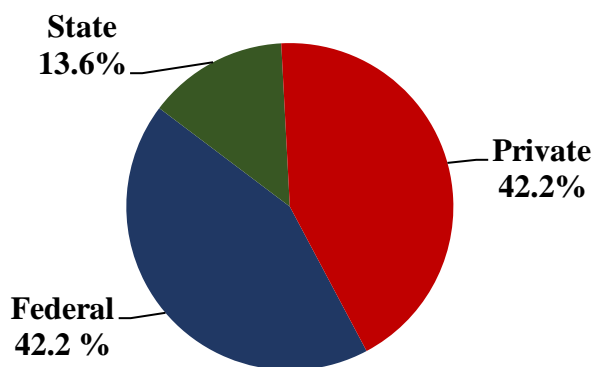


### Location

Utah County is located in the middle of the state. The county seat and largest city is Provo. As of 2018, the population of the county was estimated at 622,213. The Wasatch Mountain Range is in the eastern portion of the county. The elevation drops quickly from the mountains in the east to the Utah Lake valley in the center of the county.

### Land Ownership

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



**Figure 1. Utah County Land Ownership**

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

The 2017 Census of Agriculture indicated that there were 303,795 acres in farms or ranches in the county with an average size of 117 acres and an average value of \$8,734 per acre. The county had 118,125 acres in cropland, of which 73,397 were harvested and 72,669 were irrigated.

Substantial development ongoing within the county has resulted in decreased total farmlands in recent years. Since 2012, over 39,000 acres of farmland have been lost to development. This represents a decrease of over 11 percent in just five years. This trend is expected to continue within the county as the population continues to grow at one of the fastest rates in the state.

Source: 2017 Utah Counties Fact Book

## Growing Season

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

Location	Annual Precip.	Last spring freeze	First fall freeze	Freeze-free period
Fairfield	11.8 inches	June 7	Sept. 10	95 days
Pleasant Grove	16.7 inches	May 7	Oct. 11	158 days
Provo BYU	19.6 inches	April 29	Oct. 14	169 days

## Crop Production

Utah County is one of the primary agricultural production regions in the state. Table 2 displays the major crops grown in Utah County with 2017 yields and total acres harvested.

Primary Crops	Yields	Harvested Acres	Average Yield/Acre
Hay	146,505 tons	39,125	3.7 tons
Corn Grain	492,105 bu.	2,738	179.7 bu.
Corn Silage	207,998 tons	8,163	25.5 tons
Wheat	500,481 bu.	13,093	38.2 bu.
Oats	28,512 bu.	288	99 bu.
Barley	116,226 bu.	1,706	68.1 bu.

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Roundup Ready alfalfa has fallen out of favor with many growers. Only 25% of growers continue to use it. Ground preparation typically involves disking and a type of harrowing operation. Roughly, 40% of alfalfa is fall planted and 60% put in during the spring. Cultivation practices are similar for corn and small grains with about 70% of grains fall planted. Those still using Roundup Ready alfalfa begin ground preparation 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 most prevalent crop rotation that producers practice is to leave alfalfa in for six years, and then for the next four years, rotate between corn and small grains before returning to alfalfa. Producers typically get three to four cuttings of alfalfa each year. About 75% of all inputs (e.g., seed, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.) are purchased locally while the remaining 25% are bought in a neighboring county.

A portion of the soil in the county can be classified as sodic primarily in the low-lying valley floor. Production on these soils is only made possible through extensive decades-old drainage systems. Most of the sodic soils are planted to tolerant pasture grasses. Farmers that cultivate these soils try to apply as much organic matter as they can with moderate success.

The majority of hay from the county is sold to horse owners and local cattle producers while a smaller portion is sent to foreign markets via export brokers.

Irrigation water comes from various sources including Spanish Fork River (45%), Strawberry Reservoir (15%), Deer Creek Reservoir (15%), and wells (25%).

Utah County is also one of the largest fruit producing counties in the state. Table 3 lists some of the major fruits produced within the county and the acreages planted for each fruit. Tart cherries are marketed through two

grower cooperatives. All other fruit is sold locally to consumers with some going to local grocery stores.

Fruit	Total Acres	Bearing Age Acres	Nonbearing Age Acres
Apples	746	622	124
Apricots	43	31	12
Cherries, Sweet	304	258	46
Cherries, Tart	4,630	3,206	1,424
Peaches	794	561	233

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

### Livestock Production

The inventories of the major classes of livestock produced in the county as of 2017 compared with 2012 inventories are listed in Table 4.

Livestock	2012	2017	% Change
All Cattle	57,369	54,299	-5.4%
Beef Cows	18,132	17,050	-6.0%
Milk Cows	15,518	15,337	-1.2%
Hogs	1,658	1,060	-36.1%
Sheep and Lambs	12,165	9,484	-22.0%

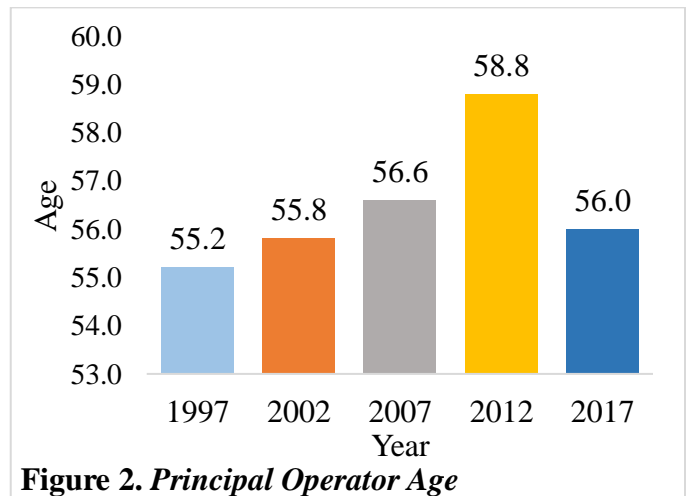
Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Many producers have valley pastures west of I-15 and summer forest grazing permits in the mountains

on the east side of the county. A few of the larger producers will also graze outside the county. The majority will overwinter cows and have them calve on valley pastures. Many of the producers market directly to consumers with the remainder going mostly through the Salina livestock auction.

### Farm Income and Age of Operator

Cash receipts from 2017 crops equaled \$79.8 million and cash receipts from livestock totaled \$122.8 million. Total 2017 cash receipts were \$202.6 million, down just over \$20 million from 2012 (\$222.6 million). The average age of the primary farmer or rancher was 56.0 in 2017, which was a notable decrease from the previous census of agriculture in 2012 when the average age was 58.8. The average age of the principle operator is graphed in Figure 2 for all USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture years since 1997.



Source: 2017 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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