

# AgNews



**DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
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## **2007 Census of Agriculture Data Released** **Statistics for Delaware's \$1 billion agricultural industry updated**

On Wednesday, February 4, Secretary Ed Kee and Delaware's Agricultural Statistician, Chris Cadwallader released the vital statistics of Delaware's more than \$1 billion agricultural industry as part of the simultaneous nationwide release of the 2007 Census of Agriculture data at 1:00 P.M. The Census of Agriculture, a process that dates back to 1840, is the most comprehensive source of statistics portraying our nation's and our state's agriculture. Information on the Delaware Census of Agriculture facts can be obtained by calling the Delaware Agricultural Statistics Service at 302.698.4537 or 800.282.8685 (DE only). Data are available down to the county level and can be accessed on-line: <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/>

In his remarks, Secretary Kee said, "I want to personally thank each and every farmer that took the time to complete their census forms so we can know the status of Delaware's number one industry – agriculture. Today's information shows that we still have a strong viable industry in Delaware that generates dollars that stay in Delaware. Agriculture is truly a strong economic engine, especially in these bleak economic times. Agriculture is one of the positive spots in our total economy."

The 2007 census shows what Delaware's agricultural base is and how it is changing, how many farms and farm operators there are, what kinds of commodities farmers are producing, as well as such things as the farmers' investment in irrigation systems and equipment. Farmers will use the national and state information to implement better marketing decisions for their products. The information released will enable the general public and policy makers at all levels of government to better understand the importance of agriculture to our economy and quality of life.

### **Selected Delaware highlights:**

- Delaware's number of farms in 2007 totaled 2,546. In Delaware the number of small farms increased, mid-size farms decreased, and large farms increased since 2002.
- Since 2002, Delaware has lost approximately 30,000 acres of farm land, due to development pressure and other issues. Delaware still has more than 510,000 acres of farmland, which is forty-one percent of the State's total land. The Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation and DDA have permanently preserved 89,692 acres of Farmland and an additional 2,131 acres of forestland (eighteen percent of the total). Delaware leads the nation in the amount of farmland preserved per capita. Although land in farms has been decreasing at a rate of 6,000 acres per year, Delaware maintains the critical level of cropland necessary to sustain and grow its agricultural industry.
- The amount of land in farms has decreased in New Castle County from 71,248 acres to 66,981 acres (down 4,267 acres or six percent); has decreased in Kent County from 185,329 acres to 173,808 acres (down 11,521 or six percent); and decreased in Sussex County from 283,503 acres to 269,464 acres (down 14,039 or five percent).

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*Census – P. 2*

- Between 2002 and 2007 farm real estate values more than doubled. The average value per farm in 2007 was \$2,073,605 compared with \$980,323 in 2002 with the average value per acre increasing from \$4,054 to \$10,347. Delaware has the fifth highest state value per acre.
- The total value of agricultural sales in 2007 was \$1.1 billion, up seventy-five percent from \$618.9 million in 2002.
- Between 2002 and 2007, the value of sales of crops increased sixty-two percent from \$72.4 million to \$117.1 million.
- Delaware ranked first in lima bean acres harvested.
- Kent and Sussex counties ranked in the top two percent nationally in vegetable acres harvested.
- Livestock sales increased by eighty-six percent since 2002, from \$468.4 million to \$872.4 million.
- Poultry, the linchpin of Delaware's agricultural economy, had a value of sales in 2007 at \$837.4 million, compared with \$440.8 million in 2002, a ninety percent increase.
- Delaware ranked eighth nationally in broiler production.
- Sussex County is the number one poultry producing county in the United States.
- Seven hundred and eight farms accounted for 91% of the total value of sales in Delaware.
- Sussex County ranked twenty eighth out of 3,079 counties in value of agricultural products sold and fourteenth in value of livestock, poultry, and their products sold.
- In 2007, Delaware farms hired 3,223 workers and paid more than \$36 million in wages.
- There were 216 farms that sold over \$3.5 million in agricultural products directly to consumers for human consumption, an increase of 23 percent over 2002. (This increase is mostly attributed to the increase in the number of farmers' markets in Delaware.)
- Twenty-nine percent of Delaware's total farm operators were women in 2007.
- Thirty-five operators were of Hispanic ethnicity.
- Twenty-three operators were Native American;
- Thirty-six operators were Asian.
- Twenty-seven operators were African-American.
- The average age of Delaware farmers was 55.4 years. Twenty-five percent of principal farm operators were age 65 or over.
- Just as in the early 1900s, technological advances such as on farm electricity and telephones were measured, the 2007 Census of Agriculture determined that 1,499 (or fifty-nine percent) of Delaware's farms have internet access, 713 of which have high-speed internet access.
- A total of 8,341 people resided in Delaware's farm households in 2007.
- There were 14 farms engaged in organic agricultural production in 2007.

For complete results of the 2007 Census of Agriculture, go to [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov).

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