

MADISON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT



**For the Year Ending
December 31, 2015**



A Word from our Chairman



The District has placed special emphasis on cover crops to protect and enhance the functionality of the soil. We have had several meetings this past year with farmers coming to our office to discuss the use of cover crops. We estimate that at least 15 Madison County farmers have planted in excess of 3,500 acres of cover crops this fall using 3 to 5 different species of plants in their mixes. The mixes usually include grasses or cereal grains, legumes, and brassicas, i.e., radishes and turnips. Each plant has different qualities that can benefit the soil differently. Some plants supply nitrogen for the following cash crop, some plants produce large amounts of carbon in the form of organic matter, while others produce spectacular root systems that penetrate and loosen the soil. We believe that no-till with winter covers is a powerful one-two punch farmers can use to combat soil erosion and improve water quality. We realize that cover crops can create their own special problems that farmers will have to manage, but no more than any other practice. We feel that as farmers gain experience they will work through these problems and at the end of the day the soil will be a richer and healthier environment for crops.

As Chairman of the Madison County Soil Conservation District, I wish to recognize and extend my thanks to the many individual farmers and landowners that work with the District. Your voluntary efforts to protect your land serve to benefit the greater community both ecologically and economically. Your stewardship of the land is appreciated and is indeed commendable. The District is honored to serve your conservation needs. You and the conservation work you do are the essence of the District program. I thank you for your conservation work.

Second, but of no less importance, as Chairman of the Madison County Soil Conservation District, I wish to recognize and extend my thanks to the SCD board, the office staff, the Madison County Commission, the many participating agencies of the state, and the federal government, local sponsoring businesses, and other groups and individuals for the partnerships we have forged. Together we are able to work together as one to assist rural landowners and farmers in their voluntary efforts to conserve and protect their soil and soil-related natural resources. You are very important to our District program. Without your efforts and support our program would not be so successful. I thank you for your partnership, your work, your good faith, and your continued support.



_____, Chairman
Madison County Soil Conservation District

Non Discrimination Statement:

The Madison County Soil Conservation District does not discriminate on the basis of a person's race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.

Notice:

This District is a recipient of taxpayer funding. If you observe an agency director or employee engaging in any activity which you consider to be illegal, improper, or wasteful, please call the comptroller's toll free hotline: 1-800-232-5454.

MADISON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2015

Presented by the board of supervisors of the Madison County Soil Conservation District to inform district cooperators and the public about the District's program and activities.

INTRODUCTION - The District is a corporate and political subdivision of the state, established by the state soil conservation committee in 1941, organized in accordance with the purposes, provisions, powers and restrictions set forth within the Tennessee Soil Conservation District Law 43-14-201 through 43-14-223. The geographic and political boundaries of the District are the same as those of Madison County. The District is a member of the Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts (TACD), and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). This district is 1 of 95 districts in Tennessee and 1 of nearly 3,000 districts in the United States. The District works closely with NRCS, a Federal agency of USDA. The two entities along with TDA work together through a Memorandum of Understanding with the purpose of conserving soil and soil related natural resources on private agricultural land. The district board is responsible for developing the District's Plan of Work. NRCS is responsible for providing technical assistance to private landowners through the local Soil Conservation District program. In no way does NRCS have authority over the district nor does the district have authority over NRCS. Together the two form a powerful partnership.

MISSION STATEMENT – Our mission is to work with the farmers and agricultural landowners of Madison County to ensure that the soil is used wisely; that it is conserved from generation to generation, therein maintaining and improving the soil's productivity, the land's value, the water quality of our streams, the quantity and quality of our wildlife, and the quality of life for the people living in and visiting Madison County.

DISTRICT SUPERVISORS - A board of supervisors, responsible for developing and administering the District's long range program, and governs the District. The board is composed of five landowners residing within the District. Two of the supervisors are appointed by the state soil conservation committee, while three of the supervisors are elected by the land owners within the District. The term served by a supervisor is three years. However, there are no term limits. The board receives no salary. Presently, the board consists of Allen Verell, Don Johnson, Joel Haynes, Bob Bryant, and Don Pearson.



Chairman, Allen Verell, of the Huntersville Community was elected to the board in 1995, and was elected to serve a 7th term in 2013. Allen served as a past Director of TACD for Area VIII. Allen is a full time farmer and is a past recipient of the District Conservation Farmer Award.



Vice-Chairman, Don Johnson, of the Denmark Community was appointed to the Board in 2003 by the state soil conservation committee and reappointed to a 5th term in 2015. Don is a full time farmer and cotton ginner. Don is a past recipient of the District's Conservation Farmer Award and TACD Category I state winner. Don is a second generation SCD Board member preceded by his father Kenneth Johnson who served on the board in the 1950s and 1960s.



Secretary-Treasurer, Joel Haynes, of the Huntersville Community, was appointed to the board in 2000 by the state soil conservation committee, and was reappointed to a 5th term in 2014. Joel currently serves as the Director of TACD for Area VIII. Joel is a full time farmer, as well as a partner in a construction company. Joel is a past recipient of the District Conservation Farmer Award and TACD Category I state winner.



Bob Bryant, of the Beech Bluff Community was elected to the board in 2001 and was elected to serve a 4th term in 2013. Bob is an avid sportsman. He has held leadership positions in the conservation of our natural resources at the local, state, and national levels. Bob's passion for the outdoors and his concerns for wildlife led him to found the local, "Forked Deer", chapter of Quail Unlimited, of which Bob has served as its President. Bob is also a former chairman of the Tennessee Council of Quail Unlimited and served as a Trustee on the Quail Unlimited National Board.



Don Pearson of the Adair Community was elected to the board in 2013. Don is a full time farmer and is a past recipient of the District Conservation Farmer Award. Don is a graduate of the AgStar program.

OFFICE STAFF

Technically the District does not have any employees. However, there were 4 employees working out of the office in 2015, which we claim as our own. They were:



Kenneth Williams “left”

Kenneth, a Soil Conservationist for NRCS, has been stationed in the Jackson Field Office since January of 1997. Among other duties, Kenneth is responsible for carrying out the duties and tasks assigned to him by the District Conservationist.

Brad Denton “middle left”

Brad, a District Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), has been stationed in the Jackson Field Office since 1986. Among other duties, Brad is responsible for providing private landowners and operators, as District cooperators, the technical assistance necessary for them to achieve their conservation goals and objectives.

Mary Beth Flowers “middle right”

Mary Beth Flowers has been the Office Secretary for the District since 2010. As office secretary Mary Beth is responsible for assisting the board with the administration of the district’s plan of work including the various conservation cost-share programs provided by NRCS and TDA through the District to district cooperators.

Benton James “right”

Benton James has been an Engineering Technician for the District since 1979. Benton is responsible for providing private landowners technical assistance in evaluating resource problems, planning, designing, supervising, and certifying the installation of conservation practices according to NRCS design standards and specifications.

District Annual Awards Banquet:

March 11th -



Over 100 guests attended our Awards & Appreciation Banquet where guests were treated to their choice of a steak or chicken dinner. Kevin Brown, NRCS State Conservationist and Doug Taylor with TDA spoke to the group. Our feature speaker, Steve Raper, Vice President of Water and Waste Water with the Jackson Energy Authority talked about JEA's use of groundwater and the abundant quantity and outstanding quality of our West Tennessee's underground aquifer.

Brad Cochran of northeast Madison County was recognized as the District's Outstanding Cooperator of 2014. Brad, a graduate of UT Martin with a degree in plant and soil science, has a keen interest in soil conservation and has worked closely with the district and NRCS to improve the functionality of his soil. Brad believes the key to growing good crops is good, rich, productive soil. He believes that good productive soil can be built and maintained by keeping it covered at all times, disturbing it less, and by keeping plants growing in it year round. Brad has been no-tilling for years but Brad sees cover crops as essential for building and maintaining rich productive soil. Brad has been experimenting with cover crops for several years and, so far, he is pleased with the results. He sees that cover crops give him several benefits including increase soil organic matter, which results in less compaction, greater infiltration, less runoff, less erosion, greater water holding capacity, and less competition from weeds. Brad's cover crop mixes include radishes, clovers, peas, canola, oats, rye and rye grass. Brad grows several hundred acres of cover crops each year and tends to them much like he does his cash crops.

At the conclusion of the meeting there was a drawing for the 15 potted plants that decorated the tables, along with the head table centerpiece, and 10 Four Seasons gift cards.

Madison SCD Hosts TACD Annual Convention

Feb. 22nd - 24th - Double Tree Hotel, Jackson, TN



Madison County SCD hosted the TACD 71st annual convention at the double Tree Hotel in Jackson in February. Over 250 people from across Tennessee attended the three day meeting. The feature speaker was Ohio farmer and Soil Health pioneer Dave Brandt. Dave spoke on Monday morning then returned Tuesday evening to join local farmers Marty Hinson, and Matt Griggs in an open forum on soil health. Other speakers included David Salyers with West Tennessee River Basin Authority, Dr. Larry Steckel; weed specialist with U.T., Scott Schoefernacker; Groundwater Specialist with the University of Memphis, and Harbert Alexander; local author and historian. Pastor Kenneth Williams with Greater Mercer Baptist Church spoke at Vespers Sunday evening. Kenneth

is also a soil conservationist with NRCS in the Jackson Field Office. Kellye Cash, Miss America, 1987 and Grand-niece of Johnny Cash provided entertainment at the banquet to wrap up the 3 day meeting. Madison SCD played important parts with the meeting. Allen Verell, district chairman, welcomed everyone to Jackson and Joel Haynes, district Sec./Tres. provided the opening prayer. District staff helped arrange the Vespers, Banquet Entertainment, the Pledge, National Anthem, Color Guard, the TCDEA social, took pictures for the website, and contacted the media. The convention was very successful in spite of bad weather that plagued the entire state just days before the meeting. [Visit the TACD website for pictures and videos of the convention.](#)

PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMS

The district works with federal, state, and local governments, various agencies, conservation groups, and businesses to obtain technical and financial assistance for district cooperators. The following are conservation programs that were utilized by district cooperators in 2015:

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM (EQIP) - EQIP is a USDA-NRCS program which provides agricultural landowners and operators with technical assistance and cost-share toward the installation of conservation practices such as gully control structures.

TDA Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund Program (TDA-ARCF) - ARCF is a conservation program of the District funded by a grant from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. With the grant the District is able to enter into contracts with district cooperators through which they apply conservation practices to their farms according to NRCS standards and specification and are eligible to receive up to 75% in reimbursement. The intent of the program is to improve water quality of Tennessee's rivers and streams by reducing soil erosion and containing animal waste. Eligible practices included, grade stabilization structures, terraces, diversions, livestock waterer with heavy use protection, and cover crops.

WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM (WRP) - The Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) is a USDA-NRCS program where the government purchases permanent or temporary easements on lands that would have been considered wetlands before they were cleared and cropped. The land is restored to its natural hydrology and planted to bottomland hardwood trees. Wetlands benefit the environment in many ways, including filtering ground water, recharging aquifers, reducing downstream flooding, protecting infrastructure, and improving habitat for wildlife.

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP) CRP is a USDA-FSA farm program that seeks to conserve soil on non-federal lands, improve the water quality of rivers and streams, enhance wildlife habitat, and stabilize and diversify farm income. Through CRP, landowners can rent out eligible cropland to the government for 10 to 15 years. The landowner has to establish the land to an acceptable conservation cover and the cover must be maintained for the life of the contract. USDA reimburses the landowners up to 50% of the establishment costs and will pay the landowner an annual rent based on the soil's relative productivity. In Madison County, the soil rental rates range from \$48 to \$185 per

acre, with an average of \$97. There are several different CRP programs available. Some CRP programs are open for enrollment year round. A general CRP enrollment is unpredictable and is usually only open for a few weeks.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP) - is a USDA-NRCS program in which the sign-up is continuous. CStP are 5 year contracts that encourage producers to maintain existing conservation while incorporating more conservation. Landowners can apply to enroll in CSP for crop, pasture, and forest land. To be eligible, among other things, a producer must control the land for 5 years, be the operator on record at the FSA office, enroll all such eligible land in CSP, keep good farm records, have already done substantial conservation work and must be willing to incorporate additional conservation practices.

Information & Technology -

Website: www.madisonscd.com. The site is packed with information about the District and it has many useful links. One can find much information on soil, water, conservation programs, conservation practices, and much more. Recently all District annual reports back to 1942 were uploaded to the site. These annual reports provide a good historical background for the district and agriculture.

Newsletter - The district publishes and distributes an annual newsletter to keep farmers updated.

Geo-Referenced Software - Much information is digitized and uploaded on the computer, including aerial photography for several years dating back to 1997. Using **ArcMap software** the photography can be overlaid with geo-reference layers including roads, streams, soils, parcels, USGS topo imagery, Flood Insurance Rate Maps, and much more including **LIDAR imagery** with which we are able to create customized topographic and relief maps of farms. Contour lines can be drawn less than a foot apart. The precision is good enough that we are able to use it to aid with our engineering conservation practices. With ArcMap and the various layers customized maps can be made for conservation farm plans.

ENGINEERING ASSISTANCE

Each year, the District is involved with the installation of several structural conservation practices that control soil erosion; improve the water quality of rivers and streams. Assistance includes site evaluation, design surveys, practice designs, practice layout, construction assistance, checkout and certification. In 2015 the office staff provided cooperators with engineering services for over 50 practices including grade control structures, terraces, diversions, and basins.

Summary of USDA and TDA Conservation Programs in Madison County SCD 2015

<u>Program</u>	<u>Active Contracts</u>	<u>Acres Benefiting</u>	<u>Funding Applied</u>
② CRP (FSA): Farms Enrolled to-date Acres Benefiting 2015 Funding Applied 2015	333	9,734	\$993,257
② CStP (NRCS): Contracts Acres Benefiting Funding Applied 2015	12	14,717	\$286,668
② EQIP (NRCS): New Contracts Active Contracts prior 2015 Acres Benefiting 2015 Funding Applied 2015	17 28	3,404	\$92,138
② TDA/ARCF (SCD): Contracts Acres Benefiting Funding Applied	14	638	\$39,940
② WRP/EWP-FPE (NRCS): Active Easements Prior to 2015 New Easements Purchased 2015 Easements in Progress 2015 Restorations Completed = 2 Restoration Funding 2015 New Applications 2015 = 1	11 2 1 _____ _____ _____	894 227 51 _____ _____ _____	\$631,881 \$145,074 _____
Totals 2015	<u>418</u>	<u>29,665</u>	<u>\$2,188,358</u>

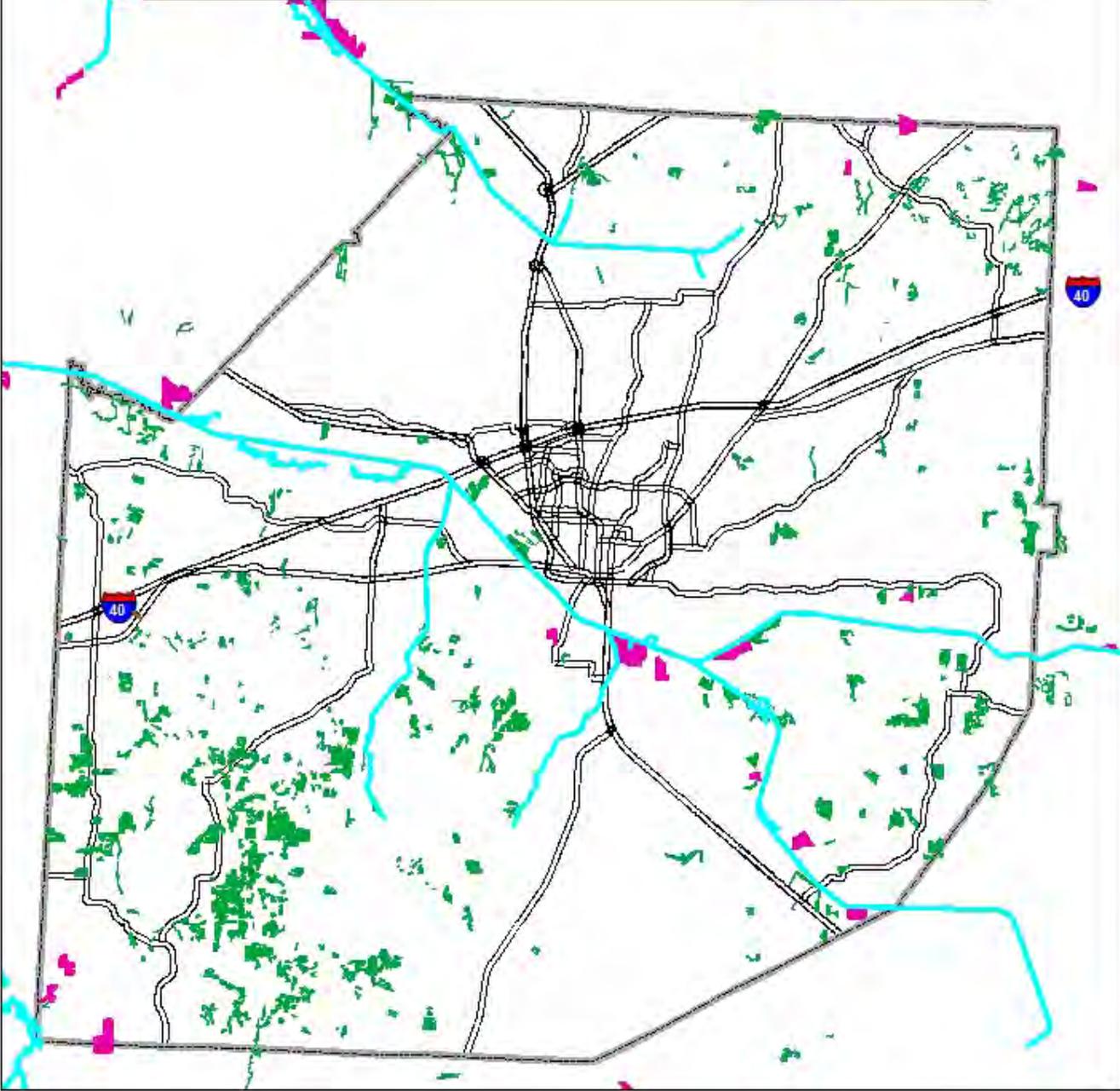
② The District has nearly 2,000 Conservation Farm Plans developed with farmers and landowners on over 100,000 acres.

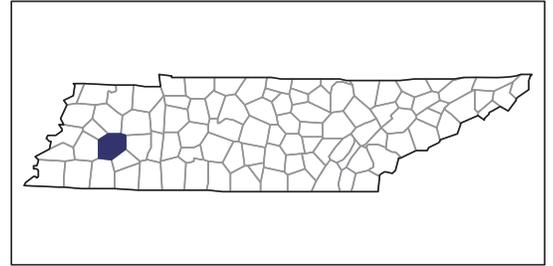


USDA Conservation Contracts Madison County 2015

-  WRP Easements
-  CRP Contracts
-  County Boundary
-  Major Roads
-  Rivers

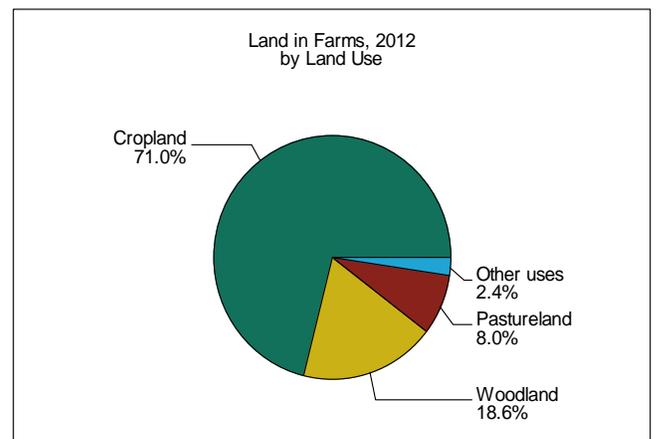
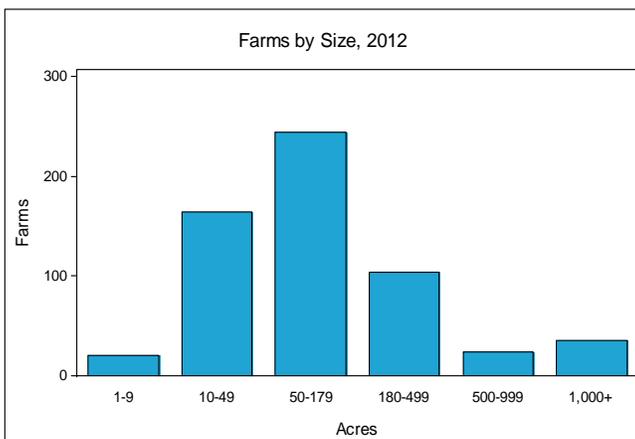
1 in = 4 miles





Madison County Tennessee

	2012	2007	% change
Number of Farms	592	706	- 16
Land in Farms	165,946 acres	177,090 acres	- 6
Average Size of Farm	280 acres	251 acres	+ 12
Market Value of Products Sold	\$66,039,000	\$28,159,000	+ 135
Crop Sales \$62,369,000 (94 percent)			
Livestock Sales \$3,670,000 (6 percent)			
Average Per Farm	\$111,552	\$39,885	+ 180
Government Payments	\$2,288,000	\$5,548,000	- 59
Average Per Farm Receiving Payments	\$6,251	\$12,034	- 48





Madison County – Tennessee

Ranked items among the 95 state counties and 3,079 U.S. counties, 2012

Item	Quantity	State Rank	Universe ¹	U.S. Rank	Universe ¹
MARKET VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS SOLD (\$1,000)					
Total value of agricultural products sold	66,039	18	95	1,546	3,077
Value of crops including nursery and greenhouse	62,369	11	95	999	3,072
Value of livestock, poultry, and their products	3,670	74	95	2,587	3,076
VALUE OF SALES BY COMMODITY GROUP (\$1,000)					
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas	45,246	11	95	893	2,926
Tobacco	-	-	56	-	436
Cotton and cottonseed	16,382	7	25	112	635
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes	(D)	(D)	94	(D)	2,802
Fruits, tree nuts, and berries	(D)	7	91	(D)	2,724
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod	(D)	(D)	93	(D)	2,678
Cut Christmas trees and short rotation woody crops	(D)	22	44	(D)	1,530
Other crops and hay	299	62	95	2,643	3,049
Poultry and eggs	(D)	(D)	94	(D)	3,013
Cattle and calves	3,410	66	95	2,051	3,056
Milk from cows	(D)	65	71	(D)	2,038
Hogs and pigs	48	27	88	1,463	2,827
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, and milk	43	59	94	2,016	2,988
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, and donkeys	70	71	94	2,088	3,011
Aquaculture	-	-	38	-	1,366
Other animals and other animal products	6	73	95	2,391	2,924
TOP CROP ITEMS (acres)					
Corn for grain	36,775	9	95	722	2,638
Soybeans for beans	28,363	13	87	804	2,162
Cotton, all	26,092	6	25	100	635
Upland cotton	26,092	6	25	97	635
Wheat for grain, all	10,525	9	81	658	2,537
TOP LIVESTOCK INVENTORY ITEMS (number)					
Cattle and calves	5,768	85	95	2,322	3,063
Goats, all	761	41	94	772	2,996
Layers	743	78	94	2,097	3,040
Horses and ponies	720	55	95	1,631	3,072
Hogs and pigs	140	49	93	1,839	2,889

Other County Highlights, 2012

Economic Characteristics	Quantity	Operator Characteristics	Quantity
Farms by value of sales:		Principal operators by primary occupation:	
Less than \$1,000	275	Farming	277
\$1,000 to \$2,499	52	Other	315
\$2,500 to \$4,999	37		
\$5,000 to \$9,999	45	Principal operators by sex:	
\$10,000 to \$19,999	53	Male	502
\$20,000 to \$24,999	21	Female	90
\$25,000 to \$39,999	21		
\$40,000 to \$49,999	7	Average age of principal operator (years)	61.8
\$50,000 to \$99,999	16		
\$100,000 to \$249,999	21	All operators by race ² :	
\$250,000 to \$499,999	13	American Indian or Alaska Native	1
\$500,000 or more	31	Asian	4
Total farm production expenses (\$1,000)	51,064	Black or African American	91
Average per farm (\$)	86,256	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	-
		White	700
Net cash farm income of operation (\$1,000)	20,726	More than one race	11
Average per farm (\$)	35,009	All operators of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino Origin ²	4

See "Census of Agriculture, Volume 1, Geographic Area Series" for complete footnotes, explanations, definitions, and methodology.

- Represents zero. (D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual operations.

¹ Universe is number of counties in state or U.S. with item. ² Data were collected for a maximum of three operators per farm.

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