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Number of farms in Iowa drops

Abstract

USDA's annual Farms and Land in Farms survey shows 85,300 farms in Iowa in 2019, down 700 from 2018.

Disciplines

Agricultural and Resource Economics | Agriculture

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DOWN AGAIN: The total number of farms in the U.S. declined by 5,800 in 2019 compared to 2018, according to latest USDA survey.

Number of farms in Iowa drops

USDA's annual Farms and Land in Farms survey shows 85,300 farms in Iowa in 2019, down 700 from 2018.

Lee Schulz | Mar 18, 2020

The number of farms in Iowa for 2019 was estimated at 85,300, down 700 farms from the previous year, according to the USDA Farms and Land in Farms 2019 Summary released Feb. 20. This is the smallest number of recorded farms in the history of the Iowa data measured back to 1975.

USDA defines a farm as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the year. Government payments are included in sales. Ranches, institutional farms, experimental and research farms, and Indian reservations are included as farms. Places with the entire acreage enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program and other government conservation programs are counted as farms.

Farm size keeps increasing

Total land in farms in Iowa dropped from 34.1 million acres in 1975 to 30.6 million acres in 2019. This is the 10th consecutive year of this total for farm acres. The average Iowa farm size for 2019 was 359 acres, up 3 acres from the previous year. This is the highest acres per farm since data became available in 1975.

Land in farms consists of agricultural land used for crops, pasture or grazing. Also included is woodland and wasteland not actually under cultivation or used for pasture or grazing, provided it was part of the farm operator's total operation. Land in farms includes acres in CRP, WRP and other government conservation programs.

The number of farms in the U.S. was estimated at 2,023,400 for 2019, down 5,800 farms from 2018. Total land in U.S. farms, at 897.4 million acres, decreased 2.1 million acres from 2018. The average farm size for 2019 in the U.S. was 444 acres, up 1 acre from the previous year. Texas had the most farms and land in farms at 247,000 farms and 126.5 million farm acres. Wyoming had the largest acres per farm at 2,417 acres per farm. Iowa farms account for 4.2% of the total farms in the U.S. and 3.4% of the total U.S. farm acres.

A closer look at the numbers

Farm numbers and land in farms are differentiated by six economic sales classes, which are based on the gross value of agricultural products sold, and government program payments are also included. The number of Iowa farms in economic sales

class \$250,000 to \$499,999 increased, while all other economic sales class farms declined compared to 2018.

Number of farms, land in farms and average farm size by economic sales						
Economic sales class	Number of farms		Land in farms, acres		Average farm size, acres	
	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
\$1,000-9,999	25,400	25,000	900,000	900,000	35	36
\$10,000-99,999	26,200	25,800	3,700,000	3,600,000	141	140
\$100,000-249,999	11,100	11,000	3,600,000	3,600,000	324	327
\$250,000-499,999	8,900	9,200	5,500,000	5,500,000	618	598
\$500,000-999,999	8,000	7,900	7,800,000	7,800,000	975	987
\$1,000,000 or more	6,400	6,400	9,100,000	9,200,000	1,422	1,438
All farms	86,000	85,300	30,600,000	30,600,000	356	359

DATA SOURCE: USDA'S NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

The number of farms with \$1 million or more in sales stayed the same. In 2019, 29% of Iowa farms had less than \$10,000 in sales. Sixty percent of Iowa farms had less than \$100,000 in sales, and 17% of Iowa farms had sales of \$500,000 or more.

Point farms are assigned an economic sales class based on the sum of the agricultural point (dollar) values assigned to the quantity of commodities produced but not sold. Point farms are places that did not have \$1,000 of reported sales for the year but had sufficient crops and livestock to normally have sales of \$1,000 or more.

The 2017 Census of Agriculture showed that 5,639 Iowa farms, or 7%, of the 86,104 Iowa farms were point farms. In 2017, these point farms operated 145,753 acres, or 0.5%, of the 30.6 million acres of Iowa farmland. The average Iowa point farm size for 2017 was 26 acres.

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