

# Crossroads Resource Center

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## **Tools for Community Self-determination**

### **North Alabama Local Farm & Food Economy**

*Highlights of a data compilation*  
by Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center (Minneapolis)<sup>1</sup>  
for

### **Food Bank of North Alabama**

August 15, 2011

*Covers Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence,  
Limestone, Madison, Marshall, & Morgan Counties in Alabama*

### **North Alabama's farms (Agricultural Census, 2007)** *Agricultural Census data for 2007 were released February 4, 2009*

*The Census of Agriculture defines a "farm" as "an operation that produces, or would normally produce and sell,  
\$1,000 or more of agricultural products per year."*

#### *Land:*

- 17,133 farms. This is 35% of Alabama farms.
- North Alabama had 8% more farms in 2007 than in 2002. Some of this may be due to census takers making better contact with small farms.
- 267 (2%) of these are 1,000 acres or more in size.
- 8,206 (48%) farms are less than 50 acres.
- Average farm size is 127 acres, considerably less than the state average of 185 acres.
- The region has 2.2 million acres of land in farms.
- This amounts to 24% of the state's farmland.
- North Alabama has 740,000 acres of harvested cropland.
- 25,707 of these acres are irrigated.
- Average value of land and buildings per farm was \$354,000. This was less than the 2007 state average of \$425,000.

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Wojciak contributed considerable data analysis to this report

*Sales:*

*With the exception of foods sold directly to consumers (see below), farmers typically sell commodities to wholesalers, brokers or manufacturers that require further processing or handling to become consumer items. The word “commodities” is used in this report to mean the crops and livestock sold by farmers through these wholesale channels. The term “products” encompasses commodity sales, direct sales, and any other sales.*

- The region’s farmers sold \$1.7 billion of crops and livestock in 2007.
- Farm product sales increased by 34% from 2002 to 2007.
- \$153 million of crops were sold (9% of sales).
- \$1.58 billion of livestock and products were sold (91% of sales).
- 11,591 (68%) of the region’s farms sold less than \$10,000 of products in 2007.
- Total sales from these small farms were \$27 million, 2% of the region’s farm product sales.
- 1,940 (11%) of the region’s farms sold more than \$100,000 of products.
- Total sales from these larger farms were \$1.6 billion, 92% of the region’s farm product sales.
- 54% of the region’s farms (9,335 of 17,133) reported net losses in 2007. This is less than the Alabama average of 57%.
- 4,641 (27%) of North Alabama’s farmers collected a combined total of \$34 million of federal subsidies in 2007.

**Top Products Sold by North Alabama farms (Census of Agriculture 2007):**

	<b>\$ millions</b>
Poultry & eggs	1,407.7
Cattle & calves**	116.5
Corn	47.1
Cotton & cottonseed**	36.8
Hogs & pigs**	22.4
Nursery & ornamentals**	19.3
Forage	17.4
Soybeans	15.5
Milk & dairy**	10.0
Vegetables, melons, & potatoes**	6.8
Fruits & nuts**	1.5

*Note: sales data for products marked with \*\* are incomplete because USDA suppresses certain data in an effort to protect confidentiality. The totals above are not accurate, rather represent a lower limit of sales for each product listed. Nevertheless, the above listings total \$1.7 billion of farm production, so most all of the region’s production is accounted for.*

*Production Expenses:*

- Feed purchases are the single largest expense for North Alabama, totaling \$670 million (44% of production expenses).
- Livestock and poultry purchases ranked as the second most important expense, at \$316 million (21%).
- Farmers charged \$83 million (4%) to depreciation.

- Supplies, repairs and maintenance cost farmers \$60 million (4%).
- Farmers spent \$58 million (4%) buying fertilizers and lime.
- Fuel expenses totaled \$55 million (4%).
- Hired farm labor costs were \$49 million (3%).
- Farmers paid \$42 million in interest expenses (3%).

*Cattle & Dairy:*

- 9,027 farms hold an inventory of 360,000 cattle.
- 217,000 cattle were sold by farmers in 2007 for total sales of at least \$117 million. *Note that data for 2007 sales of cattle in Franklin County were suppressed in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- 8,078 farms raise beef cows.
- 54 farms raise milk cows.
- 31 farms produced corn for silage, but *acreage and sales figures for Colbert, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Marshall & Morgan Counties were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- 7,698 farms produced 560,000 tons of forage crops (hay, etc.) on 300,000 acres.
- 3,428 farms sold \$17 million of forage.

*Other livestock & animal products:*

- 221 farms hold an inventory of at least 73,544 hogs and pigs. *Note that data for sales of hogs and pigs in Colbert, Franklin, and Lauderdale counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- 171 farms sold at least 393,000 hogs and pigs in 2007, worth at least \$22 million. *Note that data for number of hogs and pigs sold in Colbert, Franklin, and Marshall counties and data for sales of hogs and pigs in Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, and Marshall counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- 200 farms hold an inventory of 5,715 sheep and lambs.
- 999 farms sold at least \$748,000 worth of sheep, goats, and lambs in 2007. *Note that data for sales of sheep goats and lambs in Jackson, Lawrence, Limestone, and Marshall counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- 793 farms hold an inventory of at least 4.8 million laying hens.
- 1,215 farms raise broiler chickens.
- 17 farms engage in aquaculture.
- 1,135 farms raise horses and ponies.

*Grains, oil seeds, & edible beans:*

- 873 farms produce \$69 million of grains, oil seeds, and edible beans and peas.
- This includes 707 farms producing 13 million bushels of corn on 162,000 acres, worth \$47 million.
- This represents an average price per bushel of corn of \$3.62.
- 481 farms produce 2 million bushels of soybeans on 109,434 acres, worth \$15 million.
- The represents an average price per bushel of soybeans of \$7.50.
- Total sales of corn and soybeans amounted to 4% of all farm product sales in 2007.

*Vegetable & Melons (some farmers state that Ag Census data does not fully represent vegetable production):*

- 421 farms worked 4,524 acres to produce at least \$6.8 million of vegetables. *Note that sales data for vegetables in Franklin County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- This represents a 26% increase in the number of farms (from 334) over 2002.
- 87 farms raised at least 78 acres of potatoes. *Note that data for acreage of potatoes in Colbert, DeKalb, Jackson, and Madison counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*

*Fruits (some farmers state that Ag Census data does not fully represent fruit production):*

- 191 farms in the region manage at least 749 acres of orchards. *Note that data for acreage of land in orchards in Limestone County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- 168 farms sold at least \$1.5 million of fruits, nuts and berries. *Note that data for sales of fruits, nuts and berries in DeKalb, Jackson, and Madison counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*

*Nursery and Greenhouse plants:*

- 172 farms sold at least \$19 million worth of ornamentals in 2007. *Note that data for sales of ornamentals in Colbert County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- This represents a decrease of 5% in the number of farms (from 182) selling ornamentals since 2002.
- 12 farms sold Christmas trees.

*Direct and organic sales:*

- 657 farms sell \$2.2 million of food products directly to consumers. This is a 14% increase of amount of farms (574 in 2002) selling direct over 2002, and a 4% decrease in direct sales from 2002 sales of \$2.3 million.
- This amounts to 0.1% of farm sales, one half of the Alabama average of 0.2%, and one quarter of the national average of 0.4%.
- Morgan County leads the region in direct sales, with \$378,000.
- 23 farms in the region sold at least \$9,000 of organic products. *Note that data for sales of organic products in Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Jackson, Lawrence, Madison, and Marshall counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- For comparison, 56 farms in Alabama sold \$632,000 of organic food products.
- This means that 41% of the Alabama farms selling organic foods are located in North Alabama, although the percentage of sales is quite small.
- 91 farms market through community supported agriculture (CSA).
- 623 farms produce and sell value-added products.

*Conservation practices:*

- 2,109 farms use conservation methods such as no-till, limited tilling, filtering field runoff to remove chemicals, fencing animals to prevent them from entering streams, etc.
- 3,146 farms practice rotational or management intensive grazing.
- 123 farms generate energy or electricity on the farm.

*Other Crops:*

- 238 farms in the region sold at least \$37 million of cotton. *Note that data for cotton sales in Cullman, DeKalb, Franklin, and Morgan counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- This is a 33% decrease in the number of farms raising cotton since 2002.

**Limited-resource farms and others in North Alabama  
(Census of Agriculture, 2007)**

<b>Small Family Farms</b>	<b>Farms</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Limited Resource	2,494	15%	213,980	10%
Retirement	4,064	24%	469,263	22%
Residential/lifestyle	6,926	40%	587,279	27%
Farming occupation/lower sales	1,559	9%	187,833	9%
Farming occupation/higher sales	147	1%	81,761	4%
<b>Large family farms</b>	626	4%	183,926	8%
<b>Very large family farms</b>	960	6%	348,012	16%
<b>Nonfamily farms</b>	357	2%	96,310	4%
<b>Totals</b>	17,133		2,168,364	

Following are the definitions used by USDA in creating the table above.

**1. Rural residence farms.** Specific typologies included in rural residence farms are *limited-resource, retirement, and residential lifestyle farms*.

*Limited-resource farms.* Small farms with sales less than \$100,000 in 2003 and low operator household income in 2003 and 2004. Household income is low if it is less than the poverty level in both 2003 and 2004 or if it is less than half the county median income both years.

*Retirement farms.* Small farms whose operators report they are retired (excludes limited-resource farms operated by retired farmers).

*Residential/lifestyle farms.* Small farms whose operators report they had a major occupation other than farming (excludes limited-resource farms with operators reporting a non-farm major occupation).

**2. Intermediate farms.** Includes *farming occupation/lower-sales* and *farming occupation/higher-sales* farms.

*Farming occupation/low-sales.* Small farms with sales less than \$100,000 whose operators report farming as their major occupation (excludes limited-resource farms whose operators report farming as their major occupation).

*Farming occupation/high-sales.* Small farms with sales between \$100,000 and \$249,999 whose operators report farming as their major occupation.

**3. Commercial farms.** Includes *large, very large, and nonfamily* farms.

*Large family farms.* Farms with sales between \$250,000 and \$499,999.

*Very large family farms.* Farms with sales of \$500,000 or more.

*Nonfamily farms.* Farms organized as non-family corporations or cooperatives, as well as farms operated by hired managers.

## County and State Highlights

### Colbert County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):

- 736 farms, 26% more than in 2002.
- Colbert County has 129,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$42 million of products in 2007.
- \$9.6 million (23%) of these sales were crops.
- \$32.8 million (78%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 295 farms (40%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 256 (35%) farms.
- 30 farms (4%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 352 farms (48%) are less than 50 acres.
- 545 farms (74%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 45 farms (6%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 30 farms sold \$150,000 of vegetables, melons, and potatoes from 61 acres.
- 37 farms sold \$68,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 270% increase in the number of farms selling direct (10 in 2002), and a 300% increase in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$17,000.
- Direct sales were 0.2% of farm product sales, one half the national average of 0.4%.
- Colbert County ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in the state for acreage of corn for grain, with 18,269.
- The county ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of Christmas trees, but *sales figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- Colbert County is seventh-ranked in Alabama for sales of grains, oilseeds, and dry beans and peas, with \$5.7 million.

### Cullman County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):

- 2,465 farms, 7% more than in 2002.
- Cullman County has 230,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$406 million of products in 2007.
- \$9 million (2%) of these sales were crops.
- \$397 million (98%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 1,081 farms (44%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 954 (39%) farms.
- 13 farms (1%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 1,231 farms (50%) are less than 50 acres.
- 1,402 farms (57%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 527 farms (21%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 68 farms sold \$2.1 million of vegetables, melons, and potatoes from 1,329 acres.
- 75 farms sold \$253,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 12% decrease in the number of farms selling direct (85 in 2002) and a 65% decrease in direct sales from 2002 sales of \$720,000.
- Direct sales were 0.1% of farm product sales, one quarter the national average of 0.4%.
- The county ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in Alabama, and 7<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. for sales of poultry and eggs, with \$370 million.
- Cullman County ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in Alabama for acreage of forage crops, with 44,680.
- The county ranks first in the state for acreage of corn for silage, with 1,255.

- Cullman County ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in Alabama, and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the U.S., for inventory of broiler chickens, with 21 million.
- The county ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in the state for inventory of laying hens, with 1.7 million.
- Cullman County ranks first in the state for inventory of pullets for laying flock replacement, with 1.1 million.
- The county ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in Alabama for inventory of cattle and calves, with 65,275.
- Cullman County ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state for agricultural product sales.
- The county ranks second in Alabama for livestock and poultry sales.
- Cullman County ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in Alabama for sales of cattle and calves, with \$22 million.
- The county ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state for sales of milk, with \$4 million.
- Cullman County ranks second in the state for inventory of goats, with 4,144.
- The county ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in Alabama for sales of sheep and goats, with \$170,000.
- Cullman County ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state for acreage of vegetables, with 1,329.
- The county ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of vegetables, with \$2 million.

**DeKalb County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):**

- 2,426 farms, 11% more than in 2002.
- DeKalb County has 235,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$414 million of products in 2007.
- \$12 million (3%) of these sales were crops.
- \$402 million (97%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 1,069 farms (44%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 911 (38%) farms.
- 14 farms (1%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 1,201 farms (50%) are less than 50 acres.
- 1,529 farms (63%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 413 farms (17%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 45 farms sold \$1.2 million of vegetables, melons, and potatoes from 1,152 acres.
- 78 farms sold \$265,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 5% increase in the number of farms selling direct (74 in 2002) and a 24% increase in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$214,000.
- Direct sales were 0.1% of farm product sales, one quarter the national average of 0.4%.
- DeKalb County ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in Alabama for sales of agricultural products.
- The county ranks first in Alabama for sales of livestock and poultry.
- DeKalb County ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in the state for sales of hogs and pigs, with \$20 million.
- The county ranks first in the state for sales of horses and ponies, with \$889,000.
- DeKalb County ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in the state for inventory of hogs and pigs, with 60,242.
- The county ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in Alabama and 7<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. for inventory of broilers, with 18 million.
- DeKalb County ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state and 9<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. for sales of poultry and eggs, with \$363 million.
- DeKalb County ranks second in Alabama for acreage of forage crops, with 40,590.
- The county ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in Alabama for inventory of laying hens, with 1.4 million.
- DeKalb County ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state for inventory of pullets for laying flock replacement, with 795,000.
- The county ranks second in Alabama for inventory of cattle and calves, with 56,530.
- The county ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the state for acreage of vegetables, with 1,152.



- DeKalb County ranks fourth in the state for sales of cattle and calves, with \$18 million.
- The county ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of sheep and goats, with \$132,000.
- DeKalb County ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for acreage of soybeans, with 9,759.
- The county ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the state for acreage of corn for grain, with 11,515.
- DeKalb County ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of grains, oilseeds, and dry beans and peas, with \$5 million.
- The county ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in the state for sales of vegetables, with \$1 million.

**Franklin County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):**

- 958 farms, 3% more than in 2002.
- Franklin County has 141,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$133.4 million of products in 2007.
- \$1.6 million (1%) of these sales were crops.
- \$131.8 million (99%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 50 to 179 acres with 441 farms (46%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 10 to 49 acres with 254 (27%) farms.
- 9 farms (1%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 286 farms (30%) are less than 50 acres.
- 608 farms (63%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 138 farms (14%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 32 farms sold vegetables, melons, and potatoes from 92 acres. *Sales data for Franklin County vegetable farms were suppressed by USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- 31 farms sold \$58,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 29% increase in the number of farms selling direct (24 in 2002) and a 57% increase in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$37,000.
- Direct sales were 0.04% of farm product sales, one-tenth the national average of 0.4%.
- The county ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in the state for inventory of pullets for laying flock replacement, with 259,000.
- Franklin County ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for inventory of broilers, with 7.9 million.
- The county ranks sixth in the state for sales of livestock and poultry.
- Franklin County ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the state for sales of poultry and eggs, with \$123 million.
- Franklin County ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of agricultural products.
- The county ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of hogs and pigs, but *sales figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- Franklin County ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the state for inventory of hogs and pigs, but *inventory figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*

**Jackson County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):**

- 1,523 farms, 11% more than in 2002.
- Jackson County has 243,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$100 million of products in 2007.
- \$14 million (14%) of these sales were crops.
- \$86 million (86%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 570 farms (37%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 521 (34%) farms.
- 36 farms (2%) are 1,000 acres or more.

- 676 farms (44%) are less than 50 acres.
- 1,098 farms (72%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 115 farms (8%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 49 farms sold \$1.2 million of vegetables, melons, and potatoes from 931 acres.
- 79 farms sold \$197,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 18% increase in the number of farms selling direct (67 in 2002) and a 27% decrease in direct sales from 2002 sales of \$270,000.
- Direct sales were 0.2% of farm product sales, one half the national average of 0.4%.
- Jackson County ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in Alabama for acreage of corn for grain, with 25,809.
- The county ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state for acreage of soybeans, with 21,211.
- Jackson County ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of grains, oilseeds, and dry beans and peas, with \$9.5 million.
- The county ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for acreage of forage, with 29,100.
- Jackson County ranks fifth in the state for sales of cattle and calves, with \$15 million.
- The county ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of vegetables.
- The county ranks sixth in Alabama for inventory of hogs and pigs, with 9,386.
- Jackson County ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the state for sales of hogs and pigs, with \$2.4 million.
- The county ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the state for inventory of cattle and calves, with 32,991.
- Jackson County ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the state for sales of Christmas trees, but *sales figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*

**Lauderdale County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):**

- 1,697 farms, 14% more than in 2002.
- Lauderdale County has 228,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$45 million of products in 2007.
- \$16 million (35%) of these sales were crops.
- \$29 million (65%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 676 farms (40%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 622 (37%) farms.
- 28 farms (2%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 794 farms (47%) are less than 50 acres.
- 1,241 farms (73%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 79 farms (5%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 29 farms sold \$287,000 of vegetables, melons, and potatoes from 108 acres.
- 59 farms sold \$184,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 20% increase in the number of farms selling direct (49 in 2002) and a 23% decrease in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$240,000.
- Direct sales were 0.4% of farm product sales, the same as the national average of 0.4%.
- Lauderdale County ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state for sales of horses and ponies, with \$776,000.
- The county ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state for sales of sheep and goats, with \$157,000.
- Lauderdale County ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state for acreage of forage, with 32,798.
- The county ranks third in Alabama for inventory of goats, with 4,070.
- The county ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for acreage of wheat, with 4,302.
- Lauderdale County ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for acreage of cotton, with 21,541.
- Lauderdale County ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of cattle and calves, with \$12 million.
- The county ranks sixth in Alabama for acreage of corn for grain, with 17,200.

- Lauderdale County ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of grains, oilseeds, and dry beans and peas, with \$7.3 million.
- The county ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of cotton, with \$4.8 million.
- Lauderdale County ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the state for acreage of soybeans, with 6,373.
- Lauderdale County ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the state for inventory of cattle and calves, with 30,334.

**Lawrence County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):**

- 1,601 farms, about the same as in 2002.
- Lawrence County has 222,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$145 million of products in 2007.
- \$18 million (12%) of these sales were crops.
- \$127 million (88%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 50 to 179 acres with 658 farms (41%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 10 to 49 acres with 613 (38%) farms.
- 24 farms (1%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 702 farms (44%) are less than 50 acres.
- 1,163 farms (73%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 145 farms (9%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 25 farms sold \$135,000 of vegetables, melons, and potatoes from 79 acres.
- 46 farms sold \$101,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 5% increase in the number of farms selling direct (44 in 2002) and a 55% increase in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$65,000.
- Direct sales were 0.1% of farm product sales, one quarter the national average of 0.4%.
- Lawrence County ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in Alabama for acreage of corn for grain, with 32,256.
- The county ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state for acreage with cotton, with 25,732.
- The county ranks third in Alabama for sales of grains, oilseeds, and dry beans and peas, with \$9.6 million.
- Lawrence County ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of cotton, with \$6 million.
- The county ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the state for inventory of horses and ponies, with 3,263.
- The county ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of horses and ponies, with \$584,000.
- Lawrence County ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of agricultural products.
- Lawrence County ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of livestock and poultry.
- The county ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the state for sales of poultry and eggs, with \$115 million.
- Lawrence County ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of cattle and calves, with \$11 million.
- The county ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for inventory of broilers, with 6.5 million.
- Lawrence County ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the state for inventory of laying hens, with 303,000.
- The county ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the state for crop sales.
- Lawrence County ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the state for acreage of wheat, with 2,267.

**Limestone County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):**

- 1,352 farms, 9% more than in 2002.
- Limestone County has 237,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$71 million of products in 2007.
- \$33 million (48%) of these sales were crops.
- \$37 million (52%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 519 farms (38%) in this category.

- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 473 (35%) farms.
- 48 farms (4%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 643 farms (48%) are less than 50 acres.
- 956 farms (71%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 106 farms (8%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 27 farms sold \$492,000 of vegetables, melons, and potatoes from 195 acres.
- 50 farms sold \$295,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 25% increase in the number of farms selling direct (40 in 2002) and a 115% increase in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$137,000.
- Direct sales were 0.4% of farm product sales, the same as the national average of 0.4%.
- The county ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in the state for sales of grains, oilseeds, and dry beans and peas, with \$13 million.
- Limestone County ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in the state for sales of cotton, with \$13 million.
- The county ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in Alabama for acreage of cotton, with 44,101.
- Limestone County ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in the state for acreage of soybeans, with 29,936.
- The county ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in the state for acreage of wheat, with 12,422.
- Limestone County ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state for acreage of corn for grain, with 22,402.
- Limestone County ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in Alabama for crop sales.
- The county is fourth-ranked in Alabama for inventory of goats, with 3,355.
- Limestone County ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the state for sales of sheep and goats, but *sales figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality*.
- The county ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for acreage of forage, with 24,205.
- The county ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in the state for sales of ornamentals, with \$6.4 million.

**Madison County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):**

- 1,187 farms, 6% more than in 2002.
- Madison County has 199,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$37 million of products in 2007.
- \$27 million (73%) of these sales were crops.
- \$10 million (27%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 474 farms (40%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 376 (32%) farms.
- 44 farms (4%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 628 farms (53%) are less than 50 acres.
- 862 farms (73%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 62 farms (5%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 27 farms sold \$336,000 of vegetables, melons, and potatoes from 160 acres.
- 71 farms sold \$283,000 of food directly to consumers. This is an 8% increase in the number of farms selling direct (66 in 2002) and a 97% increase in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$144,000.
- Direct sales were 0.8% of farm product sales, double the national average of 0.4%.
- The county ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in Alabama for sales of grains, oilseeds, and dry beans and peas, with \$12 million.
- Madison County ranks second in the state for sales of cotton, with \$10 million.
- The county ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state for acreage of cotton, with 36,107.
- The county ranks second in the state for acreage of wheat, with 12,036.
- The county ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in Alabama for acreage of soybeans, with 21,392.
- Madison County ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the state for acreage of corn for grain, with 20,385.

- The county ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the state for inventory of horses and ponies, with 2,806.
- Madison County ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for crop sales.
- The county ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in the state for inventory of goats, with 2,282.
- The county ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in the state for sales of Christmas trees, but *sales figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- Madison County ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of sheep and goats, with \$107,000.
- Madison County ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for acreage of forage, with 21,693.

**Marshall County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):**

- 1,731 farms, 3% more than in 2002.
- Marshall County has 155,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$238 million of products in 2007.
- \$7 million (3%) of these sales were crops.
- \$231 million (97%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 792 farms (46%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 578 (33%) farms.
- 10 farms (1%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 962 farms (56%) are less than 50 acres.
- 1,168 farms (67%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 205 farms (12%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 43 farms sold \$349,000 of vegetables, melons, and potatoes from 203 acres.
- 63 farms sold \$142,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 11% increase in the number of farms selling direct (57 in 2002) and a 27% decrease in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$194,000.
- Direct sales were 0.1% of farm product sales, one quarter the national average of 0.4%.
- The county ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state for inventory of horses and ponies, with 3,512.
- Marshall County ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in Alabama for sales of agricultural products.
- The county ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in Alabama for sales of livestock and poultry.
- Marshall County ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state for sales of poultry and eggs, with \$220 million.
- The county ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state for inventory of broilers, with 12 million.
- Marshall County ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for inventory of laying hens, with 586,000.
- The county ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for inventory of pullets for laying flock replacement, with 355,000.
- Marshall County ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for inventory of cattle and calves, with 37,567.
- Marshall County ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the state for sales of horses and ponies, with \$521,000.
- The county is sixth-ranked in Alabama acreage of forage, with 27,998.
- The county ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the state for sales of sheep and goats, but *sales figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- Marshall county ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the state for acreage of soybeans, with 4,671.

**Morgan County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):**

- 1,457 farms, 11% more than in 2002.
- Morgan County has 162,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$97 million of products in 2007.
- \$6 million (6%) of these sales were crops.
- \$91 million (94%) of these sales were livestock.

- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 595 farms (41%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 509 (35%) farms.
- 11 farms (1%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 731 farms (50%) are less than 50 acres.
- 1,019 farms (70%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 105 farms (7%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 46 farms sold \$470,000 of vegetables, melons, and potatoes from 214 acres.
- 68 farms sold \$378,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 17% increase in the number of farms selling direct (58 in 2002) and a 52% increase in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$249,000.
- Direct sales were 0.4% of farm product sales, the same as the national average of 0.4%.
- The county ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in the state for sales of milk, with \$5.4 million.
- Morgan County ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in Alabama for acreage of corn for silage, but *acreage figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality*.
- The county ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the state for acreage of forage, with 29,955.
- Morgan County ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for inventory of goats, with 2,779.
- Morgan County ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for sales of cattle and calves, with \$11 million.
- The county ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in the state for inventory of cattle and calves, with 32,697.
- Morgan County ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for acreage of soybeans, with 5,207.
- The county ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in Alabama for acreage of wheat, with 2,499.
- Morgan County ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the state for sales of sheep and goats, with \$101,000.

**State of Alabama highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):**

- 48,753 farms, 8% more than in 2002.
- Alabama has 9 million acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$4.4 billion of products in 2007.
- \$677 million (15%) of these sales were crops.
- \$3.7 billion (85%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 50 to 179 acres with 17,808 farms (37%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 10 to 49 acres with 16,215 (33%) farms.
- 1,509 farms (3%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 19,589 farms (40%) are less than 50 acres.
- 33,742 farms (69%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 4,729 farms (10%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- Statewide sales of vegetables totaled \$34 million.
- 2,175 farms sold \$8.3 million of food directly to consumers. This is a 19% increase in the number of farms selling direct (1,822 in 2002), and a 4% increase in direct sales from 2002 sales of \$8 million.
- Direct sales were 0.2% of farm product sales, one half the national average of 0.4%.
- If direct food sales made up a single commodity, the value of these sales would outrank the state's 17<sup>th</sup> most important product, cucumbers (*see table on next page*).
- 63 farms farm organically, with a total of 540 acres of harvested cropland, and 1,113 acres of pastureland.
- 1,681 acres on 129 farms are undergoing organic conversion.
- 56 farms in Alabama sold \$631,000 of organic food products, including \$111,000 of crops (this may include ornamental and greenhouse crops), \$513,000 of livestock and poultry, and \$7,000 of products from livestock and poultry (such as milk or eggs).
- 260 farms market through community supported agriculture (CSA).
- 1,637 farms produce value-added products.
- 5,567 farms use conservation methods such as no-till, limited tilling, filtering field runoff to remove chemicals, fencing animals to prevent them from entering streams, etc.
- 8,372 farms practice rotational management of intensive grazing.
- 322 farms generate energy or electricity on the farms.

**Alabama's top farm products in 2009 (Economic Research Service)**

*The data in the table and pie chart below are for Alabama as a whole. See chart on next page.*

	<b>\$ millions</b>
1 Broilers	2,519
2 Cattle and calves	308
3 Chicken eggs	281
4 Greenhouse/nursery	255
5 Soybeans	147
6 Cotton	107
7 Peanuts	105
8 Corn	93
9 Aquaculture	91
10 Wheat	56
11 Hogs	35
12 Hay	33
13 Dairy products	25
14 Pecans	16
15 Tomatoes	13
16 Farm chickens	10
17 Cucumbers	8
18 Sweet potatoes	7
19 Watermelons	4
20 Peaches	4
21 Potatoes	3
22 Corn, sweet	2
23 Oats	1
24 Honey	1
25 Blueberries	0

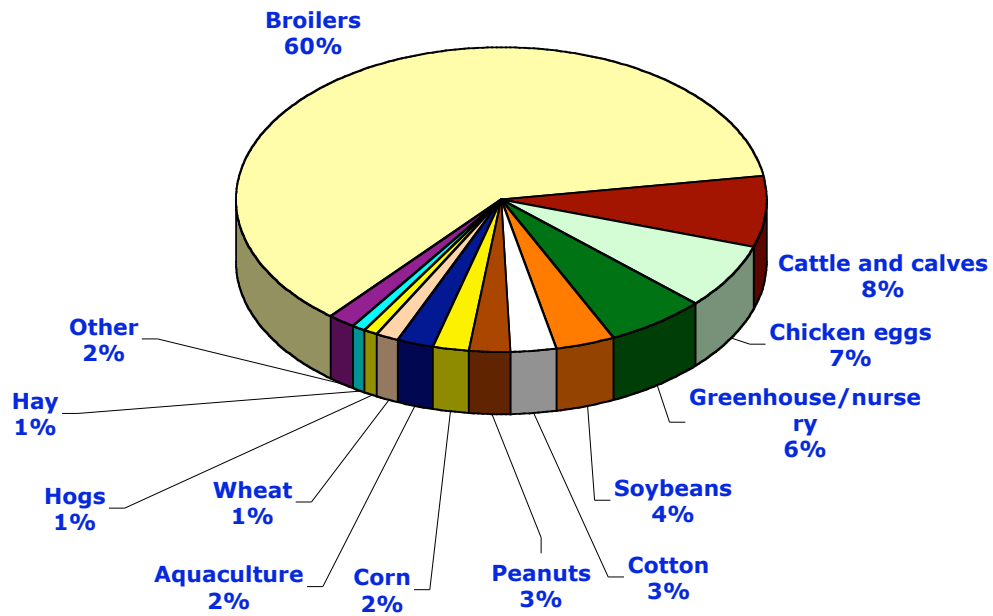
*Note that at \$8.3 million, direct sales from Alabama's farmers to consumers amount to more than the value of the 17<sup>th</sup>-ranking product, cucumbers.*



**Alabama's top farm products in 2009 (Economic Research Service)**

See table on previous page

**Top farm products in Alabama, 2009**



Source: USDA Economic Research Service

**Balance of Cash Receipts and Production Costs (BEA):**

North Alabama farmers sell \$1.710 billion of food commodities per year (1988-2009 average), spending \$1.444 billion to raise them, for an average gain of \$267 million each year. *Note that these sales figures compiled by the BEA may differ from cash receipts recorded by the USDA Agriculture Census (above).*

Overall, farm producers earned \$5.6 billion more producing crops and livestock than they spent to produce these commodities from 1988 to 2009, making a strong contribution to the regional economy. However, the farm production balance (cash receipts less production expenses) fell \$500 million from 2004 to 2009. Moreover, 54% of the region's farms reported a net loss in 2007 (Ag Census). North Alabama farmers earned \$82 million less by selling commodities in 2009 than they earned in 1969 (in 2009 dollars).

Farmers and ranchers earn another \$126 million per year of farm-related income — primarily custom work, and rental income (21-year average for 1988-2009). Federal farm support payments are relatively small, averaging \$52 million per year for the entire region for the same years.

**The region's consumers:**

*See also information covering low-income food consumption and food-related health conditions, page 18-19 above.*

North Alabama consumers spend \$2.4 billion buying food each year, including \$1.4 billion for home use. Most of this food (\$2.2 billion) is sourced outside the region. Only \$2.2 million of food products (0.1% of farm cash receipts and 0.1% of North Alabama consumer market) are sold by farmers directly to consumers.

Estimated change in net assets (that is, assets minus liabilities) for all region households combined was a loss of \$1.4 billion in 2009 alone (BLS). This places additional pressure on North Alabama consumers trying to buy food.

**Farm and food economy summary:**

Farmers gain \$267 million each year producing food commodities. Yet farmers spend \$733 million buying inputs sourced outside of the region, which drains financial resources from North Alabama. Totaling farmers' gains and the region's losses, the region loses \$466 million per year.

Meanwhile, consumers spend \$2.2 billion buying food sourced outside the region. Thus, total loss to the region is \$2.6 billion of potential wealth *each year*. This loss amounts to more than the value of all food commodities raised in the region.

**North Alabama: markets for food eaten at home (2009):**

North Alabama residents purchase \$2.4 billion of food each year, including \$1.4 billion to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 341
Fruits & vegetables	239
Cereals and bakery products	151
Dairy products	193
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	508

If North Alabama residents purchased 15% of their food for home use directly from North Alabama farmers, this would generate \$214 million of new income for the region’s farmers.

**Birmingham Metro Area: markets for food eaten at home (2009):**

Metro Birmingham residents purchase \$2.7 billion of food each year, including \$1.6 billion to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 375
Fruits & vegetables	263
Cereals and bakery products	166
Dairy products	212
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	559

**Montgomery Metro Area: markets for food eaten at home (2009):**

Metro Montgomery residents purchase \$871 million of food each year, including \$510 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 122
Fruits & vegetables	85
Cereals and bakery products	54
Dairy products	69
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	181

**Alabama: markets for food eaten at home (2009):**

State residents purchase \$11 billion of food each year, including \$6.5 billion to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>billions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 1.5
Fruits & vegetables	1.1
Cereals and bakery products	0.7
Dairy products	0.8
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	2.3

*If Alabama residents purchased 15% of their food for home use directly from Alabama farmers, this would generate \$980 million of new income for the state's farmers."*

### **Personal Income in North Alabama (2009)**

#### **North Alabama (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2009)**

The region's one million residents receive \$34 billion of income annually. Although income from manufacturing has fallen over the past nine years, personal income still tripled from 1969 – 2009, after dollars were adjusted for inflation. The largest source of personal income is transfer payments (from government programs such as pensions), which account for \$7 billion of personal income [*see below*]. Government jobs rank second, accounting for \$6 billion. Capital income (from interest, rent or dividends) brings in \$5.4 billion of personal income. Manufacturing jobs produce \$4.8 billion of personal income, and retail jobs rank fifth, with \$1.6 billion. Note that income from public sources makes up more than one-third of all personal income in the region.

Income earned from transfer payments includes \$2.7 billion of retirement and disability insurance benefits; \$2.7 billion of medical benefits; \$662 million of income maintenance benefits; \$247 million of unemployment insurance; and \$245 million of veteran's benefits.

Government income includes \$2.6 billion of income earned by federal workers; \$639 million by state government workers, and \$2.6 billion earned by local government staff. Military personnel earn \$451 million of personal income.

Although population has increased 57% since 1969, there has been only limited public planning to assure a secure and stable food supply.

#### **Issues affecting low-income residents of North Alabama:**

Over 319,000 residents (33%) earn less than 185% of federal poverty guidelines. At this level of income, children qualify for free or reduced-price lunch at school. These lower-income residents spend \$645 million each year buying food, including \$75 million of SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps) and additional millions in WIC coupons. The region's 17,133 farmers receive an annual combined total of \$59 million in subsidies (41-year average, 1969-2009), mostly to raise crops such as cotton, corn or soybeans that are sold as commodities, not to feed North Alabama residents. *Data from Federal Census American Community Survey covering the years 2005-2009, Bureau of Labor Statistics, & Bureau of Economic Analysis.*

9% percent of the region's households (nearly 83,000 residents) earn less than \$10,000 per year. *Source: Federal Census American Community Survey covering the years 2005-2009.*

20% of all adults aged 18-64 in Alabama carry no health insurance as of 2010. *Source: Centers for Disease Control.*

**Food-related health conditions:**

20% of Alabama residents reported in 2009 that they eat five or more servings of fruit or vegetables each day. 80% do not. This is a key indicator of health, since proper fruit and vegetable consumption has been connected to better health outcomes. *Source: Centers for Disease Control.*

41% of Alabama adults reported in 2009 they have at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five or more days per week, or vigorous physical activity for 20 or more minutes three or more days per week. *Source: Centers for Disease Control.*

As of 2010, 13% of Alabama residents have been diagnosed with diabetes. *Source: Centers for Disease Control.* Medical costs for treating diabetes and related conditions in North Alabama are estimated at \$594 million per year. Costs for the state of Alabama as a whole total \$4.7 billion. *Source: American Diabetes Association cost calculator.*

70% of Alabama residents were overweight in 2010. 37% of state residents weighed more than the recommended weight, while 33% were obese. *Source: Centers for Disease Control.* Twenty years ago, the rate of overweight and obese residents was only 44%. Now, Alabama ranks second in the U.S. for percentage of adults who are obese. *Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2011).* “F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America’s Future.” <http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/tfahfasinfat2011a.pdf>

**Key data sources:**

**Bureau of Economic Analysis data on farm production balance**

<http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/reis/>

**Food consumption estimates from Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey**

<http://www.bls.gov/cex/home.htm>

**U.S. Census of Agriculture**

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>

**USDA/Economic Research Service food consumption data:**

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/foodconsumption/>

**USDA/ Economic Research Service farm income data:**

<http://ers.usda.gov/Data/FarmIncome/finfidmu.htm>

**For more information:**

To see results from *Finding Food in Farm Country* studies in other regions of the U.S.:

<http://www.crcworks.org/locales.html>

To read the original *Finding Food in Farm Country* study from Southeast Minnesota (written for the Experiment in Rural Cooperation): <http://www.crcworks.org/ff.pdf>

To view a PowerPoint presented in March, 2008, by Ken Meter at Rep. Collin Peterson's (D-MN) Minnesota agricultural forum, called the "Home Grown Economy":

<http://www.crcworks.org/crcppts/petersonkm08.pdf>

To get a brief list of essential food facts, many of which are cited in the presentation above,

<http://www.crcworks.org/foodmarkets.pdf>

To link to further analysis of farm and food economies in the U.S.:

<http://www.crcworks.org/econ.html>

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