



ECONOMIC UPDATE

The Economy of Agriculture

Utah Banker's Association Mid-Year Update
August 26, 2026

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Utah Department of Workforce Services

AGENDA

1. Definitions & Measurements
2. Demographic Characteristics
3. State & National Trends



Photograph by David Condos



LABOR MARKET INFORMATION (LMI)

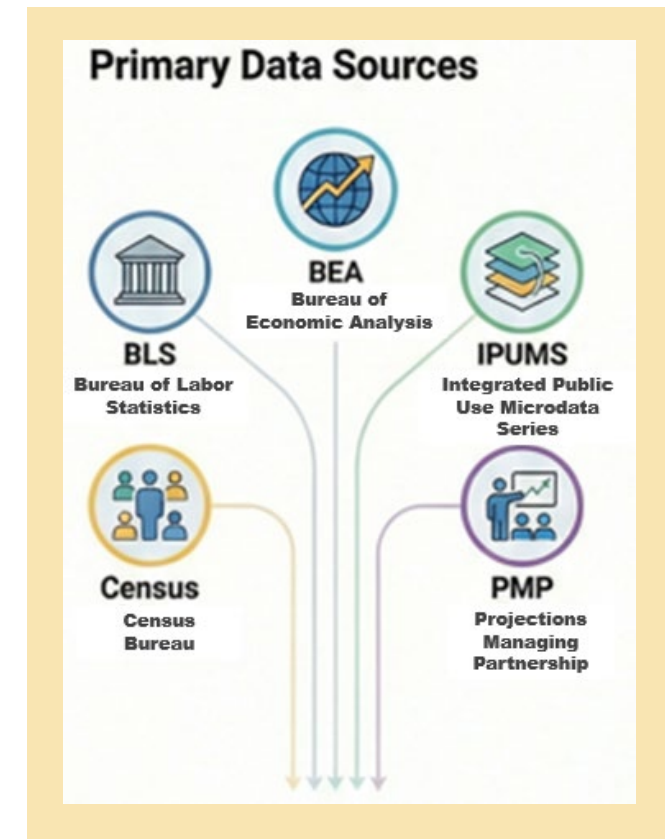
What is LMI?

Quantitative and qualitative data and analysis related to employment and the workforce



Examples

- Employment & Unemployment Statistics
- Job Forecasts
- Wages
- Demographic Characteristics



HOW IS LMI APPLIED?

Informed Decision Making

- Business Investment
- Career Preparation
- Education & Training
- Job Search
- Hiring
- Public & Private Workforce Investments

Applications

- Building Data Products
- Informing Policy
- Resource Allocation
- Strategic Planning
- Informing an Audience



What are Nonfarm Jobs?

What Are Nonfarm Payrolls?

Total nonfarm payroll employment is a popular measure of the **number of U.S. workers in the economy**.



This measure from the **Bureau of Labor Statistics** accounts for about **80% of the workers** who contribute to GDP.

However, it **does not** include:

- Farm employees
- Private household employees
- Unpaid volunteers
- Proprietors
- The unincorporated self-employed

The U.S. Department of Agriculture tracks **farm labor**, including self-employed, unpaid and hired workers.

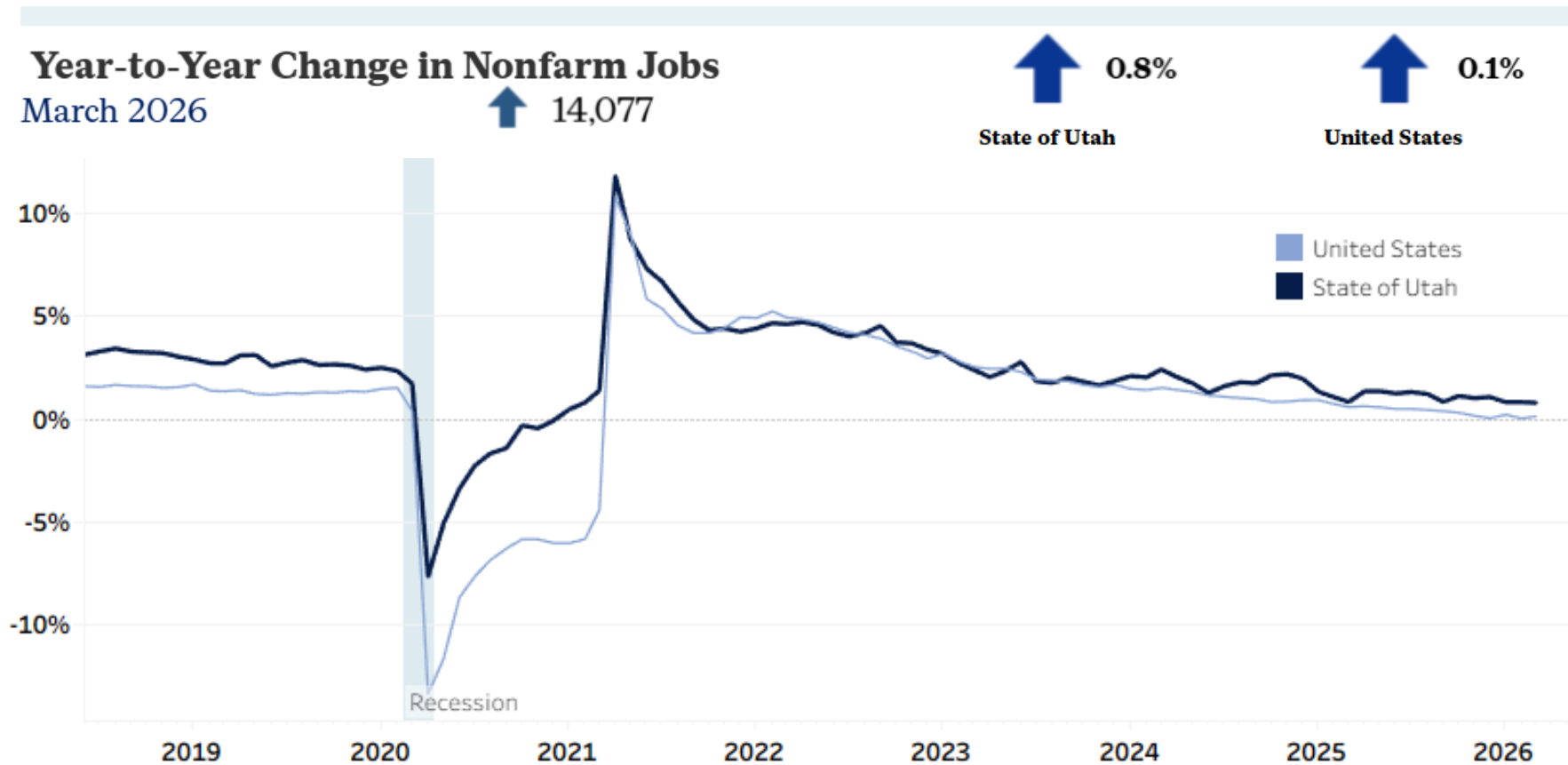


Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics (PAYEMS), USDA (NASS).

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK *of* ST. LOUIS



State and National Nonfarm Job Growth



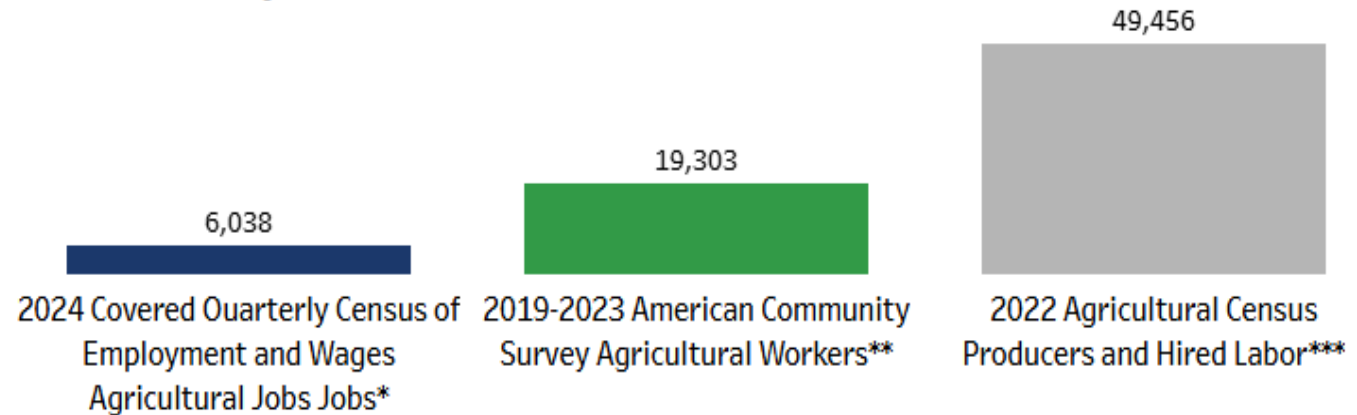
Measuring Agriculture

- QCEW counts the number of jobs but omits self-employed and firms with few/intermittent employees.
- ACS counts people working, sorting them by their primary industry of employment.
- National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) runs an Agricultural Census every 5 years.
- Because the Census is mandatory, coverage is high. Coverage is also broader, counting hired, unpaid, migrant, and seasonal labor from farms covered by QCEW, as well as small and UI-exempt farms missing from QCEW.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, National Agricultural Statistics Service

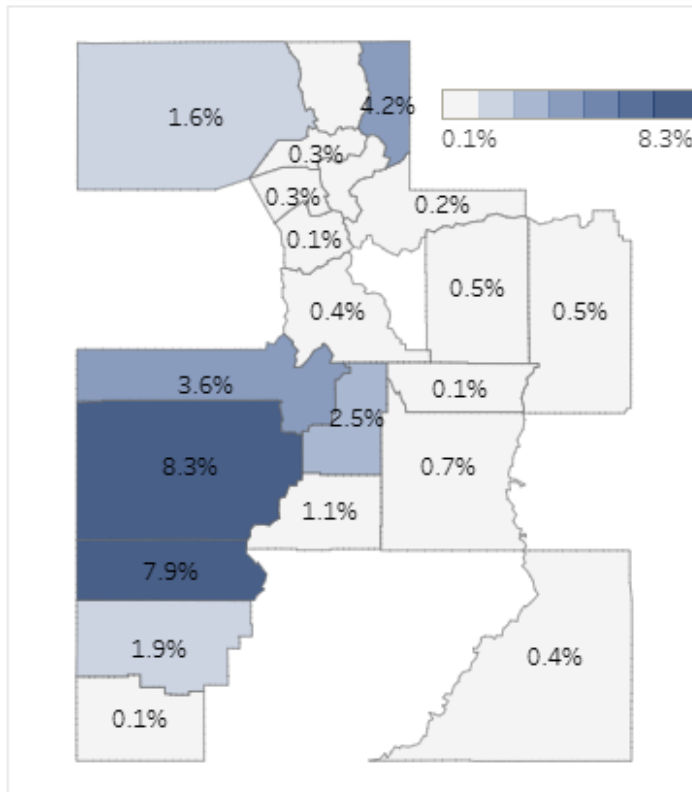


Agricultural Employment *State of Utah*

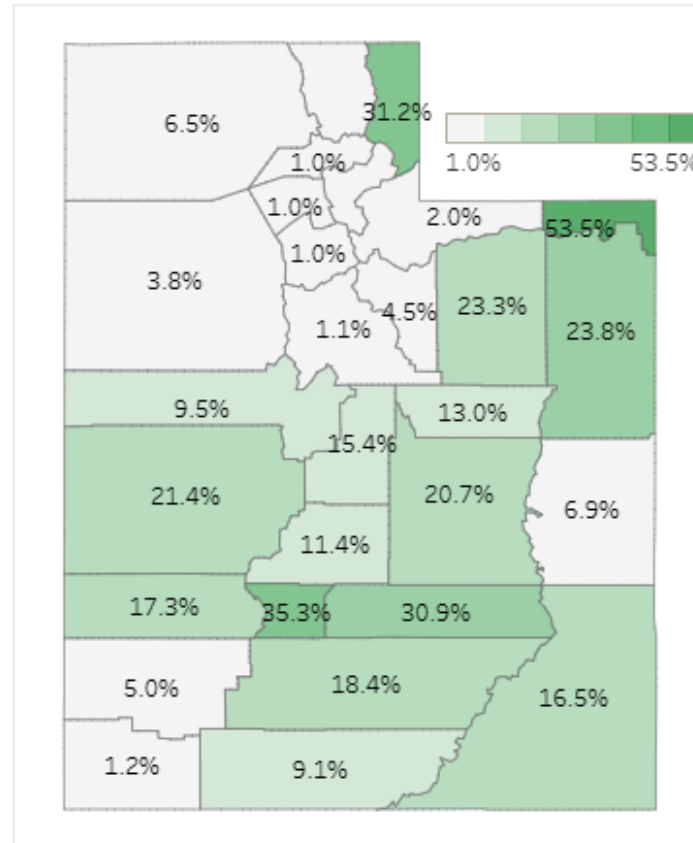


Agricultural Prevalence Varies by County

2024 Covered Agricultural Employment as a Percent of Total Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Jobs

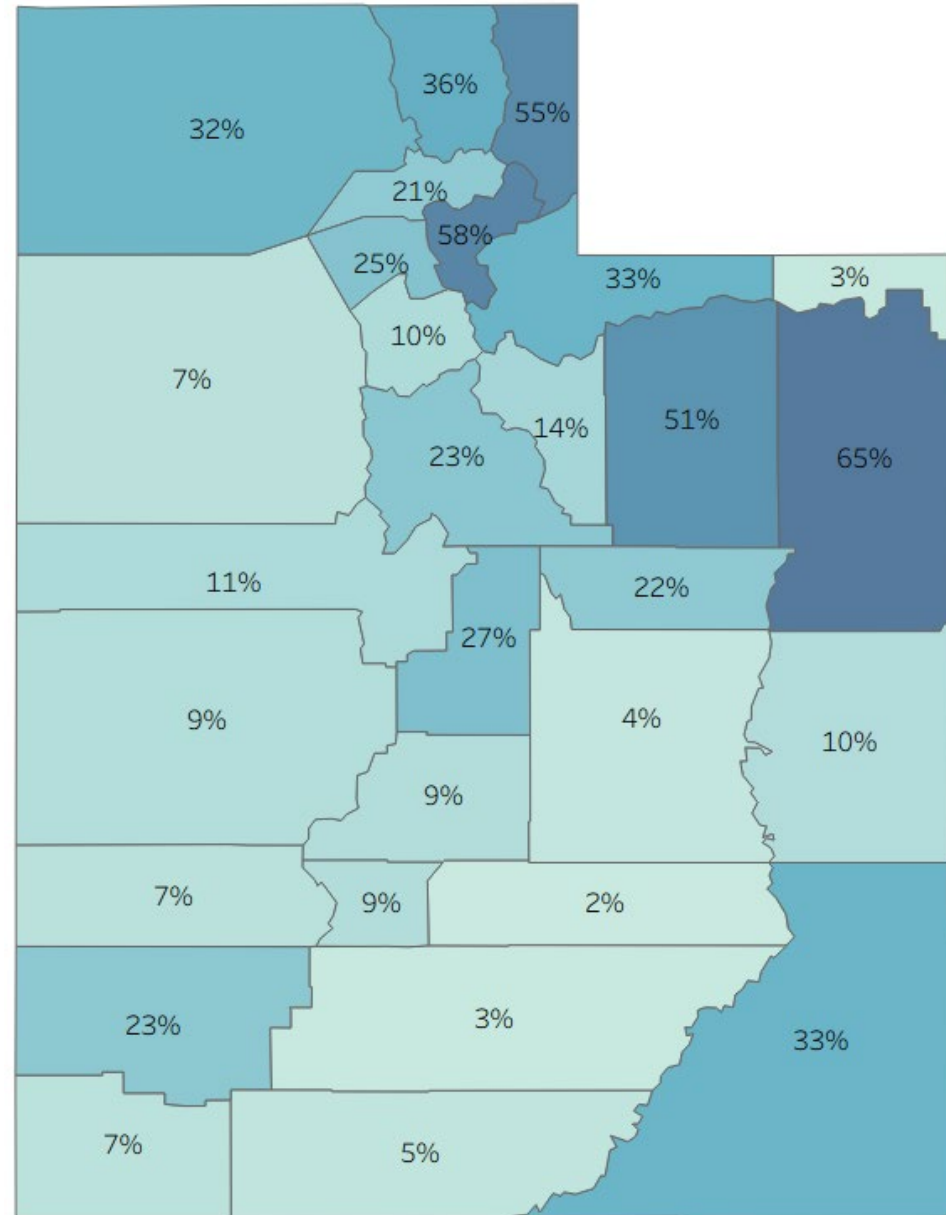


2019-2023 American Community Survey Agricultural Workers as a Percent of Total Workers



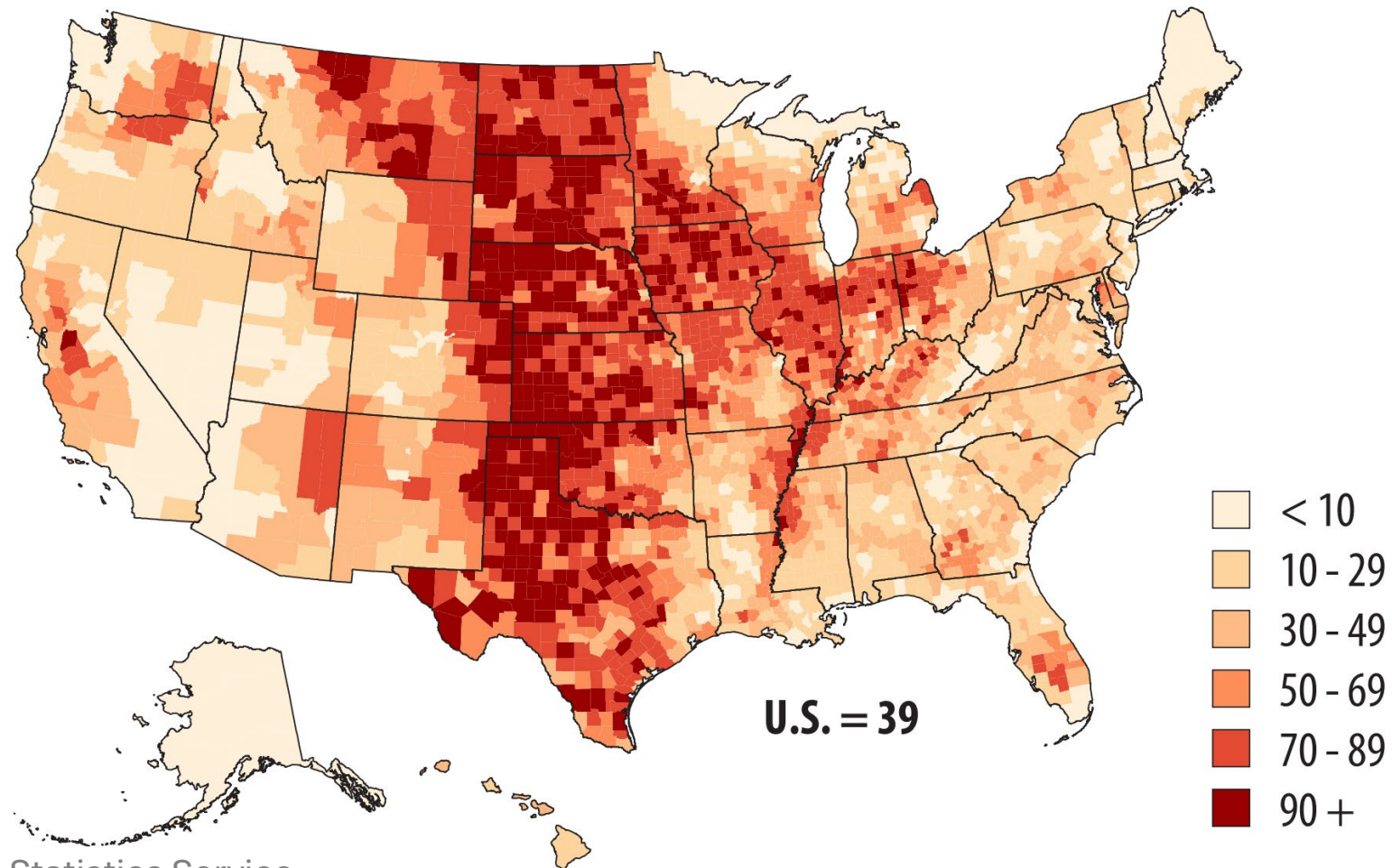
Farmland as a Share of Total

- Rural counties have the highest concentrations of farmland, but not all rural counties are heavy to agriculture



Share of Farmland Nationwide

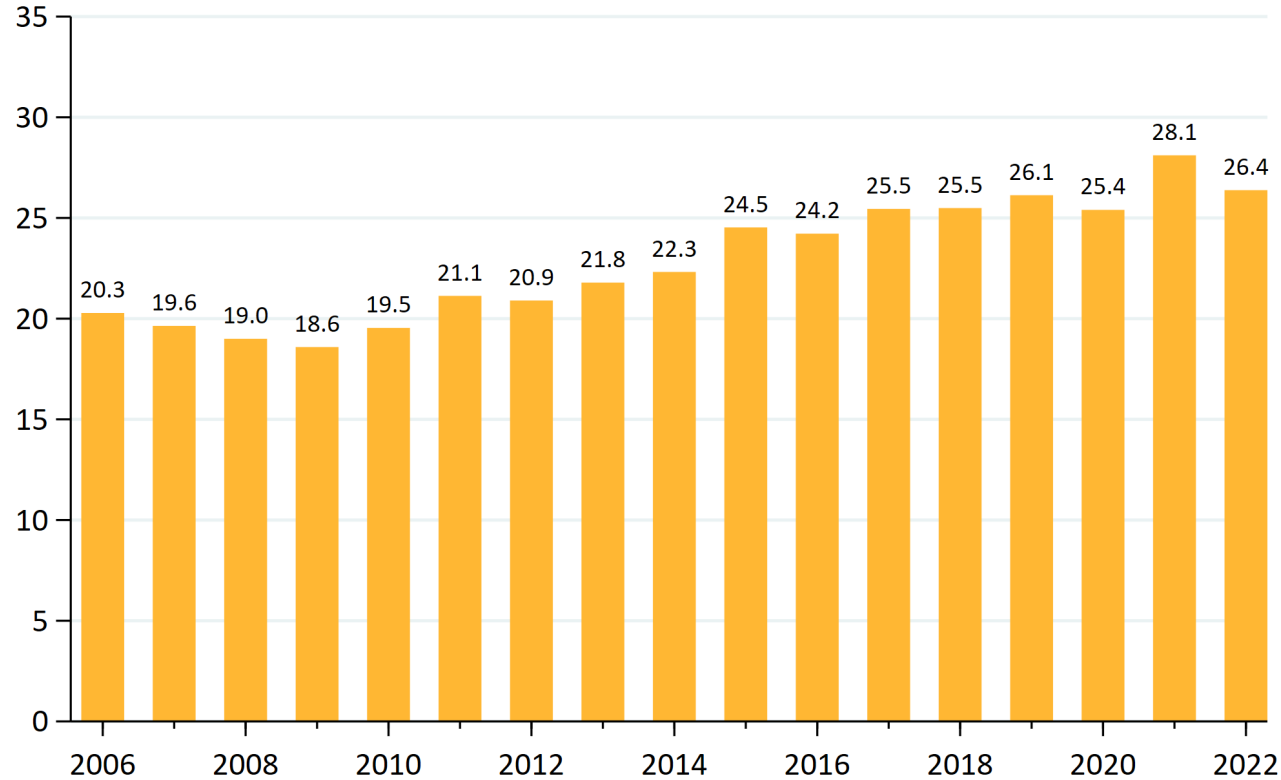
Farmland as Percent of Land Area by County, 2022



Increased Share of Women

Share of U.S. farm laborers/graders/sorters who are women, 2006–22

Percent

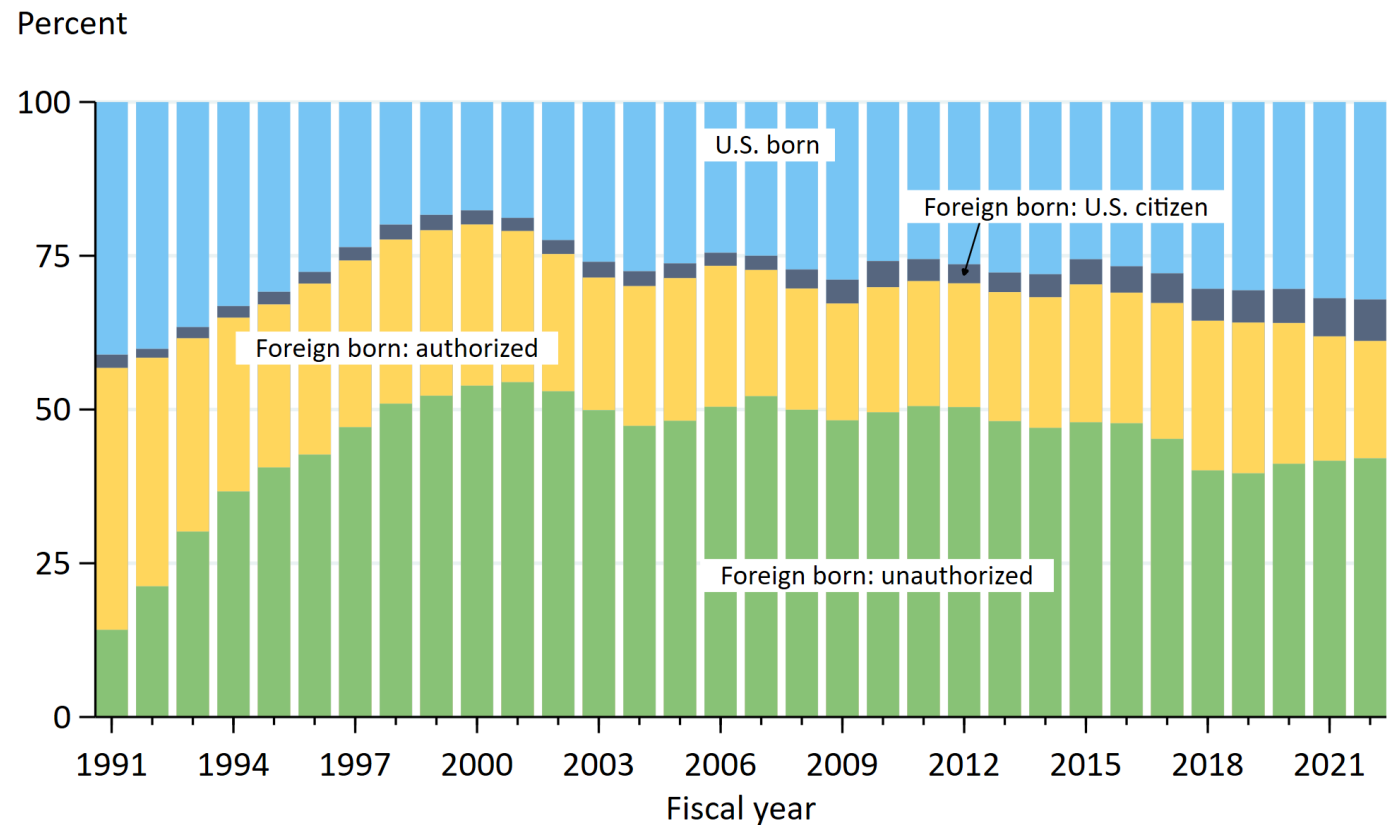


Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, annual American Community Survey.



Increased Reliance on Imported Labor

Legal status of hired crop farmworkers, fiscal years 1991–2022



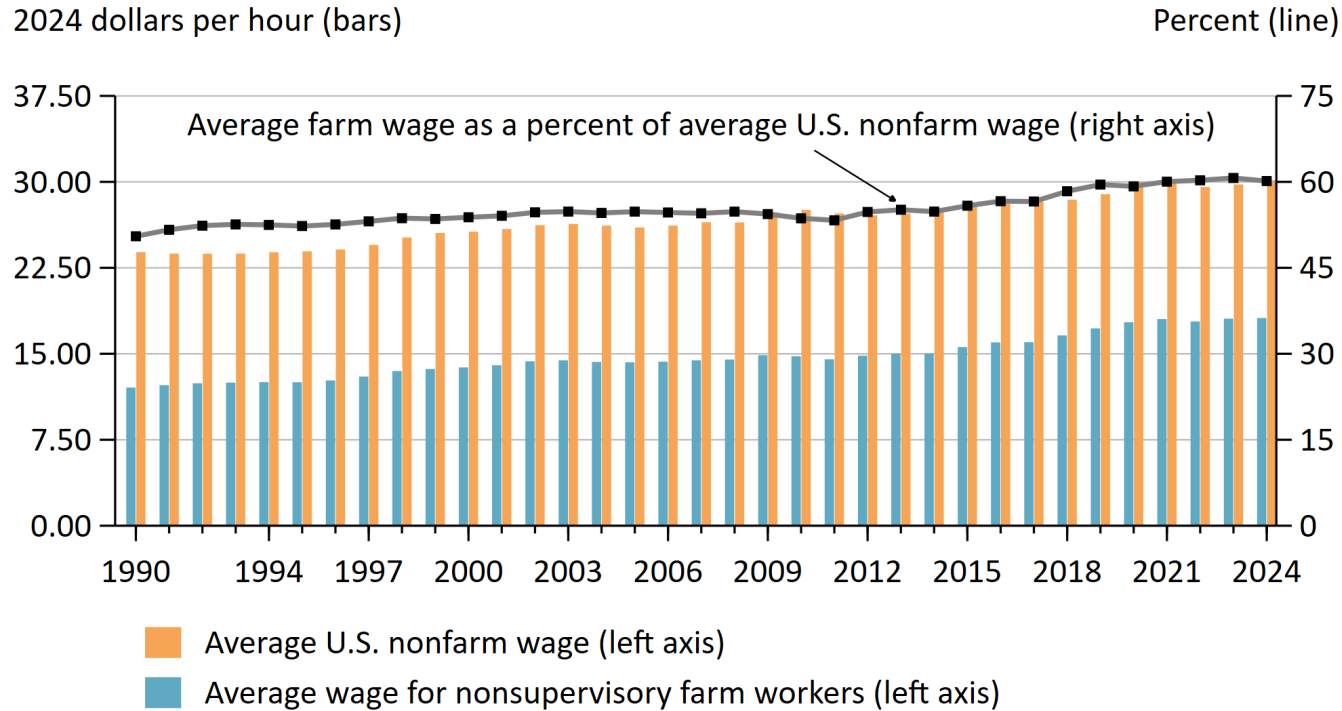
Note: Values for each year are 3-year moving averages to smooth fluctuations due to small sample sizes: e.g. data reported for fiscal year 2022 are the average over fiscal years 2020–22. U.S. born includes those born in Puerto Rico.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Labor, National Agricultural Workers Survey.



Low, but Growing Wages

Real wages for U.S. nonsupervisory farm and nonfarm workers, 1990–2024



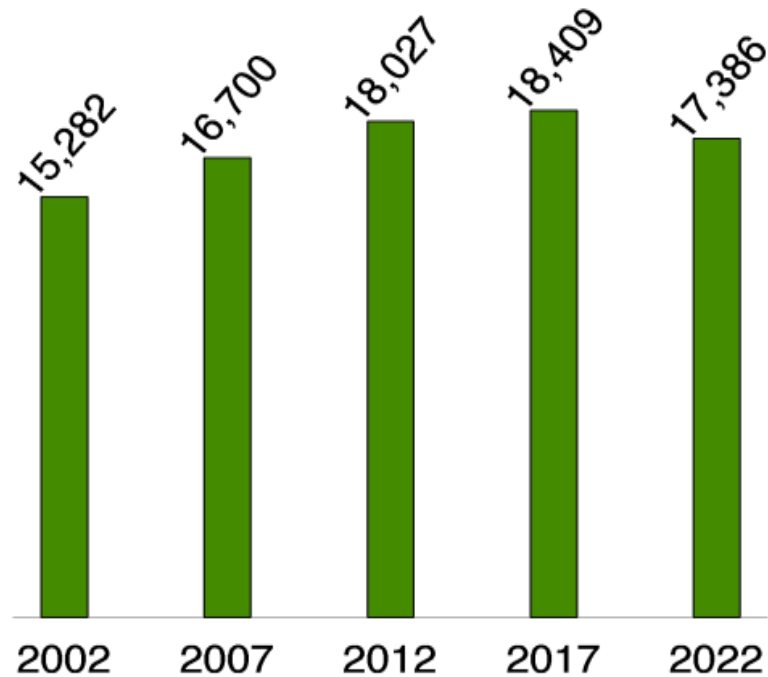
Note: The nonfarm wage includes nonsupervisory employees in mining and logging, manufacturing, and construction, and nonsupervisory employees in the service-providing industries. These groups account for about 80 percent of total employment on private nonfarm payrolls. Wages are adjusted for inflation using U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, consumer price index (CPI-U).

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Farm Labor Survey and nonfarm wage data from U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics survey.



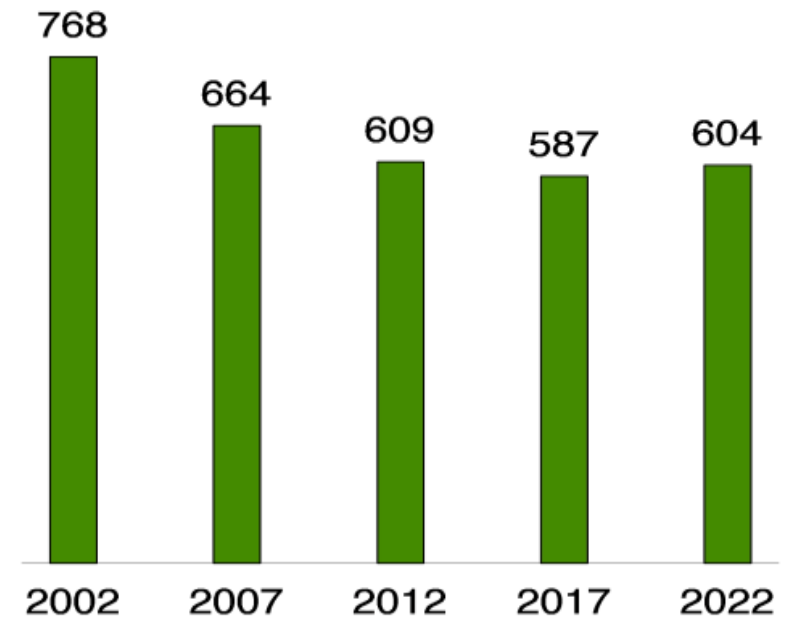
Agriculture in Utah

Number of Farms, 2002 - 2022



- Smaller farms since 2002, but more of them

Average Farm Size, 2002 - 2022 (acres)



Size of Utah Farm Operations

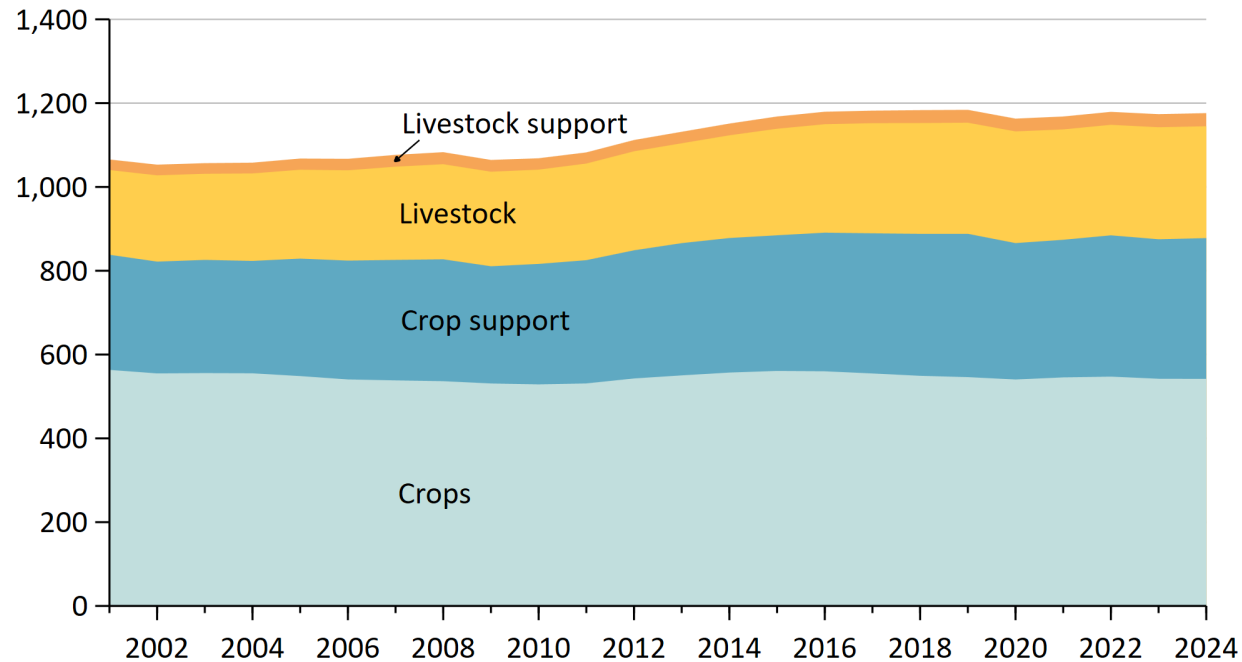
- The majority of farm operations in Utah are very small



Types of Agriculture

U.S. employment in agriculture and support industries, 2001–24

Thousand jobs



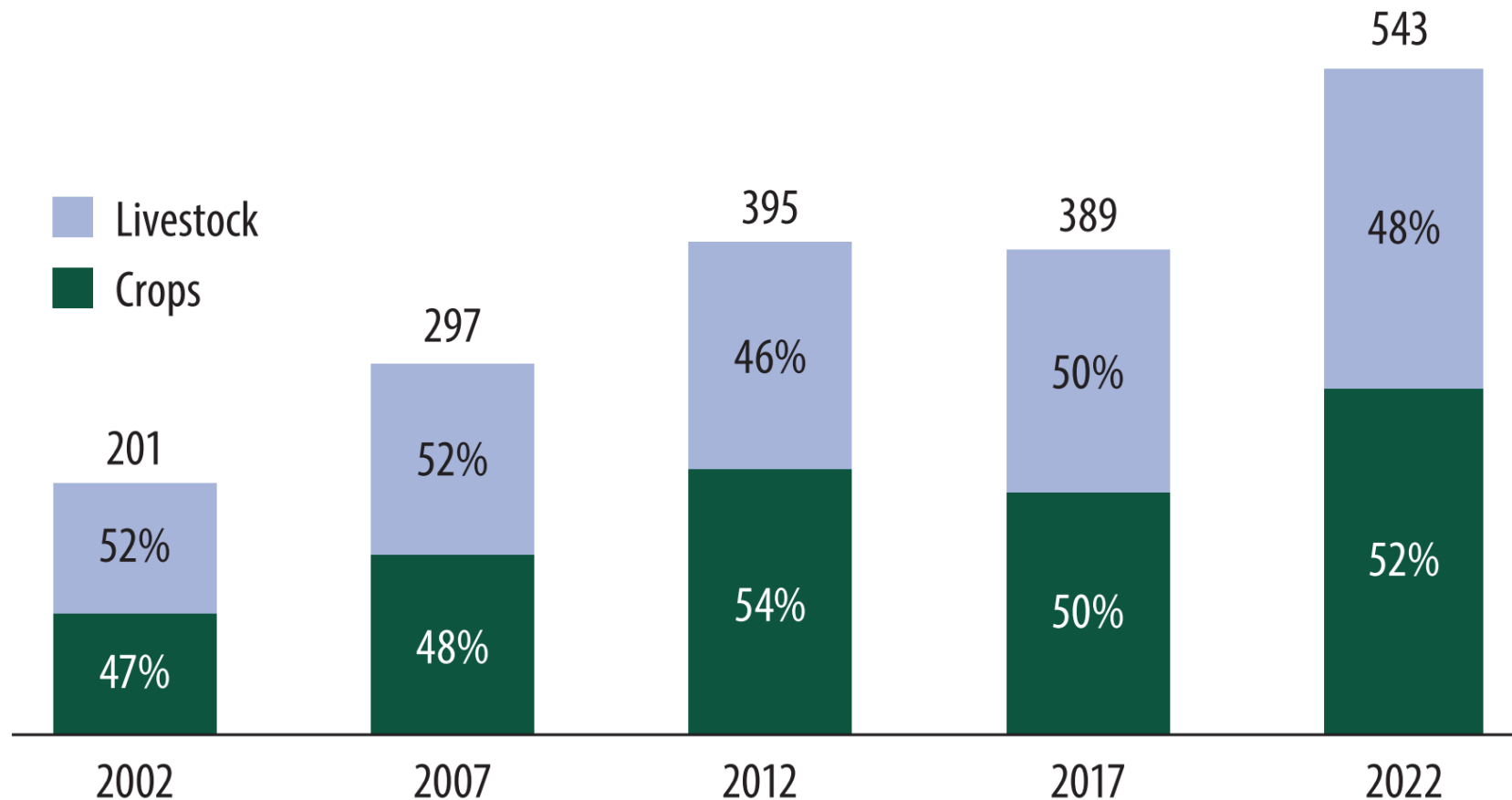
Note: Employment is measured as the annual average number of full- and part-time jobs. Data do not cover smaller farm employers in those States that exempt them from participation in the unemployment insurance system.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.



National and State Value of Livestock and Crops

Value of Production, 2002-2022 (\$ billions)



Utah's breakdown

\$1,623,782,000
69% of Total



Animal Sales

\$717,816,000
31% of Total



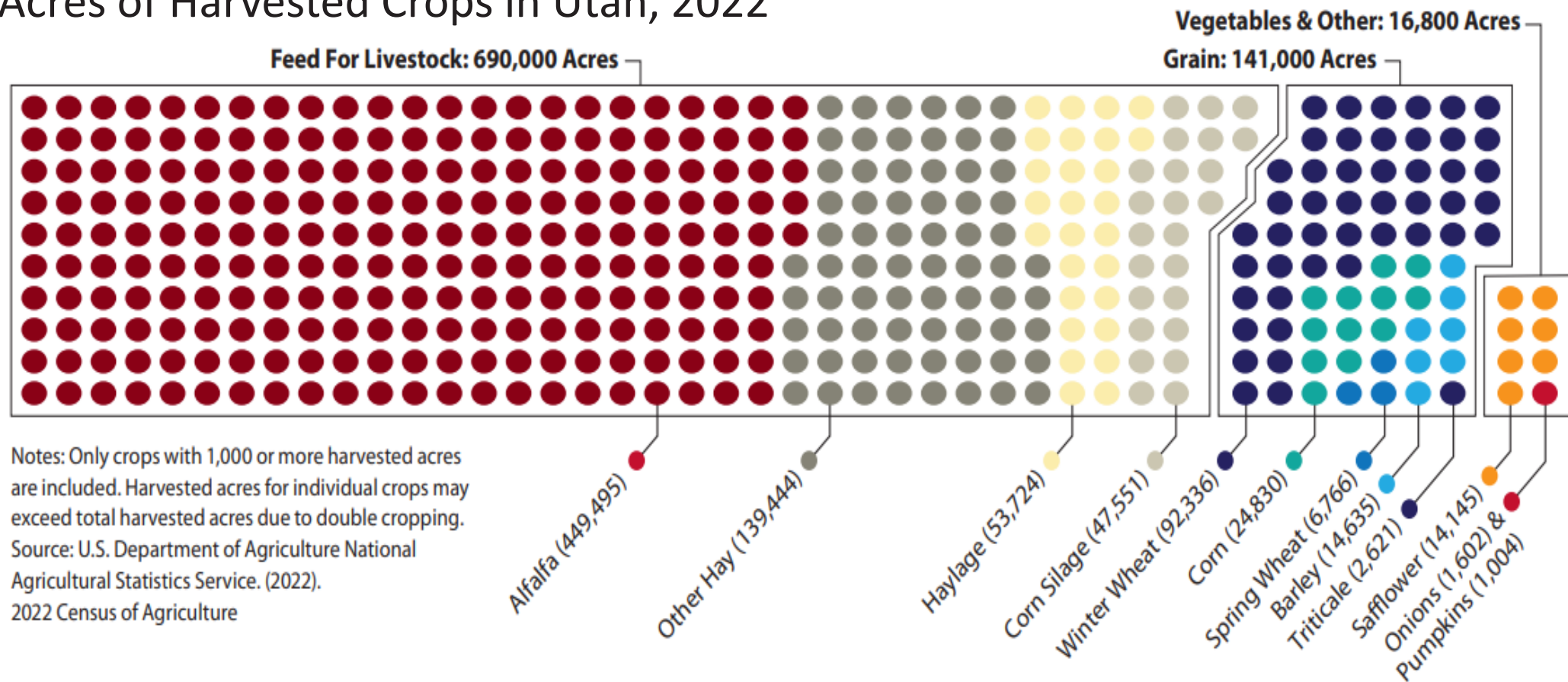
Crop Sales



Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service, Utah DWS

Much of Utah's Crops are Designated for Livestock

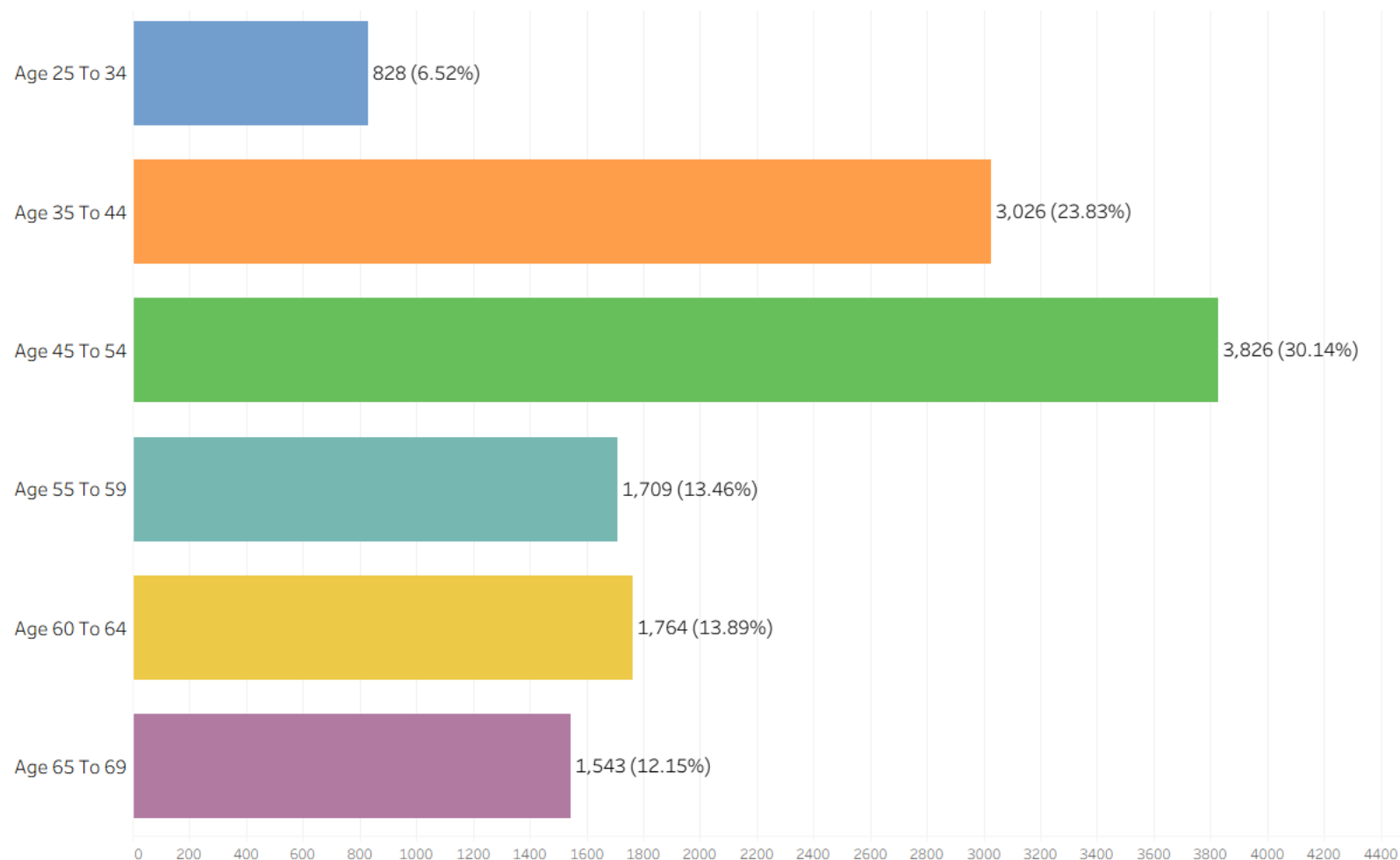
Acres of Harvested Crops in Utah, 2022



Aging Workforce

- In 1997, 60.49% of Utah farmers were 54 or under

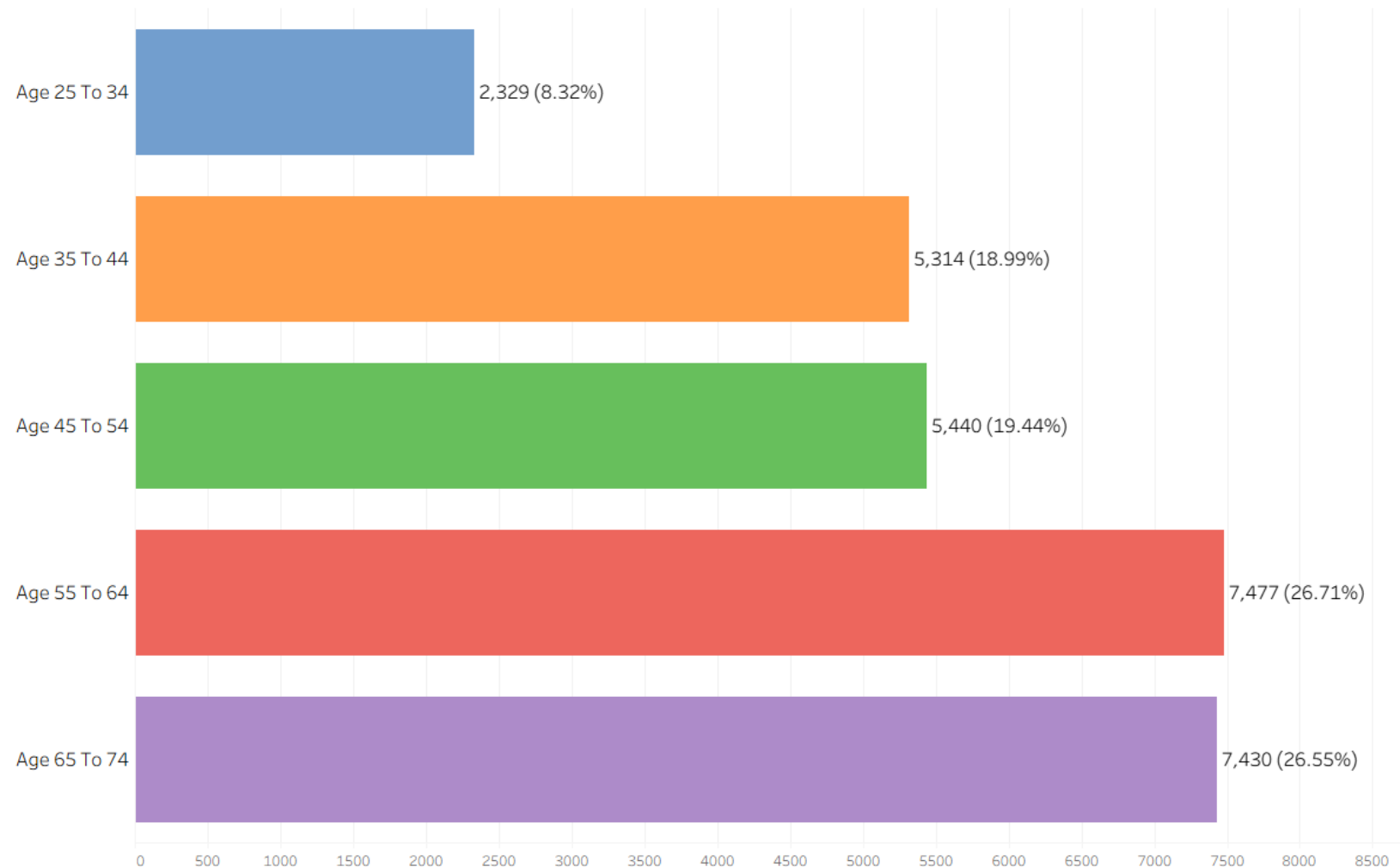
Age Distribution, 1997



Aging Workforce

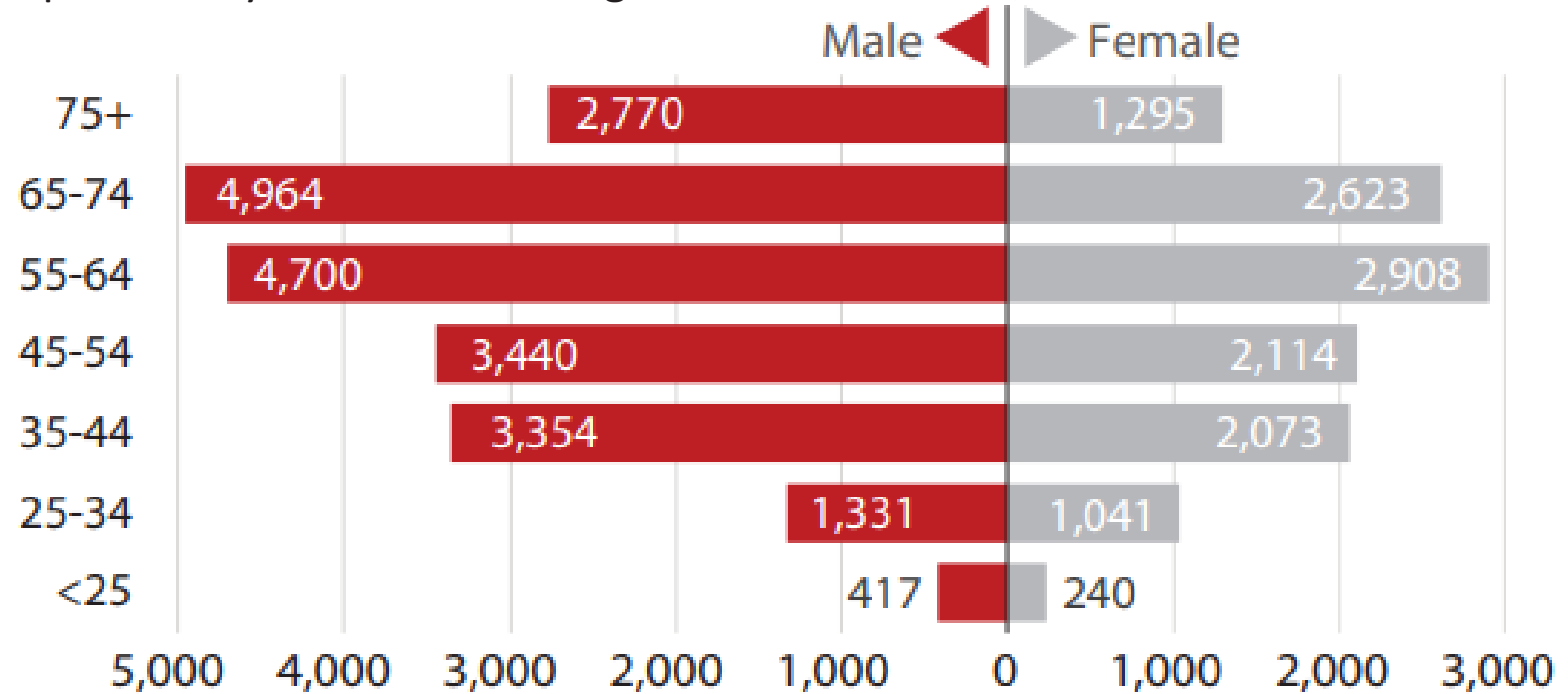
- Agriculture's workforce has gotten older – they changed the age categories to account for older workers
- 53.26% of the workforce is 55 and older

Age Distribution, 2022



Aging Workforce

Population Pyramid of Utah's Agricultural Producers, 2022

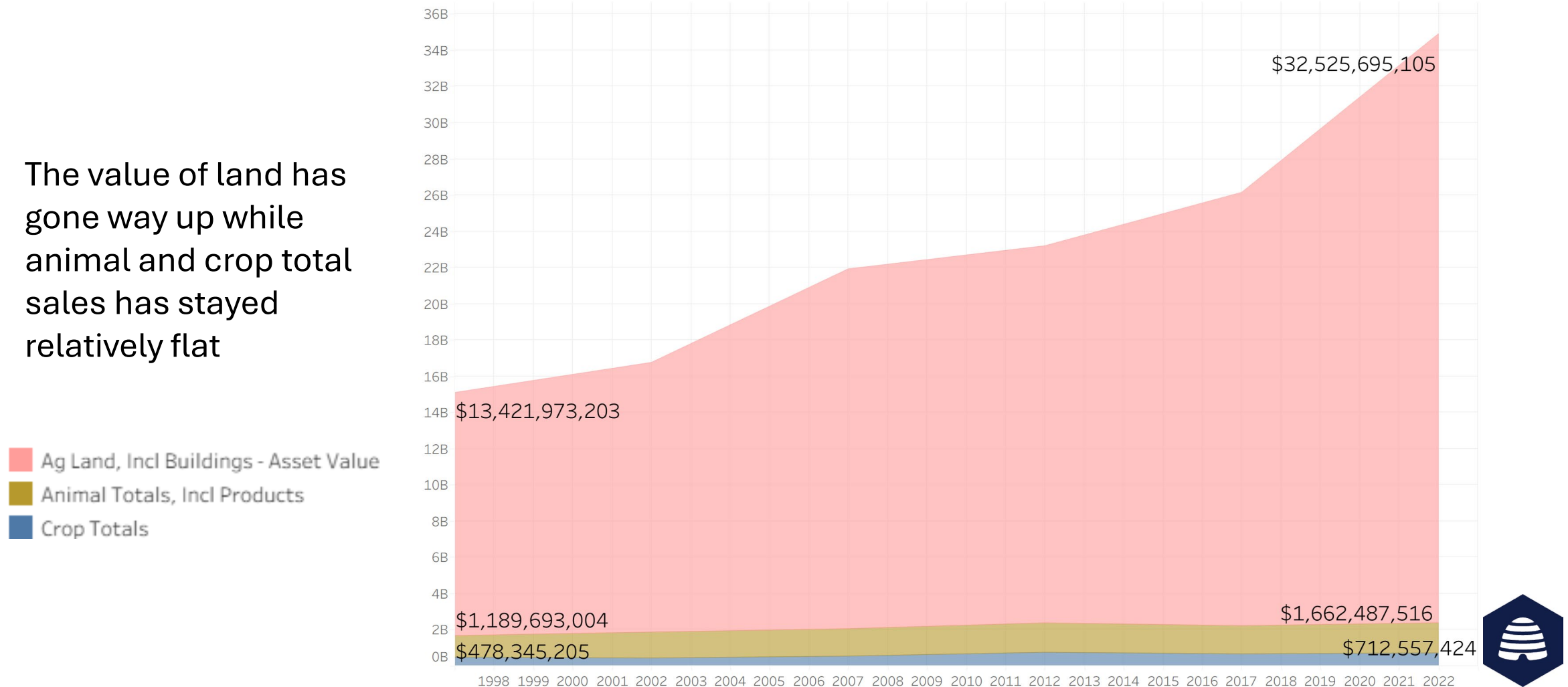


Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2022).
2022 Census of Agriculture



Utah's Runaway Value of Land

- The value of land has gone way up while animal and crop total sales has stayed relatively flat



What does the future hold?

'Once it's gone, it's gone;' Box Elder County farmer preserving farming land for farming

Raegan A. Edelman Tremonton Leader Jul 23, 2025 0

HJ NEWS

In 1997, Thayne Tagge bought a farm on a whim after a summer searching for good peaches.

"They don't have to buy it from me," Tagge explained. "I'm giving it to them. But they don't get to sell it either. They have to use it — to farm it, to keep it going.

"This land, it's beautiful, it's a work of art. They call this the 'million-dollar view,'" Tagge said, standing above the orchards with a full view of Willard Bay, thriving orchards and even the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. "The best place to grow fruit is the best place to plant a home, too — everybody wants to build here."

"What I notice is that after the first, second or third generation, there's a quarrel that starts. One guy sticks around and keeps farming's daddy's property, right? And the other siblings get nothing from it, and then there's this big clash where they say, 'you either buy me out or we got to sell it,'" Tagge explained. "Usually they can't afford to buy them out, and selling is the only option."

"Less than 3% of our fruits and vegetables are grown in Utah," Tagge said. "Ninety-seven percent are trucked in. So when you stop at a fruit stand, or a farmer's market, you're not just buying a peach — you're casting a vote."

A vote for local food. For family farming. For keeping this land in trees instead of rooftops.



Local Actions

The market is creating a lot of pressure that is not entirely positive to agriculture.

Coordinated local and state ordinances may help address community concerns.

Save the heritage without sacrificing economic prosperity.

Box Elder County approves three new Ag protection areas

[Open Audio Article Player](#)

July 09, 2025

By Nelson Phillips Staff writer nphillips@benewsjournal.com

Ag heritage zone approved for 573 acres near Thatcher

[Open Audio Article Player](#)

September 03, 2025

By Nelson Phillips Staff writer nphillips@benewsjournal.com

Summit County buys 835-acre Ure Ranch to preserve Kamas Valley open space



by Rebecca Brenner

Published: Dec 16, 2025 at 7:06 am

Saving Utah's family farms

By Sonja Brown - | Feb 4, 2026



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YOU**





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