

Ag census outlines U.S. farm power

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collected in the 50 States were—

- Acreage and value
- Land use
- Crop acreage and production
- Irrigation and drainage
- Fertilizer and pesticide use
- Livestock and poultry production
- Machinery and equipment
- Contracts and marketing agreements

- Payroll and employment
- Farm injuries and illnesses
- Farm debts
- Value of products sold
- Production expenses
- Fuel and grain storage
- Type of organization (partnership, corporation, etc.)
- Operator characteristics (age, race, residence, occupation, etc.)
- Agricultural services (cotton ginning, baling and combining, crop

dusting, plowing, veterinary services, commercial hunting and trapping, etc.)
 Inventory figures for the 1974 census were obtained as of December 31, 1974, and data on citrus crops from the bloom of 1973. Generally, all other information was for calendar year 1974.
 The purposes, content, and priority of needs for agriculture census data underwent a thorough

review and rejustification in preparation for the 1978 agriculture census program. The objectives of this review were to reduce the reporting burden, simplify the report form, increase promptness of response, and reduce the time between data collection and publication. Only essential, basic items will be asked of all farms; additional items for which county-level data are urgently needed will be asked on a 20 per cent sample basis. Data for which state or national estimates are sufficient to meet the needs will be obtained through small sample surveys (10,000 to 50,000 farms) taken for 1979.

Complete and accurate agricultural statistics help ensure an orderly and generally efficient marketing and food distribution system which benefits both the farmer and the consumer.

Agriculture census data are chiefly used as a basis for planning for the future. Each census, in turn, provides uniformly based benchmark data by county and indicates the latest trends; this is the primary purpose of the census.

Census of agriculture statistics are used in a variety of ways. As benchmarks, they are the bases for establishing trends for many of the year-to-year estimates and projections made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They

also provide a base to identify areas or universes suitable for sample surveys by the Department of Agriculture, State governments, universities, and private institutions.

Federal, State, and local agencies use the data for planning rural development, agricultural research, and extension work. These data serve as criteria for determining the economic agricultural base of a county and for analyzing that economy and its resources.

Census statistics on farms, by geographic location and by size and type of operation, provide much of the benchmark information Congress uses in developing and revising farm programs. The statistics are also used for determining the effects of these programs on various sizes and types of farms.

Farm cooperatives, commodity and trade associations, and agribusiness corporations use the data to aid in locating new plants and service and distribution centers; allocating research funds; forecasting markets; selecting marketing areas; and making advertising and other marketing decisions. This improves the farmers' access to markets and suppliers too. Actions by these various agribusiness groups increase competition and generally provide the

farmer with improved marketing and purchasing alternatives.

Census statistics, along with current estimates, take some of the guesswork out of the production and marketing decisions that confront individual farmers. By comparing their own operations with the census results for their county or State, farmers and agricultural service operators know how to better adjust their own production plans to fit the ever-changing market conditions.

Most farmers probably never see a census publication, but they benefit from the available statistics through the actions and reactions of their marketing cooperatives and associations, commodity groups, market forecasters, farm organizations, the farm press, and other data users. Census figures show a geographic picture of American agriculture, the changing crop and livestock patterns in agriculture, economic conditions and operating costs of farms, and the sources of marketing and income. Knowledge of these factors aids farmers and other decisionmakers at all levels; otherwise, those responsible for making the production and marketing decisions would be hampered, thus affecting the welfare of us all.

The definition of a farm for census purposes has been changed at various times over the years. For 1974, the final published statistics

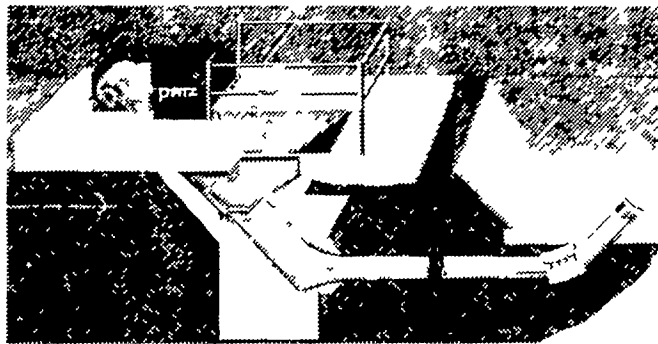
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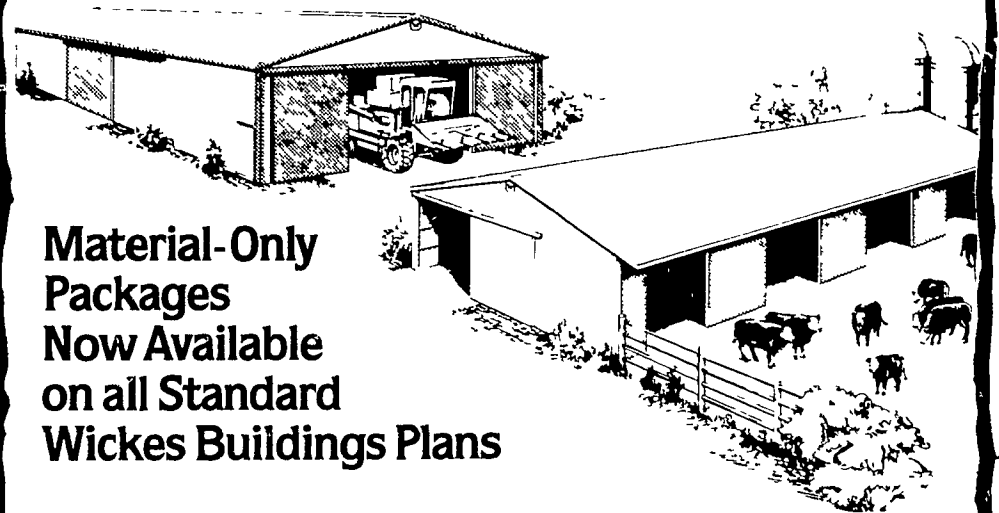
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