Executive Summary

Analysis of 2012 Census of Agriculture Data

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Introduction

This study used data from the 2002, 2007 and 2012 U.S. Censuses of Agriculture to provide a comprehensive analysis of Pennsylvania farmers, the types of farm operations in Pennsylvania, and existing trends and conditions in the state's agriculture industry. The Ag Census is conducted every 5 years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

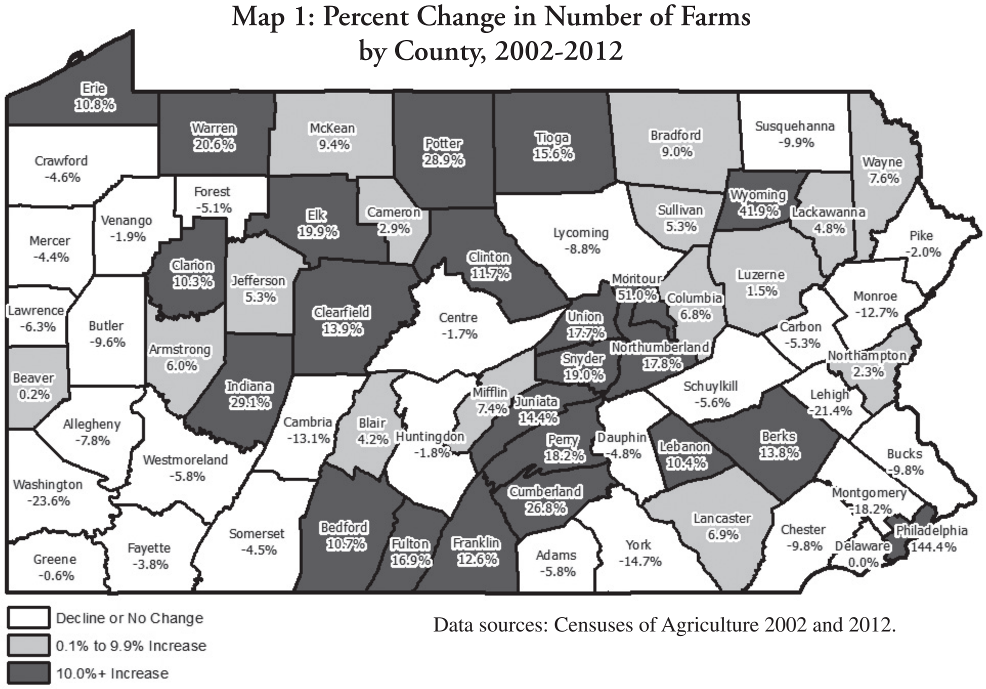
In addition to the Ag Census data, the study used surveys conducted by NASS with a specific focus on Pennsylvania at the state and county levels. The researchers also used the U.S. Department of Agriculture's definition of farm (any place from which $1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the year) for the study.

Results

From 2007 to 2012, there was a decline in the number of farms (6 percent) and acres of farmland (1 percent) in Pennsylvania (See Map 1 below and Map 2 on Page 2) and an increase (5 percent) in average farm size. A majority of farms were medium-sized (between 50-179 acres) (See Figure 1 on Page 2), and were mostly family owned or individual proprietorships (88 percent). Pennsylvania farms sold nearly $5.8 billion in agricultural products in 2012, up 15 percent from 2007.

Although male farmers reported the greatest share of agricultural sales (96 percent), in more recent years, female farmers reported higher sales increases, with the value of crops sold rising 93 percent from 2007 to 2012. This result is promising since female farmers com-

Map 1: Percent Change in Number of Farms by County, 2002-2012



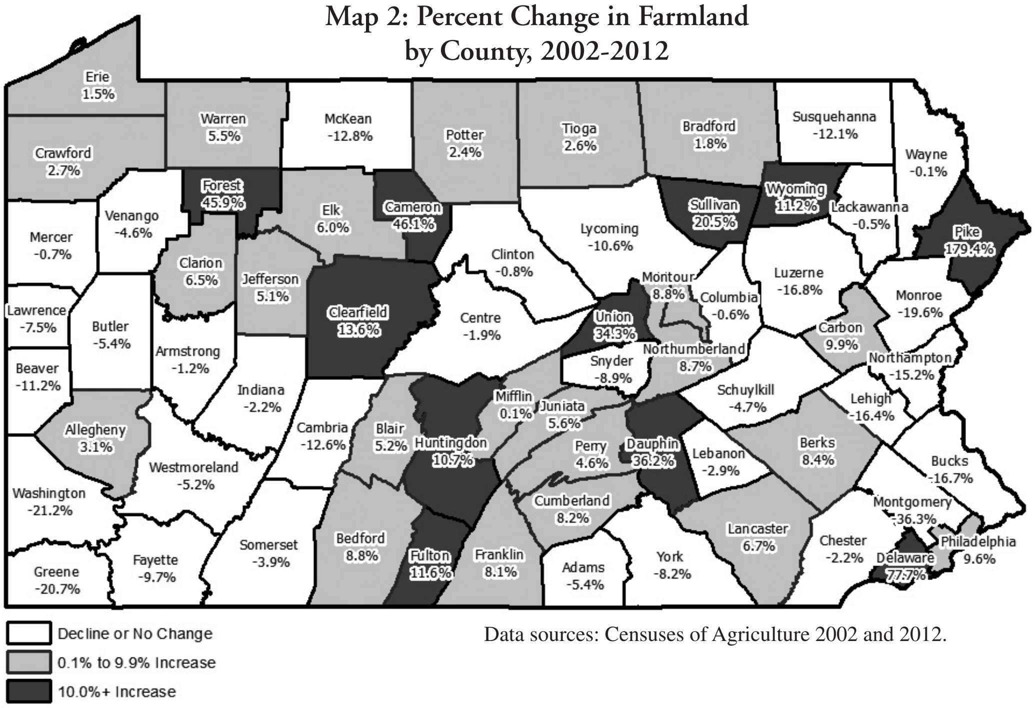
Data sources: Censuses of Agriculture 2002 and 2012.

This project was sponsored by a grant from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, a legislative agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource for rural policy within the Pennsylvania General Assembly. It was created in 1987 under Act 16, the Rural Revitalization Act, to promote and sustain the vitality of Pennsylvania's rural and small communities.

Information contained in this report does not necessarily reflect the views of individual board members or the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. For more information, contact the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, 625 Forster St., Room 902, Harrisburg, PA 17120, telephone (717) 787-9555, email: info@rural.palegislature.us, www.rural.palegislature.us.

Map 2: Percent Change in Farmland by County, 2002-2012



Data sources: Censuses of Agriculture 2002 and 2012.

prise about 14 percent of the total number of farmers in the state. The proportion of minority farmers in the state remained very low (1 percent), and has remained unchanged from 2002 to 2012.

The average age of Pennsylvania farmers is increasing. In 2012, the average age of farmers was 56 years old, a year older when compared to 2007. A little over half (52 percent) of Pennsylvania farmers reported farming as their primary occupation. Out of these, 17 percent were over age 65, and less than 1 percent was under age 25. This, coupled with a 30 percent decline in the number of farmers in the 45-49 age group, further indicated higher average ages of farmers. While this trend is similar across the U.S, Pennsylvania farmers are younger, on average, than farmers nationwide.

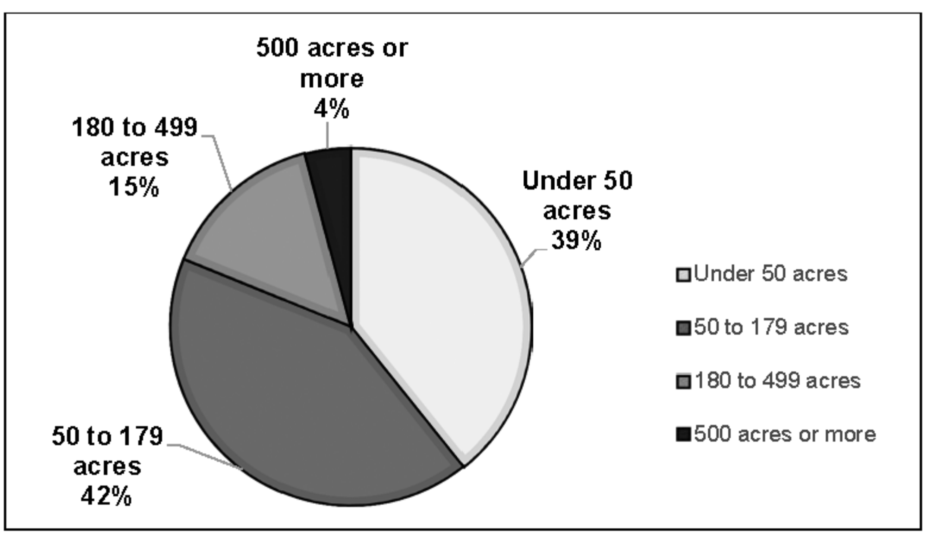
The number of older (above age 65) female farmers increased 3 percent from 2002 to 2012, whereas the proportion of younger female farmers (under age 25) has remained unchanged over the same period.

From 2007 to 2012, there was a 27 percent decline in the number of Pennsylvania farmers with fewer than 2 years on the current farm and a 23 percent decline in farmers with 3 to 4 years on the current farm. However, there was an increase (11 percent) in farmers with 10 or more years on the current farm from 2002 to 2012.

In Pennsylvania, net cash farm income increased with farm size, with larger farms (500 plus acres) representing 32 percent of the total farm income in 2012. Net farm income among smaller farms (1-49 acres) decreased significantly (38 percent) between 2002 and 2012.

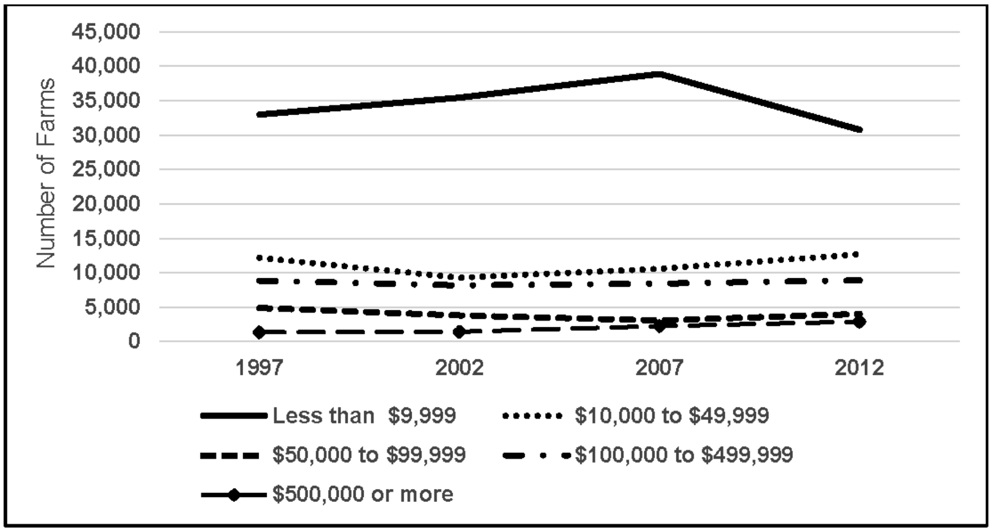
A majority of farms in Pennsylvania (52 percent) sold less than $10,000 of agricultural products in 2012, and about

Figure 1: Percent of Farms by Size in Pennsylvania, 2012 (Total Number of Farms: 59,309)



Data source: Census of Agriculture 2012.

Figure 2: Number of Farms by Value of Agricultural Sales in Pennsylvania, 2002-2012



Data sources: Censuses of Agriculture 2002, 2007 and 2012.

Table 1: Value of Agricultural Sales in Pennsylvania*, 2002-2012

	2002	2007	2012	% change 2007-2012	% change 2002-2012
All Products ($ thousands)	$4,256,959	$5,039,027	$5,797,719	15	36
Crops ($ thousands)	$1,320,914	$1,621,935	$2,180,113	34	65
Livestock ($ thousands)	$2,936,045	$3,417,092	$3,617,606	6	23

*Data adjusted for inflation with 2002=100. Data sources: Censuses of Agriculture 2002, 2007 and 2012.

Table 2: Categories of Farm Expenditures in Pennsylvania*, 2002-2012

Categories of Expenditure ($ thousands)	2002	2007	2012
Livestock and poultry purchased or leased	$333,396	$418,918	$393,759
Feed purchased	$937,355	$1,099,258	$1,435,921
Fertilizer, lime, and soil conditioners purchased	$135,921	$178,235	$275,115
Gasoline, fuels, and oils purchased	$126,126	$213,057	$244,605
Hired farm labor	$443,050	$512,587	$526,120
Interest expense	$187,899	$191,518	$201,339
Chemicals purchased	$77,774	$96,868	$122,777
All other farm production expenses	$1,372,551	$1,548,118	$1,533,441
Total farm production expenses	$3,614,072	$4,258,559	$4,733,077

*Data adjusted for inflation with 2002 =100. Data sources: Censuses of Agriculture 2002, 2007 and 2012.

21 percent sold between $10,000 and $50,000. About 7 percent of farms in the commonwealth sold between $50,000 and $99,999 of agricultural products in 2012, and 20 percent sold $100,000 or more (See Figure 2). Across the U.S., 57 percent of farms sold less than $10,000 of agricultural products in 2012, and 18 percent sold $100,000 or more.

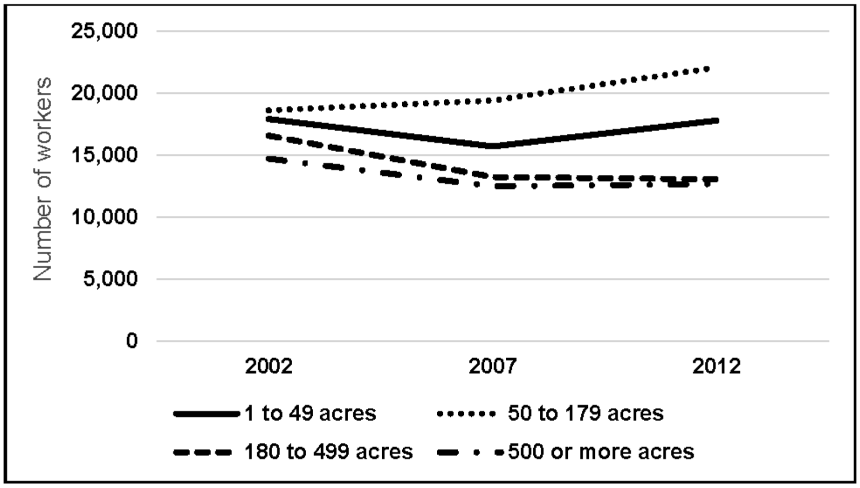
Crop sales and livestock sales increased from 2007 to 2012 (34 percent and 6 percent, respectively). Livestock represented a higher share of net cash farm income of operations from 2002 to 2012 (See Table 1). However, the relative contribution of livestock to farm profitability decreased 11 percent from 2002 to 2012 and the contribution of crops to farm profitability increased 11 percent from 2002 to 2012.

Total farm expenditures in the commonwealth increased 11 percent from 2007 to 2012, with the largest share spent on feed purchases at 45 percent of total expenses (See Table 2).

Farm labor totaled 65,487 workers in 2012, up 8 percent since 2007. Starting in 2012, the Census reported the number of migrant farm workers: 440 farms reported a total of 4,268 migrant workers.

Among the different sizes of farms, labor employment increased significantly for farms of 1 to 49 acres, with a 13 percent increase in the number of workers between 2007 and 2012. There was a 14 percent increase in farm labor employment for farms of 50 to 179 acres. On the other hand, labor

Figure 3: Farm Employment by Farm Size in Pennsylvania, 2002-2012



Data sources: Censuses of Agriculture 2002, 2007 and 2012.

employment at farms of 180 to 499 acres declined 1 percent (See Figure 3).

The research compared Pennsylvania with bordering states and the U.S. as a whole in terms of farming as an occupation. In 2012, 52 percent of operators in Pennsylvania reported farming as their primary occupation, which was higher than the national average (48 percent), and lower compared to the states of Delaware (64 percent) and New York (57 percent). Nationwide, there was a 10 percent decline in the proportion of operators with farming as their primary occupation between 2002 and 2012. In Pennsylvania, there was a 5 percent decline between 2002 and 2012. Ohio witnessed the highest decline of about 12 percent.

When comparing the commonwealth and bordering states in terms of the number of farms, acres of farmland and average farm sizes, the research found that New Jersey saw the greatest decrease (12 percent) in the number of farms between 2007 and 2012, closely followed by West Virginia (9 percent). Pennsylvania recorded a 6 percent decrease in the number of farms between the same time period. All of the study states witnessed decreases or no change in the number of farmland acres and increases in average farm sizes from 2007 to 2012. New Jersey had the highest increase (11 percent) in average farm size, followed by West Virginia (7 percent), and Pennsylvania (5 percent).

For a copy of the full report, *Analysis of 2012 Census of Agriculture Data*, visit the Center's website at www.rural.palegislature.us.

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