

# Farmers Marketing

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*Direct sales through markets, roadside stands, and other means up 8 percent since 2007.*

## 29 percent . . .

. . . of farms selling directly to consumers specialized in vegetable, fruit, and nut farming in 2012, and 25 percent specialized in beef.

### Top States in Direct Consumer Sales (\$ millions)

California	169.9
New York	100.6
Pennsylvania	86.0
Michigan	58.8
Massachusetts	47.9
Wisconsin	46.9
Ohio	46.6
Washington	45.1
Oregon	44.2
Virginia	41.7

A small but growing number of farms and ranches are pursuing new ways to market their products and connect to their communities. Their strategies include selling agricultural products directly to consumers, marketing directly to retail outlets, creating and selling a variety of value-added products, or promoting visits to their operations.

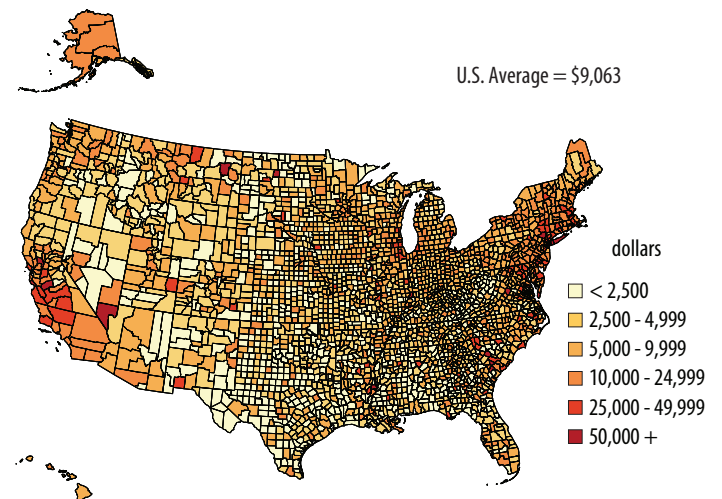
## Direct Sales to Consumers

Farmers sell fresh agricultural products directly to consumers in a variety of ways – through farmers markets, roadside stands, pick-your-own operations, community supported agriculture (CSA) arrangements, and other efforts. Throughout the United States, 144,530 farms sold \$1.3 billion in fresh edible agricultural products directly to consumers in 2012. This was a 6 percent increase in farms, and an 8 percent increase in sales, over 2007, the last time the agriculture census was conducted.

Farms with direct sales to consumers were 6.9 percent of the nation's 2.1 million farms in 2012, but those sales accounted for only 0.3 percent of total agriculture sales. Three states (California, New York, and Pennsylvania) accounted for 27 percent of direct consumer sales.

The average value of direct consumer sales per farm was \$9,063. Counties with higher average sales were largely in the Northeast and California.

Average Value per Farm of Direct Sales to Consumers, by County, 2012



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

**Farm Size.** The majority of farms selling fresh edible products directly to consumers are small. Three fourths had annual sales of less than \$5,000 in 2012, and together accounted for 11 percent of total sales. The 3 percent of farms with annual direct-to-consumer sales of \$50,000 or more accounted for 58 percent of the total.

**Direct Agriculture Sales to Consumers, by Per Farm Sales, 2012**

(number of farms and \$ millions)

Per Farm Sales	Farms		Sales	
	No.	%	\$ millions	%
\$1-\$499	37,398	26	7.8	1
\$500-\$999	20,170	14	13.7	1
\$1,000-\$4,999	52,750	36	121.8	9
\$5,000-\$9,999	14,452	10	97.3	7
\$10,000-\$24,999	11,045	8	164.8	13
\$25,000-\$49,999	4,244	3	143.7	11
\$50,000 or more	4,471	3	760.8	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>144,530</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,309.8</b>	<b>100</b>

*Note: Excludes craft items and processed products such as jellies, sausages, hams, cider, and wine.*

*Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.*

**Producer Characteristics.** Nearly 70 percent of principal operators who sold directly to consumers were established producers who had 10 years of farming experience or more; 73 percent were 45 years or older. Nearly 90 percent lived on the farm, but 68 percent worked at least some days off the farm and 42 percent did so 200 or more days during the year. Of principal operators selling directly to consumers, 18 percent were women. Women made up 14 percent of principal operators overall.

**CSAs Connect Farms and Households**

In a community supported agriculture arrangement, a farmer or rancher delivers food to subscribers who purchase shares in that season's products. Such arrangements give producers cash at the start of the season and a market for their products. In turn, by participating in a CSA, subscribers receive fresh food and have a connection with a farm in their community.

Nationally, 12,617 farms sold fresh produce and other products through a CSA in 2012. States with the largest number of farms selling through a CSA were California (1,015 farms), Texas (590), North Carolina (579), New York (578), and Pennsylvania (551).

Ten counties in the country had more than 50 CSAs; seven of the ten counties were in northeastern states.

**Direct Sales to Retailers**

Nearly 50,000 farms in 2012 sold some or all of their products directly to retail outlets such as restaurants, grocery stores, schools, hospitals, or other businesses that in turn sold to consumers. Across the country, 2.3 percent of farms sold their products directly to retailers. California had the largest number of farms (4,432) with such sales, followed by Texas, New York, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. But Hawaii, Alaska, and New England had the the largest percentages of farms with direct sales to retailers. California ranked eleventh.

**Top States in Direct Sales to Retailers (percent of farms)**

Hawaii	18
Vermont	16
Alaska	15
Rhode Island	14
New Hampshire	14
Massachusetts	13
Maine	13
Connecticut	10
New York	7
New Jersey	7

*Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.*

**Value-added Products**

Farmers add value to their agricultural commodities when they process them to produce items such as beef jerky, fruit jams, jelly, preserves, floral arrangements, cider, wine, etc. Nationally, 94,799 farms produced and sold value-added products in 2012. States with the most farms doing so were Texas (11,544 farms), California (4,281), Kentucky (4,117), Missouri (3,926), and Oklahoma (3,815).

In the United States overall, the share of farms producing and selling such products was 4.5 percent. The top states in percent of farms were Vermont (14 percent), New Hampshire (13 percent), Maine (11 percent), Rhode Island (11 percent), and Alaska (10 percent).

**Agritourism**

Just over 33,000 farms offered agritourism and recreational services such as farm or winery tours, hayrides, hunting, fishing, and other such activities in 2012.

To learn more about farmers' new marketing strategies, the 2012 Census of Agriculture, and how to access national, state, and county data, go to:

**[www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)**