

Kentucky Agriculture is More than Horses

Kentucky may be known for its horse racing industry, but agriculture plays a big part in the success of the Bluegrass State's economy. The following article provides a snapshot of the USDA Census for Agriculture - Kentucky.



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Kentucky and cattle have always been a perfect match, and as the most recent Census of Agriculture shows that bond remains to this day. In 2012, the year for which we conducted the Census, Kentucky farmers sold more than \$1 billion worth of cattle and calves.

Beef cattle production has become an increasingly important sector for many farms transitioning away from tobacco production. Overall, about half of all farms in Kentucky owned cattle in 2012. That's not surprising, considering we have some of the best cattle pasture in the United States.

While cattle have a long history in Kentucky, poultry production has emerged as a leading agriculture activity in the last 25 years. Broiler production on 826 Kentucky farms in 2012 totaled 761 billion head ranking the state 7th nationally.

Kentucky, of course, is known for horses and in 2012 horse and pony sales were \$178 million. This does not count the many horses born and raised on Kentucky farms, but owned by out of state interests, most of which are the thoroughbreds that made the Kentucky Derby so famous.

While livestock is an important element of our agriculture, there are plenty of other sides to Kentucky farming. After all, in 2012, our farmers and ranchers sold more than \$5 billion worth of agricultural products, with nearly \$2.3 billion coming from crop sales. Expansion of the Kentucky Proud™ brand for Kentucky's agricultural products has also increased agricultural diversification.

In Kentucky, soybeans and corn are the top crops. Nearly 1.47 million acres of farmland were dedicated to soybeans, with farmers selling more than \$752 million worth of the crop in 2012. Corn was harvested from 1.53 million acres while sales totaled \$694 million.

And then there's tobacco, which continues to be an important crop. Despite the continuing decrease in farms raising tobacco, Kentucky still has the largest number of tobacco farms in the United States. In 2012, more than 4,500 of our farms grew this crop. This is a significant drop from the more than 8,000 tobacco farms the Census counted in 2007, but we still have nearly 3 times as many farms as North Carolina, which is in distant second place in this category.

As you can see, Kentucky has a strong presence of all aspects of U.S. agriculture. Our livestock and our crops sectors both have something special to highlight. Agriculture keeps evolving, and as we have seen, our farmers adjust right along with the industry and continue to maintain a strong presence in the Bluegrass State. In just a few short years, we'll conduct the 2017 Census of Agriculture to see how our agriculture continues to move forward. So stay tuned!

Reading Comprehension Questions:

1) What is the main idea of the article?

2) Why do half of Kentucky farms raise beef cattle?

3) What is Kentucky's leading agriculture activity?

4) The number of tobacco farms has dropped significantly since the previous census in 2007. Why do you think that has occurred?

5) The article talked about the Kentucky Proud brand for ready-to-sell products. If you had to provide a slogan for Kentucky agriculture in general, what would it be?
