

General Statistics

- In 2008, the average farm was 418 acres compared to 297 acres in 1960, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).
- According to USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS), 46 percent of the total U.S. land area is classified as agricultural.
- In 2007, 97 percent of all U.S. beef cattle farms and ranches were classified as family farms, according to USDA's 2007 Census of Agriculture.
- According to ERS, U.S. consumers spend a smaller percent of their disposable income for food consumed at home (5.7 percent) than any country in the world. This compares to 8.6 percent spent in the United Kingdom, 9.2 percent spent in Canada, 14.6 percent spent in Japan, 24.2 percent spent in Mexico and 32.4 percent spent in India.

Production Improvements

- According to NASS and data from the U.S. Census Bureau, between 1960 and 2007 the number of U.S. farms declined by more than 1.7 million, yet the U.S. population increased by 64 percent. In 1960, there were 3.9 million farms feeding a U.S. population of 183 million. In 2007, there were 2.2 million farms feeding an estimated population of 301 million.
- Through science-based improvements in breeding and animal nutrition, beef production per cow has increased from about 400 pounds in the mid-1960s to 637 pounds in 2008, according to Cattle-Fax industry statistics.
- According to NASS, the calf crop has decreased from 1964 (43 million head) to 2008 (36.1 million head), yet the amount of beef produced has increased from 18 billion pounds in 1964 to 26.7 billion pounds in 2008.
- Today's American farmer feeds about 144 people worldwide. In 1960 that number was 25.8, according to the Agriculture Council of America (ACA).
- If the beef production practices from 1955 were used today, 165 million more acres of land—an area almost the size of Texas—still could not equal today's beef production according to an expert analysis.
- There are currently 29 cuts of beef that meet USDA criteria for lean in contrast to only seven categorized as lean in 1990.

Scientific Advancements

- Nearly half of beef producers in the United States generate and/or use some type of alternative energy on their operations, according to a survey of beef producers.
- Today, a farmer using a combine can harvest 900 bushels of corn per hour. In the 1930s, a farmer could harvest (by hand) about 100 bushels of corn in a nine-hour day, according to ACA.
- A new technique called “precision farming” boosts crop yields and reduces waste by using satellite maps and computers to match seed, fertilizer and crop protection applications to local soil conditions, according to ACA. Similarly, properly timed and detailed control of animal care and feeding minimizes resources needed and maximizes animal growth and vitality.

References

NASS: http://www.nass.usda.gov:8080/QuickStats/PullData_US.jsp

ERS: <http://www.ers.usda.gov>

U.S. Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov>

Cattle-Fax: <http://www.beefusa.org/uDocs/cattlenumbersandbeefproduction347.pdf>

ACA: <http://www.agday.org/media/agfactsheet.htm>

USDA Nutrient Data Base: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search>