

Size and Scope of Garfield County Agriculture 2019

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Location

Garfield County is located in the south central part of the state. Its economy is driven by cattle, lumber, and tourism. Some points of interest in Garfield County are Bryce Canyon National Park, the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, Kodachrome State Park, Capitol Reef National Park, and Lake Powell.

Land Ownership

The land ownership within the county is divided as shown in Figure 1.

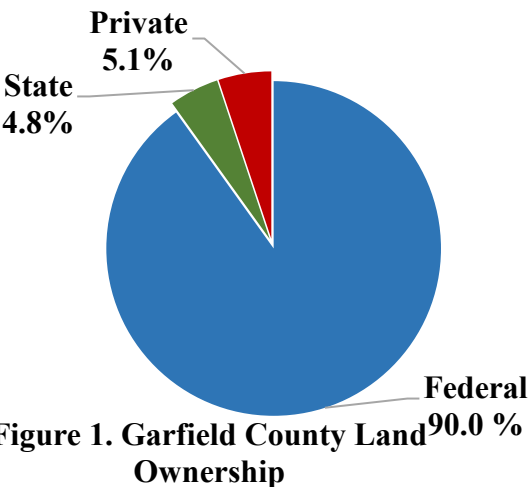


Figure 1. Garfield County Land Ownership

Source: 2017 Utah Counties Fact Book

The vast majority of the county is federally owned and is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Only a small percentage of the ground is privately held and is primarily farm ground and grazing areas.

The 2017 Census of Agriculture indicated there were 82,637 acres in farms or ranches in the county with an average size of 289 acres and an average value of \$3,127 per acre. The county had 16,297 acres of cropland of which 13,013 were harvested. Cropland is defined as land that currently has crops growing on it plus land that historically has been cropped.

Growing Season

The growing season length varies quite drastically between different areas of the county. Table 1 displays some of the details on climatology in three areas of Garfield County according to the Utah Climate Center (2019).

The much shorter growing season in Panguitch, as compared to the other two areas highlighted, is primarily due to the relatively higher elevation in that area. Panguitch sits at approximately 6,600 ft.

while Tropic and Escalante are at 6,300 ft. and 5,800 ft. respectively.

Table 1. Garfield County Annual Precipitation and Average Frost-Free Days				
Location	Annual Precip.	Last spring freeze	First fall freeze	Freeze -free period
Escalante	10.94 in	May 16	Oct. 3	142.2 days
Panguitch	9.78 in	June 20	Sept. 4	76.7 days
Tropic	12.07 in	June 2	Sept. 23	114 days

Crop Production

Hay is the primary crop grown in Garfield County. Total acres harvested and yields for 2017 are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Garfield County 2017 Crop Acres and Yields			
Primary Crops	Yields	Harvested Acres	Average Yield/acre
Hay	46,870 tons	12,783	3.7 tons

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Garfield County has three main agricultural areas: Panguitch, Escalante, and Tropic. Panguitch is the county seat and is located in the western part of the county. Escalante is located 70 miles east of Panguitch in the middle of the county. Tropic is located 30 miles southeast of Panguitch below the rim of Bryce Canyon National Park.

Typical ground preparation for planting alfalfa is begun by plowing or deep disking to a depth of 10 to 12 inches. The ground is then finish disked and land planed. Alfalfa is often planted with no cover crop with a surface drill. In Panguitch, a cover crop of oat hay is more commonly practiced. The ground preparation for the oat hay is the same with producers planting in the spring. Fall triticale or three-way are also popular rotational cereal crops.

The crops are irrigated by sprinkler systems, with the most prevalent being wheel lines. In Panguitch

flood irrigation is still a very popular irrigation method. Pivot irrigation systems are becoming more popular in Panguitch Valley and throughout Garfield County. The most used crop rotation that producers practice is to leave alfalfa in for 7 to 8 years and then reestablish. Producers typically get two cuttings of alfalfa in Panguitch and three in Escalante and Tropic each season, if water is plentiful. The majority of the alfalfa is harvested as large 3'x 3' or 3'x 4' bales.

Approximately 30% of all inputs (e.g., seed, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.) are purchased locally, 50% are bought in neighboring counties (Iron and Sevier), and the remaining 20% is bought statewide.

Approximately 50% of the irrigation water available in Garfield County is from the Sevier, Escalante, and Paria rivers. In addition, 45% of the water comes from Panguitch Lake and the Tropic and Wide Hollow reservoirs. The remaining 5% is drawn from deep wells.

Livestock Production

Approximately 95% of the farms have both crops and livestock. There are no dairies in Garfield County and the majority of the livestock are beef cattle. The inventories of the major classes of livestock produced in the county as of 2017 compared with 2012 inventories are listed in Table 3.

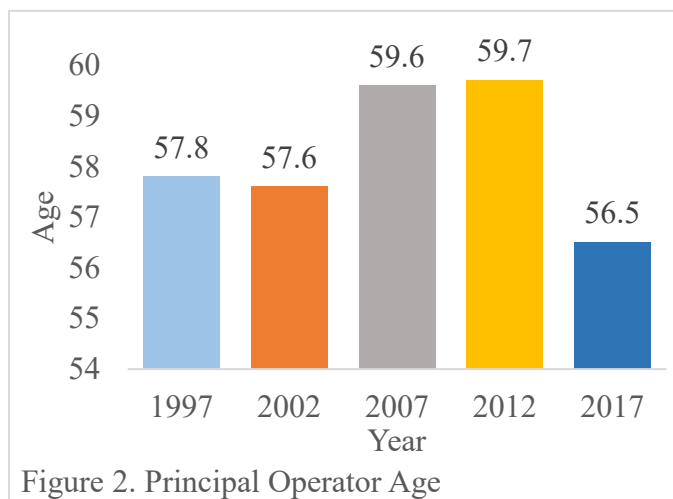
Table 3. Major Livestock Commodities			
Livestock	2012	2017	% Change
All Cattle	17,717	14,764	-16.6%
Beef Cows	12,053	10,219	-15.2%
Sheep & Lambs	474	652	37.6%

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Farm Income and Age of Operator

Garfield County has seen growth in farm revenues. Cash receipts from 2017 crops equaled \$3,600,000 and cash receipts from livestock totaled \$18,176,000. Total 2017 cash receipts were

\$21,786,000, up 80% from 2012 (\$12,043,000). The average age of the primary farmer or rancher was 56.5 in 2017, which is a notable decrease since 2012 (59.7), and is the lowest average operator age for over 20 years. The principal operator age is graphed below in Figure 2 for all USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture years since 1997.



Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Sources

- United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service (2019). 2017 Ag Census Data. Retrieved from: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/Census_Data_Query_Tool/index.php
- Utah Association of Counties. (2017). 2017 Utah Counties Fact Book. Murray. Retrieved from <https://uac.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/2017-Utah-Counties-Fact-Book.pdf>
- Utah Climate Center. (2019). Retrieved July 10, 2019, from Utah State University: <https://climate.usu.edu/>

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