

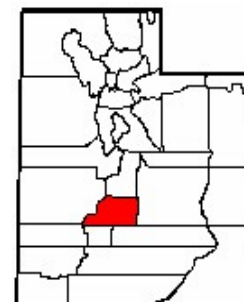


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# Size and Scope of Sevier County Agriculture 2019

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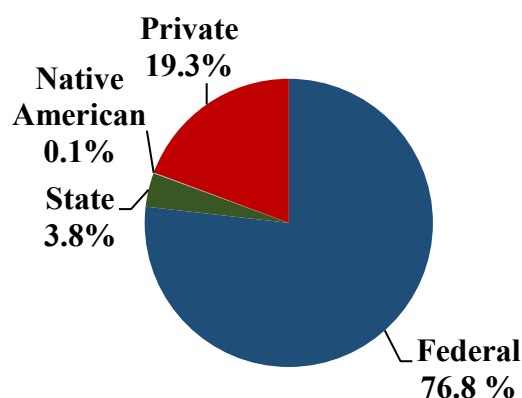
## Location

Sevier County is located in the center of the state, surrounded by Millard, Sanpete, Emery, Wayne, Piute, and Beaver counties. In 2017, the population was estimated at 21,316. The majority of the population is located in close proximity to the Sevier River and Interstate 70 on the western side of the county running southwest to northeast. The most populated city within the county is Richfield and it is the county seat. With no larger city within nearly 100 miles in any direction, Richfield has become a small hub for agricultural, retail, and industrial activity as well as a convenient stopover for tourists traveling along I-70.

Sevier County covers 1,918 square miles or 1,227,520 acres. Of this total, 108,992 acres are in farming and ranching, or 8.9% of total land area. Much of the land would be classified as semi-arid with some arable rolling areas. The Pahvant mountain range is found on the west side of Richfield, extends parallel to the interstate, and is generally forested.

## Land Ownership

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



**Figure 1. Sevier County Land Ownership**

Source: 2017 Utah Counties Fact Book

The majority of the federally owned ground is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The state-owned ground is primarily under the jurisdiction of the Utah School and Institutional Trust Land Administration (SITLA). Portions of the state-owned land are wildlife preserves. The private ground is primarily farm ground and grazing areas.

The 2017 Census of Agriculture indicated there were 108,992 acres in farms or ranches in the county with an average size of 158 acres and an average value of \$4,282 per acre. The county had 50,453 acres of cropland of which 40,129 were

harvested. In total, 49,440 acres of cropland and pasture were irrigated.

## Growing Season

The growing season in Sevier County averages just under 4 months. Table 1 displays some of the details on climatology in two areas of Sevier County according to the Utah Climate Center (2019). Salina is in the northwest corner of the county while Richfield is toward the western border in center of the county. The annual precipitation varies by almost 5 inches between the two areas.

| <b>Table 1. Sevier County Annual Precipitation and Average Frost-Free Days</b> |                       |                           |                          |                           |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Location</b>  | <b>Annual Precip.</b> | <b>Last spring freeze</b> | <b>First fall freeze</b> | <b>Freeze-free period</b> |
| <b>Richfield Radio KSVC</b>  | 8.54 in               | May 27                    | Sept. 19                 | 112 days                  |
| <b>Salina 24 E</b>   | 13.36 in              | May 31                    | Sept. 24                 | 114 days                  |

## Crop Production

The major crops grown in Sevier County with 2017 yields and total acres harvested are displayed in Table 2.

| <b>Table 2. Sevier County 2017 Crop Acres and Yields</b> |               |                        |                           |
|--|---------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Primary Crops</b>                                     | <b>Yields</b> | <b>Harvested Acres</b> | <b>Average Yield/acre</b> |
| Hay  | 147,820 tons  | 3,379                  | 4.7 tons                  |
| Corn silage  | 117,749 tons  | 5,247                  | 22.4 tons                 |
| Corn grain   | 380,057 bu.   | 2,249                  | 169 bu.                   |
| Barley   | 8,240 bu.     | 114                    | 72.3 bu.                  |

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Typical ground preparation for planting alfalfa begins by spraying Roundup in the fall or early spring to kill the quack grass prior to disking. The ground is then harrowed and planted. The procedure is the same for planting small grains except Roundup is typically not

used prior to planting grains. About 98% of all grain is planted in the spring of the year.

The most prevalent crop rotation that producers practice is to leave alfalfa in for 5 to 7 years, plant oats, barley, or corn for 2 years, then replant alfalfa. Producers typically get three cuttings of alfalfa each year, with some getting a small fourth cutting. About 25% of all inputs (e.g., seed, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.) are purchased locally while the remaining 75% are bought in a neighboring county.

## Irrigation Water

Sources of irrigation water include the Sevier River and its tributaries. Most acreage that is irrigated is either irrigated using wheel line sprinklers or under pivot irrigation systems. Very little acreage is flood irrigated except perhaps a small amount of pastureland in the Grass Valley area in the south central part of the county near Koosharem and Burrville.

## Livestock Production

The major classes of livestock produced in the county along with their associated inventories as of 2017 compared with 2012 inventories are listed in Table 3.

| <b>Table 3. Major Livestock Commodities</b> |             |             |                 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| <b>Livestock</b>                            | <b>2012</b> | <b>2017</b> | <b>% Change</b> |
| All Cattle                                  | 46,539      | 47,169      | 1.3%            |
| Beef Cows                                   | 13,558      | 13,210      | -1.1%           |
| Milk Cows                                   | 2,671       | 3,880       | 45.3%           |
| Sheep & Lambs                               | 7,486       | 3,826       | -48.9%          |

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Beef production takes place throughout the county with the greatest share produced and marketed in the north end of the county where three large feedlots are located. Additionally, Utah's largest cattle market is located in Salina.

Beef production in the county utilizes a combination of public and private land grazing. Typically, cows are fed and calved through the winter into the spring on private land in the valley. They then go onto BLM and USFS grazing allotments through late spring, summer and into the early fall, with gathering beginning on September 15 and continuing through mid-late October. Some ranches have desert winter-spring BLM grazing permits that allow them to continue to run on public ground instead of feeding the cows through the winter.

The larger producers use mainly video to sell their calves, combined with selling outliers through local live auction houses. Smaller producers mostly use local auction houses. Many of the calves marketed through local auctions end up being fed in one of the local feed yards until they are ready to go to grass or sold as stockers by the feed yards to be grown and finished. A smaller minority of producers retain ownership.

Many of the small dairies have gone out of business and the larger dairies have increased cow numbers in favor of economies of scale. Some of the dairies market to Gossner Foods in Cache Valley, UT. The larger dairies market their milk through Dairy Farmers of America (DFA). Most of the dairies are raising their own replacements.

## Farm Income and Age of Operator

Sevier County has seen growth in farm revenues. Cash receipts from 2017 crops equaled \$21,528,000 and cash receipts from livestock totaled \$67,017,000. Total 2017 cash receipts were \$88,546,000 up 40% from 2012 (\$62,951,000).

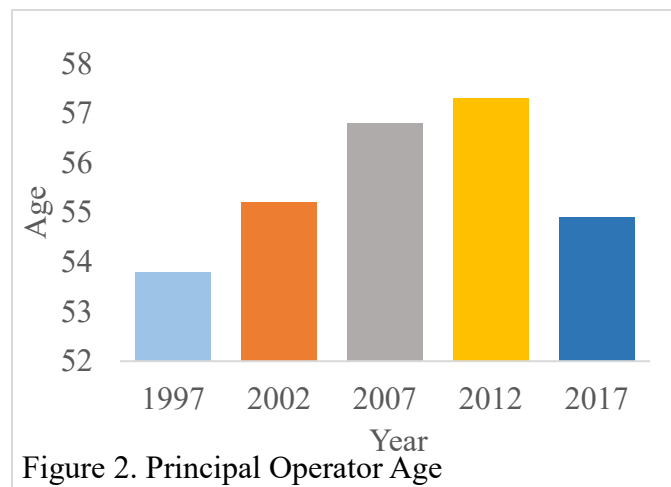


Figure 2. Principal Operator Age

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

The age of the primary farmer or rancher was 54.9 in 2017, which is a notable decrease since 2012 (57.3), and is the lowest since 1997. The principal operator average age is graphed in Figure 2 for all USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture years since 1997.

## 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](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/Census_Data_Query_Tool/index.php)
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- Utah Climate Center. (2019). Retrieved July 10, 2019, from Utah State University: <https://climate.usu.edu/>

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