

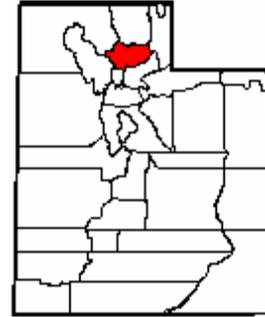


March 2020

AG/Farmland/2020-02/pr

# Size and Scope of Weber County Agriculture 2019

*Ryan Feuz, Post-Doctoral Researcher*  
*Ryan Larsen, Assistant Professor*  
*Cody Zesiger, Agriculture Faculty*

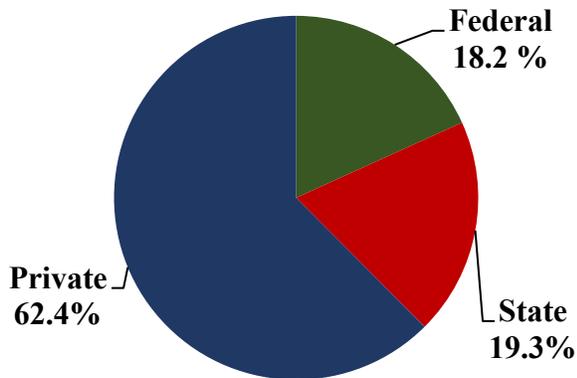


## Location

Weber County is located in the northern part of the state and borders the Great Salt Lake. The county has an area of 659 sq. miles, including 576 sq. miles of land and 83 sq. miles of water. By land area, it is the second smallest county in Utah. The Wasatch Mountain Range occupies the eastern portion of the county while the western portion extends into the Great Salt Lake.

## Land Ownership

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



**Figure 1. Weber 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). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the military control the remaining federal ground.

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 that there were 94,361 acres in farms or ranches in the county with an average size of 75 acres and an average value of \$9,319 per acre. The county had 28,259 acres in cropland of which 22,238 acres were harvested. A total of 27,169 acres of cropland and pastureland were irrigated.

## Growing Season

The growing season in Weber County averages over four and a half months. Table 1 displays some of the details on climatology in three areas of Weber County according to the Utah Climate Center (2019).

**Table 1. Weber County Annual Precipitation and Average Frost-Free Days**

Location	Annual Precip.	Last spring freeze	First fall freeze	Freeze-free period
Pine View Dam	30.5 in	May 23	Sept. 24	125 days
Weber Basin Pump	25.5 in	May 10	Oct. 14	155 days
Ogden Pioneer PH	20.6 in	Apr. 30	Oct. 16	171 days

## Crop Production

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

**Table 2. Weber County 2017 Crop Acres and Yields**

Primary Crops	Yields	Harvested Acres	Average Yield/Acre
Hay	52,743 tons	16,226	3.3 tons
Wheat	98,200 bu.	862	113.9 bu.
Corn Grain	18,140 bu.	89	203.8 bu.
Corn Silage	69,658 tons	2,788	25.0 tons
Barley	40,023 bu.	591	67.7 bu.

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Typical ground preparation for planting alfalfa begins by spraying herbicide in the fall or early spring to kill the weeds prior to disking. The seedbed is then prepared and planted. The procedure is the same for planting small grains,

except the majority of small grains are planted in the fall, e.g. winter wheat.

The most common crop rotation that farmers practice is leaving alfalfa in for five to seven years, plant corn, small grains, or a specialty crop for two years, and then replant alfalfa. Producers typically get three to four cuttings of alfalfa each year. About 25% of all inputs (e.g., seed, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.) are purchased locally while producers buy the remaining 75% in a neighboring county. Most of the hay grown in the county is fed to livestock within the county or the neighboring region.

Several specialty crops are typically grown in the county including onions, pumpkins, melons, tomatoes, peppers, squash, peaches, and apples.

Flood irrigation continues as the most common method for irrigating field crops, but subsurface drip is becoming increasingly popular among specialty crop growers. Sources of irrigation water include a vast system of ditches and canals supplied by the Ogden River, Weber River, and their tributaries.

## Livestock Production

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	19,827	19,294	-2.7%
Beef Cows	6,825	5,731	-16.0%
Milk Cows	4,582	4,545	-0.8%
Sheep & Lambs	656	4,818	634.5%

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Calves born in the spring are typically weaned in the fall at approximately 500 lbs. They are fed and fattened locally until they are sold, usually by mid-winter. During this time, they may grow to 900+ lbs. Many calves are typically shipped to contracted buyers, sold locally, or sent out of the state for sale.

The majority of cows spend the winter in local pastures feeding on supplemental hay.

### Farm Income and Age of Operator

Weber County has seen growth in farm revenues. Cash receipts from 2017 crops equaled \$24,734,000 and cash receipts from livestock totaled \$24,709,000. Total 2017 cash receipts were \$49,443,000, up nearly \$10 million from 2012 (\$39,872,000). The average age of the primary farmer or rancher was 58.8 in 2017, which is a notable decrease since 2012 (60.6) as it breaks an increasing trend since before the 1997 census of agriculture. The principal operator age is displayed in Figure 2 for all USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture years since 1997.

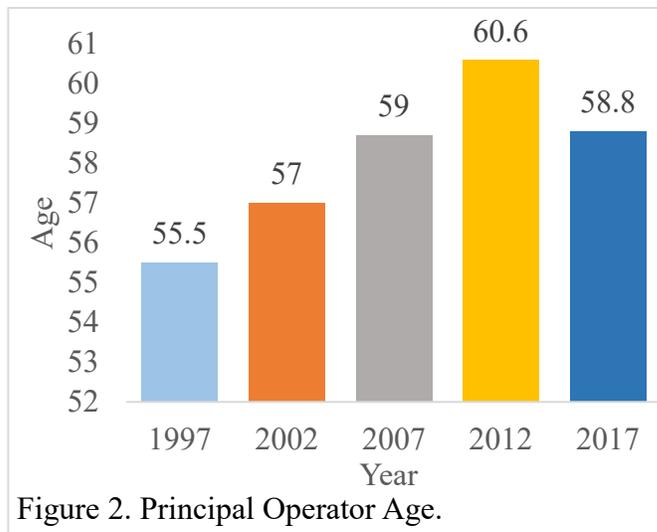


Figure 2. Principal Operator Age.

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](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/>

Utah State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of illegal discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and older), disability, and veteran’s status. USU’s policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and academic related practices and decisions. In its programs and activities, Utah State University does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, genetic information, sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, disability, status as a protected veteran, or any other status protected by University policy or local, state, or federal law. Utah State University employees and students cannot, because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran’s status, refuse to hire; discharge; promote; demote; terminate; discriminate in compensation; or discriminate regarding terms, privileges, or conditions of employment, against any person otherwise qualified. Employees and students also cannot discriminate in the classroom, residence halls, or in on/off campus, USU-sponsored events and activities. This publication is issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Kenneth L. White, Vice President for Extension and Agriculture, Utah State University. The following individuals have been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies: Executive Director of the Office of Equity, Alison Adams-Perlac, [alison.adams-perlac@usu.edu](mailto:alison.adams-perlac@usu.edu), Old Main Rm. 161, 435-797-1266. Title IX Coordinator, Hilary Renshaw, [hilary.renshaw@usu.edu](mailto:hilary.renshaw@usu.edu), Old Main Rm. 161, 435-797-1266. For further information on notice of nondiscrimination: U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 303-844-5695, [OCR.Denver@ed.gov](mailto:OCR.Denver@ed.gov).