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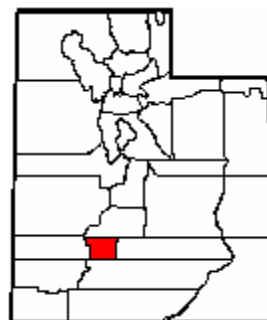
AG/Farmland/2020-07pr

Size and Scope of Piute County Agriculture 2019

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Location

Piute County is located in the south-central part of the state. The county seat is Junction and the largest city is Circleville. Other surrounding Utah counties include Sevier, Wayne, Garfield, Iron, and Beaver. In 2017, the population was estimated at 1,420, making it the second least populated county in Utah.

Land Ownership

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

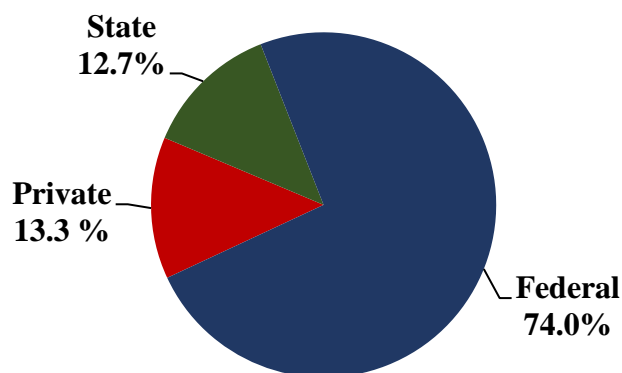


Figure 1. Piute County Land Ownership

Source: 2017 Utah Counties Fact Book

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 that there were 54,445 acres in farms or ranches in the county with an average size of 524 acres at an average value at \$2,081 per acre. The county had 14,909 acres in cropland of which 11,308 acres were harvested. There were 15,340 acres of cropland and pastureland that were irrigated (United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2019).

Growing Season

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

Table 1. <i>Piute County Annual Precipitation and Average Frost-Free Days</i>				
Location	Annual Precip.	Last spring freeze	First fall freeze	Freeze -free period
Angle	9.0 in	June 17	Sept. 11	87 days
Circleville	8.6 in	June 8	Sept. 14	99 days
Marysvale	8.0 in	June 2	Sept. 18	109 days

Crop Production

Table 2 displays the major crops grown in Piute County, with 2017 yields and total acres harvested.

Table 2. <i>Piute County 2017 Crop Acres and Yields</i>			
Primary Crops	Yields	Harvested Acres	Average Yield/Acre
Hay	36,432 tons	10,650	3.4 tons
Corn Silage	992 tons	68	14.6 tons
Barley	27,600 bu.	260	106.2 bu.

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

The hay yield reported includes small grains harvested for forage such as three-way. Most of the rotation crops in Piute County are small grains harvested for forage. Hay production has increased steadily in the last 10 years, as tons produced in 2007 and 2012 were approximately 33.5 and 31.3 thousand, respectively. Much of this increase in production can be attributed to better efficiencies or favorable weather, as total acres harvested in 2017 were down approximately 1,500 acres as compared to 2007. Barley and corn silage production were not reported in the previous two censuses of agriculture reports.

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 not typically used prior to planting grains. About 70% 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 five years, plant small grains for one year, then replant alfalfa with a nurse crop. Producers typically reap three cuttings of alfalfa each year. Nearly all inputs (e.g., seed, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.) are purchased in neighboring counties.

The Sevier River and its tributaries are the primary source of irrigation for Piute County. The heavy dependence upon the Sevier River makes Piute agriculture much more vulnerable to drought than other Utah agriculture producers who have reservoirs or wells.

Livestock Production

Table 3 inventories of the major classes of livestock produced in the county as of 2017 compared with 2012 inventories.

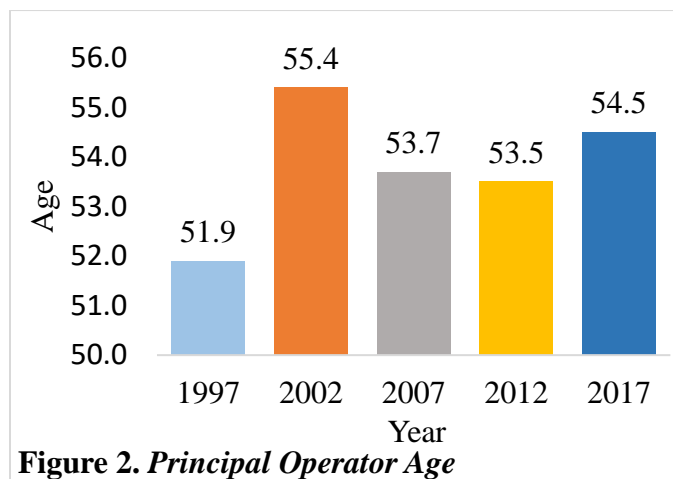
Table 3. <i>Major Livestock Commodities</i>			
Livestock	2012	2017	% Change
All Cattle	14,399	17,823	23.8%
Beef Cows	Not Reported	6,223	N/A
Milk Cows	Not Reported	4,442	N/A
Sheep and Lambs	8,476	9,113	7.5%

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Farm Income and Age of Operator

Piute County has seen large growth in farm income. Cash receipts from 2017 crops equaled \$3,445,000 and cash receipts from livestock totaled \$37,160,000. Total 2017 cash receipts were \$40,605,000, up \$23,656,000 from 2012 (\$16,949,000). While we may attribute some of this large increase to favorable prices for commodities and livestock, much of this increase may simply be a matter of census reporting differences. In 2012, no beef cows or milk cows were reported for the county. This would represent a sizeable decrease in farm income as compared to 2017 when beef cows and milk cows were reported at 6,223 and 4,442 head, respectively.

The average age of the primary farmer or rancher was 54.5 in 2017. Figure 2 below graphs the principal operator average age for all USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture years since 1997.



Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Sources

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