

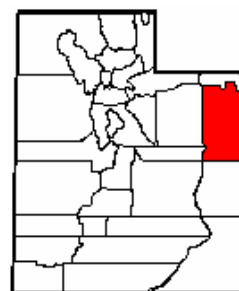


## Size and Scope of Uintah County Agriculture 2019

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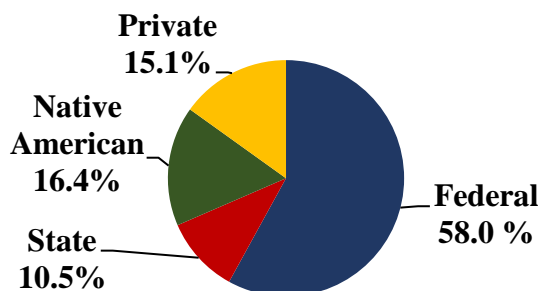


### Location

Uintah County is part of the Colorado Plateau on the eastern border of Utah. It is in the Uintah Basin in the northeastern part of the state and borders Colorado. Other surrounding Utah counties include Daggett, Duchesne, Carbon, Emery, and Grand. Much of the economy in the county is based on natural resources, such as natural gas and oil production. Agricultural production is also very important in the county's economy.

### Land Ownership

Figure 1 displays the percentage of land ownership within the county.



**Figure 1. Uintah County Land Ownership**

The majority of the federally administered land is under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) at 1.34 million acres, or 46.7% of total land, and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) at 269 thousand acres, or 9.3% of total land. The state-administered land is primarily under the jurisdiction of the Utah School and Institutional Trust Land Administration (SITLA) (A Profile of Land Use, Uintah County, UT, 2020). Portions of the state-administered land are wildlife preserves. The private land is primarily farmland and grazing areas.

The 2017 Census of Agriculture reports that there were 1,824,700 acres in farms or ranches in the county with an average size of 1,638 acres and an average value of \$630 per acre. The land area included in farms and ranches in the report includes public lands with grazing permits. The county had 70,742 acres in cropland of which 47,696 acres were harvested. Much of the discrepancy between cropland acres and harvested acres comes from cropland pasture acreage, with lesser portions resulting from idle cropland. In total, there were 65,306 acres of cropland and pastureland that were irrigated.

## Growing Season

The growing season in Uintah County averages about 4 four months. Table 1 displays some of the details on climatology in four areas of the County according to the Utah Climate Center (2019).

<b>Table 1.</b> <i>Uintah County Annual Precipitation and Average Frost-Free Days</i>				
<b>Location</b>	<b>Annual Precip.</b>	<b>Last spring freeze</b>	<b>First fall freeze</b>	<b>Freeze -free period</b>
Ouray	6.8 inches	May 9	Sept. 26	141 days
Ft. Duchesne	6.4 inches	May 26	Sept. 22	121 days
Vernal Airport	8.4 inches	May 26	Sept. 23	121 days
Jensen	8.2 inches	May 19	Sept. 20	126 days

## Crop Production

Table 2 lists the major crops grown in Uintah County with 2017 yields and total acres harvested.

<b>Table 2.</b> <i>Uintah County 2017 Crop Acres and Yields</i>			
<b>Primary Crops</b>	<b>Yields</b>	<b>Harvested Acres</b>	<b>Average Yield/Acre</b>
Hay	150,715 tons	42,515	3.5 tons
Corn silage	20,271 tons	987	20.5 tons
Corn grain	428,620 bu.	2,854	150 bu.

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Typical soil tillage preparation for planting alfalfa is plowing followed by disking and then cultipacking. The procedure is the same for planting corn and small grains. Due to the dry climate, irrigation is required to grow crops, which is primarily accomplished by sprinkler systems. Wheel line systems are the most common with

pivots becoming more common and popular in Uintah County.

The most prevalent crop rotation is five to six years of alfalfa, followed by one or two years of corn (for grain primarily with a lesser portion for silage) or small grains for hay. Producers typically get three to four cuttings of alfalfa each year. About 50% of all inputs (e.g., seed, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.) are purchased locally, while the remaining 50% are bought in a neighboring Uintah Basin county.

Sources of irrigation water include reservoirs and streams from the Uinta Mountains, the Duchesne River, and the Green River. Numerous small reservoirs are used within the county for irrigation. Three of the most important reservoirs include Red Fleet, Steinaker, and Flaming Gorge (by way of the Green River).

Roughly half of the crops produced in Uintah County are sold and shipped out of the area. The remainder are fed locally to livestock. The hay shipped from Uintah County goes to many places, including dairy markets in Idaho, California, the Midwest, Texas, and New Mexico; horse markets in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Florida; export markets to China, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates, among others. Destinations vary by year depending on where prices and the cost of shipping offer the greatest profitability.

Weed and pest control are a vital part of farming and ranching in Uintah County. Utah State University (USU) faculty assist producers in identifying problems and recommending controls. The county also has a weed department with a five-member weed board appointed by the county commission. Additionally, the weed department has one full-time weed control employee and routinely hires seasonal employees each year as necessary. The total department expenditures for 2020 were approved at \$212,400 (2020 Uintah County Budget, 2020). The department's job is to enforce the Utah Noxious Weed Act and assist residents in identifying noxious and invading weeds where possible, and in many cases, assist in controlling them as well. The state of Utah has 54 weeds listed on the official state noxious weed list. Uintah County has one officially declared noxious weed in addition to the state noxious weed list: common

teasel (*dispacus fullonum* L.) (Uintah County Weed Department, n.d.).

## 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. Beef cow-calf operations dominate livestock production in Uintah County, followed by sheep production and dairy production. Many beef calves are sold in the fall to out-of-state buyers through contracting or video sale. Some calves are fed locally through the winter. Most beef cows are fed by grazing in fields in the fall and fed hay during the winter and early spring.

Sheep production has been reduced over the last several years within the county. Many sheep producers either have quit operating or have passed away with no willing family to continue the operation. Lack of profitable wool markets, lack of predator control, and wildlife conflicts are among the top reasons for the reduction in sheep production. Most range sheep are wintered on desert ranges.

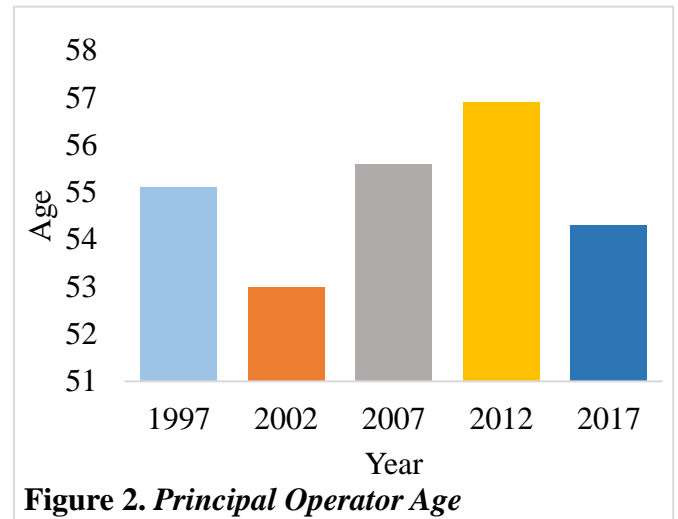
<b>Table 3.</b> <b>Major Livestock Commodities</b>			
<b>Livestock</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>% Change</b>
All cattle	36,085	35,632	-1.3%
Beef cows	24,950	22,969	-7.9%
Milk cows	652	692	6.1%
Sheep and lambs	12,857	5,929	-53.9%

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

## Farm Income and Age of Operator

Total 2017 cash receipts were \$42.2 million, down just over \$4 million since the previous agriculture census record from 2012 (\$46.6 million). Cash receipts from 2017 crops were \$16.3 million and livestock were \$25.9 million. The average age of the primary farmer or rancher was 54.3 in 2017.

The principal operator average age for all USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture years since 1997 is shown in in Figure 2.



Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

## Sources

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