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Structural and Financial Characteristics of U.S. Farms 2004 Family Farm Report

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Abstract

This report presents comprehensive information on family and nonfamily farms and important trends in farming, operator household income, farm performance, and contracting. Family farms and nonfamily farms vary widely in size and other characteristics, ranging from very small retirement and residential/lifestyle farms to establishments with sales in the millions of dollars. Most farms are family farms, or farm operations organized as proprietorships, partnerships, or family corporations. Even the largest farms tend to be family farms. Large family farms account for a small share of farms but a large and growing share of farm sales and are often organized as family corporations. Small family farms account for most of the farms in the U.S. but produce a modest share of farm output. Average farm household income has been at or above the average for all U.S. households in recent years, with farm households receiving most of their income from off-farm sources. Over the past 40 years, the growth in contract-governed production has been slow and steady, and now covers well over two-thirds of the value of U.S. production.

Keywords: Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS), family farms, farm businesses, farm financial performance, farm operator household income, farm operators, farm structure, farm typology, women farm operators, spouses of farm operators, small farms, efficiency, contracting.

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