

Sales from U.S. Horticulture Operations Up 18 Percent in Five Years, USDA Reports



The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)^[1] released the 2014 Census of Horticultural Specialties report, which shows that horticulture operations sold a total of \$13.8 billion in floriculture, nursery and specialty crops in 2014, up 18 percent since 2009. The number of horticulture operations in the United States increased 8 percent during this time to 23,221.

This report contains the results of the tenth Census of Horticultural Specialties,” said Chairman of the Agricultural Statistics Board James M. Harris. “First conducted in 1889, the horticulture census provides data on industries for which there are no other comprehensive data sources. It is a valuable tool to highlight the contribution horticulture growers bring to state-level economies – whether in sales earned or expenses paid for hired labor.”

Horticulture production was concentrated in 10 states which accounted for 65 percent of all U.S. horticulture sales in 2014. California (\$2.88 billion), Florida (\$1.80 billion) and Oregon (\$932 million) led the nation in sales.

Other key findings from the 2014 Census of Horticultural Specialties report include:

- Family- or individually-owned operations made up the largest number operations, accounting for 53 percent, but corporately owned operations accounted for 76 percent of sales (\$10.5 billion).
- Total industry expenses were up 16 percent since 2009, with labor being the largest, accounting for 37 percent of total expenses in 2014.
- Food crops grown under cover gained in prominence as the number of operations engaged in this practice increased 71 percent to 2,521.

“Because horticulture production is becoming more diverse in the United States, NASS worked with key stakeholders to ensure the 2014 Census of Horticultural Specialties would meet the needs of growers, industry leaders, and policymakers,”

said Harris. “We added 60 new items to the questionnaire to provide the most up-to-date assessment of current industry trends, including items like peonies, lavender, rudbeckia, cacti and succulents.”

The top commodities in U.S. horticulture sales reflect this very diversity. The top commodities sold in 2014, and compared to 2009, were:

- Nursery stock, \$4.27 billion, up 11 percent
- Annual bedding/garden plants, \$2.57 billion, up 11 percent
- Sod, sprigs and plugs, \$1.14 billion, up 30 percent
- Potted flowering plants, \$1.08 billion, up 24 percent
- Potted herbaceous perennials, \$945 million, up 12 percent
- Food crops under protection, \$797 million, up 44 percent

The Census of Horticultural Specialties is part of the larger Census of Agriculture program. It provides information on the number and types of establishments engaged in horticultural production, value of sales, varieties of products, production expenses and more. All operations that reported producing and selling \$10,000 or more of horticultural crops on the 2012 Census of Agriculture were included in this special study.

1. <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/>