

The Beef Community: Who We Are and What We Do



Cattle Ranchers and Their Legacy

- According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2007 Census of Agriculture, which is the most up-to-date information about American agriculture, more than 97 percent of beef cattle farms and ranches in the United States were family farms and more farms were classified as beef cattle operations (31 percent) than any other type of farm.¹
- There are 687,540 farms classified as beef cattle operations.¹
- There are more than 1 million beef producers in the United States who are responsible for almost 90 million head of beef cattle.¹
- Although cattle farms and ranches are spread across the United States, nearly a third of cattle operations are located in the Plains states and 79 percent have fewer than 50 head of cattle.¹

The People Under the Cowboy Hats

- The average age of the American farmer is 57 years old and has been above 50 since the 1974 Census of Agriculture and has increased in each census since that time.¹
- The average number of years a beef producer has been on the farm or ranch is 22 years. In fact, 75 percent of beef cattle ranchers and farmers have lived and worked on the farm 10 or more years.¹
- According to USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS), nearly one in five cattle producers is a college graduate, one in four has attended some college and 89 percent are high school graduates.²

Cattle Income

- According to USDA's ERS, the average annual gross income from livestock on farms in this country in 2011 was \$44,666.²
- Less than one-third of cattle operators claim farming as their primary occupation and 19 percent consider themselves retired. However, 61 percent say they work more than 1,000 hours a year on their farming operations.
- Eighty percent of the primary operators for beef cattle farms and ranches live on the farm or ranch.¹

Strong Demand for Beef

Consumers' love of great steaks and burgers, their confidence in the safety of U.S. beef and their renewed interest in the nutritional benefits of protein help create strong demand for beef.

- Consumer spending on beef was \$84.7 billion in 2012 and has grown \$25 billion since 2002.³
- Per capita spending for beef in retail and foodservice was about \$269 in 2012 – up more than \$60 since 2002.³
- In 2010, per capita consumption of beef was 57.2 pounds, compared to 57.9 pounds for chicken.³

Beef in Retail

Beef dominates the retail meat department in volume (pounds) of sales and total dollar amount. Additionally, the value of beef sales continues to increase. The following statistics represent supermarkets with annual sales of \$2 million or more. Data includes select supercenter and club retail stores. Data does not include butcher shops or independent grocery stores with annual sales of less than \$2 million.

- Beef accounts for more than 49 percent of dollars spent on meat at retail. In comparison, chicken accounts for 23 percent of dollars spent on meat at retail.⁴
- In 2012, 5.0 billion pounds of fresh beef were sold at retail, a slight decrease of 4.0 percent in volume from the previous year.⁴
- In 2012, beef accounted for 34.4 percent of the pounds of meat purchased at retail.⁴

- For 2012, natural/organic beef sales comprised 4.9 percent of the total beef volume (pounds) and 6.1 percent of the total beef sales (dollars) in retail. This represents an 18 percent increase in total pounds and a 15 percent increase in total dollars from the previous year.

Beef in Foodservice

The foodservice sector includes both “restaurants” (limited and full service) and “beyond restaurants,” such as lodging, business and industry (e.g., private, corporate and employee dining facilities), colleges and schools.

- In 2012, the food supplied to the U.S. food marketing system, including food service and food retailing, was worth \$1.22 trillion. Of this total, foodservice facilities supplied approximately \$556 billion.⁵
- In 2012, beef secured 32 percent of the total protein market which totaled 25 billion pounds, thus maintaining the position of number one protein served in restaurants.
- Overall, the foodservice sector purchased 8.0 billion pounds of beef in the US in 2012. This equated to \$32.9 billion in wholesale purchases.⁶
- Ground beef represents the largest share of volume in foodservice at 64 percent and also the largest share of dollars at 35 percent.⁶

The following statistics measure beef volume in commercial restaurants, which account for about 69 percent of all consumer beef spending in foodservice.

- In 2012, 5.5 billion pounds of beef were purchased by commercial restaurant operators.⁶
- Limited Service Restaurants, such as McDonalds and Wendy’s, accounted for more than 65 percent of all beef served in commercial restaurants in 2012.⁶

Beef in the Home

- More than eight out of 10 individuals consume fresh beef regularly (an average of 1.7 times per week) in home.⁷
- Ground beef is the most popular beef item for consumers preparing meals in their home. In 2010, ground beef was present at 61 percent of all in-home beef servings. Steak is the second most popular in-home beef item.⁷
- According to NHANES data, Americans consume 1.7 oz of beef daily, on average.⁸

Impact on Society

Beef production positively affects the U.S. economy. According to USDA, producers of meat animals in 2012 were responsible for more than \$87 billion in added value to the U.S. economy, as measured by their contribution to the national output.⁹

- Nearly one-half of cattlemen and women volunteer with a youth organization and more than one-third donate their time to other civic organizations, compared to a national average of 7 percent of all Americans.¹⁰
- Nearly one-fourth of U.S. cattlemen and women have served in the military, more than the national average of 14 percent, and 94 percent vote in national, state and local elections; comparatively, only 64 percent of the general population votes. One-half of cattlemen and women have run for elected office and 81 percent have been elected to serve.¹⁰
- Livestock grazing is the primary use of an estimated 587 million acres of permanent grassland, pasture and rangeland. Much of the land grazed is not suitable for growing other food products.¹¹ By raising cattle, farmers and ranchers more than double the land area that can be used to raise food for a growing population.

1. U.S. Census of Agriculture: <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/>

2. USDA, ERS Farm Income and Costs: Farm Sector Income Forecast: http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/farmincome/data/va_t1.htm

3. Cattle Fax: www.cattlefax.com

4. FreshLook Data (IRI Scanner) Research

5. United States Department of Agriculture: Newsroom: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/News/BSECoverage.htm>

6. Usage and Volumetric Assessment of Beef in Foodservice: 2010 Edition, December 2010, Technomic

7. U.S. NPD Group’s National Eating Trends Service: www.npd.com

8. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey

9. http://webarchives.cdlib.org/sw10864b1b/http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FarmIncome/Data/va_t1.pdf

10. Profile of U.S. Cattlemen, Aspen Media & Market research, July 2010

11. USDA, Major Uses of Land in the United States, 2002.