

FACT SHEET: The Cattle Industry, Who We Are

<p>A Family Affair</p>	<p>Cattle and beef production represent the largest single segment of American agriculture. In fact, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) says more farms are classified as beef cattle operations (35%) than any other type of farm.</p> <p>There are about 800,000 beef producers in the United States, who are responsible for nearly 100 million head of beef cattle. These animals will generate about \$80 billion in beef sales in the retail meat case.</p> <p>Most farms and ranches in the United States, including cattle ranches, are family owned and operated. Fewer than 5 percent of farms are operated by tenants, with more than 58 percent run by the full owner of the farm. Thirty-seven percent of farmers say they are part owners in their operations.</p> <p>When it comes to cattle production, most operations are small. According to USDA, the typical herd averages just 40 head of cattle. But that doesn't mean that these small farms and ranches produce most of the beef. Herds with more than 100 head of cattle represent 51 percent of the beef cow inventory. Producers with fewer than 40 head of cattle usually have multiple sources of farm income, or also have employment off the farm.</p>
<p>Cattle Income</p>	<p>About 28 percent of all cattle came from operations with less than \$250,000 in overall sales in 2004. Other statistics from USDA illustrate that cow-calf operations have multiple sources of income and generally are not large. In fact, the smallest farms documented by USDA, with incomes less than \$10,000 a year from farming, are often cattle operations.</p> <p>The average annual income from livestock on farms in this country is \$38,438, according to the 2002 Census of Agriculture. The average total income from a beef cattle operation in 2004 was \$74,200, which was the lowest of any type of farm. Two-thirds of the income from very small farms will come from two crops – cattle and hay. By contrast, only 10 percent of the income from large family farms (greater than \$500,000) comes from cattle.</p> <p>In fact, about 46 percent of beef farmers say they have incomes outside the farm, even though two-thirds say they work more than 1,000 hours a year on it. Less than one-third of cattle operators claim farming as their occupation, while 23 percent say they are retired. Overall, 47 percent of a farmer's income was from off-farm wages or salaries in 2004. Farming income represented only 17 percent of the farm operator's income, according to the 2004 USDA Agricultural Resource Management Survey.</p>
<p>Demographics</p>	<p>According to the 2002 Census of Agricultural, the average age of a farmer is 55.3 years. The average age for farmers has been older than 50 since the 1974 Census of Agriculture – and has increased with every census taken since then. A recent (2005) survey conducted by the Iowa Beef Center found that the average age of beef producers in that state is 52, with 53 percent of them between the ages of 45 and 65.</p> <p>Cattle operations have long been considered multi-generational endeavors, handed down from generation to generation. In the Iowa survey, 60 percent of beef producers expected to pass their operation on to their children.</p> <p>USDA's 2002 Census of Agriculture also found that most cattle producers are well-educated. Nearly one in five is a college graduate, while one in four have attended some college. Eighty-five percent are high school graduates.</p>
<p>Impact on Society</p>	<p>Beef producers on the farm directly impact other segments of our society. First, they raise animals that produce beef, which is in high demand, eaten by the vast majority of the population, provides excellent nutrition and is safe and wholesome. U.S. beef is also known in other parts of the world for its quality and consistency.</p> <p>Beef production also affects the U.S. economy. According to USDA, producers of meat animals in 2005 were responsible for more than \$64 billion in added value to the U.S. economy, as measured by their contribution to the national output.</p>

