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Tools for Community Self-determination

Food and Farm Economy of Clark County, Washington

Compiled for
Clark County — Community Choices

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Clark County, Washington:

345,000 residents (6% of Washington) earned \$12.6 billion of income in 2005.

Highlights from U.S. Agriculture Census (2002)

Farms and ranches

- 1,596 farms and ranches (4% of Washington's)
- Bruce Prenguber's research shows there may be only 200 farms as of 2007 [Globalwise]
- 70,000 acres in farms and ranches
- 38,000 acres of cropland (0.5% of state cropland)
- 23,000 acres of this land is harvested (0.5% of state's harvested acreage)
- Average size 44 acres (10% of Washington average — Globalwise estimates 20 acres)
- Average value of land and buildings \$422,000 (68% of state average)
- 1,264 (80%) farms are less than 50 acres
- 17 farms (1%) are 500 acres or more

Cash receipts

- Total farm sales \$54 million
- Sales rose 13% from 1997 to 2002
- Total crop sales \$28 million
- \$18.7 million of these crop sales (66% of crop sales, and one third of all commodity sales), are nursery and greenhouse crops
- \$5.8 million of crop sales (20%) are fruit sales
- Total sales of livestock and livestock products \$26 million
- This includes \$9.5 million of milk
- 58% of the farms (931) sell less than \$2,500 of farm products (sales in this size category fell from \$874,000 to \$643,000 over the period 1997 to 2002)
- 81% of farms (1,291) sell less than \$10,000 per year, accounting for only 4% of county farm sales (sales fell from \$3.2 million to \$2.4 million from 1997 to 2002)
- 6% of farms (94) sell more than \$100,000 (sales rose from \$38 million to \$46 million from 1997 to 2002). Note these larger farms account for 85% of farm sales.

- 1,073 farms (67%) reported a net loss in 2002 (compares to 59% rate for Washington), even after subsidies are taken into account
- 29 farms collect \$205,000 of federal subsidies
- 290 farms sell \$769,000 of food directly to consumers
- That is to say, the number of farms selling direct to consumers fell 16% from 1997 to 2002, while sales volume fell 6%
- 21 farms sell \$25,000 of organically certified foods

Livestock

- 16,000 cattle and calves on 693 farms and ranches (6% of state's farms; 1.5% of state's cattle and calves)
- The number of Clark County farms raising cattle fell 30% from 1997 to 2002, while the number of cattle fell 34%, and the value of cattle sales declined 14% to \$4.7 million.
- Half of the cattle inventory is held by 672 ranches holding less than 100 animals each
- Small ranches holding 100 head or less are 97% of the ranches raising cattle
- 6 farms raise 30% of the county's cattle on ranches with more than 500 head
- 4,543 of county cattle (28%) are beef cattle
- 3,669 milk cows (23% of cattle in county)
- Value of milk sales fell 33% from 1997 to 2002, to \$9.5 million
- 8,690 cattle sold
- Although the number of hogs and pigs sold increased from 806 to 1705, sales receipts fell from \$91,000 to \$71,000
- 48 farms held an inventory of 700 hogs and pigs at the end of 2002. Nearly one-third of all hogs and pigs were raised on operations with less than 25 animals. Three operations raised between 100 and 500 hogs or pigs each.
- While the number of farms raising hogs fell slightly from 1997 to 2002 (from 54 to 48), inventory increased from 375 to 699 (86% rise).
- 83 farms raise 2,000 sheep and lambs (3% of Washington)
- 210 farms raise poultry, including 4.4 million broilers sold (13% of state's)
- 540 farms raise 3,433 horses

Crops

- 14 farms raise corn for forage (707 acres raise 14,000 tons)
- 17 farms raise grains or edible beans, selling \$184,000 worth
- 4 farms raise wheat (30,000 bushels on 450 acres)
- 12 farms raise oats (300 acres produce 18,000 bushels)
- 3 farms raises barley (325 acres raise 27,000 bushels)
- One farm raises edible dry beans
- 8 farms produce potatoes (acreage and production not reported by USDA)
- 1,012 farms raise 71,000 tons of forage crops

Vegetables

- 46 farms have 624 acres in vegetable production (\$974,000 in sales)
- Seven acres of these vegetables are sold for processing
- Eight farms raise 401 acres of green peas
- 61 acres of sweet corn grown on 26 farms
- Pumpkins are raised on 10 farms (56 acres)
- Eighteen acres of cucumbers raised on 14 farms

- 23 farms raise 15 acres of tomatoes
- Fourteen farms raise 10 acres of snap beans
- Twelve acres of squash produced on 11 farms
- Other vegetables raised commercially include asparagus, beets, broccoli, cabbage, canteloupe, carrots, herbs, lettuce, onions, and peppers

Tree Fruits

- 89 farms have 278 acres of orchard [Globalwise data shows far fewer than this]
- This is only half the land that was devoted to orchards five years before (1997)
- 78 acres of grapes are raised on 31 farms
- 56 acres of pears are planted on 40 farms
- 62 farms raise 42 acres of apples
- 13 farms raise 41 acres of peaches
- 38 farms raise 9 acres of sweet cherries, and 14 farms raise four acres of tart cherries
- Eleven farms raise 41 acres of hazelnuts
- Five acres of plums are raised on 21 farms
- Other fruits produced commercially include apricots, kiwi, and persimmons

Berries

- 74 farms produce 1,389 acres of berries
- 33 farms raise 852 acres of raspberries
- 371 acres of strawberries are raised on 23 farms
- 34 farms raise 149 acres of blueberries
- 12 acres of blackberries are raised on eleven county farms
- Other berries raised in Clark County include boysenberries, cranberries, and loganberries
- Fruit and nut sales increased 40% from \$4.2 million in 1997 to \$5.8 million in 2002

Other, including woody crops

- 140 farms raise greenhouse and nursery crops (total sales of \$18.7 million)
- 46 farms sell \$1.3 million of Christmas trees

Note: many farmers report that USDA data on fruit and vegetable production may understate local production

Clark County Highlights:

Ranks 2nd in Washington for broiler chicken inventory (662,000)

Ranks 3rd in state for sheep & goat sales (\$253,000)

Ranks 4th in Washington for acres of berries grown (1,389)

Ranks 4th in state for Christmas tree acreage (1,057)

Ranks 6th in state in sales of Christmas trees (\$1.3 million)

Ranks 6th in Washington for poultry sales (\$7 million)

Ranks 8th in state for horse sales (\$562,000)

Ranks 9th in state for nursery crop sales (\$18.7 million)

Ranks 10th in Washington for corn for silage (707 acres)

Ranks 10th in state for number of horses (3,433)

Farm Production Balance [Bureau of Economic Analysis]

The county's farms have sold \$58.3 million of crops and livestock each year, on average, since 1995 (11 years). However, it has required \$58.8 million to produce these commodities, for an average loss of \$400,000 each year. This is a total production loss of \$4.7 million since 1995. *[Data in this section are in 2005 dollars.]*

On average, \$300,000 of federal subsidies have been extended to county farmers each year since 1995. Clearly, these do not fully compensate farmers for production losses.

Farm families also earned \$8.6 million in farm-related income (cash rents for land, custom work for neighbors, etc.) in 2005. However, this type of income has fallen from its peak of \$20 million per year in 1986. Average farm-related income since 1995 is \$11 million per year.

Overall, the county's farmers earned \$ 23 million less from farm production in 2005 than they had earned in 1969 (in 2005 dollars). This decline of net income is 40% of current sales.

Cash receipts for livestock fell 50% over the period 1969 to 2005, declining from \$65 million to \$32 million. Cash income for crops fell 30% since 1969, from \$34 million to \$10 million.

Of the \$59 million spent for production expenses, an estimated \$30 million is spent on inputs sourced outside of the county.

Consumers

The county's consumers buy \$807 million of food each year. At least \$700 million of this is sourced outside the county.

73,000 (21%) of the county's residents earn an income lower than 185 percent of the poverty rate. At this level or below, families qualify for free and reduced school lunches.

The *average* household in Clark County lost \$21,000 in net worth in the year 2005 alone, primarily because it assumed new mortgage debt. This is a total decline of \$2.7 billion in net worth for all county households.

Summary of Clark County Farm & Food Economy

Producers spend \$400,000 more each year to produce crops and livestock than they earn in sales. In the course of farming at a loss, farmers spend \$30 buying farm inputs that are sourced outside the county. Meanwhile, Clark County consumers buy \$700 million of food produced outside the county. This amounts to an overall flow of \$730 million away from the county each year — over twelve times the value of all agricultural products now produced in Clark County.

Clark County: markets for food eaten at home

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 97.6
Fruits & vegetables	79.4
Cereals and bakery products	18.8
Dairy products	51.0
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	162.8

City of Vancouver: markets for food eaten at home

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 43.4
Fruits & vegetables	35.3
Cereals and bakery products	8.4
Dairy products	22.7
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	72.4

Clark County (not including City of Vancouver): markets for food eaten at home

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 54.2
Fruits & vegetables	44.1
Cereals and bakery products	10.5
Dairy products	28.3
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	90.4

Washington State: markets for food eaten at home

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 1,742.2
Fruits & vegetables	1,417.4
Cereals and bakery products	336.2
Dairy products	910.8
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	2,905.1

City of Portland, Oregon: markets for food eaten at home

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 171.6
Fruits & vegetables	139.6
Cereals and bakery products	33.1
Dairy products	89.7
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	286.2

Portland/Salem Metropolitan Area: markets for food eaten at home

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 664.6
Fruits & vegetables	540.7
Cereals and bakery products	128.2
Dairy products	347.5
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	1,108.2

Oregon State: markets for food eaten at home

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 1,023.0
Fruits & vegetables	832.2
Cereals and bakery products	197.4
Dairy products	534.8
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	1,705.8

Energy markets

Clark County: markets for energy and utilities

	<i>millions</i>
Gasoline and motor oil	\$ 277.5
Electricity	123.3
Natural gas	47.7
Fuel oil and other fuels	9.3
Water and other public services	58.4

Key data sources:

Bureau of Economic Analysis data on farm production balance

<http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/countyal/reis/>

Food consumption estimates from Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey

<http://www.bls.gov/cex/home.htm>

U.S. Census of Agriculture

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>

USDA/Economic Research Service food consumption data:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/foodconsumption/>

USDA/ Economic Research Service farm income data:

<http://ers.usda.gov/Data/FarmIncome/finfidmu.htm>

For more information:

To see results from *Finding Food in Farm Country* studies in other counties of Minnesota, Iowa, California, Hawaii: <http://www.crcworks.org/fffc.pdf>.

To read the original *Finding Food in Farm Country* study from Southeast Minnesota (written for the Experiment in Rural Cooperation): <http://www.crcworks.org/ff.pdf>.

To view a PowerPoint presented by Ken Meter at a plenary appearance to the Community Food Security Coalition in October 2006: <http://www.crcworks.org/crcppts/cfsc06.pdf>.

To link to further analysis of farm and food economies in the U.S.:
<http://www.crcworks.org/rural.html>.

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