



# Crossroads Resource Center

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## ***Tools for Community Self-determination***

### **Sarasota County, Florida Local Farm & Food Economy**

*Highlights of a data compilation*  
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**Sarasota County Government**  
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#### **Sarasota County (Florida)**

355,722 residents receive \$15.3 billion income annually (2004). Real personal income has increased 40% per year since 1976. \$2.5 billion (16%) of this personal income is government payments.

#### **The county's farms (Agricultural Census, 2002)**

##### *Land:*

- 371 farms. This is 0.8% of Florida's total.
- 23 (6%) of these are 1,000 acres or more in size.
- 255 (69%) farms are less than 50 acres.
- While the average farm size is 327 acres, the median size is 15 acres.
- The county has 121,310 acres of land in farms.
- This amounts to 1.2% of the state's farmland.
- 6,418 acres of harvested cropland.
- 92 farms (25%) have a total of 5,002 acres of irrigated land.
- Average value of land and buildings per farm is \$841,623. This is 126% of the state average.

##### *Sales:*

- \$17.8 million of crops and livestock sold (2002). *Note that the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) shows \$28 million in sales for 2002 and generally much higher values than the Census. No explanation for this is known.*
- \$13.3 million of crops sold (75% of sales).
- \$4.5 million of livestock and products sold (25% of sales).
- 94% of Sarasota County ag sales involved (1) Nursery and Greenhouse crops, 47%; (2) Fruit, 27%, and (3) Cattle and calves, 20%.
- The number of farms/ranches selling livestock, poultry and related products fell 38% from 1997 to 2002 (293 to 183), while the amount of livestock products sold fell 39%.
- 231 (62%) county farms sold less than \$5,000 of products in 2002.
- 32 farms (9%) sold more than \$100,000 of products.
- 63% of county farms (233 of 371) reported net losses in 2002.
- County farmers collected a combined average of \$14,207 of federal commodity support payments from 1995-2004 (Environmental Working Group).

*Cattle & Dairy:*

- 176 ranches and farms hold an inventory of 22,741 cattle.
- 9,139 cattle (40%) were sold in 2002 for total sales of \$3.6 million, a decline from 13,374 sold in 1997 for \$4.4 million.
- 5,024 young cattle — weighing less than 500 pounds — were sold by county ranchers. This is less than half of 1997 sales of 10,994.
- 46% of Sarasota County's cattle inventory live on 8 ranches having 500 or more cattle.
- 33% of the county's cattle ranches hold fewer than 10 animals.
- 4 farms raise 9 milk cows. There were 377 milk cows in 1997, on 21 farms.
- 15 farms produce 1,968 tons of forage crops (hay, etc.).

Distribution of cattle inventory

Animals	Farms	Number
1 to 9	54	304
10 to 19	50	638
20 to 49	13	403
50 to 99	10	735
100 to 199	13	1,706
200 to 499	13	4,356
500 or more	8	7,005

Distribution of cattle sales

Animals sold	Farms	Number
1 to 9	65	334
10 to 19	22	276
20 to 49	11	351
50 to 99	14	1,056
100 to 199	3	400
200 to 499	14	4,131
500 or more	4	2,591

Distribution of forage farm size

Farm size	# farms
1 to 24 acres	3
25 to 99 acres	6
100 to 249 acres	6

*Other livestock & animal products:*

- 15 farms hold an inventory of 181 hogs and pigs, down from the 47 farms having 526 hogs and pigs in 1997. This is a two-thirds decline in both number of farms and inventory in five years.
- Hog and pig sales fell from \$71,000 in 1997 to \$9,000 in 2002.
- 7 farms hold an inventory of 68 sheep and lambs.
- 20 farms raise poultry, 17 to harvest their eggs.
- 13 of these farms hold less than 50 birds.
- 3 of these farms hold 50-99 birds.
- 1 of these farms holds 20,000 - 50,000 birds.

- Five years earlier, 41 farms sold poultry.
- 5 farms hold an inventory of 23 milk goats.
- 128 farms hold an inventory of 882 horses; 28 farms sold 110 horses in 2002.
- Sarasota County has 1,840 bee colonies.

*Vegetables & Melons (some farmers state that Ag Census data does not fully represent vegetable production):*

- 8 farms work 83 acres to raise vegetables.
- 4 farms raise 6 acres of snap beans.
- 1 farm raises broccoli.
- 2 farms raise cabbage.
- 1 farm raises carrots.
- 1 farm raises celery.
- 1 farm raises collard greens.
- 1 farm raises cucumbers.
- 1 farm raises kale.
- 1 farm raises lettuce.
- 1 farm raises mustard greens.
- 4 farms raise 2 acres of okra.
- 5 farms raise 10 acres of green onions.
- 1 farm raises blackeyed peas.
- 4 farms raise radishes.
- 1 farm raises spinach.
- 2 farms raise sweet peppers.
- 1 farm raises squash.
- 6 farms raise 15 acres of sweet corn.
- 3 farms raise 20 acres of tomatoes.

Distribution of vegetable farm size

Farm size	#farms
0.1 to 4.9 acres	1
5.0 to 24.9 acres	5
25.0 to 99.9 acres	2

*Fruits (some farmers state that Ag Census data does not fully represent fruit production):*

- The county has 43 farms with a total of 3,887 acres of orchards. 41 of these raise citrus fruit. Fruits accounted for 27% of county ag sales.
- 32 farms raise 3,110 acres of oranges, including:
- 28 farms raise 1,852 acres of Valencia oranges.
- 24 farms raise 1,259 acres of "other oranges:" (tangelos — 11 farms; tangerines — 10 farms; "other" citrus — 2 farms).
- 10 farms raise tangerines.
- 2 farms raise "other citrus."
- 20 farms raise 565 acres of grapefruit.
- 4 farms raise lemons.
- 3 farms raise limes.
- 9 farms raise 18 acres of berries.
- 2 farms raise watermelons.

Distribution of orchard size:

Total acreage	# farms
0.1 to 4.9 acres	15
5.0 to 24.9 acres	11
25.0 to 99.9 acres	11
100.0 to 249.9 acres	2
250.0 to 499.9 acres	1
500.0 acres or more	3
500.0 to 749.9 acres	1
750.0 to 999.9 acres	1
1,000.0 acres or more	1

*Nursery and Greenhouse plants*

- This sector accounts for 47% of all agricultural sales in Sarasota County.
- 61 farms have 357,106 square feet of greenhouse space, and 1,314 acres in the open.

*Direct and organic sales:*

- 24 farms sell \$239,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 23% drop in the number of farms (31 in 1997) selling direct, and a 34% decrease of direct sales from 1997 to 2002.
- Sarasota County farmers are more likely than other Florida farmers to sell direct, with 2% of state sales.
- 5 county farms sold organic foods (\$40,000 sales).
- 363 farms in Florida sold \$5.9 million of organic food products.

**Balance of Cash Receipts and Production Costs (BEA):**

Sarasota County ranchers and farmers sell \$34 million of food commodities per year (1976-2004 average), spending \$24 million to raise them, for an average gain of \$10 million each year. Note that these sales figures compiled by the BEA are far higher than cash receipts recorded by the USDA Agriculture Census (above).

Overall, farm producers have earned a surplus of \$286 million since 1976. Total county cash flow has been positive each year since 1969. Nevertheless, 63% of the county's farms and ranches lost money in 2002 (Ag Census). Sarasota County farmers and ranchers earned \$3 million less by selling commodities in 1969 than they earned in 2004 (in 2004 dollars).

Farmers and ranchers earn another \$823,000 per year of farm-related income — primarily custom work, and rental income (twenty-nine year average for 1976-2004). Federal farm support payments are relatively small, averaging \$14,207 per year for the entire county for the years 1995-2004; BEA; Environmental Working Group).

**The county's consumers:**

Sarasota County consumers spend \$797 million buying food each year, including \$468 million for home use. Most of this food is produced outside the region. Only \$239,000 of food products (0.7% of farm cash receipts) are sold by farmers directly to consumers.

Estimated change in net assets for all county households combined was a loss of \$835 million in 2004 (BLS).

**Farm and food economy summary:**

Farmers gain \$10 million each year producing food commodities, but spend \$7 million buying inputs from external suppliers, for a total gain of \$3 million to the county.

Meanwhile, consumers spend \$500 million buying food from outside. Thus, total loss to the region is \$500 million of potential wealth *each year*. This loss amounts to 15 times the value of all food commodities raised in the region.

**Sarasota County: markets for food eaten at home (2004):**

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 127
Fruits & vegetables	75
Cereals and bakery products	49
Dairy products	64
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	152

**Key data sources:**

**Bureau of Economic Analysis data on farm production balance**

<http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/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 regions 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 keynote appearance to the Minnesota Rural Partners Summit in July, 2005: <http://www.crcworks.org/metersummit05.pdf>.

To get a brief list of essential food facts, many of which are cited in the presentation above, <http://www.crcworks.org/foodmarkets.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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