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Tools for Community Self-determination

High Country Region (Western North Carolina / Eastern Tennessee) **Local Farm & Food Economy**

Highlights of a data compilation
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for
Heifer Project International

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*Covers Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Watauga, & Wilkes Counties in North Carolina,
and Johnson County in Tennessee*

High Country region (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2009)

184,748 residents receive \$5.5 billion of income annually. Although the region's income has not grown as fast as that of the state of North Carolina, personal income still increased more than 200% from 1969 – 2009, after dollars were adjusted for inflation. This is in part due to a population increase. The largest source of personal income was transfer payments (from government programs such as pensions), which account for \$1.5 billion of personal income [see below]. Capital income (from interest, rent or dividends) brought in \$1.1 billion of personal income. Government jobs ranked third, with \$737 million. Health care workers ranked fourth, earning \$376 million. Manufacturing jobs produced \$306 million of personal income. Retail jobs ranked sixth, with \$257 million.

Income earned from transfer payments included \$623 million of medical benefits; \$524 million of retirement and disability insurance benefits; \$126 million of income maintenance benefits; \$75 million of unemployment insurance; and \$39 million of veteran's benefits.

Government income includes \$36 million of income earned by federal workers, and \$676 million earned by state and local government staff. Military personnel earn \$24 million of personal income.

Although population has increased 47% since 1969, there has been only limited public planning to assure a secure and stable food supply.

Issues affecting low-income residents of High Country region:

Nearly 71,000 residents (41%) earn less than 185% of federal poverty guidelines. At this level of income, children qualify for free or reduced-price lunch at school. These lower-income residents

spend \$144 million each year buying food, including \$13 million of SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps) and additional WIC coupons. *Data from Federal Census of 2000, Bureau of Labor Statistics, & Bureau of Economic Analysis.*

13% percent of the region's households (nearly 24,000 residents) earn less than \$10,000 per year. *Source: Federal Census of 2000.*

20% of all adults aged 18-64 in the region carry no health insurance (2008). *Source: Centers for Disease Control. Note: this data is only compiled in metro areas; Winston-Salem was selected as the closest metro area.*

Food-related health conditions:

Data on Metro Winston-Salem residents eating five or more servings of fruit or vegetables each day were not compiled in 2007 or 2008. This is a key indicator of health, since proper fruit and vegetable consumption has been connected to better health outcomes. *Source: Centers for Disease Control. Note: this data is only compiled in metro areas; Winston-Salem was selected as the closest metro area.*

Data on Metro Winston-Salem adults having adequate exercise were not reported for 2007 or 2008. *Source: Centers for Disease Control.*

9% of Metro Winston-Salem residents have been diagnosed with diabetes as of 2008. *Source: Centers for Disease Control.*

Medical costs for treating diabetes and related conditions in the study region are estimated at \$107 million per year. Costs for the state of North Carolina as a whole total \$5.4 billion. *Source: American Diabetes Association cost calculator.*

69% of Metro Winston-Salem residents are overweight (40%) or obese (29%). *Source: Centers for Disease Control, data for 2008.*

The region's farms (Agricultural Census, 2007)

Agriculture Census data for 2007 were released February 4, 2009

The Census of Agriculture defines a "farm" as "an operation that produces, or would normally produce and sell, \$1,000 or more of agricultural products per year."

Land:

- 4,316 farms.
- The High Country region had 11% less farms in 2007 than in 2002.
- 42 (1%) of these are 1,000 acres or more in size.
- 2,270 (53%) farms are less than 50 acres.
- Average farm size is 95 acres.
- The region has 412,221 acres of land in farms.
- The High Country region holds 104,236 acres of harvested cropland.
- 1,469 of these acres are irrigated.
- Average value of land and buildings per farm was \$116,595.

Sales:

With the exception of foods sold directly to consumers (see below), farmers typically sell commodities to wholesalers, brokers or manufacturers that require further processing or handling to become consumer items. The word “commodities” is used in this report to mean the crops and livestock sold by farmers through these wholesale channels. The term “products” encompasses commodity sales, direct sales, and any other sales.

- The region’s farmers sold \$503 million of crops and livestock in 2007.
- Farm product sales increased by 64% from 2002 to 2007.
- At least \$79 million of crops were sold. *Note that data for crop sales in Watauga County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- At least \$412 million of livestock and products were sold. *Note that data for livestock sales in Watauga County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- 2,744 (64%) of the region’s farms sold less than \$10,000 of products in 2007.
- Total sales from these small farms were at least \$2.3 million. *Note that sales data in Watauga and Johnson counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- 467 (11%) of the region’s farms sold more than \$100,000 of products. *Note that sales data in Watauga and Johnson counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- Total sales from these larger farms were at least \$466 million. *Note that sales data in Watauga and Johnson counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- The average net cash income for the region’s farm operations was \$27,827.
- 54% of the region’s farms (2,329 of 4,316) reported net losses in 2007.
- 230 (5%) of the High Country region’s farmers collected a combined total of \$1.1 million of federal subsidies in 2007.

Production Expenses:

- Feed was the largest single expense for the High Country region farmers in 2007, totaling 185 million (47% of production expenses).
- Livestock and poultry purchases ranked as the second most important expenses, at 60 million (15%).
- Hired farm labor cost farmers \$27 million (7%).
- Gasoline, fuels, and oil costs totaled \$16 million (4%).

Grains, oil seeds, and edible beans:

- 98 farms produce at least \$2.1 million of grains, oil seeds, and edible beans. *Note that data for sales of grains, oil seeds, and edible beans in Watauga County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- This includes 76 farms producing at least 180,709 bushels of corn on at least 2,152 acres, worth at least \$2 million. *Note that data for bushels and acreage of corn in Ashe and Avery counties, and data for sales of corn in Avery County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- No soybean sales were reported, but *data for soybean sales were suppressed by the USDA in Alleghany and Wilkes counties in an effort to protect confidentiality.*

Poultry:

- 182 farms held an inventory of 101 million broiler chickens.
- 213 farms held an inventory of 506,111 laying hens.
- Sales of poultry and eggs totaled \$362 million, primarily from Wilkes County.
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Cattle and Dairy:

- 2,021 ranches and farms held an inventory of 88,638 cattle.
- 62,678 cattle were sold by 1,860 farms in 2007 for total sales of at least \$34 million. *Note that data for cattle sales in Watauga County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- 55 farms raise 3,422 milk cows.
- 1,421 farms raise 26,578 beef cows.
- 76 farms produced 123,882 tons of corn for silage on at least 8,360 acres. *Note that data for corn for silage produced in Avery County, and data for acreage of corn for silage in Avery and Watauga counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- 2,026 farms produced 94,640 tons of forage crops (hay, etc.) on 55,968 acres.
- 762 farms sold \$2 million of forage.

Other livestock & animal products:

- 43 farms hold an inventory of 531 hogs and pigs.
- 26 farms sold 1,680 hogs and pigs in 2007, worth at least \$227,000. *Note that data for sales of hogs and pigs in Avery County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- 74 farms hold an inventory of 1,708 sheep and lambs.
- 257 farms sold \$271,000 worth of sheep, goats, and lambs in 2007.
- 11 farms engage in aquaculture.
- 204 farms sold \$1 million worth of horses and ponies.

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

- 203 farms worked 1,356 acres to produce at least \$906,000 of vegetables. *Note that data for sales of vegetables in Alleghany County were suppressed by USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- This represents a 34% increase in the number of farms (from 152) over 2002 levels.
- 107 farms raised least 108 acres of potatoes. *Note that data for sales of potatoes in Alleghany County were suppressed by USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*

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

- 124 farms in the region hold over 618 acres of orchards. *Note that data for acreage of orchards in Avery County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*

- 124 farms sold at least \$1.9 million of fruits, nuts and berries. *Note that data for sales of fruits, nuts and berries in Avery County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*

Nursery and Greenhouse plants:

- 320 farms sold at least \$13 million of ornamentals in 2007. *Note that data for sales of ornamentals in Watauga County were suppressed by USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- This represents a decline of 22% in the number of farms selling ornamentals (from 410) since 2002.
- 596 farms sold \$55 million of Christmas trees.

Direct and organic sales:

- 193 farms sell \$1 million of food products directly to consumers. This is a 3% decrease of amount of farms (199 in 2002) selling direct over 2002 and a slight rise in direct sales over 2002.
- This amounts to 0.2% of the region's farm product sales, half the national average of 0.4%.
- Ashe County leads the region in direct sales, with \$367,000. Wilkes County is a close second, with \$311,000.
- 32 farms in the region sold \$328,000 of organic products.
- 24 farms market through community supported agriculture (CSA).
- 133 farms produce and sell value-added products.

Conservation practices:

- 561 farms use conservation methods such as no-till, limited tilling, filtering field runoff to remove chemicals, fencing animals to prevent them from entering streams, etc.
- 597 farms practice rotational or management intensive grazing.
- 19 farms generated energy or electricity on the farm.

Other Crops:

- 110 farms in the region sell at least \$2 million of tobacco. *Note that data for tobacco sales in Alleghany and Watauga counties were suppressed by USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.* This is a decrease of 87% in the number of farms raising tobacco since 2002.

Limited-resource farms and others in the High Country region (Census of Agriculture, 2007)

Small Family Farms	Farms	Percent	Acres	Percent
Limited-resource	859	20%	55,338	14%
Retirement	1,031	24%	91,354	23%
Residential/lifetsyle	1,555	36%	106,996	26%
Farming occupation/lower sales	411	10%	42,255	10%
Farming occupation/higher sales	59	1%	7,358	2%
Large family farms	79	2%	26,027	6%
Very large family farms	215	5%	63,890	16%
Nonfamily farms	107	2%	11,954	3%
	Totals		4,316	405,172

County and State Highlights

Alleghany County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):

- 519 farms, 5% less than in 2002.
- Alleghany County has 76,656 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$34 million of products in 2007.
- \$19 million (55%) of these sales were crops.
- \$15 million (45%) of these sales was livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 204 farms (39%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 142 farms (27%) in this category.
- 16 farms (3%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 256 farms (49%) are less than 50 acres.
- 283 farms (55%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 50 farms (10%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 14 farms sold \$96,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 33% decrease in the number of farms selling direct (21 in 2002) and a 300% increase in direct sales from 2002 sales of \$32,000.
- Direct sales are 0.3% of farm product sales, less than the national average of 0.4%.
- Alleghany County ranks 1st in the state for acreage of pumpkins, with 632 acres.
- Alleghany County ranks 2nd in North Carolina and 5th in the U.S. for acreage of Christmas trees, with 7,954 acres.
- Alleghany County ranks 3rd in North Carolina and 8th in the United States for Christmas tree sales, with \$9.5 million.
- The county ranks 3rd in North Carolina for milk and dairy product sales, with \$7.9 million.
- The county ranks 6th in North Carolina for acreage of corn, with 2,061 acres.
- The county is the ninth-ranked in the state for cattle and calf inventory, with 22,469.

Ashe County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):

- 1,125 farms, 2% less than in 2002.
- Ashe County has 108,452 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$42 million of products in 2007.
- \$32 million (76%) of these sales were crops.
- \$10 million (24%) of these sales was livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 461 farms (41%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 402 farms (36%) in this category.
- 5 farms (0.4%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 578 farms (51%) are less than 50 acres.
- 716 farms (64%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 77 farms (7%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 62 farms sold \$367,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 29% increase in the number of farms selling direct (48 in 2002) and a 33% increase in direct sales from 2002 sales of \$276,000.
- Direct sales are 0.9% of farm product sales, more than double the national average of 0.4%.
- Ashe County ranks 1st in North Carolina and 2nd in the United States for sales of Christmas trees, with \$26 million.
- Ashe County ranks 1st in North Carolina and 3rd in the United States for acreage of Christmas trees, with 12,642 acres.

- The county ranks 4th in North Carolina for inventory of sheep and lambs, with 936.
- The county ranks 9th in North Carolina for sales of cattle, with \$8,981.

Avery County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):

- 477 farms, 4% less than in 2002.
- Avery County has 27,818 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$21 million of products in 2007.
- \$20 million (98%) of these sales were crops.
- \$419,000 (2%) of these sales was livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 214 farms (45%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 158 farms (33%) in this category.
- 2 farms (0.4%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 302 farms (63%) are less than 50 acres.
- 287 farms (60%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 48 farms (10%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 17 farms sold \$82,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 47% decrease in the number of farms selling direct (32 in 2002) and a 58% decrease in direct sales from 2002 sales of \$193,000.
- Direct sales are 0.4% of farm product sales, the same as the national average.
- Avery County ranks 2nd in the North Carolina, and 5th in the United States for sales of Christmas trees, with \$14 million.
- The county ranks 2nd in North Carolina for acreage of short rotation woody crops, with 49 acres.
- The county ranks 3rd in North Carolina and 7th in the United States for acreage of Christmas trees, with 7,882 acres.
- Avery County ranks 3rd in North Carolina for acreage of ornamentals, with 1,397 acres.

Watauga County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):

- 587 farms, 20% less than in 2002.
- Watauga has 45,782 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$12 million of products in 2007.
- *Data for crop and livestock sales for Watauga County were suppressed by their USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 264 farms (45%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 213 farms (36%) in this category.
- 5 farms (0.9%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 328 farms (56%) are less than 50 acres.
- 388 farms (66%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 15 farms (3%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 33 farms sold \$88,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 6% decrease in the number of farms selling direct (35 in 2002) and a 5% decrease in direct sales from 2002 sales of \$93,000.
- Direct sales are 0.8% of farm product sales, double the national average of 0.4%.
- The county ranks 4th in North Carolina for acreage of Christmas trees, with 2,795 acres.
- Watauga County ranks 5th in North Carolina for sales of Christmas trees, with \$4.2 million.

Wilkes County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):

- 1,095 farms, 14% less than in 2002.
- Wilkes County has 109,970 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$390 million of products in 2007.
- \$6.8 million (2%) of these sales were crops.
- \$383 million (98%) of these sales was livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 448 farms (41%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 402 farms (37%) in this category.
- 12 farms (1%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 555 farms (51%) are less than 50 acres.
- 653 farms (60%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 269 farms (25%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 40 farms sold \$311,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 13% decrease in the number of farms selling direct (46 in 2002) and a 29% decrease in direct sales from 2002 sales of \$436,000.
- Direct sales are 0.1% of farm product sales, one fourth of the national average of 0.4%.
- Wilkes County ranks 1st in North Carolina and 9th in the United States for broiler production, with 16.7 million.
- Wilkes County ranks 2nd in the state for sales of cattle and calves, with \$14 million.
- Wilkes County ranks 2nd in North Carolina for acreage of corn for silage, with 5,855 acres.
- The county ranks 3rd in North Carolina and 10th in the United States for sales of poultry and eggs, with \$362 million.
- The county ranks 3rd in North Carolina for acreage of apples, with 291 acres.
- The county ranks 4th in North Carolina for sales of livestock and poultry.
- The county ranks 4th in North Carolina for inventory of cattle and calves, with 31,457.
- Wilkes County ranks 4th in North Carolina for sales of horses and ponies, with \$770,000.
- Wilkes County ranks 5th in North Carolina for sales of farm products.
- Wilkes County ranks 6th in North Carolina for sales of fruits, tree nuts, and berries, with \$1.2 million.
- Wilkes County ranks 6th in North Carolina for inventory of pullets for laying flock replacement, with 439,056.
- The county ranks 7th in North Carolina for sales of milk and other dairy products, with \$5.6 million.
- The county has the 8th largest acreage of forage in North Carolina, with 18,355 acres.
- The county ranks 9th in North Carolina for inventory of laying hens, with 502,722.
- Wilkes County ranks 10th in North Carolina for quail production, but *inventory figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*

Johnson County highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):

- 513 farms, 23% less than in 2002.
- Johnson County has 43,543 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold 5.6 million of products in 2007.
- \$1.9 million (34%) of these sales were crops.
- \$3.7 million (66%) of these sales were livestock or related products.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 - 49 acres with 224 farms (44%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 - 179 acres with 212 farms (41%) in this category.
- 2 farms (0.4%) are 1,000 acres or more.

- 253 farms (49%) are less than 50 acres.
- 417 farms (81%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 7 farms (1%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 27 farms sold \$103,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 59% increase in the number of farms selling direct (17 in 2002) and a 686% increase in direct sales from 2002 sales of \$15,000.
- Direct sales are 1.8% of farm product sales, more than four times the national average of 0.4%.
- Johnson County ranks 2nd in Tennessee for Christmas tree sales, with \$321,000.
- Johnson County ranks 3rd in Tennessee for acreage of Christmas trees with, 275 acres.
- The county ranks 6th in Tennessee for acreage of ornamentals but, *acreage figures for ornamentals in Johnson County were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*

State of North Carolina highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):

- 52,913 farms, 2% less than in 2002.
- North Carolina has 8,474,671 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$10.3 billion of products in 2007.
- \$2.6 billion (25 %) of these sales were crops.
- \$7.7 billion (75 %) of these sales was livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 10 to 49 acres with 20,772 farms (39%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 17,830 farms (34%) in this category.
- 1,662 farms (3%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 25,773 farms (49%) are less than 50 acres.
- 34,276 farms (65%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 8,326 farms (16 %) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 3,712 farms sold \$29 million of food directly to consumers. This is a 22% increase in the number of farms selling directly (3,054 in 2002) and a 71% increase in sales from 2002 sales of \$17 million.
- Direct sales are 0.3% of farm product sales, less than the national average of 0.4%.
- If direct food sales made up a single commodity, the value of these sales would be similar to the state's 19th-most important product, aquaculture.
- 418 farms farm organically, with a total of 3,021 acres of harvested cropland, and 3,377 acres of organic pastureland.
- 7,775 acres on 376 farms are undergoing organic conversion.
- 383 farms in North Carolina sold \$7.3 million of organic food products, including \$4.9 million of crops (this may include ornamental and greenhouse crops), \$730,000 of livestock and poultry, and \$1.6 million of products from livestock and poultry (such as milk or eggs).
- 413 farms market through community supported agriculture (CSA).
- 1,429 farms produce value-added products.
- 12,540 farms use conservation methods such as no-till, limited tilling, filtering field runoff to remove chemicals, fencing animals to prevent them from entering streams, etc.
- 9,576 farms practice rotational management or intensive grazing.
- 467 farms generate energy or electricity on the farm.
- North Carolina ranks 1st in the U.S. for tobacco sales, with \$549 million.
- North Carolina is the second-ranked seller of poultry and eggs in the country, with \$4 billion.

- North Carolina is the second-ranked state in the country for production of pullets for laying flock replacement, with 7,129,798.
- The state is ranked 2nd in the country for Christmas tree sales, with \$65 million.
- The state ranks 2nd in the country for inventory of turkeys, with 17,865,896.
- The state ranks 2nd in the U.S. for inventory of hogs and pigs, with 10,134,004.
- North Carolina ranks 5th in the country for inventory of broilers, with 149,921,809.
- The state is ranked 5th in the country for acreage of cotton, with 536,060 acres.
- The state ranks 6th in the country for livestock sales.
- The state ranks 6th in the country for cotton sales, with \$211 million.
- North Carolina ranks 7th in the country for sales of ornamentals, with \$574 million.
- North Carolina ranks 8th in the country for sales of crops and livestock.
- North Carolina is ranked 9th in the country for laying hen inventory, with 12,748,275.

North Carolina's top farm products in 2009 (Economic Research Service)

Due to data suppression at the local level, such a chart cannot reasonably be constructed for the High Country region region itself. The data in the table and pie chart below are for North Carolina as a whole. See chart on next page.

	\$millions
1 Broilers	2,430
2 Hogs	1,878
3 Ornamentals	813
4 Tobacco	746
5 Soybeans	557
6 Turkeys	523
7 Chicken eggs	349
8 Corn	328
9 Cattle and calves	214
10 Cotton	213
11 Sweet potatoes	176
12 Wheat	163
13 Dairy products	133
14 Peanuts	67
15 Hay	52
16 Blueberries	51
17 Potatoes	35
18 Tomatoes	35
19 Aquaculture	29
20 Cucumbers	25
21 Strawberries	20
22 Cabbage	17
23 Apples	16
24 Watermelons	15
25 Corn, sweet	15

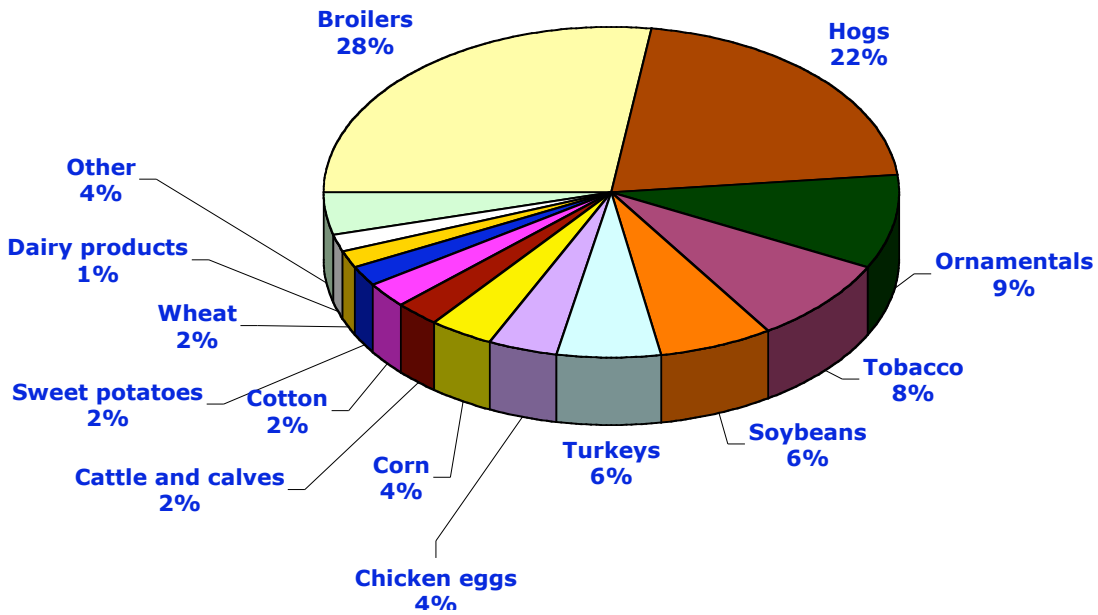
Note that 69% of farm product sales involved the feeding and care of livestock, while another 10% of sales involved tobacco and cotton; many of the fruits and vegetables grown in North Carolina were exported out of the state.

Note also that at \$29 million, direct sales from farmers to consumers amount to about the same value as the 19th-ranking product, sales of fish raised by aquaculture.

North Carolina's top farm products in 2009 (Economic Research Service)

See table on previous page

Top farm products in North Carolina, 2009



Source: USDA Economic Research Service

State of Tennessee highlights (Agriculture Census 2007):

- 79,280 farms, 9% less than in 2002.
- Tennessee has 10,969,798 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$2.6 billion of products in 2007.
- \$1.1 billion (44%) of these sales were crops.
- \$1.5 (56%) of these sales was livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 50 to 179 acres with 29,588 farms (37%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 10 to 49 acres with 29,396 farms (37%) in this category.
- 1,348 farms (2%) are 1,000 acres or more.
- 35,210 farms (44%) are less than 50 acres.
- 59,278 farms (75%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 3,801 farms (5%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 3,581 farms sold \$15 million of food directly to consumers. This is a 6% increase in the number of farms selling direct (3,392 in 2002) and a 36% increase in direct sales from 2002 sales of \$11 million.
- Direct sales are 0.6% of farm product sales, greater than the national average of 0.4%.
- If direct food sales made up a single commodity, the value of these sales would outrank the state's 14th-most important product, snap beans.
- 159 farms farm organically, with a total of 747 acres of harvested cropland, and 953 acres of pastureland.
- 1,509 acres on 148 farms are undergoing organic conversion.
- 137 farms in Tennessee sold \$1.1 million of organic food products, including \$976,000 of crops (this may include ornamental and greenhouse crops), \$82,000 of livestock and poultry, and \$68,000 of products from livestock and poultry (such as milk or eggs).
- 251 farms market through community supported agriculture (CSA).
- 2,719 farms produce value-added products.
- 12,472 farms use conservation methods such as no-till, limited tilling, filtering field runoff to remove chemicals, fencing animals to prevent them from entering streams, etc.
- 16,694 farms practice rotational management of intensive grazing.
- 452 farms generate energy or electricity on the farms.
- Tennessee ranks 4th in the U.S. for tobacco sales, with \$71 million.
- The state ranks 6th in the country for acreage of cotton, with 504,057 acres.
- Tennessee is the 6th ranked state for inventory of horses and ponies, with 142,003.

Tennessee’s top farm products in 2009 (Economic Research Service)

Due to data suppression at the local level, such a chart cannot reasonably be constructed for the High Country region region itself. The data in the table and pie chart below are for Tennessee as a whole. See chart on next page.

	\$ millions
1 Soybeans	565
2 Broilers	442
3 Cattle and calves	424
4 Ornamentals	292
5 Corn	251
6 Cotton	146
7 Dairy products	128
8 Tobacco	107
9 Wheat	105
10 Hay	83
11 Tomatoes	45
12 Hogs	39
13 Chicken eggs	39
14 Beans, snap	8
15 Apples	3
16 Sheep and lambs	2
17 Farm chickens	2
18 Squash	1
19 Honey	1
20 Wool	0

Note: mushrooms, aquaculture, and turkeys are also among Tennessee’s top products, but sales were not listed by ERS, in an effort to protect confidentiality.

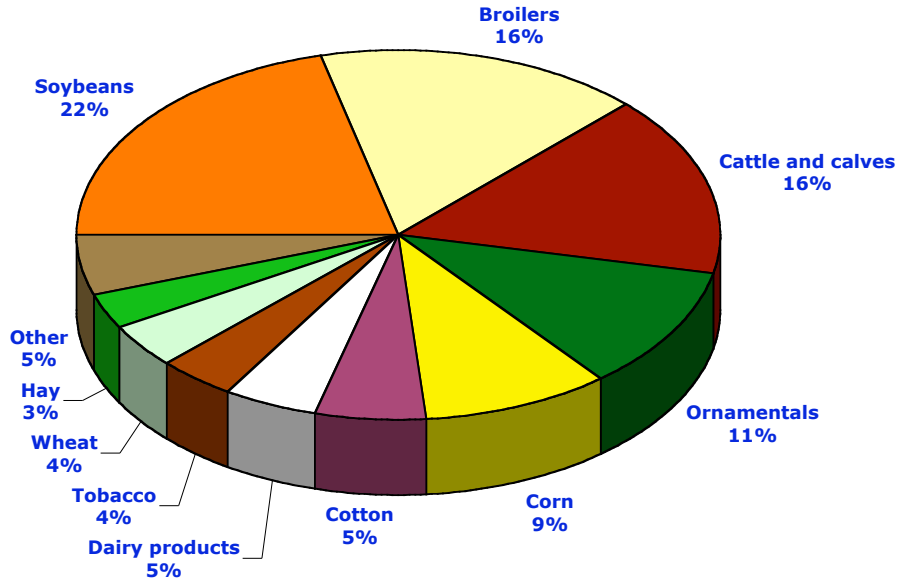
Note that 69% of farm product sales involved the feeding and care of livestock, while another 9% of sales involved tobacco and cotton.

Note also that at \$15 million, direct sales from farmers to consumers total far more than sales of snap beans, the state’s 14th-most important product.

Tennessee's top farm products in 2009 (Economic Research Service)

Due to data suppression at the local level, such a chart cannot reasonably be constructed for the High Country region region itself. The data in the table and pie chart below are for Tennessee as a whole. See table on previous page.

Top farm products in Tennessee, 2009



Balance of Cash Receipts and Production Costs (BEA):

High Country region ranchers and farmers sell \$449 million of food commodities per year (1969-2009 average), spending \$340 million to raise them, for an average gain of \$109 million each year. *Note that these sales figures compiled by the BEA may differ from cash receipts recorded by the USDA Agriculture Census (above).*

Overall, farm producers earned a surplus of \$4.4 billion by selling crops and livestock from 1969 to 2009, on \$18 billion of sales, a hefty return of 24%.

However, 54% of the region's farms and ranches reported net losses in 2007 (Ag Census). High Country region farmers and ranchers earned \$52 million less by selling commodities in 2009 than they earned in 1969 (in 2009 dollars).

Farmers and ranchers earn another \$45 million per year of farm-related income — primarily custom work, and rental income (41-year average for 1969-2009). Federal farm support payments are relatively small, totaling at least \$5 million in 2009 and often not fully reported.

The region's consumers:

See also information covering low-income food consumption and food-related health conditions, pages 1-2 above.

High Country region residents purchase \$439 million of food each year, including \$257 million for home use. Most of this food is produced outside the region. Only \$1 million of food products (0.04% of farm cash receipts and 0.2% of the region's consumer market) are sold by farmers directly to consumers.

Estimated change in net assets (that is, assets minus liabilities) for all of the region's[households combined was a loss of \$253 million in 2009 alone (BLS). This places additional pressure on local consumers trying to buy food.

Farm and food economy summary:

Farmers gain \$109 million each year producing food commodities, and spend \$190 million buying inputs sourced outside of the region, for a total loss of \$80 million to the region.

Meanwhile, consumers spend \$400 million buying food from outside. Thus, total loss to the region is \$480 million of potential wealth *each year*. This loss amounts to more than the value of all food commodities raised in the region.

High Country region: markets for food eaten at home (2009):

High Country region residents purchase \$439 million of food each year, including \$257 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 61
Fruits & vegetables	43
Cereals and bakery products	35
Dairy products	27
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	92

If the region’s residents purchased 15% of their food for home use directly from farmers in the region, this would generate \$39 million of new farm income.

Alleghany County: markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Alleghany County residents purchase \$26 million of food each year, including \$15 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 3.6
Fruits & vegetables	2.5
Cereals and bakery products	2.1
Dairy products	1.6
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	5.4

Ashe County: markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Ashe County residents purchase \$61 million of food each year, including \$36 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 8.6
Fruits & vegetables	6.0
Cereals and bakery products	4.8
Dairy products	3.8
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	12.8

Avery County: markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Avery County residents purchase \$43 million of food each year, including \$25 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 5.9
Fruits & vegetables	4.2
Cereals and bakery products	3.4
Dairy products	2.6
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	8.9

Watauga County: markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Watauga County residents purchase \$108 million of food each year, including \$63 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 15.1
Fruits & vegetables	10.6
Cereals and bakery products	8.5
Dairy products	6.7
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	22.5

Wilkes County: markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Wilkes County residents purchase \$158 million of food each year, including \$93 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 22.1
Fruits & vegetables	15.5
Cereals and bakery products	12.5
Dairy products	9.8
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	32.9

Johnson County (Tennessee): markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Johnson County residents purchase \$43 million of food each year, including \$25 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 6.0
Fruits & vegetables	4.2
Cereals and bakery products	3.4
Dairy products	2.6
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	8.9

Johnson City (Tennessee): markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Johnson County residents purchase \$469 million of food each year, including \$275 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 65.5
Fruits & vegetables	45.9
Cereals and bakery products	37.0
Dairy products	29.0
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	97.5

Winston-Salem metro area: markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Metro Winston-Salem residents purchase \$1.1 billion of food each year, including \$675 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$161
Fruits & vegetables	113
Cereals and bakery products	91
Dairy products	71
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	240

Charlotte metro area: markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Metro Charlotte residents purchase \$4.1 billion of food each year, including \$2.4 billion to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 579
Fruits & vegetables	406
Cereals and bakery products	328
Dairy products	256
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	862

North Carolina: markets for food eaten at home (2009):

North Carolina residents purchase \$22 billion of food each year, including \$13 billion to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 3,111
Fruits & vegetables	2,180
Cereals and bakery products	1,760
Dairy products	1,377
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	4,634

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 the U.S.:

<http://www.crcworks.org/locales.html>

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 in March, 2008, by Ken Meter at Rep. Collin Peterson's (D-MN) Minnesota agricultural forum, called the "Home Grown Economy":

<http://www.crcworks.org/crcppts/petersonkm08.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/econ.html>

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