

Idaho Women in Ag

Supporting the success of Idaho's women in agriculture through research, education and outreach

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INTRODUCTION

Women are essential to Idaho's agricultural industries and communities. According to the USDA and statistics on farm size, farm sales, and returns to farming, women farmers are a socially disadvantaged and underserved group. In 2019, University of Idaho research and extension faculty were awarded a USDA NIFA grant to conduct research and outreach to better understand the challenges and opportunities Idaho's women in agriculture are facing. The **Women Farmers and Ranchers on the Rise in the US and Idaho** project has two primary long-term goals:

1. Reduce barriers and increase opportunities for achieving financial success and increasing sustainability of enterprises for women farm and ranch operators
2. Increase the prosperity of women farm operators, their families and rural communities

GETTING TO KNOW IDAHO WOMEN IN AG

Idaho has nearly **25,000** farm and ranch operations. According the 2017 Census of Agriculture (CoA):

- **70%** of Idaho farm operations have at least one woman operator which means more than **16,134** farm operations in Idaho have at least one woman operator.
- **39%** of Idaho farm and ranch operators are women. There are at least **17,230** women operators in Idaho.
- **45%** of Idaho principal farmers (operators who are self-designated as a principal operator or senior partner) are women. There are at least **10,896** women principal farmers or ranchers in Idaho.

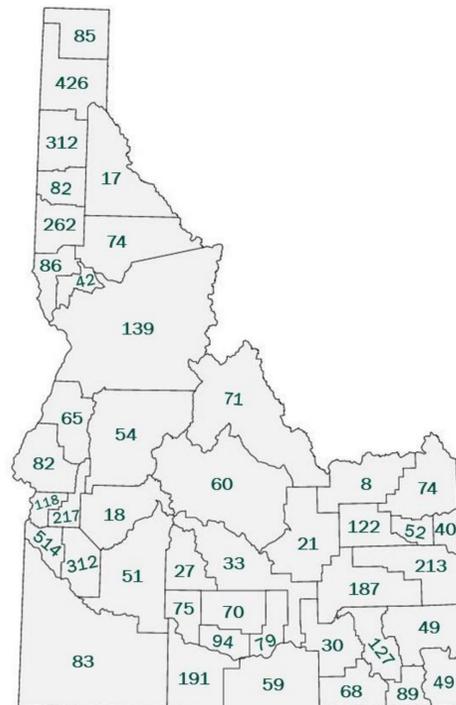


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WOMEN PRIMARY PRODUCERS

The 2017 Census of Agriculture introduced a new variable, **primary producer**, that is coded by USDA's National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) to designate one single producer per operation that makes the most farm decisions and works the fewest days off-farm. There are **24,577** primary producers in Idaho and **20%** or **4,927** primary farmers and ranchers in Idaho are women (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of Women Primary Farmers and Ranchers in Idaho by County



Nearly **80%** of Idaho women primary producers have annual gross farm sales of **less than \$150,000** while more than **15%** of Idaho women primary producers have **over \$1,000,000** in annual gross farm sales. On average, women primary producers are somewhat similar to men primary producers in age and years of farming experience, but men tend to operate and own larger acreages, while women rent out more acreage (Table 1). Table 1 shows a comparison of men and women primary producers in Idaho.

References

Pilgeram, Ryanne, Katherine Dentzman, Paul Lewin, and Kelsey Conley. 2020. "How the USDA Changed the Way Women Farmers Are Counted in the Census of Agriculture." *Choices* 35(316-2020-956).

United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2021. "Census of Agriculture." <https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/>.

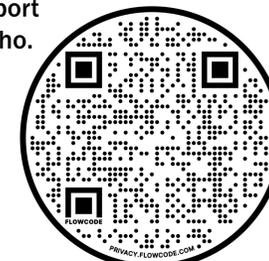
Table 1: Comparison of Women and Men Primary Producers (2017)	Women's Average	Men's Average
Age	58	59
Years of Experience on this Farm	19	24
Acres Operated	267	514
Acres Owned	374	404
Acres Rented from Others	68	176
Acres Rented to Others	1122	262

WHY AREN'T WE SHOWING TRENDS?

The CoA has collected gender-specific data since 1978, however, the amount and type of data collected has changed over time. One of the biggest changes is the ability to list additional producer operators (up to four) and to self-designate principal operators. These changes have increased the amount of data on women farmers and ranchers but have complicated comparisons of this data across time. See **BUL1014 Women Farmers on the Rise? Understanding USDA Data-Collection Methods** to learn more about CoA data collection methods and how to access data on women farmers. <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/publications>

WHAT'S NEXT?

In addition to analyzing USDA CoA data, the project team has conducted 7 regional focus groups and a statewide survey of women producers. Nearly 500 women from 40 counties across the state completed the full survey. This data will help us understand challenges, opportunities, and barriers women in agriculture are facing and identify how educators and technical assistance providers can support the success of women producers in Idaho. Visit the Idaho Women in Ag webpage idahowomeninag.org and sign up for the monthly newsletter to get project updates, explore data fact sheets, and get announcements about education and outreach events!



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