

## USDA

The Census of Agriculture was released on April 11, 2019, revealing many new trends, including:

- There is now a total of 2.04 million farms/ranches (down 3.2% from 2012) with an average size of 441 acres (up 1.6%) on 900 million acres (down 1.6%).
- A continued increase in consolidation and a greater reliance on government assistance programs.
- Ninety-six percent of farms/ranches are family owned.
- Fewer farms with aging producers and consolidation into larger operations. Average age of all producers is 57.5 years (an increase of 1.2 years from 2012). Thirty-six percent of all producers are female. Eleven percent of all producers served in the military.
- The number of younger farmers (35 and under) grew and now account for 8% of all producers.
- The largest operations (\$5 million minimum sales) accounted for 35% of all sales. The number of middle-sized farms in all sectors fell.

The American Seed Trade Association has endorsed a ruling approved by the Commission of Phytosanitary Measures that develops a System Approach for the international movement of seed. Countries currently have many different rules regarding seed testing requirements for import and export that cause unnecessary delays, additional costs and repetitive testing requirements.

A recent review of the Farm Credit System shows that economic factors remain favorable, despite many challenges, including tariffs on US products and weather disasters in some regions. If the current situation continues, production cutbacks are forecasted and should boost producer prices. On the other hand, farm land values have remained stable. Investor demand for quality land remains strong.

## STATE LAWS

Agriculture interests in many states are pushing for the expansion of laws governing "right to farm laws" in order to shield agricultural operations from being sued by their neighbors. (A recent case in North Carolina awarded millions to neighbors near a large hog feeding operation concerning air pollution.)

## LABOR

The release of Census data illustrates the need for a quick resolve of the agricultural worker shortage. In addition, legal issues centered around guest worker programs are far from settled.

Joint liability rules passed in recent years, changes in overtime rules, wage minimums and worker protection rules are making it more difficult to farm.

## EPA

State pesticide regulators in many states have expressed concern that EPA officials are considering the possibility of limiting state's ability to impose additional restrictions on the use of pesticides beyond federal guidelines. In recent communications, EPA stated they may review the provisions in federal law that govern pesticide regulators. EPA stated that some state rules "narrow the federal label" that govern chemical applications. Under current rules, states take an additional step and require additional training for pesticide applicators, impose a later cut-off date for when chemicals can be applied to crops or require more accountability regarding local issues regarding pests and environmental concerns. According to a statement, The Association of American Pesticide Control Officials believe the current system works well.

## WOTUS

April 15 was to be the final day for comments to be submitted regarding a proposed new definition of "Waters of the U.S." The action would clarify regulatory authority under the Clean Water Act. Many groups are expected to have expressed opposition to any changes and at the same time working harder to preserve the over-reaching 2015 WOTUS rule. NAICC as well as The Pesticide Policy Coalition (PPC) submitted recommendations regarding clarity and improvements to key definitions and concepts in the proposed rule.