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NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

United States Department of Agriculture • Washington, DC 20250

Ag Statistics Hotline: (800) 727-9540 • www.nass.usda.gov



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Contact: nass-media@usda.gov

2023 Irrigation and Water Management data now available

WASHINGTON, Oct. 31, 2024 – There were 212,714 farms with 53.1 million irrigated acres, which included 81 million acre-feet of water applied in the United States, according to the 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey results, published today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). In 2018, the irrigation survey results showed that there were 231,474 farms with 55.9 million irrigated acres, which included 83.4 million acre-feet of water. The results show that the number of farms irrigating, the amount of land irrigated, and the total water used for irrigation decreased between 2018 and 2023.

“The 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey, conducted every five years, expands on the data collected in the 2022 Census of Agriculture,” said NASS Administrator Joseph L. Parsons. “This report offers detailed, comprehensive, up-to-date information specific to the agriculture industry’s use, management, and investment of water supplies and irrigation systems.”

Data highlights from the 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey include:

- The total amount of water used in 2023 was 81 million acre-feet, down 2.8% from 2018.
- The average acre-feet applied per acre was 1.5, which was the same as the 2018 irrigation survey. (An acre-foot is the amount of water required to cover one acre to a depth of one foot.)
- The largest portion of irrigated farmland acres in the United States was dedicated to cropland – including grain and oilseed crops, vegetables, nursery and greenhouse, and hay crops.
- Farmers irrigated 49.6 million acres of harvested cropland acres in the open in 2023.
- Ground water from on-farm wells accounted for 54% of irrigation water applied to acres in the open; the average well depth in 2023 was 241 feet.
- The irrigation results show 12.6 million more irrigated acres with sprinkler systems than gravity irrigation.
- Five states accounted for around one-half of the irrigated acres, and more than half of all water applied – Arkansas, California, Idaho, Nebraska, and Texas.
- Equipment, in general, is one of the leading irrigation expenditures with farmers and ranchers spending \$3 billion on irrigation equipment, facilities, land improvements and computer technology in 2023; energy costs for pumping well and surface water amounted to \$3.3 billion.
- Irrigated area of horticulture under protection was 1.7 billion square feet in 2023. This compares with 1.5 billion square feet in 2018.
- Irrigated horticulture grown in the open was 598,980 acres in 2023. This compares with 581,936 acres in 2018.

The 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey followed up with approximately 35,000 producers who indicated in the 2022 Census of Agriculture that they irrigated or had irrigation equipment. Producers provided information on water sources and amount of water used; acres irrigated by type of system; irrigation use by crop; and system investments and energy costs.

“The 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey data provide valuable information that producers, farm organizations, businesses, state departments of agriculture, elected representatives and legislative bodies at all levels of government can use to make agriculture water use more efficient,” said Parsons. “From comparing water use by application methods or appraising water use trends to developing improved technologies or federal programs, these data are crucial to the industry.”

To access the results of the 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey, visit www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus or view in NASS’s online [Quick Stats](#) database.

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NASS is the federal statistical agency responsible for producing official data about U.S. agriculture and is committed to providing timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture.

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