

Farmland Ownership and Tenure

Results from the 2024 Tenure, Ownership, and Transition of Agricultural Land (TOTAL) Survey



ACH22-28/March 2026

In 2024, more than 2 million landowners rented out 347.8 million acres of land for agricultural purposes. Of these landowners, 13% were farmers who owned and operated farms and ranches as well as rented out farmland (operating landlords) and 87% were landlords who do not operate farms (non-operating landlords). Most landowners acquired their land prior to 2014. Non-operating landlords intend to sell relatively little land in the next five years, about 5 percent of owned acres.

2.1 million landlords
348 million owned acres rented out
\$34 billion rent received

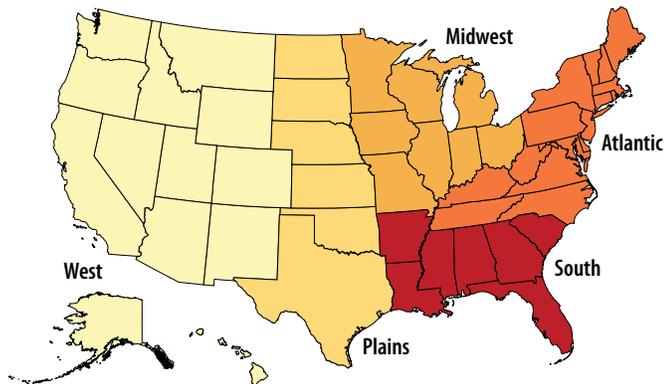


Number and Location

Nationally, the Plains, West and Midwest regions comprised 87% of the agricultural land rented out. The Plains region, with 149.4 million acres, had the largest share of owned agricultural land rented out (43% of US total).

The number of landlords (operating landlords and landlord only entities combined) totaled 2.1 million in 2024, up 2% from 2014. The largest number of landlords, or 38% of all landlords, was in the Midwest region with nearly 800,000 landlords.

TOTAL Regions, 2024



Owned Acres Rented Out and Landlord Entities by Region, 2024

	Acres million	% of Total percent	Landlord Entities number	% of Total percent
Atlantic	20.2	6	423,742	20
South	24.9	7	215,440	10
Midwest	73.9	21	797,637	38
Plains	149.4	43	435,235	21
West	79.4	23	220,436	11
United States	347.8	100	2,092,491	100

Landlord Ownership Arrangements

Non-operating landlords include entities who rent out land under a variety of ownership arrangements (privately owned, trust, family legal entity, non-family legal entity, and other). An entity may consist of more than one person.

Privately owned land was the largest share (38%) of all agricultural land rented out by non-operating landlords, followed by trusts (27%) and family owned legal entities (26%). Of the total non-operating landlord entities, most had an ownership type of privately owned (67%) or trust (17%). Just under 35,000 non-operating landlords rented out land under more than one ownership arrangement.

Landlord Entities, Ownership Type and Owned Acres Rented Out, 2024

	Number of Landlord Entities	Owned Acres Rented Out (millions)	(percent of total)
Operating Landlords	262,448	71.8	21
Non-operating Landlords^a	1,830,043	276.1	79
Privately owned	1,234,261	104.8	38
Trust	308,823	73.5	27
Family legal entity	191,352	73.1	26
Non-family legal entity & other	61,016	15.9	6
Multiple types of ownership	34,592	8.7	3
Total	2,092,491	347.8	100

^a Non-operating landlords may have more than one arrangement.

59

The percent of land rented out to others that is cropland.

SNAPSHOT

Non-Operating Landlord Entities, 2024

Number of Non-operating Landlords = 1,830,043
 Total Acres Rented to Others = 276,082,757

Principal Landlords **Acres Rented to Others**
 (percent)

Sex
 Male 65 61
 Female 35 39

Age
 < 55 12 9
 55-64 18 14
 65-74 33 33
 75-84 25 28
 85+ 11 15

Occupation
 Farm or Ranch Work 4 10
 Other than farming/
 ranching 38 32
 Not in paid workforce 57 57

Education
 Less than High School 3 1
 High School 25 18
 Some College 23 20
 4-year college graduate
 and beyond 49 60

Retired from Farming/Ranching
 Retired 34 45
 Not Retired 14 15
 Never farmed 52 40

About the TOTAL Survey

The 2024 Tenure, Ownership, and Transition of Agricultural Land (TOTAL) Survey, a special study as part of the 2022 Census of Agriculture program, was conducted to collect data from landowners and landlords of agricultural land to learn more about the rented land and who owns the land. The TOTAL survey collected data in all states on landlords' acres rented out, income, expenses, assets, debt, demographics, land transfer plans, and more. NASS conducted TOTAL in collaboration with USDA's Economic Research Service. To learn more about the 2024 TOTAL survey, the 2022 Census of Agriculture, and how to access census data, go to: www.agcensus.usda.gov

Demographic Characteristics

More than a third of non-operating landlords were 75 and over, and they rented out over 40% of total acres, received more than 40% of the rent, and held more than 40% of the total asset value of land and buildings.

Older landlords held little debt, around 20% of debt owed by non-operating landlords. Landlords aged 64 or less held the majority of debt.

Principal Landlords: Value of Land and Buildings, Rent Received, Operating Expenses and Debt by Age of Landlord.

	Value of Land and Buildings	Rent Received	Operating Expenses	Debt
Total	\$1,378 billion	\$27 billion	\$9 billion	36 billion
Age	Percent of Total			
< 55	11	9	17	31
55 to 64	15	16	16	20
65 to 74	31	31	30	28
75 to 84	28	29	24	17
85+	15	15	13	4

69.2

The average age of principal landlord.

Economics of Land Ownership

In 2024, landlords received \$34.1 billion in rent payments up 9% from 2014. Their operating expenses were \$12.0 billion, and their debt related to the land they rented out was \$50.7 billion. The value of the land and buildings they rented out was \$1.7 trillion, up 47% from 2014.

In 2024, 88% of acres rented out by operating landlords, and 95% of acres rented out by non-operating landlords, were fully paid for, which is comparable to 2014.

Total Assets, Rent Received, Expenses, and Debt Related to Acres Rented Out by Region, 2024 (\$ billion)^a

	Value of Land and Buildings	Rent Received	Operating Expenses	Capital Expenses	Debt
Atlantic	136.0	2.0	1.2	0.8	6.5
South	132.8	2.7	0.9	0.4	4.5
Midwest	631.6	15.3	4.6	1.1	18.2
Plains	463.9	8.9	3.2	0.8	11.7
West	295.1	5.2	2.2	1.5	9.7
United States	1,659.4	34.1	12.0	4.6	50.7

^a Combined total of operating landlords and non-operating landlords

The \$12.0 billion in 2024 operating expenses include both ownership expenses (for example, interest, taxes) and production expenses (for example, fertilizer, feed, fuels, repairs, insurance, wages). For the United States, 71% of operating expenses were ownership, and 29% were production expenses. Capital expenditures totaled \$4.6 billion. Capital expenditures are items such as land purchased, land improvements and purchases of equipment.

How did landlords acquire the land they rent out?

Non-operating landlords acquired the majority of their land through inheritance, trusts, and gifts. Operating landlords and operators of owned farmland acquired the majority of their land through purchases (from non-relatives, relatives, or at auction).

Share of Acres Acquired by Each Method

	Non-operating Landlord	Operating Landlord	All Owned Farmland
Purchased			
Non relative	25	38	33
Relative	14	19	24
Auction	2	2	3
Other Means			
Inherited	40	35	29
Through a trust	11	4	7
Gift or donation	3	1	2
Other	4	2	3

New for 2024, the TOTAL survey asked respondents to report the most recent year land was acquired through each method used. For all methods, the majority of landowners reported their most recent acquisition of land was prior to 2014. Landowners acquiring land via a trust had the highest number reporting acquisition in 2014 or more recent years.

All Owned Farmland, Most Recent Year Land Acquired, by Land Acquisition Method

	2019-2024	2014-2018	Prior to 2014
	<i>Percent of Method</i>		
Purchased			
From a non relative	17	15	68
From a relative	15	15	72
At an auction	18	14	68
Other Acquisition Methods			
Inherited through a will	19	14	67
Acquired through a trust	25	25	50
Received as a gift/donation	15	8	77
Obtained in some other way	16	12	72

A Look Ahead: Transition of Agricultural Land Ownership

Landlords and operating owners of farmland plan to sell or gift a small share of owned acres in the next five years. Less than 5% of owned farmland is expected to transition to others through sales or gifts. 10% of owned farmland is or will be placed in trust in the next five years, and another 15% is or will be written into a will in the next five years.

Five Year Transition Plans:

Number of Acres Planned For Transition, (millions)

	Non-operating Landlord	All Owned Farmland
Transition to others		
Sell to a non relative	12.8	22.8
Sell to a relative	2.9	12.8
Gift or donate	2.2	7.4
Put or keep in a trust or will		
Trust	59.5	91.5
Will	108.7	135.2

Non-operating landlords were asked to report transition plans beyond a five year horizon as well. Regardless of time frame, non-operating landlords plan to transition ownership (as a share of owned acres rented out) through wills (42%) and trusts (26%), or sell to a relative (2%), a non-relative (7%) or gift/donate (2%). Landlords may have indicated more than one method through which they intended to transfer land. 20% of non-operating landlords indicated no plans for transitioning owned acres.