

## American Farmers Count! Reading Page

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### Vocabulary

**agribusiness**— the business or industry of farming or agriculture

**census**— official process of counting the number of people in a country, city, or town and collecting information about them

**colonist**— a person who helps to create a colony

**equipment**— supplies or tools needed for a special purpose

**population**— the number of people who live in a place

**rural**— relating to the country and the people who live there instead of the city

In order to survive, we must eat! In early America, most people were farmers. They grew their own food. The first **colonists** in the New World tried to farm the land like they had in Europe. It didn't work and they nearly starved. They had to learn to farm like the natives and grow the crops that would grow well here.

Today, fewer than 2 percent of the people in this country live on a farm or ranch. Most people do not grow their own food. One American farmer today can feed about 165 people. Twenty-four million Americans have jobs involved in agriculture. These jobs are called **agribusiness**. Agribusiness includes people who grow, process, deliver and sell food. It also includes people who teach agriculture in colleges. It includes scientists who study insects and diseases that affect our food. It includes bankers who loan money to farmers and ranchers so they can buy the **equipment** they need, such as tractors. It includes the people who build and sell that equipment. It even includes the truckers who haul the cattle to market, the florist who sells a dozen red roses, and the check-out clerk at the grocery store. How do we know these numbers? The Census of Agriculture is used to find out how many farmers there are in the United States. It also finds out what crops and animals are grown in the United States.

The Census of Agriculture is not the first **census** used in the United States. The first census, which counts everyone in the nation, is called the decennial census. This census was first taken in 1790 and is still used today. It is a count of every person living in the United States. The Constitution mandates that the country counts its **population**, or people, once every 10 years. Filling out the census is the law, not just our civic duty. The census serves as the basis for fair political representation. The 2020 Census will mark the 24th time that the United States has counted its people since 1790. Census Day is April 1, 2020.

The census tells us how many people live in the United States. It is important that every person who lives in the U.S. be counted. This helps make sure the government can provide money to each community. The census is used to help decide funding for schools, parks, roads, members of congress, and more. In 1790, 95% of Americans lived in **rural** areas. This means they lived in the country. Today only 19% of Americans live in rural areas.

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