

System Indicators

Agricultural Lands and Ranches



Number of Working Landscapes (2007)

December 2013

Number of Working Landscapes

The number of working landscapes (farms and ranches) in the counties fully and partly within the Region was collected from the 2007 Census of Agriculture (**United States Department of Agriculture, 2009**). The counties fully within the Region had 3,304 working landscapes compared to 24,606 in the counties partly within the Region. California as a whole had 81,033 farms and ranches in 2007 and led the nation in terms of the number of different commodities produced in 2011 (**California Department of Food and Agriculture, 2013**). The smaller number of working landscapes in the counties fully within the Region is not unexpected since ranches make up the majority of working landscapes in the counties within the Region, and ranches are typically significantly larger in size than farms. Ranches tend to be greatest in size when livestock are grazed on native pasture land, which is common in the Sierra particularly further south in the western foothills where there is less access to irrigated water (**Kenny, Barber, Hutson, Linsey, Lovelace, & Maupin, 2009**).

Types of Agricultural Production

The Region supports a variety of different working landscapes, but the leading types of working landscapes are associated with livestock and forage production. The total number of working landscapes, number by common crop type and average acreage for the crops commonly grown in the Sierra in 2007 is found in [Appendix B](#), which was collected from the 2007 Census of Agriculture. The 2007 and 2011 Crop Reports from the counties with available reports were examined to ascertain crop and animal production types in cases where the Census did not report these specifics⁷. Some key findings from the data include:

- Cattle and Calf Operations were one of the most common types of working landscapes in the Region. It was also one of the top ten grossing agricultural products in all 22 Counties in 2011. There were 1,407 Cattle and Calf Operations in the counties fully within the Region and 5,506 in the counties partly within the Region in 2007. Counties in the South Subregion dominated with 2,574 operations; many of these were located in the foothills of the southern Sierra where the vegetation mapping shows a predominance of potential ranch land. California as a whole had 16,638 Cattle and Calf operations.
- Ranches and field crops were more common than fruit, nut, and vegetable crop farms in the counties within the Region in 2007. The type of farms present in each county was closely associated to the availability of irrigated water. As shown in Chart 1, Mariposa County had the least amount of irrigated water available and also has the smallest acreage of crop types.
- Forage production is one of the more common agricultural practices in the counties fully within the Region, which complements the large number of ranches. Of the counties partly within the Region, Modoc and all the counties in the South Subregion had both the largest average acreage in forage as well as the largest number of farms producing forage.
- Significant regional differences exist in the average acreage and number of orchards (fruit tree and vineyard crops) in the Region. Counties in the South Subregion were the largest nut and

⁷ Modoc County has not produced a Crop Report since 2008 and does not have their past reports available. Therefore, the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) California Agricultural Statistical Data was examined to acquire statistics on Modoc County as well as Statewide trends (California Department of Food and Agriculture, 2013).

grape producing regions of the country. This Subregion had 9,538 farms in orchards compared to 3,082 farms in orchards in the remaining counties in the Region. However, the majority of these orchards are found outside the Region in the San Joaquin Valley. As seen in Chart 3, looking at counties fully within the Region, orchards were most common in the South Central Subregion and their average acreage was small.

- The number of farms with harvested croplands (i.e. fruit, nut, vegetable, and forage crops) in the counties fully within the Region in 2007 was 1,001, which is significantly different from the 15,875 farms with harvested cropland in the counties partly within the Region. Of the counties fully within the Region, Lassen County had by far the greatest number of harvested acres (46,908) and Mariposa County had the smallest number of harvested acres (286). The harvested cropland values were in alignment with the irrigated acres for the respective counties. Counties that had access to irrigated acres had more harvested cropland. Once again, counties in the South Subregion led the counties partly in the Region in the number of harvested acres. These counties made up 34 percent of the State's total harvested acres, which was over 7.6 million. Fresno County had 978,948 harvested acres, which made up 25 percent of the County's total land area.

