

Gila County, AZ

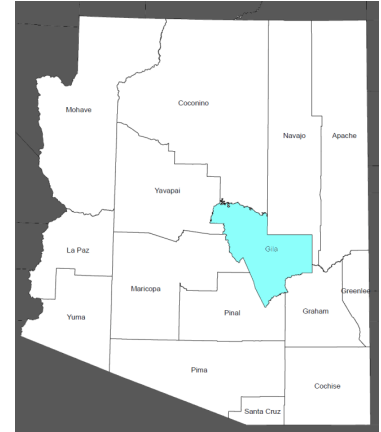
Arizona County Agricultural Economy Profiles University of Arizona Cooperative Extension

Overview

Gila County is located in central Arizona, bordered to the north by Navajo and Coconino counties, to the west by Yavapai, Maricopa, and Pinal counties, and to the east by Graham County. As of 2018, the population was nearly 54,000 with approximately 41% of the county's population residing in rural areas. Major population centers include Payson and Globe.

Top industries in Gila County include copper-mining, mining-related industries, and government.

Although on-farm agriculture accounts for less than 1% of the county's GDP and less than 1% of all private industry jobs, Gila County is specialized in beef cattle ranching, with employment in ranching about 5 times more concentrated than the national average. Gila County has the highest average farm size of all Arizona counties at 4,074 acres. Land in farms accounts for approximately 40% of total county land area. Gila County represents less than 1% of Arizona's total agricultural cash receipts.



Map of Gila County, Arizona

Indicator	Gila County	Arizona
Land Area (square miles)	4,795	113,990
Land in Farms (Crops, Grazing) (square miles)	1,897	40,822
Population (2018)	53,889	7,171,646
Annual Average Population Growth Rate (2010-18)	0.1%	1.4%
Percent of Population Over 65 (2018)	28.8%	17.5%
Percent Population Rural (2010)	41.1%	10.2%
Total Employment (2018)	14,868	2,826,095
Share Federal, State, & Local Government Employment (2018)	36.2%	13.8%
GDP (2018)	\$2.1 billion	\$348.3 billion
Ag, Forestry, & Hunting GDP (on-farm only) (2018)	\$8.5 million*	\$2.3 billion

* Estimated from 2017 IMPLAN model data

Industry	Location Quotient
Copper, nickel, lead, and zinc mining	550.15
Nonresidential site preparation contractors	7.45
Rv parks and campgrounds	7.32
Lessors of other real estate property	6.05
Beef cattle ranching and farming	5.39
Tire dealers	4.00
Motor vehicle towing	3.77
Ambulance services	3.29
Residential site preparation contractors	3.25
Golf courses and country clubs	3.16

Top 10 Private Industries in Gila County by Employment LQ

An economy can be characterized by the industries that make up the "base" of the economy. A common way to measure this is with location quotients (LQs), which are the ratio of a particular industry's share of employment within a region to the same industry's share of national employment. An industry with a LQ greater than 1.25 is considered part of the economic base, exporting goods and services and bringing money into the region. LQs also help identify a region's areas of specialization. Higher LQs indicate greater specialization. Of the top 10 most concentrated industries in Gila County, agriculture accounts for one industry, beef cattle ranching and farming, with employment 5.39 times more concentrated than the national average. Copper mining is highly concentrated in Gila County, with an LQ of 550.

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Every 5 years, U.S. Department of Agriculture releases the Census of Agriculture, which provides the most comprehensive source of information on agricultural production by county. The Census provides information on the number of farms, types of crops and livestock produced, and farm characteristics, among other information. A farm is defined as any establishment that produced and sold, or could have sold, more than \$1,000 or more of agricultural products in the Census year. The following information comes from the most recent 2017 Census of Agriculture.

Farms

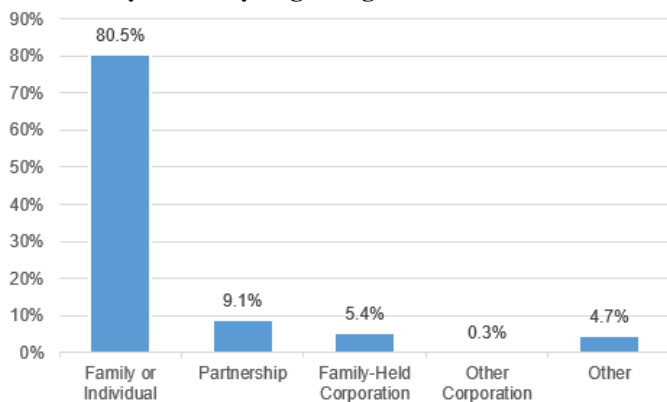
There were 298 farms in Gila County in 2017, covering 973 acres of cropland (99% irrigated) and 752,145 acres of pastureland (<1% irrigated). The average farm size was 4,074 acres, significantly larger than the national average of 441 acres, with the top 4% of farms accounting for 98% of county acreage.

Of 298 farms, 156 had less than \$1,000 in sales and only 1 farm had more than \$500,000 in sales. A large majority (81%) of county farms are family- or individually-held farms, 9% are partnerships, and only 0.3% are non-family-held corporate farms.

Farms are classified by the type of agricultural products they produce. When a farm or ranch produces more than one agricultural product, they are classified by the product that constitutes more than 50% of their sales. The most common type of operation in Gila County is beef cattle ranching and farming (181 farms), followed by aquaculture and other animal production* (70 farms).

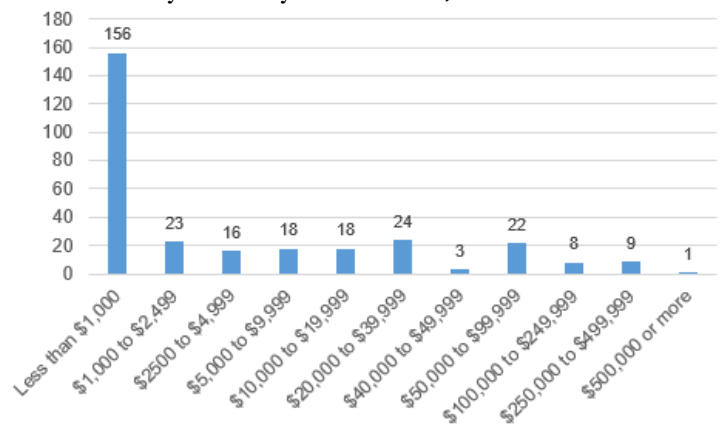
While the number of farms is helpful in understanding how many farms “specialize” in different types of agricultural production, it does not reflect the magnitude or scale of production by commodity, which is better captured by sales or cash receipts (next page).

Gila County Farms by Legal Organization, 2017



Source: USDA

Gila County Farms by Annual Sales, 2017



Source: USDA

Gila County Farms by Industry

Category	Farms
Total farms	298
Oilseed and grain farming	0
Vegetable and melon farming	3
Fruit and tree nut farming	18
Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production	8
Other crop farming	7
Cotton farming	0
Hay and all other crop farming	7
Beef cattle ranching and farming	181
Cattle feedlots	1
Dairy cattle and milk production	0
Hog and pig farming	0
Poultry and egg production	3
Sheep and goat farming	7
Aquaculture and other animal production*	70

* Includes farms where no single type of livestock accounts for more than 50% of farm sales.

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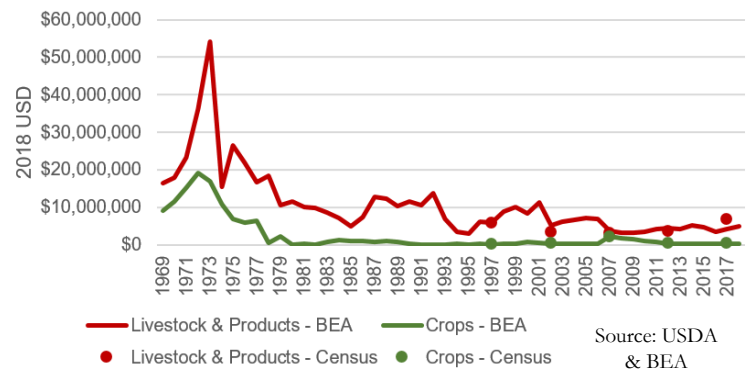
Production & Marketing

Gila County is a livestock-dominant county, with 92% of county cash receipts originating from sales of livestock and 8% from crops.

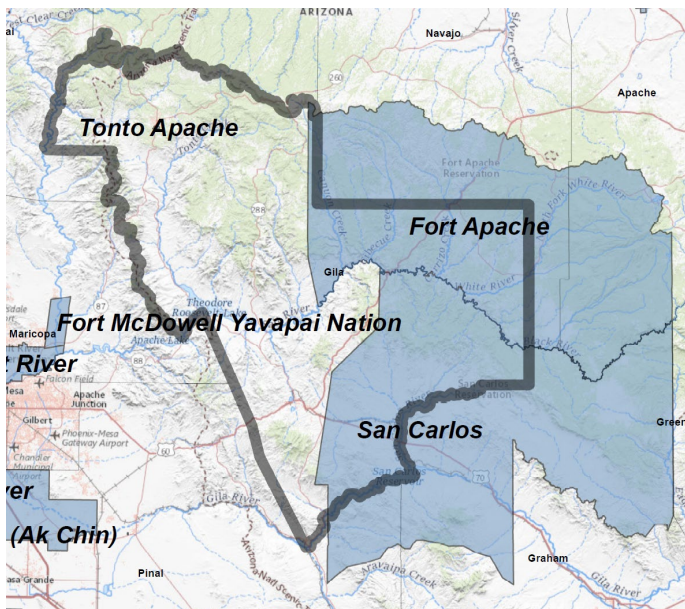
According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, the top agricultural commodity in Gila County by sales is **cattle and calves** (\$5.8 million). The county also produces **horses, ponies, mules, burros, and donkeys** (\$0.5 million) and is ranked in the top 5% of U.S. counties for equine sales. **Fruits, tree nuts, and berries** account for more than 60% of Gila County's crop sales. Forage (such as hay) is the largest crop by acreage.

Local direct-to-consumer sales account for less than 1% of cash receipts, and no farms reported sales of organic production.

Gila County Agricultural Cash Receipts for Crops & Livestock, 1969 to 2018



Gila County Tribal Areas



Tribal Agriculture

Gila County contains portions of the Fort Apache, San Carlos Apache, and Tonto Apache reservations. Of these three tribal areas, the Census of Agriculture only reports on the San Carlos Apache. Statistics reported for San Carlos Apache agricultural production represent production within the entire tribal area, therefore production occurring within Gila County is only a portion of the total reported.

The San Carlos Apache reservation spans across Gila County, Graham and Pinal counties. A total of 198 farms operated on the San Carlos Apache reservation in 2017. A large majority of these farms are small, both in terms of size and value of sales. Of 198 farms, 187 farms were between 1 and 9 acres in size and 169 farms sold less than \$1,000 in agricultural products. Almost all farms (193 farms) had inventory of cattle and calves, but only 66 farms sold cattle in 2017.

Ranching & Public Lands

Federal lands account for 59% of county land area in Gila County. As a livestock-dominant county, many Gila County livestock producers rely on leasing federal lands for grazing their livestock. The Forest Service (FS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are the two federal agencies that issue grazing permits. In Gila County, roughly 1.8 million acres are managed by the FS and 57,000 acres are managed by the BLM, accounting for nearly all federal lands in the county.

Ranching on public lands presents a series of unique considerations for producers, including coordinating with one or many land managers, complying with federal or state regulations, obtaining permits, and paying fees. These considerations have implications for operations and the cost of doing business (Cost and Return Estimates for Cow/Calf Ranches in Five Regions of Arizona, Teegerstrom & Tronstad, 2000).

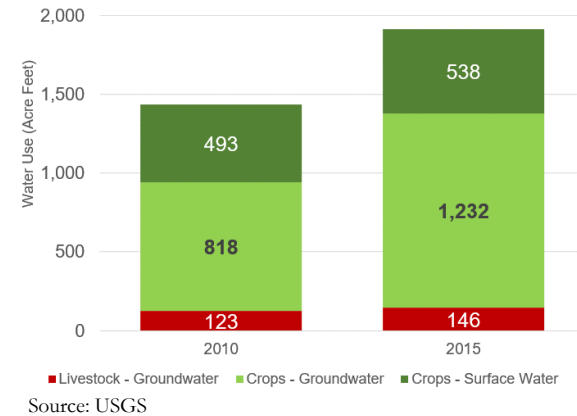
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Irrigation Water Use

In Arizona, agriculture accounts for about 75% of the state’s water use. More than half of withdrawals for agricultural uses in the state are from surface water. In some areas of the state with high demand, groundwater withdrawals for irrigated agriculture are limited by the 1980 Groundwater Management Act. This legislation established five Active Management Areas (AMA) as well as other Irrigation Non-Expansion Areas (INA) where groundwater pumping and expansion of irrigated agriculture are limited. There is no land in Gila County within an AMA or INA.

Based on 2015 USGS estimates of water use, agriculture accounted for 22.8% of county water withdrawals. Mining accounted for roughly half. Agricultural irrigation water use in Gila County is dominated by production of crops, though irrigated crop production is sparse, with only about 520 irrigated acres in the county. The majority of irrigation water is sourced from groundwater. In 2015, an estimated 1,378 acre-feet (AF) of groundwater were used for agricultural production and 538 AF were sourced from surface water. An acre-foot is the amount of water required to cover one acre one foot deep in water. Total water use and total irrigated acreage increased between 2010 and 2015. Increases in irrigated acreage occurred primarily in acreage irrigated by sprinklers.

Gila County Agricultural Water Use by Use & Source



Gila County Water Map



Gila County Irrigated Acres by Irrigation Technology

