

Q: How valuable is Santa Cruz County agriculture in relationship to California and U.S. agriculture?

A: The timing of your question couldn't be better! In May of this year the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) released the 2012 Census of Agriculture. The census is currently conducted every five years, and includes a significant amount of detail for all agriculture, and more recently, organic agriculture. Included here are just a few summary statistics, which show the value of agricultural products sold for the U.S., California, and Santa Cruz County. As you will see, both California and Santa Cruz County are important contributors to the nation's and the state's total and organic agricultural sectors. This is in part explained by the high value specialty crops – such as berries, vegetables, and horticultural products – that are characteristic of the state and county.

Table 1. Top Five States with Organic Product Sales in the United States*

	Organic Product Sales (\$1,000)	Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold (\$1,000)	Percent Organic
United States	3,120,717	394,644,481	0.8
1. California	1,355,207	42,627,472	3.2
2. Washington	291,410	9,120,749	3.2
3. Oregon	194,358	4,883,674	4.0
4. Wisconsin	121,527	11,744,476	1.0
5. New York	97,177	5,415,125	1.8

* Product sales are before taxes and/or production costs.

Table 2. Top Five Counties with Organic Product Sales in California*

	Organic Product Sales (\$1,000)	Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold (\$1,000)	Percent Organic
California	1,355,207	42,627,472	3.2
1. Sonoma	196,782	974,393	20.2
2. Monterey	150,835	2,979,735	5.1
3. Imperial	106,171	1,888,639	5.6
4. Santa Cruz	76,790	565,835	13.6
5. Fresno	68,783	4,973,041	1.4

* Product sales are before taxes and/or production costs.

Here are some notes of interest. California represents roughly 11% of the market value of U.S. agricultural products sold, and roughly 43% of U.S. organic product sales – the top state in the nation in both categories. Though Santa Cruz County has a small share of the state's total agricultural product sales, it ranks fourth in organic product sales, with roughly 6% of the state's share! It is surpassed by only three counties, Sonoma, Monterey, and Imperial, which have larger agricultural land bases. Note, too, that organic product sales account for close to 14% of Santa Cruz County's agricultural product sales. If you have other questions, please feel free to contact our office, or visit the USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture website: <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/>.