AGRICULTURE IN THE WESTERN SLOPE

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This study was released January 19th, 2026. This is considered version 1 of this report. The author reserves the right to update this report to ensure its accuracy, and potential changes will be documented in the version history.

San Juan Range in Western Colorado

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers agriculture for five counties: Mesa County, Delta County, Montrose County, Garfield County, and Rio Blanco County. The report has three distinct sections: 1) A section that covers time series agricultural Census data. 2) A survey of issues facing agricultural producers in the five county region. 3) An economic contribution model showing the economic contribution of agriculture, including jobs, wages, GDP, and taxes, to the five county region.

AGRICULTURAL CENSUS

- Since 2002, the number of farms has grown in most counties, but total farmland has dropped by 15–30% in Mesa, Delta, and Montrose counties, showing a shift toward smaller scale operations.
- Across the region, 35–44% of producers are over age 65, while less than 8% are under 35, raising long-term agricultural succession concerns.
- In all counties, over 80% of farms generate less than $100,000 annually, with many making under $2,500, especially in Mesa County (50.9% under $2,500).
- Cattle remain the dominant livestock sector but have seen inventory and sales declines since 2017 in most counties. Despite declines in cattle across the region, sheep inventory increased in Montrose and Rio Blanco.
- Mesa and Delta counties remain strong in fruit, tree nut, and berry production. Delta leads in vegetable production growth, while nursery/greenhouse sales have generally declined.

AGRICULTURE SURVEY RESULTS

- 71.8% of producers have been directly impacted by drought in the past three years leading to reduced forage, smaller herds, and higher feed costs.
- 57.6% have diversified income streams (e.g., agritourism and secondary crops).
- Main cost pressures: labor, equipment/maintenance, and fertilizer/inputs.
- Biggest threats agricultural producers reported were drought/water shortages, high input costs, labor shortages, and land development pressure.
- Only one-third of respondents use precision agriculture or new technologies. Cost, training, and infrastructure are the main barriers.
- Agricultural producers saw growth potential in direct-to-consumer marketing, farm-to-table experiences, agritourism, niche livestock products (lamb, wool, targeted grazing), and resilient local food systems.
- Nearly 40% of producers are unsure whether their operation will be passed to the next generation.
- Survey results show that producers do not have a positive outlook regarding the future.

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

- Agriculture supports 9,123 total jobs region-wide, with Mesa (38.6%), Delta (23.5%), and Montrose (21.5%) contributing the most.
- The Total GDP contribution is $281.7 million. Total output is $719.1 million. Labor income totals $107.7 million.
- Combined state and local tax revenues from agriculture total $20.3 million, with an additional $33.9 million to the federal government.
- 1.92% of employment in Delta County is directly tied to agriculture, with 9.42% of employment Rio Blanco County, 6.74% in Montrose County, 3.29% in Mesa County, and 2.43% in Garfield County.

View of agricultural lands outside of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison near Montrose Colorado.

PREFACE LETTER

Agriculture has long been a defining force of Western Colorado, economically, culturally, and geographically. It shapes our working lands, sustains rural communities, supports thousands of jobs, and anchors supply chains that extend well beyond the farm gate. Yet despite its importance, agriculture is often discussed in pieces: as land use, as heritage, or as a single production sector. This report was commissioned to bring those pieces together and offer a clear, data-driven understanding of where agriculture stands today on the Western Slope, and what lies ahead.

This study is significant in both scope and depth. It is one of the most comprehensive, region-wide assessments of Western Slope agriculture conducted to date, combining long-term Census of Agriculture trends, direct input from producers, and IMPLAN economic contribution modeling across five counties. By integrating structure, lived experience, and economic impact in a single analysis, the report establishes a shared factual foundation that has not previously existed for regional planning, investment, and policy conversations.

The findings confirm both the scale and the fragility of the sector. Agriculture supports more than 9,000 jobs across the region, contributes approximately $281.7 million to regional GDP, and generates over $719 million in total economic output, placing it alongside some of Western Colorado's most consequential economic sectors. At the same time, the data reveals sustained pressure: an aging producer population, declining farmland acreage in most counties, increasing reliance on smaller operations, persistent drought impacts, rising input costs, and uneven access to capital and technology.

Producer survey responses bring these trends into sharper focus. Most respondents have been operating for more than two decades, many are uncertain about generational transition, and nearly half report gross annual sales under $100,000. While innovation and diversification are occurring, adoption of new technology remains limited by cost, infrastructure, and training barriers. These constraints are not abstract. They directly affect productivity, resilience, and the ability of agricultural businesses to adapt, grow, or transition successfully to the next generation.

This report also makes clear that agriculture is not only a production sector, it is an entrepreneurial one. Farms and ranches are businesses: capital-intensive, often multi-generational, and operating in increasingly complex economic, regulatory, and environmental conditions. Long-term viability depends not only on land and water, but on sound business planning, access to capital, operational efficiency, workforce strategies, innovation, and succession readiness. When these elements are missing, exits from agriculture accelerate, and the economic consequences extend far beyond individual operations.

The Business Incubator Center commissioned this study as part of its role as an economic and business development organization committed to strengthening regional resilience. Through AgriWest, BIC's agriculture-focused initiative, we work alongside producers to address many of the challenges reflected in this data, connecting agricultural operators to business expertise, financing tools, innovation pathways, and strategic support that recognize agriculture as both an economic engine and a business ecosystem. AgriWest is led by Janie VanWinkle, a rancher with lived experience in the realities documented here, ensuring this work remains grounded in practice as well as data.

The purpose of this report is not to prescribe a single solution. It is to establish a shared, credible baseline, one that allows communities, producers, policymakers, and economic development partners to move beyond anecdote and toward intentional, coordinated action across agriculture, economic development, water, infrastructure, and workforce systems. The decisions made in the coming years will shape not only the future of agriculture on the Western Slope, but the long-term economic health of the region itself. We offer this study as a tool for understanding, alignment, and informed decision-making.

Dalida Sassoon Bollig
Chief Executive Officer
Business Incubator Center

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AGRICULTURE IN THE WESTERN SLOPE

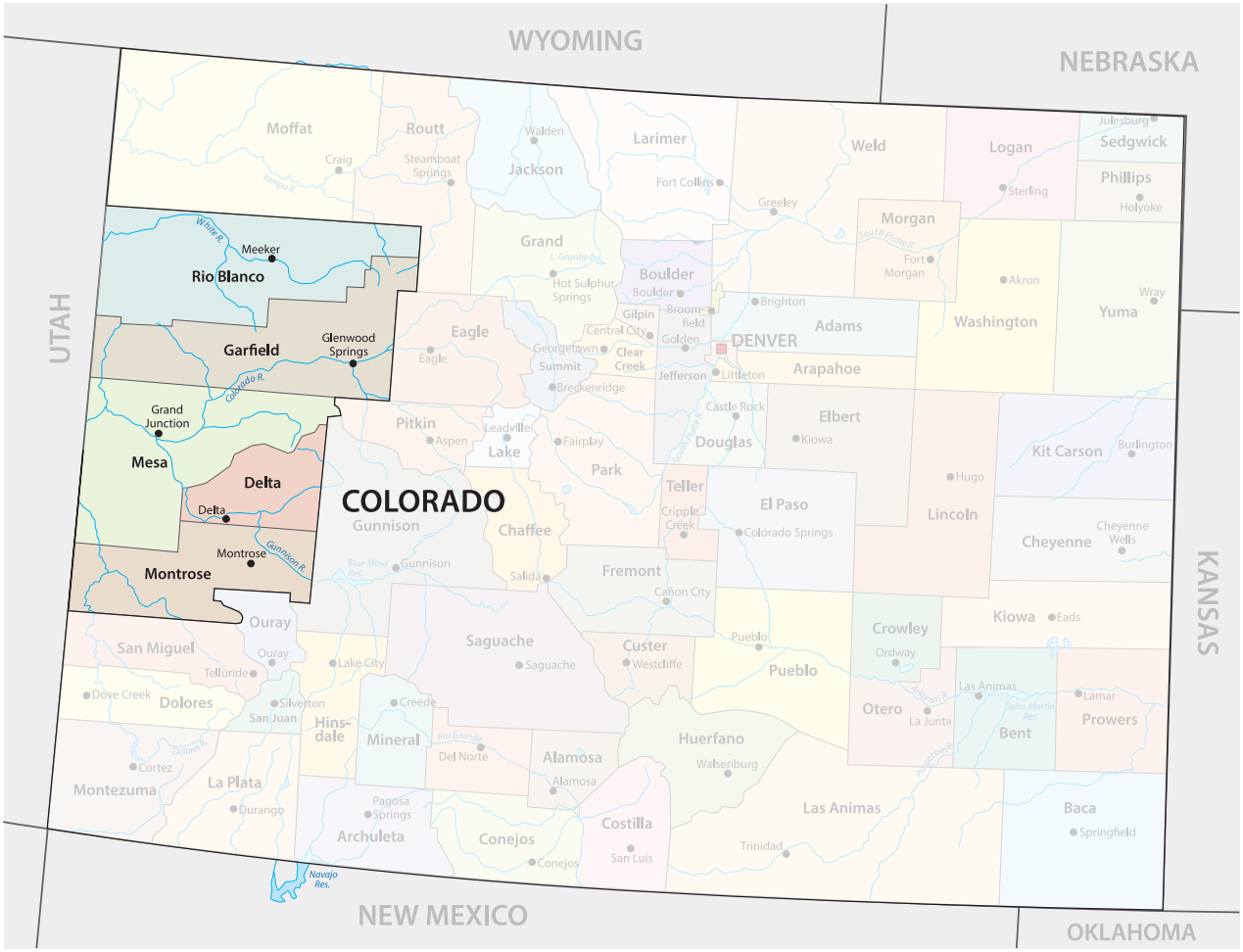
Agriculture is both a key economic driver and part of the identity of the Western Slope of Colorado. It drives jobs, supports local businesses, shapes the landscape, and is part of why people choose to live in the region. The goal of this report is to dig in on the role of agriculture in the region, understand the long term trends, its economic contribution, and what agricultural producers see as challenges and opportunities.

This report is divided into three distinct sections. The first part of the report covers the 2022 Census of Agriculture, along with historical data going back to 2002, to show how the structure of agriculture has shifted across Mesa, Delta, Montrose, Garfield, and Rio Blanco counties. This includes changes in farm size, land use, sales, crop and livestock mix, and producer demographics.

The second section looks at survey results from producers themselves. These responses provide insight into what is happening with Western Slope producers in terms of cost pressures, technology use, diversification efforts, and views on the biggest opportunities and challenges for the future.

The third section models the total economic contribution of agriculture using IMPLAN. This shows how direct farm and ranch activity flows through the broader economy, creating jobs, generating income, driving tax revenue, and contributing to regional GDP. The IMPLAN model measures direct, indirect, and induced effects of agriculture in the Western Slope.

Taken together, the data, survey responses, and modeling results give a complete picture of where agriculture stands today on the Western Slope and the economic footprint it leaves in the region.



SECTION 1: AGRICULTURAL CENSUS

Total 5-County Area Agriculture Census Data

The 2022 Census of Agriculture County Profile has data for the five counties listed for their most recent survey year in 2022. In addition to this snapshot of one year, data was collected back to the 2002 Census of Agriculture so trends could be viewed over time. The data is broken down by the total five county region, and then the subsequent pages cover each individual county.

Tables 1 through 4 show the basic characteristics of the total five-county region's agricultural producers. Table 1 shows that the majority of farmland use is pastureland at 62.6%, with cropland at 18.6% and woodland at 12.9%.

Table 2 shows farms by value of sales, and shows that the majority of farms (46.5%) make less than $2,500 in sales. In fact, 5,353 out of 5,836 farms report less than $100,000 in sales, indicating that most producers operate at a small scale by sales volume. Only 8.3% of farms report $100,000 or more in sales.

Table 3 shows farms by size, and shows that 40.0% of farms are between 10–49 acres and 29.3% are between 1 and 9 acres. In total, 69.3% of farms are smaller than 50 acres, reflecting a large base of small acreage operations across the region. Table 4 shows the age of producers, and shows that 39.8% of producers are over the age of 65, with only 7.3% under the age of 35. This age distribution suggests that succession and replacement of producers will remain a long-term issue for the region.

Table 1:
Land in Farms by Use (acres)

Type	Acres	Percentage
Cropland	299,389	18.60%
Pastureland	1,007,300	62.60%
Woodland	208,274	12.90%
Other	95,008	5.90%
Total	1,609,971	

Table 2:
Farms by Value of Sales

Category	Number	Percentage
<$2,500	2,716	46.54%
$2,500-$4,999	703	12.05%
$5,000-$9,999	672	11.51%
$10,000-$24,999	654	11.21%
$25,000-$49,999	334	5.72%
$50,000-$99,999	274	4.69%
$100,000+	483	8.28%
Total	5,836	

Table 3:
Farms by Size

Acres	Number	Percentage
1-9	1,712	29.30%
10-49	2,336	40.00%
50-179	928	15.90%
180-499	403	6.90%
500-999	184	3.20%
1000+	273	4.70%
Total	5,836	

Table 4:
Age of Producer

Type	Number	Percentage
<35	797	7.30%
35-64	5,773	52.90%
65+	4,340	39.80%
Total	10,910	

Total 5-County Area Agriculture Census Data Time Series

Tables 5 through 9 show total agricultural census data over time for the combined five-county region. Table 5 shows that the number of farms increased from 4,321 in 2002 to 5,836 in 2022 while land in farms declined from 1,763,289 acres to 1,609,971 acres. As a result, average farm size fell from 408 acres to 276 acres, showing that most of the growth has been in smaller operations.

Table 6 also shows that market value of agricultural products sold peaked in 2012 at $380.0 million and declined to $306.0 million by 2022, while production expenses totaled $317.1 million in 2022 and net cash farm income was $42.6 million. Government payments rose sharply in 2022 to $20.7 million relative to prior census years.

Table 7 shows crop sales increasing from $121.2 million in 2002 to $132.3 million in 2022, with fruits, tree nuts, and berries rising to $45.4 million by 2022. Table 8 shows livestock sales falling from a 2012 peak of $239.3 million to $173.7 million in 2022, driven largely by a decline in cattle sales to $92.4 million in 2022.

Table 9 shows cattle and calves inventory peaking in 2017 (200,073) before falling to 134,267 in 2022, with cattle and calves sold also declining to 86,076 by 2022. Hog inventory and sales are lower than in 2002, while broilers and other meat-type chickens sold increased sharply by 2022.

Table 5:

Farm Volume

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Number of farms	4,321	5,014	5,580	6,197	5,836
Land in farms (acres)	1,763,289	1,668,005	1,785,543	1,795,992	1,609,971
Average size of farm (acres)	408	333	320	290	276

Table 6:

Income and Expenses (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Market value of agricultural products sold	$317,925,504	$301,332,740	$380,005,392	$360,434,459	$305,994,000
Government payments	$6,466,680	$4,515,265	$5,060,652	$3,843,997	$20,687,000
Farm-related income	$16,427,520	$23,238,545	$18,338,160	$28,094,293	$33,032,000
Total farm production expenses	$299,795,616	$302,582,185	$379,899,444	$337,132,729	$317,103,000
Net cash farm income	$39,563,496	$26,501,535	$23,502,144	$55,242,446	$42,611,000

Per Farm Average	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Market value of agricultural products sold	$73,577	$60,098	$68,101	$58,163	$52,432
Government payments	$1,497	$901	$907	$620	$3,545
Farm-related income	$3,802	$4,635	$3,286	$4,534	$5,660
Total farm production expenses	$69,381	$60,347	$68,082	$54,403	$54,336
Net cash farm income	$9,156	$5,286	$4,212	$8,914	$7,301

Table 7:
Crop Sales (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
TOTAL CROPS	$121,209,264	$116,283,285	$140,661,012	$128,947,965	$132,294,000
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas	$9,472,320	$19,920,370	$33,763,404	$22,075,387	$16,727,000
Tobacco	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cotton and cottonseed	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes	$15,967,152	$11,886,000	$11,013,360	$14,656,679	$23,201,000
Fruits, tree nuts, berries	$23,867,928	$27,330,725	$27,624,960	$40,244,914	$45,441,000
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod	$25,694,496	$14,643,835	$12,899,496	$16,273,608	$15,072,000
Cultivated Christmas trees, short rotation woody crops	$41,400	$2,830	N/A	$219,553	N/A
Other crops and hay	$17,979,192	$8,088,140	$27,559,560	$31,132,858	$30,753,000

Table 8:
Livestock Sales (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
TOTAL LIVESTOCK, POULTRY, AND PRODUCTS	$196,550,640	$185,050,870	$239,344,380	$231,486,494	$173,699,000
Poultry and eggs	$8,280	$2,977,160	$64,092	$27,604,241	$24,199,000
Cattle and calves	$114,245,784	$112,922,660	$142,598,160	$144,002,508	$92,373,000
Milk from cows	$5,772,816	N/A	$9,290,724	N/A	$13,825,000
Hogs and pigs	$1,712,304	$432,990	$664,464	$984,956	$562,000
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk	$7,849,440	$867,395	$9,437,220	$11,428,886	$10,887,000
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys	$4,264,200	$5,048,720	$5,038,416	$3,829,441	$2,263,000
Aquaculture	$3,312	N/A	$1,094,796	$2,566,708	N/A
Other animals and animal products	$3,734,280	$614,110	$1,624,536	$1,844,973	$3,991,000

Table 9:
Livestock Inventory

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Cattle and calves inventory	168,344	158,025	174,685	200,073	134,267
Cattle and calves sold	123,156	111,899	113,812	126,326	86,076
Hogs and pigs inventory	3,937	2,446	2,581	2,890	2,683
Hogs and pigs sold	11,556	3,320	3,090	4,885	3,415
Sheep and lambs inventory	77,018	65,031	82,244	65,721	67,893
Broilers and other meat-type chickens sold	5,591	1,129	3,641	5,558	15,286

Mesa County Agriculture Census Data

The previous section showed the combined census data for the entire five county region. This section breaks each county down separately.

Tables 10 through 14 show the basic characteristics of Mesa County agricultural producers. Table 10 shows that the majority of farmland in Mesa County is pastureland at 59.4%, with cropland at 21.5% and woodland at 11.9%. Table 11 shows farms by value of sales, and shows that 50.9% of farms make less than $2,500 in sales. In fact, 2,237 out of 2,353 agricultural producers have less than $100,000 in sales, with only 4.9% of producers having more than $100,000 in sales. Of the five counties, Mesa County has the highest percentage of farms under the $2,500 threshold.

Table 12 shows farms by size, and shows that 46% of agriculture producers have between 1-9 acres, and 36.4% having between 10-49 acres. Table 13 shows the age of producers, and shows that 35% of producers are over the age of 65, with only 7.4% under the age of 35. Of the five counties in this study, Mesa has the smallest percentage of farms with producers over the age of 65.

Table 10:
Land in Farms by Use (acres)

Type	Acres	Percentage
Cropland	57,663	21.5%
Pastureland	159,317	59.4%
Woodland	31,803	11.9%
Other	19,540	7.3%
Total	268,323	100%

Table 11:
Farms by Value of Sales

Category	Number	Percentage
<$2,500	1,197	50.9%
$2,500-$4,999	318	13.5%
$5,000-$9,999	294	12.5%
$10,000-$24,999	235	10.0%
$25,000-$49,999	96	4.1%
$50,000-$99,999	97	4.1%
$100,000+	116	4.9%
Total	2,353	100%

Table 12:
Farms by Size

Acres	Number	Percentage
1-9	1,083	46.0%
10-49	857	36.4%
50-179	232	9.9%
180-499	86	3.7%
500-999	51	2.2%
1000+	44	1.9%
Total	2,353	100%

Table 13:
Age of Producer

Type	Number	Percentage
<35	323	7.4%
35-64	2,508	57.6%
65+	1,526	35.0%
Total	4,357	

Mesa County Agriculture Census Data Time Series

Tables 14 through 18 show data from the Census of Agriculture going back to 2002 over time. Table 14 shows that the number of farms has increased from 1,599 in 2002 to 2,353 in 2022. However, the land in farms has fallen 30% since 2002, implying that many of the new farms are smaller operations. The average size of farm has fallen from 241 to 114 acres in the same time period.

Table 15 shows income and expenses for agricultural producers. All dollar figures have been adjusted to constant 2022 dollars using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), with 2022 as the base year (2022 = 100). This adjustment reflects changes in purchasing power over time and allows for a more realistic comparison across census years. Adjusted for inflation, the market value of agricultural products sold has stayed relatively constant since 2002, peaking at $114,247,618 in 2017, and falling to $90,764,000 in 2022. Note that government payments to farmers rose sharply in 2022 due to a combination of pandemic-related relief programs and continued support under the Farm Bill. Per farm averages have fallen since 2002 primarily because of the data in Table 14 that shows that the number of farms has increased, while the size of each farm has decreased. An important note on the per farm figures is that government payments and farm-related income are averaged only among farms that received or reported those items. All other per farm figures are averaged across all farms.

Table 16 shows crop sales adjusted for inflation. Note that missing data points in the table are not a mistake, but simply omitted from the Census of Agriculture due to lack of data or lack of the actual crop. Total crop sales have increased from $48,941,424 in 2002 to $53,900,000 in 2022. Fruits, tree nuts, and berries have increased the most over time with nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod falling the most.

Table 17 illustrates livestock sales, and shows that cattle and calves are the largest livestock in Mesa County, and has fallen drastically since 2017. The sharp decline in cattle and calf sales in the 2022 Census likely reflects a combination of persistent drought conditions, and rising input costs. Many producers in western Colorado have reduced herd sizes, transitioned out of beef cattle, or left the industry entirely in response to this pressure. Table 18 shows that while cattle and calves inventory has fallen, sheep and lambs inventory rose in 2012 but has recently fallen off, down to 17,251 in 2022 from its peak of 22,547 in 2012.

Table 14:
Farm Volume

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Number of farms	1,599	1,767	2,264	2,465	2,353
Land in farms (acres)	385,255	372,511	386,932	342,534	268,323
Average size of farm (acres)	241	211	171	139	114
Median size of farm (acres)	24	16	14	10	10

Table 15:
Income and Expenses (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Market value of agricultural products sold	$98,074,944	$86,640,450	$110,633,256	$114,247,618	$90,764,000
Government payments	$1,455,624	$673,540	$1,073,868	$885,490	$7,388,000
Farm-related income	$5,184,936	$6,010,920	$5,073,732	$6,140,206	$7,600,000
Total farm production expenses	$95,205,096	$92,321,675	$112,733,904	$104,427,170	$101,284,000
Net cash farm income	$7,859,376	$1,003,235	$4,045,644	$16,847,357	$4,469,000
Per Farm Average	**2002**	**2007**	**2012**	**2017**	**2022**
Market value of agricultural products sold	$61,335	$49,033	$48,867	$46,348	$38,574
Government payments	$8,178	$4,811	$1,790	$9,129	$54,324
Farm-related income	$15,029	$11,786	$6,765	$9,043	$11,728
Total farm production expenses	$59,429	$52,247	$49,794	$42,364	$43,044
Net cash farm income	$4,905	$567	$1,787	$6,834	$1,899

Table 16:
Crop Sales (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
TOTAL CROPS	$48,941,424	$42,820,730	$53,172,816	$55,694,895	$53,900,000
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas	N/A	$4,195,475	N/A	$6,840,107	$3,981,000
Tobacco	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cotton and cottonseed	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	$4,093,000
Fruits, tree nuts, berries	$14,062,752	$14,410,360	$18,360,396	$26,975,907	$30,004,000
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod	$16,906,104	$11,264,815	$10,361,976	$6,587,803	$6,333,000
Cultivated Christmas trees, short rotation woody crops	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other crops and hay	$8,905,968	N/A	$11,552,256	$11,219,037	$9,488,000

Table 17:
Livestock Sales (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
TOTAL LIVESTOCK, POULTRY, AND PRODUCTS	$49,133,520	$43,821,135	$57,460,440	$58,552,723	$36,863,000
Poultry and eggs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cattle and calves	$23,771,880	$22,640,000	$33,729,396	$33,950,657	$20,126,000
Milk from cows	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hogs and pigs	$91,080	$60,845	$82,404	$179,524	$200,000
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk	$430,560	$867,395	N/A	N/A	$3,330,000
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys	$1,328,112	N/A	$1,891,368	$1,088,061	N/A
Aquaculture	$3,312	N/A	N/A	$1,213	N/A
Other animals and animal products	$1,382,760	$601,375	$559,824	$258,369	$903,000

Table 18:
Livestock Inventory

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Cattle and calves inventory	45,071	34,102	42,376	46,952	27,155
Cattle and calves sold	27,524	22,835	27,344	28,255	17,186
Hogs and pigs inventory	560	316	486	444	423
Hogs and pigs sold	709	315	475	1,196	813
Sheep and lambs inventory	3,111	3,966	22,547	18,634	17,251
Broilers and other meat-type chickens sold	613	52	192	71	858

Delta County Agriculture Census Data

The basic characteristics of Delta County's agricultural producers are shown in Tables 19 through 22. Table 19 shows that the majority of farmland use in Delta County is pastureland at 43.7%, with cropland at 35.5% and 10.9% woodland next. Table 20 shows farms by value of sales, and shows that 45.5% of farms make less than $2,500 in sales. 91.4% of agricultural producers have less than $100,000 in sales, with only 8.6% of producers having more than $100,000 in sales. Table 21 shows farms by size, and shows that 48.6% of agriculture producers have between 10–49 acres, and 23.4% having between 1–9 acres. Table 22 shows the age of producers, and shows that 42.5% of producers are over the age of 65, with only 8.2% under the age of 35.

Table 19:
Land in Farms by Use (acres)

Type	Acres	Percentage
Cropland	66,410	35.5%
Pastureland	81,847	43.7%
Woodland	20,464	10.9%
Other	18,526	9.9%
Total	187,247	100%

Table 20:
Farms by Value of Sales

Category	Number	Percentage
<$2,500	687	45.5%
$2,500-$4,999	178	11.8%
$5,000-$9,999	199	13.2%
$10,000-$24,999	167	11.1%
$25,000-$49,999	96	6.4%
$50,000-$99,999	54	3.6%
$100,000+	130	8.6%
Total	1,511	100%

Table 21:
Farms by Size

Acres	Number	Percentage
1-9	354	23.4%
10-49	734	48.6%
50-179	274	18.1%
180-499	88	5.8%
500-999	26	1.7%
1000+	35	2.3%
Total	1,511	100%

Table 22:
Age of Producer

Type	Number	Percentage
<35	231	8.2%
35-64	1,383	49.2%
65+	1,195	42.5%
Total	2,809	

Delta County Agriculture Census Data Time Series

Data for Delta County from the Census of Agriculture going back to 2002 is shown in the subsequent tables. Table 23 shows that the number of farms has increased from 1,063 in 2002 to 1,511 in 2022. However, the land in farms has fallen 29% since 2002, implying that many of the new farms are smaller operations. The average size of farm has fallen from 247 to 124 in the same time period. This is a trend for each of the five counties.

Table 24 shows income and expenses for agricultural producers. Adjusted for inflation, the market value of agricultural products sold has increased from $64,711,512 in 2002 to $79,085,000 in 2022. Again, note that government payments to agriculture jumped in 2022.

Table 25 shows crop sales adjusted for inflation. Total crop sales have increased from $23,867,928 in 2002 to $37,099,000 in 2022. Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes have increased the most over time, along with fruits, tree nuts, and berries. Other crops and hay, as well as grains and nursery/greenhouse sales have remained relatively stable.

Table 26 illustrates livestock sales, and shows that cattle and calves are the largest livestock in Delta County, although they have fallen from 2017 to 2022. Table 27 shows that while cattle and calves inventory has fallen from 40,550 in 2017 to 30,710 in 2022, broiler chicken sales have increased dramatically from 2,827 in 2017 to 13,901 in 2022.

Table 23:

Farm Volume

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Number of farms	1,063	1,294	1,250	1,615	1,511
Land in farms (acres)	262,443	252,530	250,761	236,846	187,247
Average size of farm (acres)	247	195	201	147	124
Median size of farm (acres)	50	40	38	25	25

Table 24:

Income and Expenses (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Market value of agricultural products sold	$64,711,512	$66,222,000	$72,775,812	$81,412,921	$79,085,000
Government payments	$1,402,632	$1,025,875	$952,224	$1,088,061	$5,601,000
Farm-related income	$2,070,000	$6,404,290	$3,697,716	$7,368,975	$9,082,000
Total farm production expenses	$61,051,752	$61,106,775	$72,770,580	$72,132,258	$78,112,000
Net cash farm income	$5,284,296	$12,543,975	$4,655,172	$17,737,699	$15,656,000

Per Farm Average	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Market value of agricultural products sold	$60,876	$51,176	$58,220	$50,410	$52,340
Government payments	$9,607	$8,694	$8,002	$10,773	$59,585
Farm-related income	$8,347	$22,550	$10,076	$19,240	$26,098
Total farm production expenses	$57,433	$47,223	$58,216	$44,664	$51,696
Net cash farm income	$4,971	$9,694	$3,724	$10,983	$10,362

Table 25:
Crop Sales (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
TOTAL CROPS	$23,867,928	$28,523,570	$30,845,256	$36,833,958	$37,099,000
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas	N/A	$3,653,530	$8,080,824	$6,933,508	$5,148,000
Tobacco	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cotton and cottonseed	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes	$3,721,032	$3,179,505	$4,494,288	$7,099,689	$9,560,000
Fruits, tree nuts, berries	$8,831,448	$12,524,165	$9,153,384	$12,509,669	$14,563,000
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod	N/A	$3,254,500	$2,388,408	$2,998,536	$3,126,000
Cultivated Christmas trees, short rotation woody crops	N/A	$2,830	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other crops and hay	$4,653,360	$5,910,455	$6,728,352	$7,247,675	$4,615,000

Table 26:
Livestock Sales (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
TOTAL LIVESTOCK, POULTRY, AND PRODUCTS	$40,843,584	$37,698,430	$41,929,248	$44,578,963	$41,986,000
Poultry and eggs	N/A	$2,919,145	N/A	N/A	$3,929,000
Cattle and calves	$25,896,528	$22,606,040	$23,092,740	$25,802,936	$18,189,000
Milk from cows	$5,772,816	N/A	$9,282,876	N/A	$13,825,000
Hogs and pigs	$99,360	$121,690	$128,184	$382,095	N/A
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk	$1,304,928	N/A	N/A	$3,956,806	$1,457,000
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys	$1,001,880	$1,134,830	$1,339,392	$718,096	$1,058,000
Aquaculture	N/A	N/A	$1,094,796	N/A	N/A
Other animals and animal products	$819,720	N/A	$752,100	$557,980	$2,439,000

Table 27:
Livestock Inventory

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Cattle and calves inventory	30,150	33,689	33,208	40,550	30,710
Cattle and calves sold	25,281	23,122	17,554	23,684	17,907
Hogs and pigs inventory	470	558	478	910	1,004
Hogs and pigs sold	612	993	589	1,284	1,093
Sheep and lambs inventory	15,927	10,293	13,611	15,613	7,885
Broilers and other meat-type chickens sold	1,478	885	2,524	2,827	13,901

Montrose County Agriculture Census Data

Tables 28 through 31 show the basic characteristics of Montrose County agricultural producers. Table 28 shows that the majority of farmland use in Montrose County is pastureland at 62.5%, with cropland at 23.9% and woodland next at 7.6%. Table 29 shows farms by value of sales, and shows that the majority of farms (40.9%) make less than $2,500 in sales. In fact, 920 out of 1,050 agricultural producers have less than $100,000 in sales, with only 12.4% of producers having more than $100,000 in sales. Table 30 shows farms by size, and shows that 40.3% of agriculture producers have between 10–49 acres, and 16.3% having between 1–9 acres. Table 31 shows the age of producers, and shows that 44.0% of producers are over the age of 65, with only 6.8% under the age of 35.

Table 28:
Land in Farms by Use (acres)

Type	Acres	Percentage
Cropland	68,131	23.9%
Pastureland	178,350	62.5%
Woodland	21,625	7.6%
Other	17,418	6.1%
Total	285,524	100%

Table 29:
Farms by Value of Sales

Category	Number	Percentage
<$2,500	429	40.9%
$2,500-$4,999	127	12.1%
$5,000-$9,999	89	8.5%
$10,000-$24,999	143	13.6%
$25,000-$49,999	82	7.8%
$50,000-$99,999	50	4.8%
$100,000+	130	12.4%
Total	1,050	100%

Table 30:
Farms by Size

Acres	Number	Percentage
1-9	171	16.3%
10-49	423	40.3%
50-179	230	21.9%
180-499	122	11.6%
500-999	41	3.9%
1000+	63	6.0%
Total	1,050	100%

Table 31:
Age of Producer

Type	Number	Percentage
<35	131	6.8%
35-64	941	49.1%
65+	843	44.0%
Total	1,915	

Montrose County Agriculture Census Data Time Series

Table 32 shows that the number of farms in Montrose County has increased slightly from 915 in 2002 to 1,050 in 2022. However, the land in farms has fallen 15% since 2002, implying that newer farms are often smaller in size. The average size of farm has fallen from 366 acres to 272 acres over the same time period.

Table 33 shows income and expenses for agricultural producers. Adjusted for inflation, the market value of agricultural products sold has declined from $96,033,096 in 2002 to $87,900,000 in 2022. Per farm averages show that net cash income remains relatively strong in Montrose County compared to peer counties, despite slightly lower market value and farm size.

Table 34 shows crop sales adjusted for inflation. Note that missing data points in the table are not a mistake, but simply omitted from the Census of Agriculture due to lack of data or lack of the actual crop. Total crop sales have fluctuated over time, falling from a peak of $44,079,600 in 2012 to $29,443,000 in 2022. Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes continue to be the most significant crop in Montrose County, although sales have decreased since 2012. Other crop categories have shown modest changes, while grains and hay have remained stable.

Table 35 illustrates livestock sales, and shows that cattle and calves are the largest livestock category in Montrose County, though they have declined since 2017. Table 36 shows that cattle and calves inventory fell from 53,051 in 2017 to 35,892 in 2022, while sheep and lamb inventory increased from 13,086 in 2017 to 21,540 in 2022, indicating a shift in the mix of livestock.

Table 32:

Farm Volume

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Number of farms	915	1,045	1,128	1,135	1,050
Land in farms (acres)	334,747	321,056	329,653	330,523	285,524
Average size of farm (acres)	366	307	292	291	272
Median size of farm (acres)	73	46	44	40	40

Table 33:

Income and Expenses (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Market value of agricultural products sold	$96,033,096	$95,031,400	$135,013,068	$98,527,138	$87,900,000
Government payments	$1,632,816	$1,498,485	$1,216,440	$960,696	$2,906,000
Farm-related income	$3,727,656	$2,763,495	$3,676,788	$2,888,153	$4,885,000
Total farm production expenses	$76,785,408	$86,456,500	$123,204,444	$90,236,283	$78,532,000
Net cash farm income	$25,232,472	$12,836,880	$16,701,852	$12,139,704	$17,159,000

Per Farm Average	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Market value of agricultural products sold	$104,954	$90,939	$119,692	$86,808	$83,715
Government payments	$9,896	$7,928	$6,082	$8,282	$30,271
Farm-related income	$15,153	$12,284	$14,807	$7,722	$14,893
Total farm production expenses	$84,011	$82,734	$109,223	$79,504	$74,792
Net cash farm income	$27,607	$12,284	$14,807	$10,695	$16,342

Table 34:
Crop Sales (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
TOTAL CROPS	$34,840,584	$32,901,580	$44,079,600	$22,401,684	$29,443,000
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas	$9,435,888	$12,071,365	$25,682,580	$7,966,984	$7,598,000
Tobacco	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cotton and cottonseed	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes	$12,219,624	$8,539,525	$6,431,436	$6,430,113	$9,548,000
Fruits, tree nuts, berries	$783,288	N/A	N/A	$759,338	$730,000
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod	N/A	N/A	N/A	$2,612,802	$3,095,000
Cultivated Christmas trees, short rotation woody crops	$41,400	N/A	N/A	$219,553	N/A
Other crops and hay	N/A	N/A	N/A	$4,406,829	$8,413,000

Table 35:
Livestock Sales (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
TOTAL LIVESTOCK, POULTRY, AND PRODUCTS	$61,026,912	$62,129,820	$90,933,468	$76,125,454	$58,457,000
Poultry and eggs	N/A	N/A	N/A	$27,596,963	$20,132,000
Cattle and calves	$28,148,688	$35,510,840	$47,827,020	$41,195,906	$24,295,000
Milk from cows	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hogs and pigs	$529,920	$111,785	$408,096	$413,633	$346,000
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk	$2,083,248	N/A	$2,557,140	$3,532,256	$3,187,000
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys	$594,504	$1,422,075	$626,532	$424,550	N/A
Aquaculture	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other animals and animal products	$1,531,800	N/A	$307,380	$264,434	$298,000

Table 36:
Livestock Inventory

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Cattle and calves inventory	48,435	47,338	56,083	53,051	35,892
Cattle and calves sold	30,722	34,086	35,996	35,764	22,895
Hogs and pigs inventory	1,618	675	1,219	1,331	1,090
Hogs and pigs sold	2,969	1,038	1,683	2,122	1,376
Sheep and lambs inventory	18,366	19,792	15,433	13,086	21,540
Broilers and other meat-type chickens sold	3,500	N/A	225	1,932	187

Garfield County Agriculture Census Data

Tables 37 through 40 show the point in time information for Garfield County agriculture. Table 37 shows that the majority of farmland use in Garfield County is pastureland (61.3%), followed by woodland (16.8%) and cropland (15.8%). Table 38 shows that 44.3% of farms make less than $2,500 in sales, and 91.3% make under $100,000. Table 39 shows that most farms are small, with 42.9% between 10–49 acres and 13.1% under 10 acres. Table 40 shows that 42.7% of producers are over 65, with only 5.3% under 35.

Together, this points to a grazing and hay oriented sector will many small, part-time operations alongside a smaller set of large ranches. This pulls down per-farm averages, increases exposure to cattle/hay prices, and drought. The age profile skews older for Garfield County, which could lead to more succession problems than other counties.

Table 37:
Land in Farms by Use (acres)

Type	Acres	Percentage
Cropland	63,548	15.8%
Pastureland	246,828	61.3%
Woodland	67,730	16.8%
Other	24,635	6.1%
Total	402,741	100%

Table 38:
Farms by Value of Sales

Category	Number	Percentage
<$2,500	266	44.3%
$2,500-$4,999	61	10.1%
$5,000-$9,999	64	10.6%
$10,000-$24,999	71	11.8%
$25,000-$49,999	43	7.2%
$50,000-$99,999	44	7.3%
$100,000+	52	8.7%
Total	601	100%

Table 39:
Farms by Size

Acres	Number	Percentage
1-9	79	13.1%
10-49	258	42.9%
50-179	111	18.5%
180-499	49	8.2%
500-999	43	7.2%
1000+	61	10.1%
Total	601	100%

Table 40:
Age of Producer

Type	Number	Percentage
<35	64	5.28%
35-64	630	51.98%
65+	518	42.74%
Total	1,212	

Garfield County Agriculture Census Data Time Series

Tables 41 through 45 show Garfield County agricultural census data over time. Table 41 shows that the number of farms increased from 499 in 2002 to 601 in 2022, while average farm size fell from 810 to 670 acres. Land in farms fluctuated over time, peaking in 2017 before returning to 2002 levels.

Table 42 shows that, adjusted to 2022 dollars, the market value of agricultural products sold peaked in 2017 at $43.5 million before dropping to $25.1 million in 2022. Government payments rose significantly from $437,000 in 2017 to $2.7 million in 2022, largely due to pandemic-related relief. Net cash farm income improved from 2012 lows, but remains below early 2000s levels.

Table 43 shows that total crop sales have declined since 2002, with the most significant drop in nursery and greenhouse production. Fruits and hay have remained relatively steady, while grains and vegetables remain small contributors. Table 44 shows that cattle and calves continue to dominate livestock sales but declined sharply from $25.5 million in 2017 to $14.0 million in 2022. Table 45 confirms this trend, with cattle inventory dropping from 34,267 to 19,353 and sales falling by nearly half.

Table 41:
Farm Volume

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Number of farms	499	623	625	661	601
Land in farms (acres)	404,335	335,331	310,854	475,166	402,741
Average size of farm (acres)	810	538	497	719	670
Median size of farm (acres)	110	50	43	50	40

Table 42:
Income and Expenses (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Market value of agricultural products sold	$37,708,776	$31,417,245	$29,652,360	$43,501,819	$25,052,000
Government payments	$925,704	$506,570	$790,032	$436,680	$2,672,000
Farm-related income	$3,441,168	$3,575,705	$2,823,972	$8,369,700	$7,062,000
Total farm production expenses	$43,511,400	$41,049,150	$39,488,520	$46,613,164	$30,948,000
Net cash farm income	($2,258,784)	($5,549,630)	($6,223,464)	$5,696,248	$3,838,000

Per Farm Average	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Market value of agricultural products sold	$75,570	$50,429	$47,442	$65,811	$41,684
Government payments	$12,022	$11,513	$10,000	$9,098	$32,585
Farm-related income	$24,936	$21,540	$14,482	$44,051	$38,802
Total farm production expenses	$87,023	$65,889	$63,182	$70,518	$51,494
Net cash farm income	($4,519)	($8,907)	($9,956)	$8,617	$6,387

Table 43:
Crop Sales (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
TOTAL CROPS	$11,719,512	$9,675,770	$7,382,352	$10,657,418	$6,963,000
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas	$36,432	N/A	N/A	$289,907	N/A
Tobacco	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cotton and cottonseed	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes	$26,496	$166,970	$87,636	$1,126,877	N/A
Fruits, tree nuts, berries	$190,440	$396,200	$111,180	N/A	$144,000
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod	$8,788,392	N/A	N/A	$4,074,467	$2,518,000
Cultivated Christmas trees, short rotation woody crops	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other crops and hay	$2,677,752	N/A	$4,317,708	$4,963,596	$3,931,000

Table 44:
Livestock Sales (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
TOTAL LIVESTOCK, POULTRY, AND PRODUCTS	$25,989,264	$21,741,475	$22,270,008	$32,844,401	$18,089,000
Poultry and eggs	$8,280	$49,525	$58,860	N/A	$124,000
Cattle and calves	$21,408,768	$15,927,240	$15,617,520	$25,542,141	$13,964,000
Milk from cows	N/A	N/A	$7,848	N/A	N/A
Hogs and pigs	$125,856	$73,580	$36,624	N/A	N/A
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk	$967,104	N/A	$2,784,732	$2,385,971	$1,064,000
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys	$818,064	$2,297,960	$877,668	$1,306,401	$592,000
Aquaculture	N/A	N/A	N/A	$2,565,495	N/A
Other animals and animal products	N/A	N/A	N/A	$753,273	$338,000

Table 45:
Livestock Inventory

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Cattle and calves inventory	22,408	19,238	18,443	34,267	19,353
Cattle and calves sold	20,068	15,762	13,197	22,468	12,655
Hogs and pigs inventory	747	289	383	205	72
Hogs and pigs sold	858	531	306	243	71
Sheep and lambs inventory	8,236	8,676	9,891	10,529	8,893
Broilers and other meat-type chickens sold	N/A	96	350	364	170

Rio Blanco County Agriculture Census Data

Tables 46 through 49 show the point in time information for Rio Blanco County agriculture. Table 46 shows that most farmland use is for pastureland (73.1%), followed by woodland (14.3%) and cropland (9.4%). Table 47 shows that 42.7% of farms report less than $2,500 in sales, and 82.9% report under $100,000. Table 48 shows that 45.1% of farms are smaller than 180 acres, while 21.8% are over 1,000 acres, reflecting a mix of small and large operations. Table 49 shows that 41.8% of producers are over 65, and 7.8% are under 35.

Table 46:
Land in Farms by Use (acres)

Type	Acres	Percentage
Cropland	43,637	9.4%
Pastureland	340,958	73.1%
Woodland	66,652	14.3%
Other	14,889	3.2%
Total	466,136	100%

Table 47:
Farms by Value of Sales

Category	Number	Percentage
<$2,500	137	42.7%
$2,500-$4,999	19	5.9%
$5,000-$9,999	26	8.1%
$10,000-$24,999	38	11.8%
$25,000-$49,999	17	5.3%
$50,000-$99,999	29	9.0%
$100,000+	55	17.1%
Total	321	100%

Table 48:
Farms by Size

Acres	Number	Percentage
1-9	25	7.8%
10-49	64	19.9%
50-179	81	25.2%
180-499	58	18.1%
500-999	23	7.2%
1000+	70	21.8%
Total	321	100%

Table 49:
Age of Producer

Type	Number	Percentage
<35	48	7.78%
35-64	311	50.41%
65+	258	41.82%
Total	617	

Rio Blanco County Agriculture Census Data Time Series

Tables 50 through 54 show Rio Blanco County agricultural census data over time. Table 50 shows that the number of farms has grown from 245 in 2002 to 321 in 2022. Land in farms increased by 24% over the same period, from 376,509 to 466,136 acres, with average farm size remaining among the highest in the region.

Table 51 shows that, adjusted to 2022 dollars, the market value of agricultural products sold has remained fairly stable over time, rising modestly from $21.4 million in 2002 to $23.2 million in 2022. Government payments increased sharply in 2022 to $2.1 million, likely due to COVID-19-related relief and Farm Bill programs. Net cash farm income declined significantly since 2012, falling to $1.5 million in 2022.

Table 52 shows that crop sales have steadily grown, increasing from $1.8 million in 2002 to $4.9 million in 2022. Nearly all of this value comes from “other crops and hay.” Nursery and greenhouse production was present in earlier years but not reported in 2022. Table 53 shows that livestock continues to dominate Rio Blanco agriculture, led by cattle and calves, though their sales declined from $22.3 million in 2012 to $15.8 million in 2022. Table 54 shows that cattle inventory declined from a peak of 25,253 in 2017 to 21,157 in 2022. Sheep inventory has recovered slightly, rising from 7,859 in 2017 to 12,324 in 2022.

Table 50:
Farm Volume

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Number of farms	245	285	313	321	321
Land in farms (acres)	376,509	386,577	507,343	410,923	466,136
Average size of farm (acres)	1,537	1,356	1,621	1,284	1,452
Median size of farm (acres)	305	160	208	110	158

Table 51:
Income and Expenses (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Market value of agricultural products sold	$21,397,176	$22,021,645	$31,930,896	$22,744,963	$23,193,000
Government payments	$1,049,904	$810,795	$1,028,088	$473,070	$2,120,000
Farm-related income	$2,003,760	$4,484,135	$3,065,952	$3,327,259	$4,403,000
Total farm production expenses	$23,241,960	$21,648,085	$31,701,996	$23,723,854	$28,227,000
Net cash farm income	$3,446,136	$5,667,075	$4,322,940	$2,821,438	$1,489,000

Per Farm Average	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Market value of agricultural products sold	$87,337	$77,269	$102,017	$71,078	$72,254
Government payments	$13,635	$11,420	$21,874	$11,002	$42,400
Farm-related income	$24,436	$41,908	$27,621	$29,708	$36,692
Total farm production expenses	$94,869	$75,959	$101,282	$74,137	$87,936
Net cash farm income	$14,068	$19,886	$13,812	$8,817	$4,640

Table 52:
Crop Sales (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
TOTAL CROPS	$1,839,816	$2,361,635	$5,180,988	$3,360,010	$4,889,000
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas	N/A	N/A	N/A	$44,881	N/A
Tobacco	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cotton and cottonseed	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Fruits, tree nuts, berries	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod	N/A	$124,520	$149,112	N/A	N/A
Cultivated Christmas trees, short rotation woody crops	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other crops and hay	$1,742,112	$2,177,685	$4,961,244	$3,295,721	$4,306,000

Table 53:
Livestock Sales (2022 dollars)

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
TOTAL LIVESTOCK, POULTRY, AND PRODUCTS	$19,557,360	$19,660,010	$26,751,216	$19,384,953	$18,304,000
Poultry and eggs	N/A	$8,490	$5,232	$7,278	$14,000
Cattle and calves	$15,019,920	$16,238,540	$22,331,484	$17,510,868	$15,799,000
Milk from cows	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hogs and pigs	$866,088	$65,090	$9,156	$9,704	$16,000
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk	$3,063,600	N/A	$4,095,348	$1,553,853	$1,849,000
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys	$521,640	$193,855	$303,456	$292,333	$613,000
Aquaculture	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other animals and animal products	N/A	$12,735	$5,232	$10,917	$13,000

Table 54:
Livestock Inventory

Type	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Cattle and calves inventory	22,280	23,658	24,575	25,253	21,157
Cattle and calves sold	19,561	16,094	19,721	16,155	15,433
Hogs and pigs inventory	542	608	15		94
Hogs and pigs sold	6,408	443	37	40	62
Sheep and lambs inventory	31,378	22,304	20,762	7,859	12,324
Broilers and other meat-type chickens sold		96	350	364	170

Section 1 Conclusion

The five county region added farms over the last two decades, but it did not add land. Farms increased from 4,321 in 2002 to 5,836 in 2022 while land in farms fell from 1,763,289 acres to 1,609,971 acres. Because of this, average farm size dropped from 408 acres to 276 acres. Most farms are small and most report very low sales. In 2022, 69.3% of farms are under 50 acres and 46.5% report under $2,500 in annual sales. Only 8.3% report $100,000 or more. This means a large share of farms are not operating at commercial scale.

Sales and profitability data point to volatility and margin pressure. Market value of agricultural products sold peaked in 2012 at $380 million and declined to $306 million by 2022. Total farm production expenses were $317.1 million in 2022, and net cash farm income was $42.6 million. Government payments increased in 2022 to $20.7 million, which shows that government support played a larger role in stabilizing producer finances in that year.

Livestock still drives most sales, but has weakened after previous peaks. Livestock sales declined from $239.3 million in 2012 to $173.7 million in 2022. Cattle and calves sales were $92.4 million in 2022. Cattle inventory peaked in 2017 at 200,073 and fell to 134,267 by 2022. Crop sales have been steadier. Fruits, tree nuts, and berries reached $45.4 million by 2022, and is the largest crop category for the five county region.

County results track the same regional story, but each county has a few unique differences. Mesa County is small scale and specialty crop focused. It has the highest share of very low sales farms in the five county area, which points to a large number of small operations. At the same time, fruit is a clear strength. Fruits, tree nuts, and berries are one of the county's consistent agricultural outputs.

Delta County shows the most consistent crop growth in the region. Crop sales rise over time, with gains led by vegetables and fruit categories. The livestock side has shifted over the last decade. Cattle inventory has declined since 2017, while broiler sales jumped from 2017 to 2022, showing a changing mix of livestock.

Montrose County has a more commercial profile than the other four counties. It has a higher share of farms above $100,000 in sales and remains a major farm production county. It also has the oldest producer base in the region, which raises transition risk. Vegetables dominate the crop side, but sales are below earlier peaks. Livestock has seen cattle decline after 2017, but large increases in sheep inventory.

Garfield County is anchored in pasture and hay. Average farm size is higher than in the smaller acreage counties, but many farms still report low sales. The biggest change is the drop after 2017. Total sales, cattle sales, and cattle inventory all fall sharply by 2022, which highlights exposure to drought and cattle cycles.

Rio Blanco County stands out for land base and ranch scale. Land in farms is higher than in 2002 and average farm size remains among the largest in the region. It also has the highest share of farms above $100,000 in sales. Crop sales growth is mostly hay and other crops.

Colorado agriculture is larger in scale than the five county region, but has similar trends. In 2022, Colorado reports 36,056 farms and an average farm size of 838 acres, compared to 5,836 farms and 276 acres in the five county region. Colorado sales rose to $9.22 billion in 2022, about $256,000 per farm, while the five county region reports $306.0 million, about $52,000 per farm. The five county region is also less commercial by sales distribution, with 8.3% of farms above $100,000 in sales compared to 14% statewide. Producer age looks similar in both areas, with about 39 to 40% age 65 or older and about 7 to 8% under 35. Colorado is more livestock weighted, while the five county region is more crop weighted due to specialty crops in Mesa, Delta, and Montrose.

SECTION TWO: AGRICULTURAL SURVEY — PRODUCER AND OPERATION CHARACTERISTICS

A survey was developed and sent to agricultural producers to determine producer and operations characteristics, their financial profile, technology and practices, and challenges facing agriculture. The survey was sent to over 100 agricultural producers and received 49 total responses, 35 of which were completed enough to be usable.

Figure 1 illustrates that livestock production is the dominant operation type (42.86%), followed closely by crop production (37.14%). Smaller portions are in agribusiness (equipment, supply, etc.) at 11.43%, and support services such as transportation or finance at 2.86%.

Table 55 shows that the largest share of respondents (44.1%) reported that 76-100% of their household income comes from agriculture, with 26.5% earning less than 25%. Table 56 shows where survey respondents are from, with most survey participants from Mesa County (40%), followed by Delta (18%), Montrose (16%), Rio Blanco (14%), and Garfield (12%). Figure 2 illustrates that a strong majority (70.6%) have operated more than 20 years, while 14.7% have 11–20 years in business. About 8.8% have been operating 5–10 years, and 5.9% for less than 5 years.

Figure 1:
What type of business do you operate?

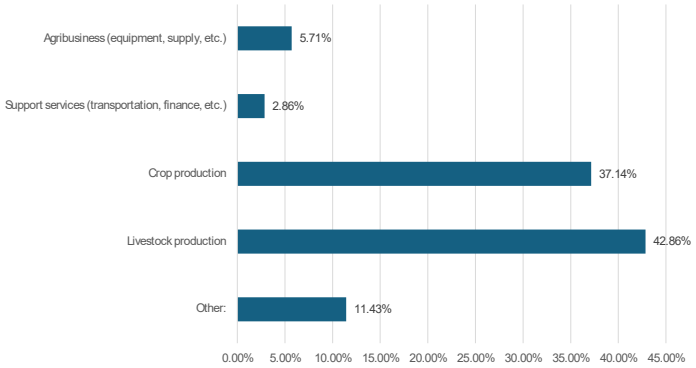


Figure 2:
How many years have you operated in this county?

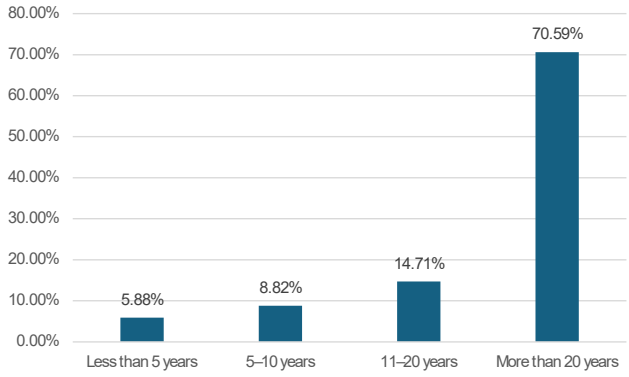


Table 55:
Income Level

Income	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 25%	9	26.47%
26–50%	4	11.76%
51–75%	3	8.82%
76–100%	15	44.12%
None	3	8.82%

Table 56:
County Location

Income	Frequency	Percentage
Mesa	20	40.00%
Delta	9	18.00%
Garfield	6	12.00%
Montrose	8	16.00%
Rio Blanco	7	14.00%

AGRICULTURAL SURVEY: FINANCIAL PROFILE

Respondents were asked how many family members and total people they employ. On average, agricultural producers employ 2.55 family members and a total of 13.15 people. There was a wide variance on the non-family portion, going from 0 to 120.

Figure 3 shows that the majority of respondents (46.7%) reported annual gross sales under $100,000, followed by 24.4% earning between $100,000 and $499,000. About 20% fell into the $500,000 to $1.9 million range, while 6.7% reported $2 million to $4.9 million in sales, and just 2.2% earned $5 million or more. Figure 4 illustrates land tenure, and shows that a majority of 59% of producers own their land, while 35% both own and lease, and 6% lease exclusively. When asked about profitability, 43.75% said they are about the same compared to previous years, 40.63% said more profitable, and 15.63% said less profitable (Figure 5).

Figure 6 illustrates cost pressures, with the largest expenses affecting profitability being labor (30.43%), equipment and maintenance (30.43%), and fertilizer or other inputs (20.29%). Regulatory compliance accounted for 18.84% of responses, and “other” expenses made up 10.39%.

Respondents were asked about both year-round employees and seasonal employees. The average for year-round employees is 4.04, while average seasonal employees is 12.77.

Figure 3:

What is your gross annual sales range?

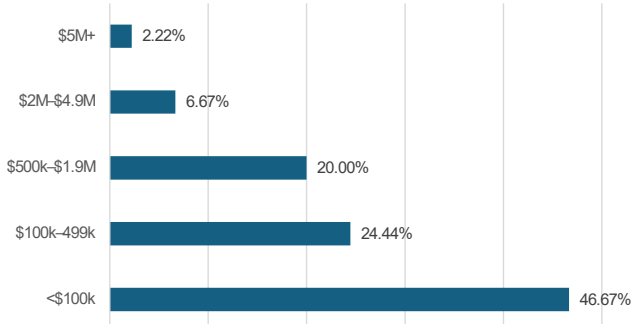


Figure 4:

Which best describes your land tenure?

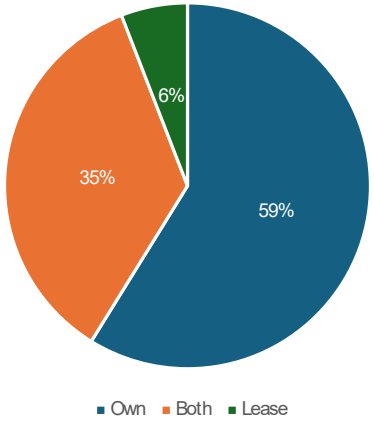


Figure 5:

Business Profitability Over 5 Years

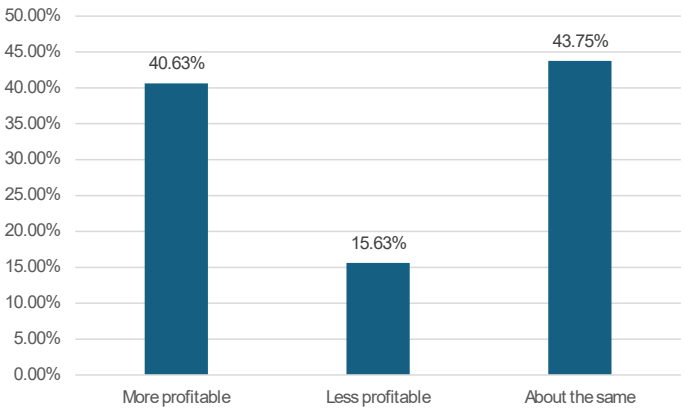
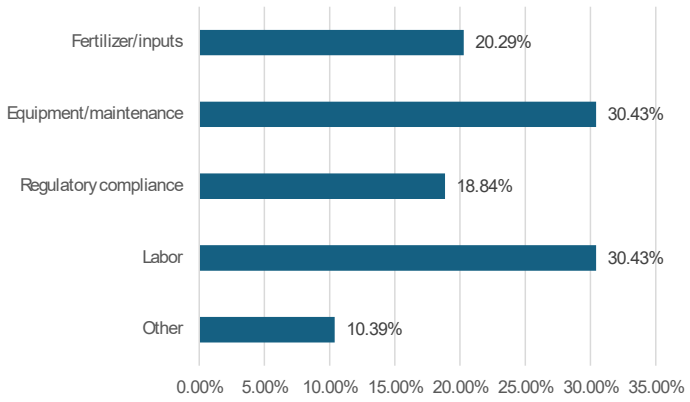


Figure 6:

What are the largest expenses affecting your profitability (check all that apply)



AGRICULTURAL SURVEY: FINANCIAL PROFILE

Producers were asked what percentage of their inputs come from Western Colorado. 66.29% of inputs are sourced from Western Colorado. Figure 7 indicates that 57.6% of respondents have diversified their income streams, while 42.4% have not. Table 57 shows examples of diversification from open-ended responses, which includes big game hunting, secondary crops, direct-to-consumer sales, value-added processing, agritourism, leasing crop harvests, offering additional services such as outfitting and targeted grazing, expanding food options for customers, hosting events, and pursuing grant opportunities.

When asked about the use of precision agriculture or other new technologies, 52.94% said “yes,” 38.24% said “not sure,” and 8.82% said “no” in one set of responses, while another set showed 50% “yes,” 32.35% “unsure,” and 17.65% “no,” suggesting possible differences between subgroups or question framing.

Figure 7:

Have you diversified your income streams (e.g., agritourism, secondary crops)??

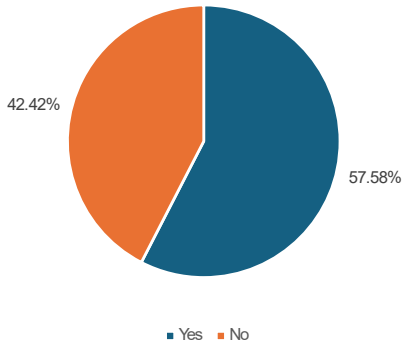


Table 57:

Have you diversified your income streams? (open ended response)

Big Game hunting
Crop production
Different meat and byproduct sales
Direct to consumer sales
hunting
Hunting
I'm working on several different farms now but when I was in charge of a market farm, I was adding tours and winter crops to the list of income streams.
Leased crop harvest
More on-site food options for customers
New events and grant opportunities
Off farm income
Off farm income
Offered additional services
Outfitting, targeted grazing
Secondary crops
Value added, processing, agritourism

AGRICULTURAL SURVEY: TECHNOLOGY

Respondents were asked what percentage of their input purchases are made within Western Colorado. 66.29% of input purchases are purchased in Western Colorado.

When asked about the use of precision agriculture or other new technologies, 66.7% reported they do not use such technologies, while 33.3% said they do (Figure 8). Those using new technologies cited a variety of examples (Table 58), including detailed animal tracking with EID, GPS ear tags, artificial insemination and genetic analysis, orchard trellis systems, harvest-assist platforms, RFID inventory tags, fruit scanning, precision feeding and irrigation systems, pest management tools, horticultural technologies, soil testing, moisture monitoring, electronic fencing, environmental monitoring systems, agrivoltaics, and commercial solar panels.

Figure 8:
Do you use precision agriculture or other new technologies?

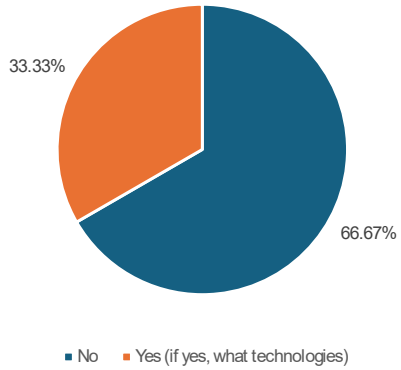


Table 58:
Do you use precision agriculture or other new technologies?

Detailed individual animal tracking with EID
Electronic fencing
Enviromonitor and Weatherlink
GPS ear tags, artificial Insemination, EPD analysis
Orchard trellis, harvest assist platforms,inventory rfid tags, fruit scanning
Precision feeding sensors and wearable sensors
Precision irrigation, Pest mgt. technology, Horticultural technology
soil testing, moisture meter, weed barrier on most crops.
Weather stations, Agrivoltaics and commercial Solar Panels

AGRICULTURAL SURVEY: TECHNOLOGY

Survey results show the main barriers to adopting new technology (Table 59). The most common obstacle is cost, cited by 43.55% of respondents. Training or knowledge gaps and infrastructure limitations (such as internet access or electricity) were each mentioned by 19.35% of producers. Time required to implement new technology was noted by 11.29%, while 6.45% said they do not plan to adopt new technology at all.

One major issue in agriculture today is what to do with the farm or ranch when the existing family ages out of work years. Figure 9 shows the response to the question “do you anticipate your business being passed down to the next generation?” 52.94% said “yes,” 8.82% said “no,” while 38.24% said “not sure.” Respondents were ask a similar version of this question, but in regards to being able to sell to a younger generation. 50% said “yes,” 17.65% said “no,” and 32.35% said “not sure.”

Table 59:
What are the biggest barriers to adopting new technology?

Income	Frequency	Percentage
Cost	27	43.55%
Training/knowledge	12	19.35%
Infrastructure (internet access, electricity)	12	19.35%
Time to implement	7	11.29%
I do not plan to adopt new technology	4	6.45%

Figure 9:
Do you anticipate your business being passed down to the next generation

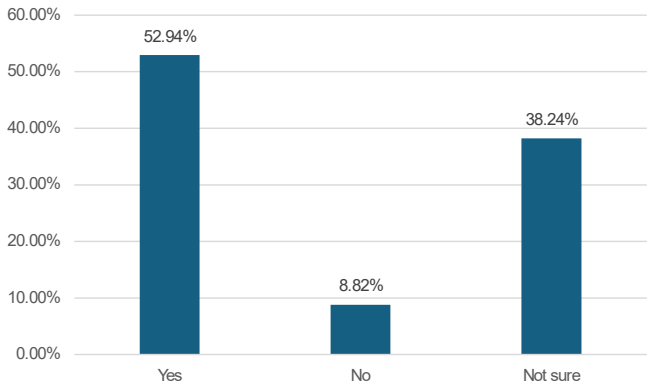
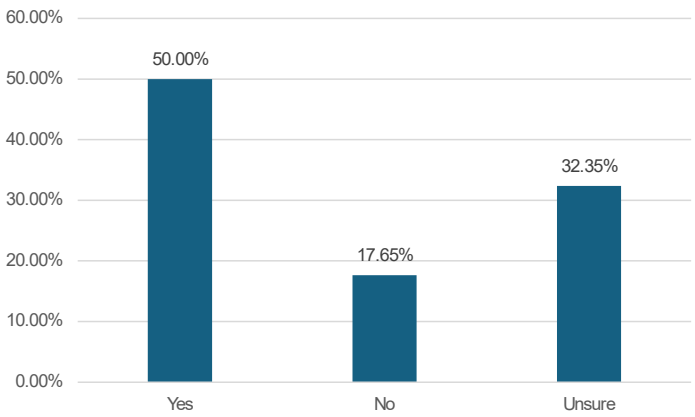


Figure 10:
Are younger generations interested in continuing your business?



AGRICULTURAL SURVEY: PROGRAMS

Respondents were asked if they had utilized state or federal agriculture programs in the last five years. 51.52% said “yes” and 48.48% said “no.” Table 60 illustrates the open ended responses regarding state or federal agricultural programs in the last five years.

Table 61 shows the results of “how would you rate the level of support provided by local or state government for agriculture?” 30% responded “poor,” 24.24% responded “fair” and “good” proportionally, while 9.09% responded “excellent” and 12.12% responded “none.”

Table 60:

Have you utilized any state or federal agricultural programs in the past 5 years? - Yes (If yes, which programs (e.g., EQIP, CRP, LFPA, Enterprise Zone, other local, state, or federal grants, tax credits)?

Crop Insurance
Crop Insurance
EQIP, ELRP, LDP (wool)
EQIP, LFPA, LRP, RFP, risk MGMT programs at FSA
EQIP/nourish CO/Mesa Conservation district
equip
equip
Federal grants
REAP - VGAP
Tax credits
USDA farm Liab
We are currently putting in an Agrivoltaic complex with CSU's participation. Subsidized crop insurance is our biggest help from the feds. I would guess that we take some Enterprise Zone credit but don't know.

Table 61:

How would you rate the level of support provided by local or state government for agriculture?

Income	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	3	9.09%
Good	8	24.24%
Fair	8	24.24%
Poor	10	30.30%
None	4	12.12%

AGRICULTURAL SURVEY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Table 62 shows the open-ended responses to which specific policies or incentives would significantly benefit their operation. Three main themes are regulation in general, predator control (wolves), and direct to consumer processing rules, or streamlining the slaughter/ processing access.

Table 63 shows the results of the question “what are the greatest threats to agriculture in your area?” 28.77% said “drought,” 24.66% “input costs,” 20.55% said “labor shortages,” 20.55% “land access development measures,” and 5.48% “other.”

Table 62:

Are there specific policies or incentives that would significantly benefit your operation?

Allow removing problem wolves.
Any policies or incentives talking about the benefits of regenerative and/or organic growing practices benefit all of us!
Direct more resources to our CSU Agricultural Research Centers.
Farming incentives or tax breaks for farm income. Less restrictions/regulations around migrant workers
Immigration reform. Labor availability. Affordable labor. H2A reform.
Less regulation
Less regulation on grazing public grounds also concerning predator control
More small farmer support in the form of incentives, education assistance, marketing, grants, labor pools, etc.
Paid for it
Remove all wolves and repeal the endangered species act
Streamline better access to direct to consumer marketing/sales; remove barriers at the regulatory level, particularly for slaughter/processing. Incentives for small processors may be helpful to connect producers to processors for strategic partnerships.
"Subsidies for Equipment Upgrades especially for precision agriculture and sustainable tech and Tax Relief for Small or Beginning Farmers To reduce financial pressure in the early year"
Support for infrastructure, engagement with State policy makers, legislative, CDA

Table 63:

What are the greatest threats to the future of agriculture in your area?

Income	Frequency	Percentage
Drought / water shortages	21	28.77%
Labor shortages	15	20.55%
Input costs	18	24.66%
Land access / development pressure	15	20.55%
Other:	4	5.48%

AGRICULTURAL SURVEY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Survey respondents were asked “have you been directly impacted by drought in the past three years?” 71.8% responded “yes,” 28.1% responded “no,” and Table 64 illustrates the open ended responses to the question. Producers reported a wide range of drought impacts, most centered on reduced forage and hay production, which in turn forced herd or flock reductions and increased feed purchases. Many noted higher overhead costs, poorer crop quality, shortened grazing seasons, and in some cases complete water unavailability, with some operations producing only 40% of normal hay yields.

Table 65 lists the responses to “what opportunities do you see for the future of agriculture in Western Colorado?” Respondents saw opportunities in expanding farm to table experiences, agritourism, and direct sales of high quality local products such as Palisade peaches, as well as developing niche markets for lamb, wool, and targeted grazing. Some stressed using limited water for food crops and building resilient local farming systems, while others were pessimistic due to political and regulatory barriers, climate change, and rising land and input costs.

Table 64:

Have you been directly impacted by drought in the past three years?

calves weaned is less, labor to manage cattle is increased,
Affected crop quality
Affected crop quality
Cut back on number of cattle
dry ground hay doesn't grow.
Have to buy in feed, can't grow enough now, reduce flock size by over 50%
I’m not able to use the high country for as long as usual.
Increase in overhead cost of feeding livestock
Increased feed costs to supplement
Irrigation impacts
Irrigation impacts
Less grass for pasture and hay, water shortage
much less forage production less animals
No water availability
Only getting 40% of hay production. Since we do not raise livestock we do not qualify for assistance.
Reduced hay production which resulted in herd reduction
reduced production

Table 65:

What opportunities do you see for the future of agriculture in Western Colorado?

A focus at farm to table experiences bring tourists to the area.
decreasing and greater limitations
Demand for locally produced high quality fresh produce.
Direct to consumer marketing our products, targeted marketing of niche products/services (lamb, wool, targeted grazing offerings)
Farming and ranching opportunities
I am not sure.
its tough when the Democrats in power from the front range seem to want to severely limit ag in general and animal ag in particular
Limited, many producers do not see their enterprise as a business.
None
Not much unless government policies change and people get serious about climate change problems.
One of the opportunities I see for the future of Ag in Western CO is to prioritize using our limited water resources to grow food for people, rather than for purely industrial or non-edible crops. With the pressures of drought and changing climate, it's critical that we invest in resilient, regionally adapted farming systems that feed our communities first. I envision a future where small and mid-scale farms are supported in producing fruits, vegetable, grains, and pasture-raised meats-crops that go directly to local families and market. This not only ensures food security for Western CO, but also strengthens our local economy and connection to the land.
Pretty poor if the current political climate doesn’t change.
Providing open space and wildlife habitat
Reducing pasture and forage availability, which increased feed costs.
Strong demand and prices for Colorado grown produce. High quality Palisade Peaches will continue to be a good opportunity if farming correctly
The peach industry is a bright spot that is generally healthy. I would hope the cattle industry remains healthy and anticipate that it will though all ag runs on tight margins.
Very challenging
With the increased costs of crop land and input costs, I am fearful for the future of Ag in Western CO.

SECTION THREE: ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION MODELING

While the Census data and survey results describe the structure of agriculture and the realities faced by producers, the next step is to measure its total footprint in the Western Slope economy. This section uses IMPLAN modeling to estimate how agricultural activity flows through the regional economy, creating jobs, generating income, and contributing to GDP.

The analysis includes direct effects such as jobs, wages, and production within agriculture itself, along with indirect effects from local supply chain purchases and induced effects from household spending. Results are presented for the five county Western Slope region, as well as for each individual county. All figures are reported in 2024 dollars to provide an accurate, inflation-adjusted view of agriculture's economic role.

Table 66 shows the IMPLAN codes used to build the economic contribution model for agriculture. There are agriculture codes in IMPLAN such as "cotton farming," that do not apply to the Western Slope. Note that "all other crop farming" represents hay and pasture crops, grass seed, herbs and spices, and hemp.

Table 66:
IMPLAN Codes and Direct Employment

Industry	Direct Employment
Beef cattle ranching	4,238.96
Support activity for agriculture	1,238
All other crop farming	913.9
Fruit farming	603.24
Vegetable and Melon Farming	479.44
Other animal production	370.15
Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production	178.85
Wineries	127.8
Dairy cattle and milk production	119
Grain farming	92.23
Poultry and egg production	83.18
Tree and nut farming	5.1
Oilseed farming	0.52

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION MODELING

This report is an economic contribution study and not an economic impact study.[1] The distinction is that an economic contribution study includes all spending, regardless of whether the dollars are new to the economy or not. In contrast, an economic impact study only includes spending that would not have occurred without the existence of the event or industry. Because the agricultural sector being studied already exists, and the question is about overall footprint rather than the addition of new spending, an economic contribution framework is most appropriate.

This report employs IMPLAN, an Input Output modeling system that traces every flow of economic activity among sectors, households, and government. The model's Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) captures every major flow, including business purchases, paychecks and household spending, public revenues and transfers, and "leakages" like savings, commuter income spent outside the county, and imports/exports.

The analysis begins with the direct effect: the jobs, wages, and operating expenditures generated by the agricultural sector. IMPLAN then adjusts this initial contribution for leakages, supply chain (indirect) responses, and the further rounds of household spending that produce the multiplier, delivering a complete picture of local impact.

Leakages matter because not every dollar spent inside the county stays there. Taxes, commuters' earnings spent where they live, household savings, and purchases of imported goods or services all siphon money away. After netting out those leakages, IMPLAN measures supply chain effects, the local purchases made by businesses that serve the focal industry. For example, when a hay producer buys fertilizer, fuel, and equipment maintenance services, only the portion sourced inside the county counts toward the indirect effect, while the rest is treated as an import.

Finally, IMPLAN estimates induced effects, the spending that occurs when employees in the direct and supply chain layers use their paychecks at grocery stores, gas stations, restaurants, and elsewhere in the region. Each transaction creates income for another household, and the process repeats until the dollars ultimately leak away. The sum of direct, indirect, and induced effects is the total economic impact, and dividing that total by the direct effect yields the familiar multiplier. Note that all calculations are in 2024 dollars. Direct, indirect, and induced effect definitions are summarized below:

- Direct effects
  The immediate change in output, jobs, or income that comes straight from the spending or production being studied. For example, peach, vegetable, cattle sales, grape sales to wineries, etc.
- Indirect effects
  The supply-chain ripple that follows the direct spending. Local box and pallet suppliers, irrigation parts, crop inputs (fertilizer, amendments), equipment repair, etc.
- Induced effects
  The household-spending ripple that occurs when workers in the direct and indirect industries spend their wages on groceries, rent, healthcare, entertainment, and other personal needs. Those purchases support further economic activity in consumer-facing sectors such as retail, restaurants, and real estate.

Together, the three layers add up to the total economic impact.

TOTAL ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION RESULTS

Table 58 illustrates economic contribution results. The direct employment impact of agriculture is 8,450 employees. This includes full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees. Adding indirect and induced employment effects, the total employment impact is 9,123. A total of 364 jobs were created through supply chain effects, while the wages from direct and indirect employment created 308 additional jobs as each of these employees spent their money over the year. This implies a job multiplier of 1.08, which means that every job in agriculture supports 0.08 jobs elsewhere in the Western Slope.

[1] See Watson, P., Wilson, J., Thilmany, D., & Winter, S. (2007). "Determining economic contributions and impacts: What is the difference and why do we care?" Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy, 37(2), 140–146.

Table 67 shows the total economic impact of agriculture. The combination of direct, indirect, and induced activity generates $107,672,055 in labor income for Western Slope households. In IMPLAN, labor income consists of employee compensation, wages, salaries, employer-paid benefits, and payroll taxes alongside proprietor income earned by self-employed owners and partners. This paycheck and profit stream represents roughly 38% of agriculture's total value-added impact, making it the share that flows directly into household budgets and fuels additional consumer spending in the local economy.

The total GDP impact of agriculture is $281,708,755. Value added, often called Gross Regional Product (GRP) at the county scale, equals total industry output minus the cost of intermediate inputs, so it captures only the new wealth created inside the local economy. In IMPLAN terms, that $281,708,755 is the sum of labor income, taxes on production, and operating surplus generated by agricultures direct, indirect, and induced activity. Because regional GDP reflects the market value of all final goods and services produced within the county during the study period, it is the standard yardstick for assessing economic growth and impact. The results in Table 10 imply a GDP multiplier of 1.30, meaning that for every $1 in agriculture, $0.30 is generated through supply chain and household spending rounds.

The direct total output value of $587,311,998 represents the gross total value of all sales and production resulting from agriculture. This is a broader measure than the standard gross domestic product (GDP). Output is the value of an industry's production. It counts the county GDP and the intermediate inputs that are associated with it. This total output measure is the gross measure of local economic activity and is more in line with how a business would account for the sales transaction from one firm to another.[2] GDP is a subset of "output," and is the standard measure of growth by an economy. GDP is a more accurate representation of economic impact, is what economists and the Bureau of Economic Analysis use and is the emphasis of this report. Total output including indirect and induced effects is $719,150,556.

The combination of direct, indirect, and induced effects creates jobs in a variety of industries. Table 68 shows the different industries created by the economic contribution of agriculture. Cattle ranching, support activities for agriculture, and other crop farming represent the largest job contributors due to the direct effects of agricultural employment. Moving down the list to the top supply chain impacted industries include trucking and transportation, other real estate, and wholesale goods merchants.

Table 67:
Total Economic Impact Agriculture

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Regional GDP	Output
Direct Effect	8,450	$72,921,727	$215,721,849	$587,311,998
Indirect Effect	364	$20,925,715	$35,436,612	$81,072,229
Induced Effect	308	$13,824,613	$30,550,294	$50,766,329
Total Effect	9,123	$107,672,055	$281,708,755	$719,150,556

[2] A good example illustrating the relationship between total output and GDP is car production: GDP only counts the final value of the car, but total output adds the intermediate goods of steel, rubber, and other parts, plus the total value of the car. This is known as double counting in GDP calculations.

Table 68:
Agriculture Employment Impact by Industry

Industry	Direct Employment	Indirect Employment	Induced Employment	Total Employment
Beef cattle ranching and farming, including feedlots and dual-purpose ranching and farming	4,239	0	0	4,239
Support activities for agriculture and forestry	1,238	0	0	1,238
All other crop farming	914	0	0	914
Fruit farming	603	0	0	603
Vegetable and melon farming	479	0	0	479
Animal production, except cattle and poultry and eggs	370	0	0	370
Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production	179	0	0	179
Dairy cattle and milk production	119	0	0	119
Grain farming	92	0	0	92
Poultry and egg production	83	0	0	83
Truck transportation	0	44	2	46
Other real estate	0	29	10	39
Wholesale - Other nondurable goods merchant wholesalers	0	33	1	34
Full-service restaurants	0	6	17	22
Couriers and messengers	0	18	3	21

Table 69 illustrates the tax impacts at the federal, state, county, and city/special-district levels. The total economic contribution of agriculture generated $54,224,995 in taxes, $10,543,341 flowing to the state and $33,895,693 to the federal government. Combining sub-county general ($2,472,271), sub-county special districts ($4,299,443), and county taxes ($3,014,247) amounts to $9,785,961, which is the total tax impact on the county. These revenues derive from payroll, income, sales, property, and excise taxes created through direct, supply-chain, and household-spending effects.

Table 69:
Total Tax Impact

	Sub-County General	Sub-County Special Districts	County	State	Federal	Total
Direct	$1,339,039	$2,333,201	$1,622,230	$6,644,394	$24,750,673	$36,689,537
Indirect	$575,195	$1,097,762	$724,476	$1,990,697	$5,297,360	$9,685,490
Induced	$558,036	$868,480	$667,541	$1,908,250	$3,847,661	$7,849,968
Total	$2,472,271	$4,299,443	$3,014,247	$10,543,341	$33,895,693	$54,224,995

INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The following sections break down the total economic impact down by county, organized as follows:

1) Mesa County
2) Montrose County
3) Delta County
4) Garfield County
5) Rio Blanco County

These five counties add to the total economic contribution. Table 70 summarizes the job results for all five counties and shows the direct and total jobs created. The 4th column shows the percentage impact of total jobs and shows Mesa County 38.6% of the impact, with Delta County second at 23.5%, and Montrose 3rd at 21.5%.

Table 70:
Employment Economic Impact Category Comparison

Category	Direct Jobs	Total Jobs	% Total Job Impact
Mesa County	3,220	3,520	38.6%
Montrose County	1,824	1,962	21.5%
Delta County	1,973	2,140	23.5%
Garfield County	1,003	1,048	11.5%
Rio Blanco County	429	452	4.9%
Total	8,450	9,123	

Mesa County

Table 71 shows that agriculture in Mesa County generates a significant economic contribution, supporting 3,520 jobs and producing $98,378,953 in regional GDP. Labor income totals $35,825,620, and total output, which includes GDP plus the value of intermediate goods, is $252,068,224. These figures include direct activity within the agricultural sector, along with ripple effects through the local supply chain and household spending. Table 72 shows that this activity generates $16,372,870 in combined state and local taxes. The top employment from agriculture in Mesa County includes beef cattle ranching (1,479), all other crop farming (438), fruit farming (406), support activities for agriculture (361), and animal production (except cattle and poultry and eggs) (151). These five sectors together account for the vast majority of the county's agricultural employment impact, with cattle production by far the primary activity.

Table 71:

Economic Contribution of Agriculture in Mesa County

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Regional GDP	Output
Direct Effect	3,220	$18,842,369	$68,325,732	$191,328,008
Indirect Effect	173	$10,575,027	$17,244,043	$39,377,470
Induced Effect	127	$6,408,223	$12,809,178	$21,362,746
Total Effect	3,520	$35,825,620	$98,378,953	$252,068,224

Table 72:

Mesa County Tax Contribution

	Sub-County General	Sub-County Special Districts	County	State	Federal	Total
Direct	$561,566	$763,332	$476,619	$2,505,268	$7,079,887	$11,386,673
Indirect	$204,478	$278,935	$173,681	$826,305	$2,669,552	$4,152,951
Induced	$224,041	$304,337	$190,126	$779,947	$1,720,279	$3,218,730
Total	$990,086	$1,346,604	$840,426	$4,111,520	$11,469,718	$18,758,354

Table 73:

Top 5 Mesa County Agriculture Employment Impact by Industry

Industry	Total Employment
Beef cattle ranching and farming, including feedlots and dual-purpose ranching and farming	1,479.31
All other crop farming	438.24
Fruit farming	406.15
Support activities for agriculture and forestry	361.58
Animal production, except cattle and poultry and eggs	150.67

Montrose County

Agriculture in Montrose County supports 1,962 jobs and generates $65,663,702 in regional GDP (Table 74). The sector contributes $24,264,410 in labor income, and $170,321,604 in total output. As shown in table 75, the total state and local tax contribution is estimated at $4,681,487. The top five industries in agricultural employment are beef cattle ranching (896), support activities for agriculture (370), vegetable and melon farming (192), all other crop farming (182), and other animal production (59). This shows a more diversified mix than some neighboring counties.

Table 74:
Economic Contribution of Agriculture in Montrose County

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Regional GDP	Output
Direct Effect	1,824	$17,451,994	$51,872,876	$143,877,573
Indirect Effect	68	$3,829,534	$7,134,790	$15,331,438
Induced Effect	69	$2,982,882	$6,656,036	$11,112,593
Total Effect	1,962	$24,264,410	$65,663,702	$170,321,604

Table 75:
Montrose County Tax Contribution

	Sub-County General	Sub-County Special Districts	County	State	Federal	Total
Direct	$345,431	$379,803	$414,751	$1,534,737	$6,061,059	$8,735,781
Indirect	$182,845	$199,987	$219,019	$501,400	$1,010,519	$2,113,769
Induced	$147,786	$161,614	$177,011	$417,103	$836,737	$1,740,251
Total	$676,062	$741,404	$810,781	$2,453,240	$7,908,315	$12,589,801

Table 76:
Top 5 Montrose County Agriculture Employment Impact by Industry

Industry	Total Employment
Beef cattle ranching and farming, including feedlots and dual-purpose ranching and farming	896.14
Support activities for agriculture and forestry	369.78
Vegetable and melon farming	192.11
All other crop farming	182.33
Animal production, except cattle and poultry and eggs	59.33

Delta County

Delta County's agricultural economy ranks highest as a percentage of the total economy of the five counties, supporting 2,140 jobs and $78,766,690 in GDP. Total labor income reaches $35,238,454, while total output is $180,798,332. As shown in Table 78, the state and local tax contribution totals $5,446,304. The top employment sectors include beef cattle ranching (958), support activities (356), fruit farming (170), vegetable and melon farming (142), and all other crop farming (122), with livestock and orchard operations leading the way.

Table 77:
Economic Contribution of Agriculture in Delta County

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Regional GDP	Output
Direct Effect	1,973	$28,234,740	$64,080,787	$150,706,641
Indirect Effect	76	$3,568,654	$5,917,234	$15,424,262
Induced Effect	91	$3,435,061	$8,768,669	$14,667,429
Total Effect	2,140	$35,238,454	$78,766,690	$180,798,332

Table 78:
Delta County Tax Contribution

	Sub-County General	Sub-County Special Districts	County	State	Federal	Total
Direct	$291,770	$520,325	$488,180	$1,943,529	$8,697,503	$11,941,308
Indirect	$105,749	$187,514	$175,499	$438,582	$942,235	$1,849,579
Induced	$152,549	$270,186	$252,758	$619,661	$1,043,000	$2,338,155
Total	$550,068	$978,025	$916,438	$3,001,773	$10,682,739	$16,129,043

Table 79:
Top 5 Delta County Agriculture Employment Impact by Industry

Industry	Total Employment
Beef cattle ranching and farming, including feedlots and dual-purpose ranching and farming	958.39
Support activities for agriculture and forestry	355.60
Fruit farming	169.83
Vegetable and melon farming	142.14
All other crop farming	122.45

Garfield County

Table 80 shows that agriculture in Garfield County supports 1,003 jobs, with $9,066,985 in labor income and $24,170,999 in GDP. Total output is $62,784,761. The state and local tax contribution comes to $1,660,684, driven by both direct agricultural production and related spending in the local economy. Table 81 shows the top five agricultural employment industries as beef cattle ranching (588), support activities (147), all other crop farming (108), greenhouse/nursery production (60), and other animal production (53), reflecting a balance between ranching, support services, and small-scale specialty agriculture.

Table 80:
Economic Contribution of Agriculture in Garfield County

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Regional GDP	Output
Direct Effect	1,003	$6,251,782	$18,817,177	$52,981,067
Indirect Effect	29	$1,961,448	$3,492,430	$6,934,954
Induced Effect	16	$853,755	$1,861,392	$2,868,740
Total Effect	1,048	$9,066,985	$24,170,999	$62,784,761

Table 81:
Garfield County Tax Contribution

	Sub-County General	Sub-County Special Districts	County	State	Federal	Total
Direct	$114,596	$322,040	$115,296	$421,690	$1,920,483	$2,894,105
Indirect	$63,389	$177,645	$63,336	$160,537	$451,626	$916,532
Induced	$30,109	$84,333	$30,047	$77,666	$205,902	$428,057
Total	$208,095	$584,018	$208,679	$659,892	$2,578,011	$4,238,695

Table 82:
Top 5 Garfield County Agriculture Employment Impact by Industry

Industry	Total Employment
Beef cattle ranching and farming, including feedlots and dual-purpose ranching and farming	588.33
Support activities for agriculture and forestry	146.58
All other crop farming	107.93
Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production	60.30
Animal production, except cattle and poultry and eggs	53.15

Rio Blanco County

Although a smaller county, agriculture in Rio Blanco County still provides substantial local impact. The sector supports 452 jobs, $3,276,587 in labor income, and $14,728,411 in GDP. Total output is over $53,177,636, with state and local taxes totaling $1,573,827. Agricultural employment is concentrated in beef cattle ranching (317), as well as all other crop farming (63), animal production (26), vegetable and melon farming (12), and greenhouse/nursery production (5). This structure reflects a traditional ranching economy with a modest degree of crop diversification.

Table 83:
Economic Contribution of Agriculture in Rio Blanco County

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Regional GDP	Output
Direct Effect	429	$2,140,843	$12,625,277	$48,418,709
Indirect Effect	18	$991,052	$1,648,115	$4,004,105
Induced Effect	5	$144,692	$455,020	$754,821
Total Effect	452	$3,276,587	$14,728,411	$53,177,636

Table 84:
Rio Blanco County Tax Contribution

	Sub-County General	Sub-County Special Districts	County	State	Federal	Total
Direct	$25,677	$347,700	$127,383	$239,170	$991,740	$1,731,669
Indirect	$18,734	$253,681	$92,942	$63,874	$223,428	$652,658
Induced	$3,551	$48,010	$17,600	$13,873	$41,742	$124,775
Total	$47,961	$649,391	$237,924	$316,916	$1,256,911	$2,509,103

Table 85:
Top 5 Rio Blanco County Agriculture Employment Impact by Industry

Industry	Total Employment
Beef cattle ranching and farming, including feedlots and dual-purpose ranching and farming	316.80
All other crop farming	62.95
Animal production, except cattle and poultry and eggs	25.64
Vegetable and melon farming	11.66
Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production	4.74

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION CONCLUSION

The total economic contribution can be seen in context in Tables 87 and 88. Table 87 shows the total employment, labor income, and regional GDP for each of the five counties. Table 87 takes the direct economic contribution, omitting indirect and induced effects, and divides by the total numbers in Table 86. This shows that 11.92% of employment in Delta County is directly tied to agriculture, with 9.42% of employment Rio Blanco County, 6.74% in Montrose County, 3.29% in Mesa County, and 2.43% in Garfield County. Job numbers are a higher percentage than regional GDP and labor income, and this is due to lower wages in the agricultural sector. The largest share of GDP belongs to Delta County at 5.19%, with Rio Blanco County (2.66%) and Montrose County (2.26%) next.

Table 88 shows the total economic contribution, adding direct, indirect, and induced effects together, and shows the percentages compared to Table 86. The trend does not change, but the impact increases. For Delta County, the impact of agriculture on employment increases from 11.92% to 12.93%, a 1% increase. Adding up total employment, labor income, and regional GDP (Table 77) and dividing by the sum of the total economic impact in Table 79 shows that regional agriculture accounts for 4.87% of jobs, 1.65% of GDP, and 1.07% of labor income. For the five county area, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) has an estimate of agricultural jobs at exactly 4%. Other industries of similar jobs/GDP scale for the five county area include manufacturing (3.5%), real estate (3.9%), and administration and waste services (4.6%).

Table 86:
County Economic Characteristics

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Regional GDP
Mesa	97,908	$5,361,601,295	$9,009,670,377
Montrose	27,062	$1,293,023,660	$2,295,083,177
Delta	16,548	$698,957,217	$1,235,429,561
Garfield	41,288	$2,442,006,072	$4,100,408,581
Rio Blanco	4,556	$238,045,713	$475,347,455
Total	187,362	$10,033,633,957	$17,115,939,151

Table 87:
County Direct Economic Impact Summary

County	Employment	Labor Income	Regional GDP
Mesa	3,220	$18,842,369	$68,325,732
Montrose	1,824	$17,451,994	$51,872,876
Delta	1,973	$28,234,740	$64,080,787
Garfield	1,003	$6,251,782	$18,817,177
Rio Blanco	429	$2,140,843	$12,625,277
Total	8,449	$72,921,728	$215,721,849
	% Employment	% Labor Income	% Regional GDP
Mesa	3.29%	0.35%	0.76%
Montrose	6.74%	1.35%	2.26%
Delta	11.92%	4.04%	5.19%
Garfield	2.43%	0.26%	0.46%
Rio Blanco	9.42%	0.90%	2.66%
Total	4.51%	0.73%	1.26%

Table 88:

County Total Economic Impact Summary

County	Employment	Labor Income	Regional GDP
Mesa	3,520	$35,825,620	$98,378,953
Montrose	1,962	$24,264,410	$65,663,702
Delta	2,140	$35,238,454	$78,766,690
Garfield	1,048	$9,066,985	$24,170,999
Rio Blanco	452	$3,276,587	$14,728,411
Total	9,122	107,672,056	281,708,755
	% Employment	% Labor Income	% Regional GDP
Mesa	3.60%	0.67%	1.09%
Montrose	7.25%	1.88%	2.86%
Delta	12.93%	5.04%	6.38%
Garfield	2.54%	0.37%	0.59%
Rio Blanco	9.92%	1.38%	3.10%
Total	4.87%	1.07%	1.65%

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