

Agritourism and Recreational Services on US Farms



Data from the 2022 Census of Agriculture

NERCRD Data Brief 2024-1

published May 8, 2023



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This research brief was published by the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development (NERCRD), one of four regionally focused centers funded by the USDA NIFA to help connect the nationwide network of Land-Grant college and university researchers, educators, and practitioners across state lines while reducing duplication of effort. Learn more at nercrd.psu.edu.



NERCRD DATA BRIEF 2024-1

Agritourism and Recreational Services on US Farms: Data from the 2022 Census of Agriculture

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Suggested Citation: Entsminger, Jason S., and Claudia Schmidt. 2024. “Agritourism and Recreational Services on US Farms: Data from the 2022 Census of Agriculture.” NERCRD Data Brief 2024–1. <https://nercrd.psu.edu/pubs/agritourism-data-2022-census-of-agriculture/>.

Acknowledgements: The authors thank Stephan Goetz, Ph.D., Sarah Cornelisse, and Kristen Devlin for their helpful comments used in developing and editing this data brief.

This work was supported in part by the United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) under projects #2020-68006-31683 and #2021-51150-34733, by the Pennsylvania State University and University of Maine, and by NIFA Multistate/Regional Research Appropriations under project #NE2249. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or those of other funders.

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Introduction

In 2022, 28,617 agricultural operations had earnings from agritourism or recreational services. Compared to data from the previous Census of Agriculture 2017, the number of agritourism operations stayed relatively the same (28,575 operations in 2017). This accounts for 1.5% of all U.S. agricultural operations and 4.1% of those with any income from farm-related sources. Receipts from agritourism and recreational services totaled \$1.26 billion of income to U.S. farms – or 5.7% of all receipts by U.S. farms from sources other than the sale of agricultural products. On average, U.S. agritourism operations earned \$44,004 in gross revenue from on-farm tourism and recreational services in 2022.

While the number of agritourism operations remained about the same compared to the 2017 census, total gross receipts from agritourism and recreational services increased by \$309.9 million (nominal) – a 33% increase over the 2017 total of \$949.3 million. In this data brief, we provide an overview of the available census data of producers who receive income from “agritourism or recreational services.” The Census of Agriculture asks about agritourism as follows: “Report the gross dollar amount received before taxes and expenses in 2017 for - Agri-tourism and recreational services, such as farm tours, hay rides, hunting, fishing, etc.” (USDA NASS Census of Agriculture, 2022, pg. 23). However, this definition does not capture all agritourism activities on a working farm. Sales directly from farm operations, such as those from a pick-your-own activity or wine purchased by a visitor following a complimentary vineyard tour, are explicitly not considered part of agritourism according to the previous question. Instead, these transactions are categorized under direct sales. Since agritourism and direct sales are captured separately by the agricultural census, we will describe income received from direct-to-consumer sales in a separate data brief. Please refer to our previously published [national and state-level agritourism and direct-to-consumer sales factsheets](#) for more information about these activities based on 2017 census data.

Key Definitions

Agritourism and Recreational Services. For the purposes of USDA data, this number excludes the value of agricultural and food products sold directly to consumers on farm.

Agritourism Operations. Refers here to those farms and ranches that reported gross receipts from agritourism and recreational services in Section 34 of the 2022 Census of Agriculture questionnaire (Report Form 22-A100).

Income from Farm-related Sources. Used by USDA to refer to gross revenues derived from on-farm activities other than sales, including agritourism and recreational services, governmental and insurance payments, customwork/agricultural services, rent earned, sales of forest products, etc.

Agritourism and Recreational Services by Farm Size

One means of classifying agricultural operations is by the total land they have in production. Often termed "farm size," this is measured as the total number of acres held and used by operations. USDA has generally established categories for this measure broken into ranges of total farm acreage. Those categories are reported along the horizontal axis of Figures 1 and 2.

Data show that the largest number of agritourism operations in a single farm size category are those producing on between 10 and 49.9 acres of land; in 2022, there were 6,686 agritourism operations within this category, accounting for 23.4% of all agritourism operations in the U.S. From 2017 to 2022 there was a decline in the number of large farms reporting receipts from agritourism and recreational services and an increase in the number of smaller farms. For example, in 2017 farms working on 219 or fewer acres of land accounted for 53.7% of U.S. agritourism operations, but by 2022 one only need count up to those farms with 139 or fewer acres accounted to reach a similar proportion (52.8%) of U.S. agritourism operations. Conversely, there was a 7.3% decline in the number of agritourism operations producing on 220 or more acres from 2017 to 2022. It should be noted that the distribution of agritourism operations across farm size categories does reflect the same general trend for all U.S. agriculture, with fewer mid-size farms and greater numbers of small and large farms.

In addition to data on number of agritourism operations by farm size, Figure 1 also reports data on the total gross receipts from agritourism and recreational services on U.S. farms in 2017 and 2022. In the most recent Census of Agriculture, agritourism operations with 219 or fewer acres accounted for 54.3% of total agritourism receipts. The largest value accrued for any single farm size category was among agritourism operations with 2,000 or more acres, accounting for \$251.7 million – or 20% – of agritourism and recreational services receipts. This was a \$43 million increase over the category's 2017 figure – or growth of 4.5%. This is despite a decline of 554 total agritourism operations within this category over that period. However, these large farms did not have the greatest total growth in agritourism and recreation receipts.

Agritourism operations with between 10 and 49.9 acres in production saw the largest total economic growth, accounting for \$226.7 million of agritourism receipts in 2022, a \$75.2 million – or 49.6% – increase over 2017. Very small farms, with fewer than 10 acres, saw the greatest proportional increase in agritourism receipts, rising 137.2% to \$89 million (a net gain of \$51.7 million). In fact, by 2022, farms under 50 acres account for one-quarter of agritourism income in the U.S. Critically, the average agritourism income per farm more than doubled between 2017 and 2022 for those with less than 10 acres; in 2022, the average income from these activities among the smallest farms went up 105% to \$27,010. For operations with 10 to 49.9 acres, the average increased a more conservative 19% to \$33,903. Figure 2 provides additional data on growth in per-farm average receipts.

Agritourism by Farm Size (Acreage) Comparison of Operations and Agritourism Receipts, 2017 to 2022

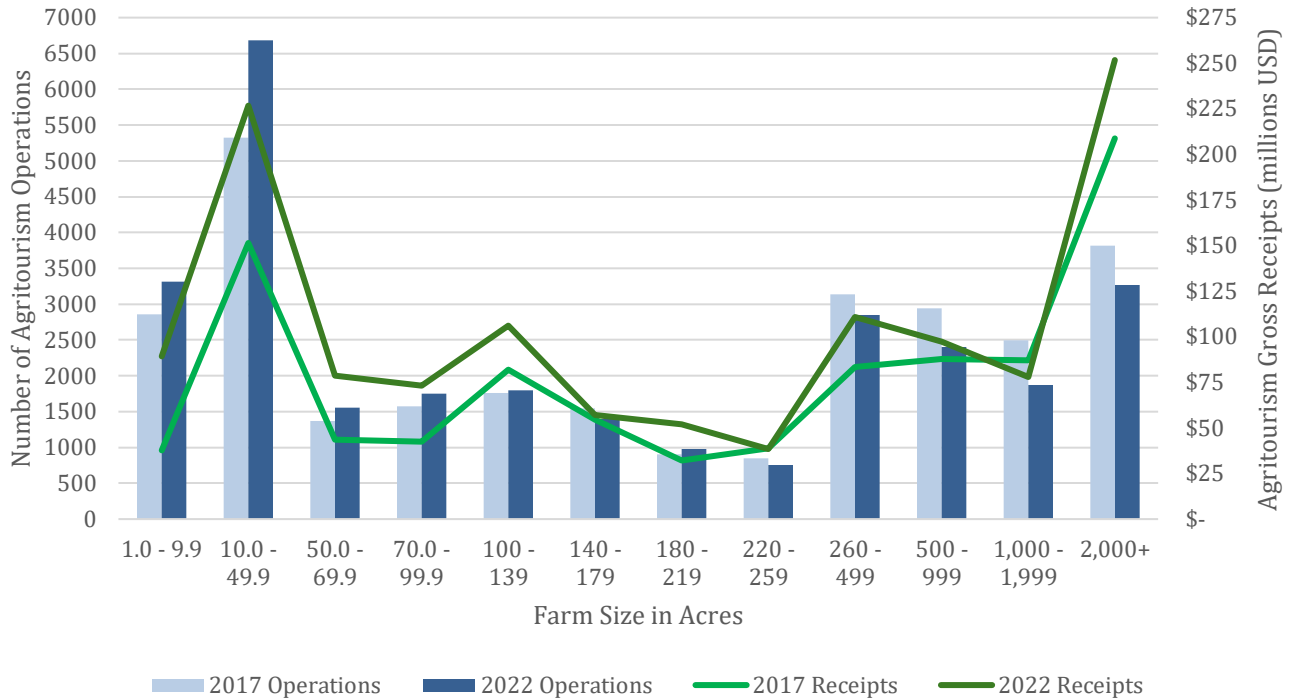


Figure 1. Agritourism in the U.S. by farm size: Comparison of number of agritourism operations and gross receipts from agritourism, 2017 to 2022

Average Receipts per Farm from Agritourism and Recreational Services, 2017 to 2022 by Farm Size

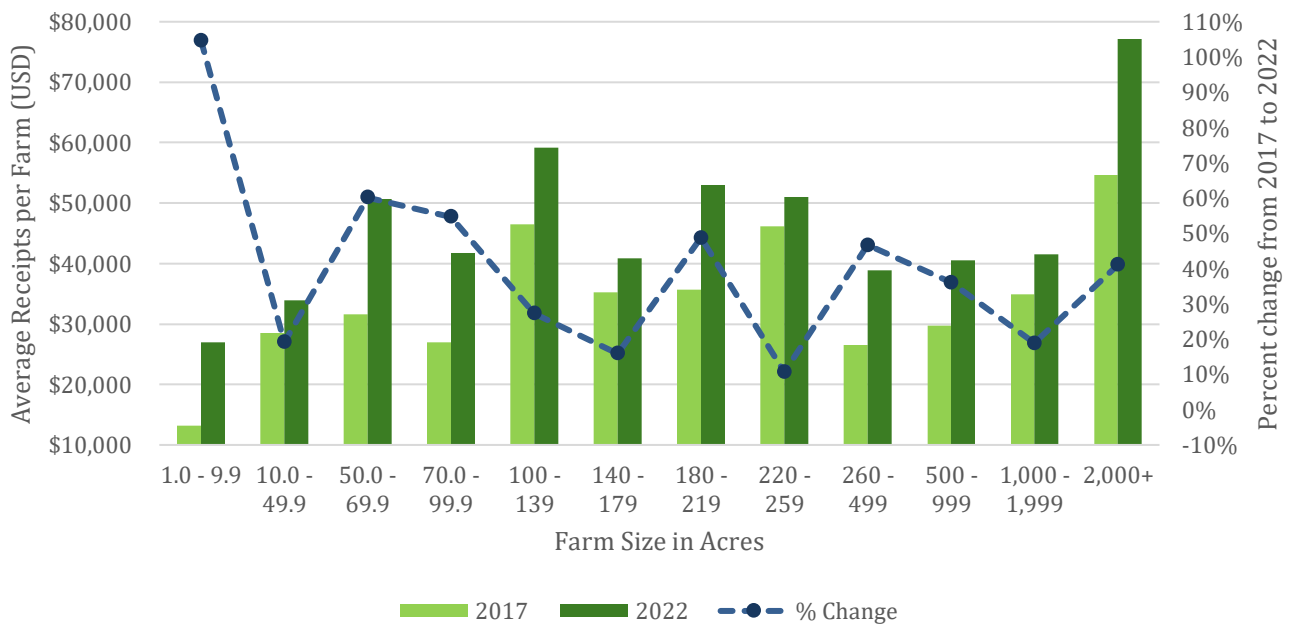


Figure 2. Agritourism in the U.S. by farm size: Average receipts per farm from agritourism and recreational services, 2017 to 2022

Agritourism and Recreational Services by Economic Class

Agricultural operations are also often classified based on the total revenues to the farm in a given year. USDA measures this in various ways, but one common method with wide use is the farm's "economic class." This is measured as the sum of the market value of agricultural products sold and Federal farm program payments. Notably, this classification scheme does not include income from other farm-related sources, such as agritourism. Thus, it is useful to compare the data on other farm income sources, such as agritourism and recreation services, across the farm economic class categories to understand how these other incomes sources may augment and diversify farm revenues beyond sales and government payments. USDA has established standard categories for this classification based on ranges of agricultural sales and government payment revenues. These categories are reported along the horizontal axis of Figures 3 and 4.

Compared to prior data based on farm size, Figure 3 shows that when considering economic class there is a smoother distribution of agritourism operations across categories. A structure commonly seen in agricultural data of this kind is seen, with an anomalous peak for farms with less than \$1,000 in gross income from sales and Federal payments followed by a normal distribution with a slight downward skew. The largest number of agritourism operations in a single economic class category are those with sales and Federal payments totaling between \$10,000 and \$24,999; in 2022 there were 4,684 agritourism operations within this category, accounting for 16.4% of all agritourism operations in the U.S. that year. Farms with fewer than \$1,000 in sales were roughly matched, accounting for 15.52% of U.S. agritourism operations (totaling 4,440). From 2017 to 2022 there was negligible variation in the number of agritourism operations within all economic class categories.

Figure 3 shows that farms in the upper-mid ranges of sales and payments income have experienced a considerable increase in total gross receipts from agritourism and recreational services on U.S. farms between 2017 and 2022. In 2017, agritourism operations in the economic classes spanning \$50,000 to \$250,000 in income had additional receipts from agritourism and recreational services of \$230.8 million; in 2022 that number grew to \$360.5 million, a \$129.8 million – or 56.2% – increase. The number of agritourism operations in this economic class range decreased by 288 in that time, from 6,120 to 5,832 farms.

This trend is also seen in data on per-farm average receipts from agritourism and recreational services; as seen in Figure 4, the average agritourism receipts for farms in economic classes spanning \$50,000 to \$1 million show substantial growth rates of 45 to 69 percent. Agritourism operations in the second-highest economic class (\$500k - \$1M) saw the largest total increase in per-farm average income from agritourism and recreation, increasing \$42,309 between 2017 (\$66,619) and 2022 (\$109,224). The largest proportional growth in average income from agritourism and recreation was among operations in the fourth-highest economic class (\$100k - \$250k) at 69%; this represents a total increase of \$28,728 for the average agritourism operation in the category, rising from \$41,554 in 2017 to \$70,281 in 2022. Intriguingly, agritourism operations in the highest economic class (more than \$1 million in product sales and Federal payments) saw a net decrease in the average income from agritourism and recreation.

Agritourism by Farm Economic Class Comparison of Operations and Agritourism Receipts, 2017 to 2022

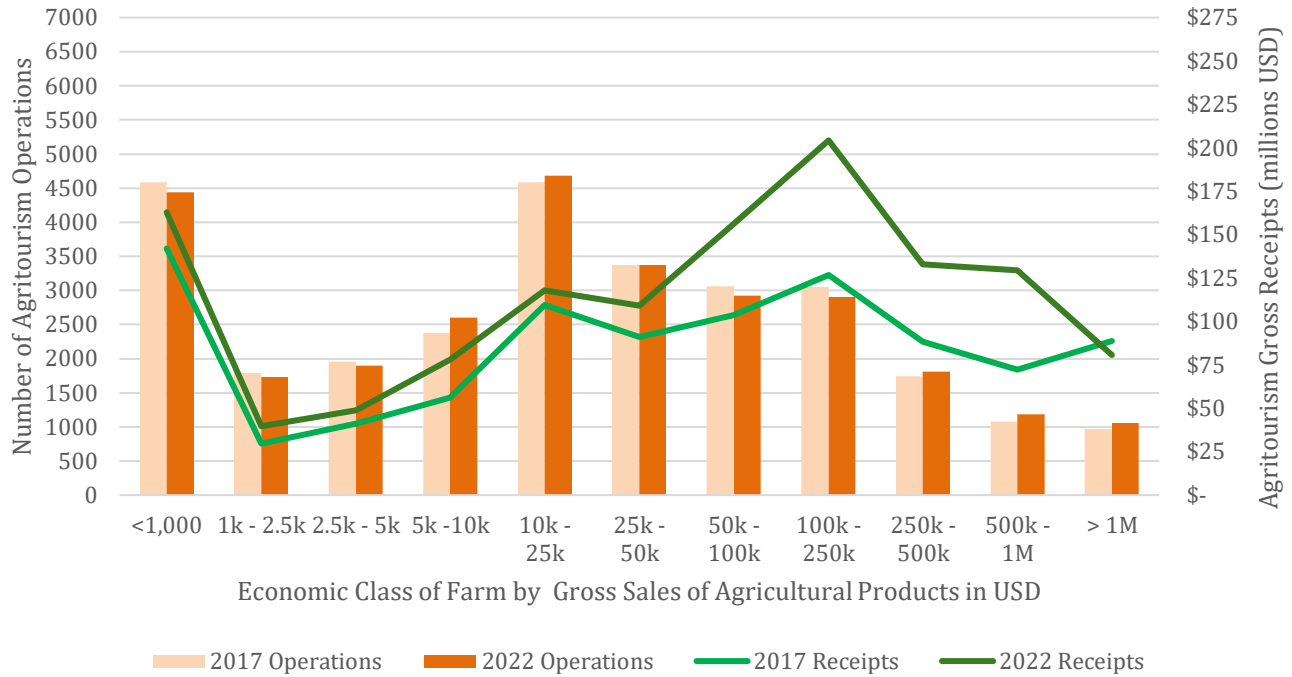


Figure 3. Agritourism in the U.S. by economic class of farms: Comparison of number of agritourism operations and gross receipts from agritourism, 2017 to 2022

Agritourism by Farm Economic Class Average Receipts per Farm from Agritourism Recreational Services, 2017 to 2022

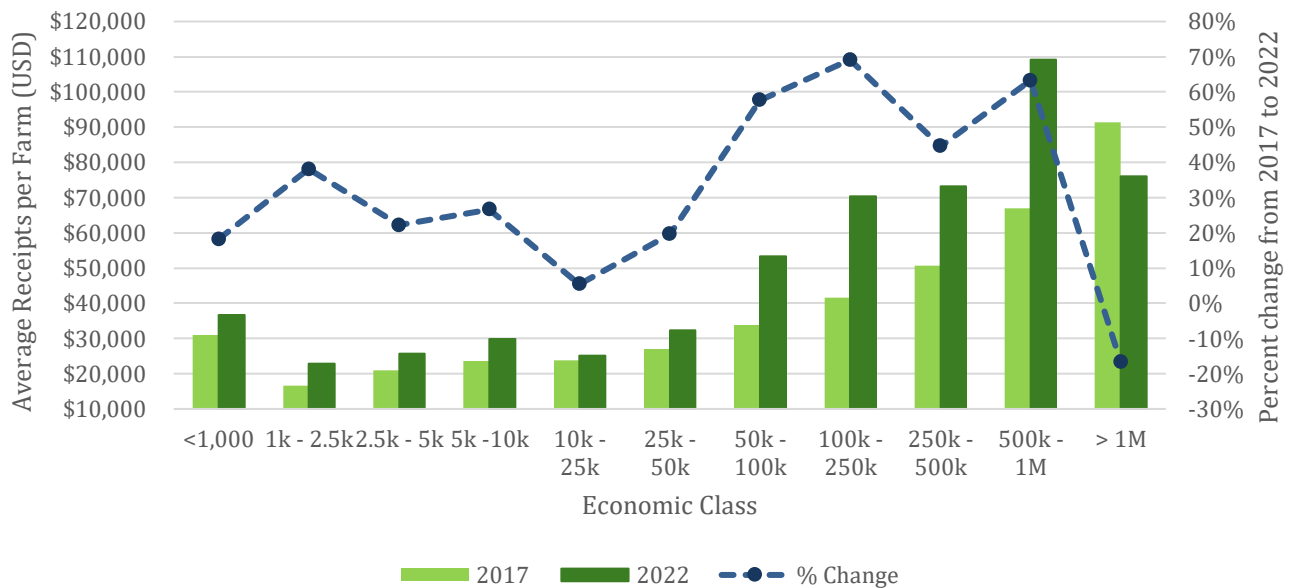


Figure 4. Agritourism in the U.S. by economic class of farms: Average receipts per farm from agritourism and recreational services, 2017 to 2022

Distribution of Agritourism Operations in the U.S.

While data at the national level help reveal aggregated trends among U.S. agricultural enterprises engaged in tourism and recreational services, spatial distribution is also an important factor in understanding the landscape of American agritourism. The following sections report selected information from the 2022 Census of Agriculture by state to reveal some of the geography of U.S. agritourism.

Agritourism Operations by State

A key measure of agritourism geography – the number of agritourism operations – shows Texas has the largest estimated number of U.S. farms and ranches reporting income from agritourism and on-farm recreational activities. USDA NASS data from the 2022 Census of Agriculture reports 4,816 agritourism operations in the Lone Star State. The second highest total number of agritourism operations is California (1,245), followed by North Carolina (982), New York (947), and Colorado (909). States with the fewest number of agritourism operations include Nevada (32), Rhode Island (46), Delaware (47), and Alaska (58). Figure 5 reports data for all 50 states.

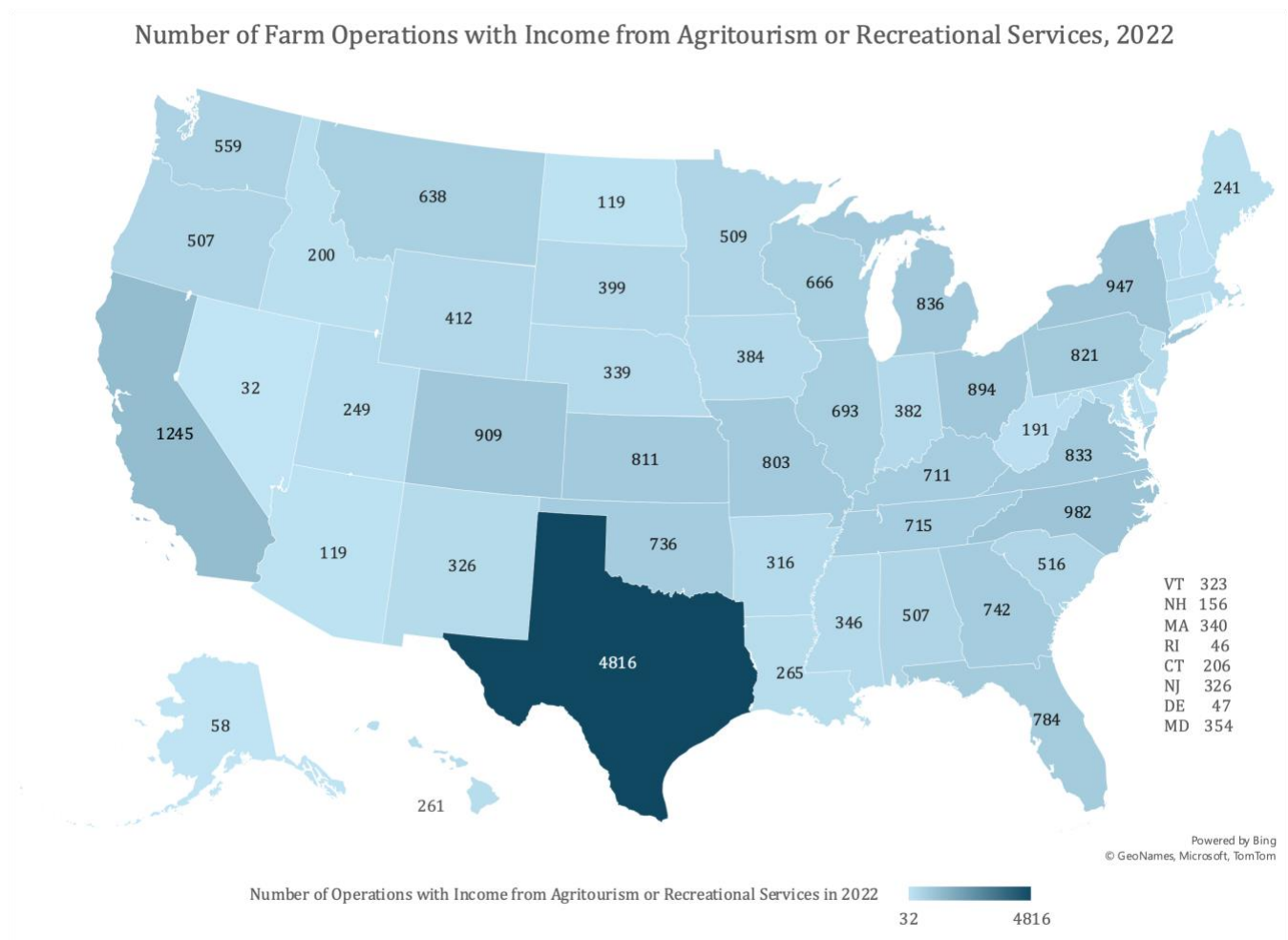


Figure 5. Number of agritourism operations by U.S. state in 2022

Figure 6 shows the percentage change in the number of agritourism operations from the 2017 to the 2022 census. The most significant declines are observed in Nevada (-44%, from 57 to 32 operations), Arizona (-41%, from 202 to 119 operations), and New Mexico (-30%, from 465 to 326 operations). Further, while Texas saw a 16% decline, it had the largest total change of any state in total number of agritourism operators losing 907 operations (from 5,723 in 2017 down to 4,816 in 2022). On the other hand, several states have seen notable proportional growth in their agritourism sectors. Vermont leads the nation with a 74% increase (from 186 to 323 operations), followed by Delaware (42%, from 33 to 47 operations) and Massachusetts (42%, from 240 to 340 operations). Other states with notable growth include West Virginia (38%), Ohio (27%), and Louisiana and Missouri (each with 23%). The majority of states experienced either moderate increases or decreases in the number of agritourism operations between the two most recent Census of Agriculture observation years.

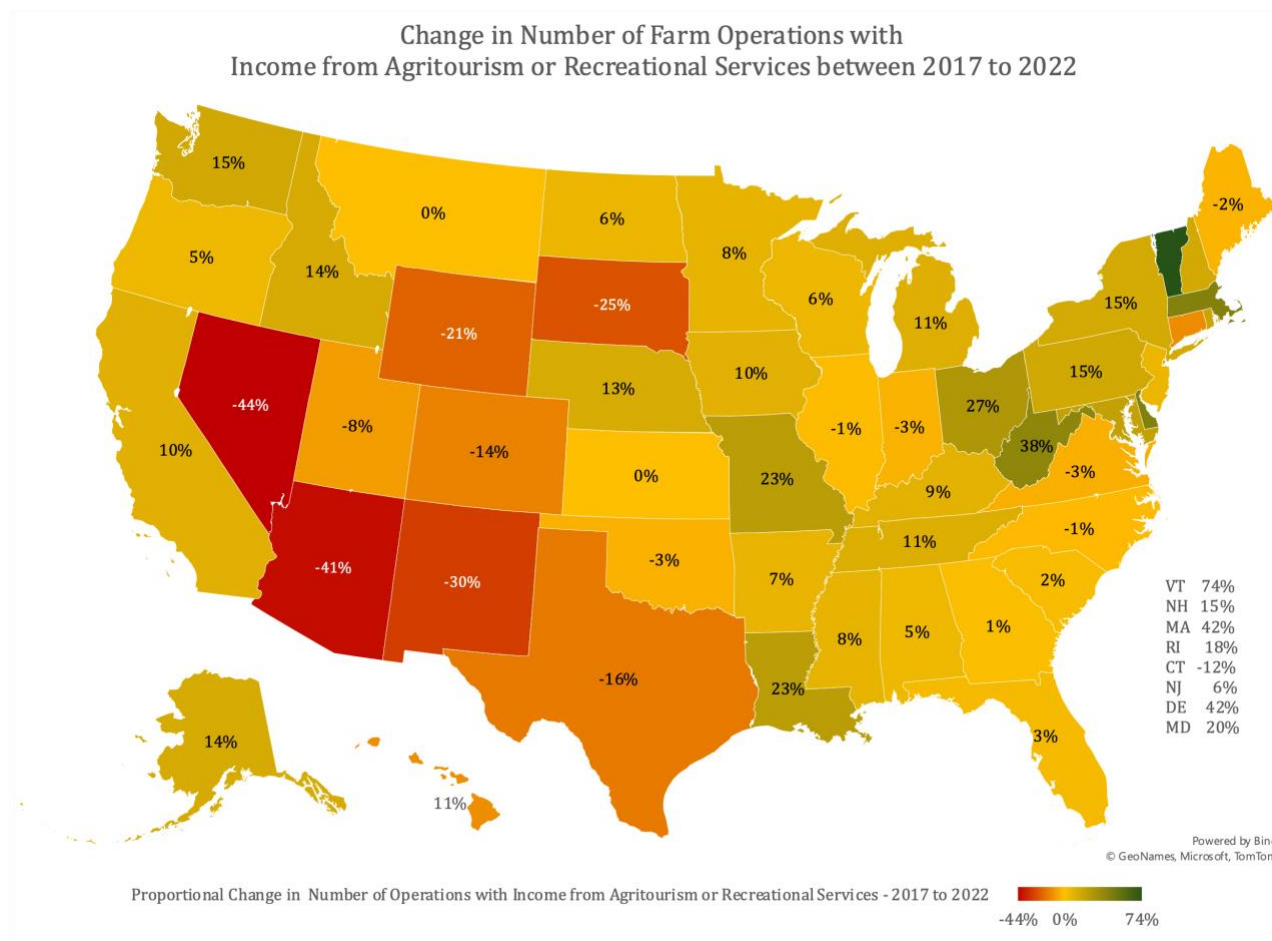


Figure 6. Proportional change in the number of agritourism operations between 2017 and 2022 by U.S. state

The proportion of all farms and ranches within a region engaged in agritourism and recreation services is an important indicator of agritourism’s diffusion within a state’s agricultural economy. Figures 7 and 8 report data on the proportion of all farms and those with farm-related income, respectively, that are estimated to have agritourism receipts. Alaska and Vermont tie for the states with the largest proportion of farms to have agritourism and recreation income, at 4.9%. Other New England states also feature prominently in the top ten, with Massachusetts (4.8%), Rhode Island (4.4%), Connecticut (4.1%), New Hampshire (4.0%), and Maine (3.4%) all shown to have notable proportions of their farms earning agritourism revenues. Also in the top 10 are Hawai’i (4.0%), Wyoming (3.9%), and New Jersey (3.3%). All of these states also rank among those with the highest ratios of agritourism operations as a proportion of farms with income from farm-related sources outside of product sales and government

payments. Nine of the ten listed remain at the top of the list, led by Alaska where 29.9% of the farms with non-sales receipts engage in agritourism. Here, Texas enters the number 10 spot, with agritourism and recreational services receipts on 8.7% of all farms with non-sales income sources.

Iowa and North Dakota consistently have the lowest proportion of farms –relative both to all farms and to those with farm-related income – engaged in agritourism. Interestingly, while Arizona has one of the smallest percentages of all agricultural operations in the state engaged in agritourism (0.7%), it is among the top 50% of states in terms of the percentage of operations with farm-related income that have agritourism and recreation receipts (5.8%). As a general matter, data from the 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture indicate that when measured as a proportion of farms, agritourism and on-farm recreation are more predominant along the two coasts, within the Western inter-mountain zone, and for non-contiguous states, with less diffusion among the plains states of the Midwest.

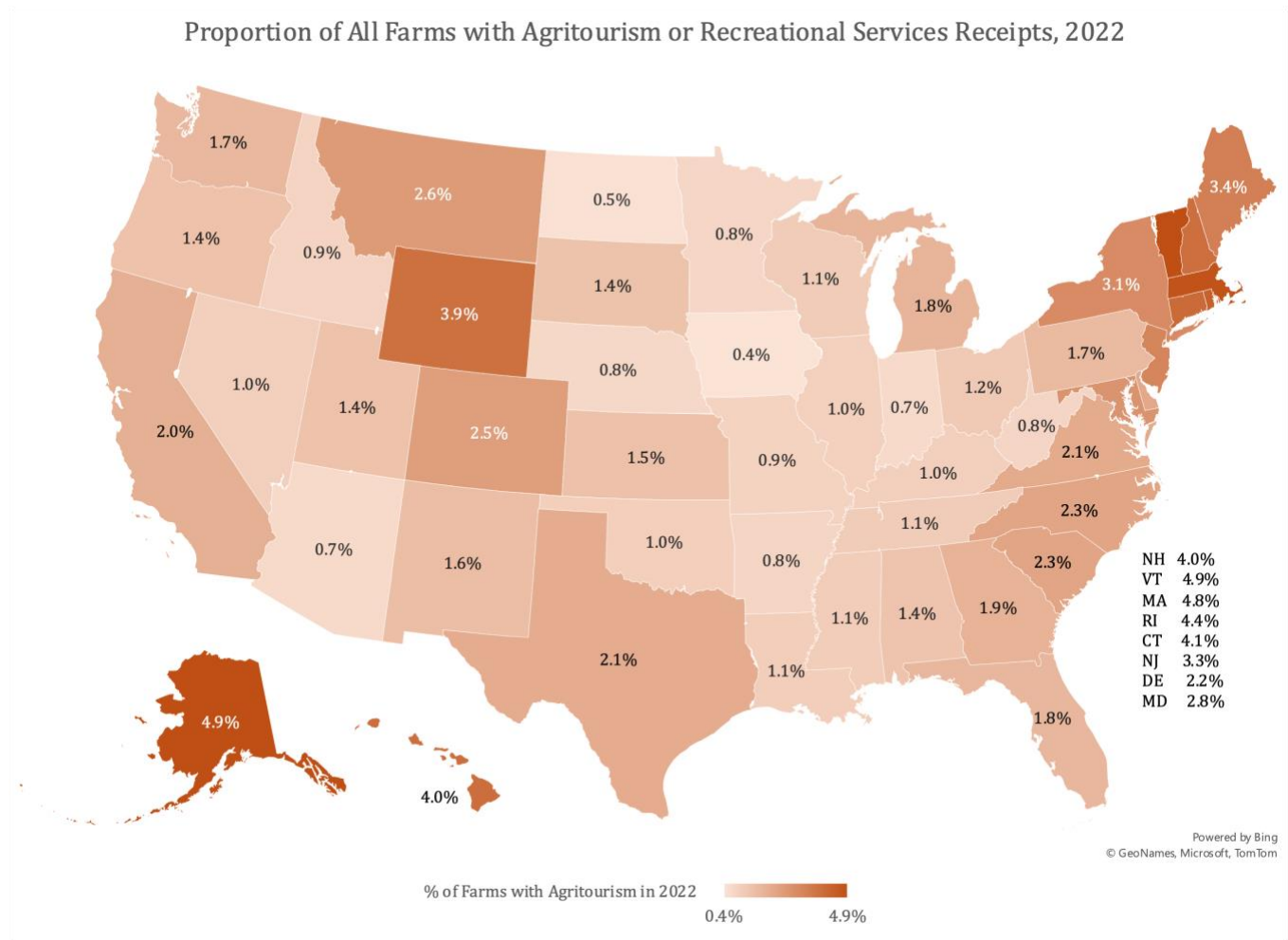


Figure 7. Proportion of all farms with agritourism receipts by U.S. state in 2022

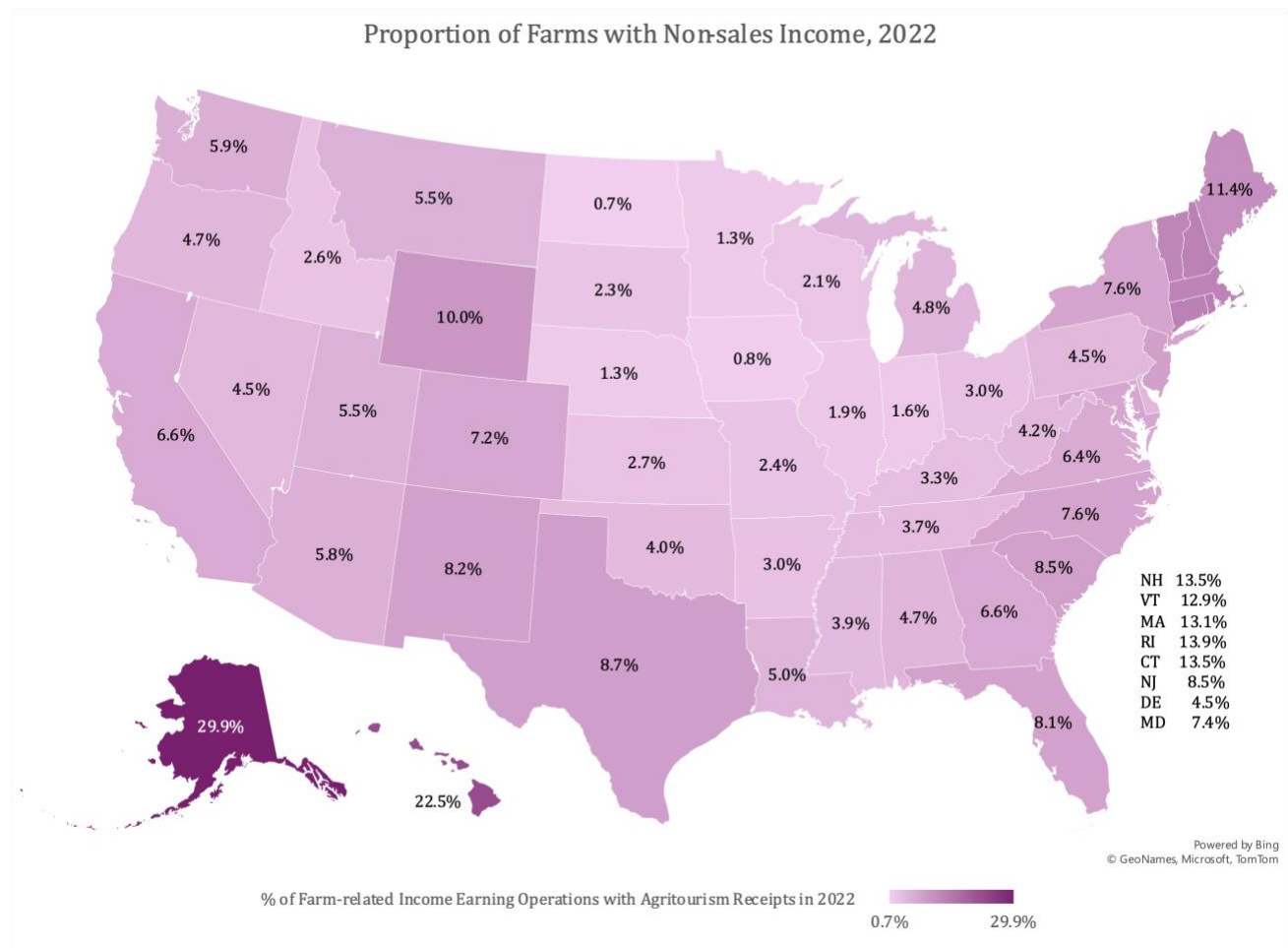


Figure 8. Agritourism operations as a proportion of farms with non-sales income by U.S. state in 2022

Agritourism Receipts by State

Economic data on the value of agritourism and recreational services receipts on U.S. farms also help reveal important geographic aspects of U.S. agritourism. Figure 9 reports the aggregated total value of these receipts by state in 2022. In general terms, patterns here follow those seen previously for the total number of agritourism operations. Texas has the largest estimated total value of agritourism income at \$191.8 million, followed by California (\$99.1 million), Colorado (\$66.7 million), Michigan (\$56.6 million), and New York (\$55.5 million). States with the smallest total value of agritourism receipts include Louisiana (\$3.1 million), Alaska (\$2.6 million), Nevada and Rhode Island (each at \$2.3 million), and North Dakota (\$1.8 million).

More revealing are data on the growth of total agritourism and recreational services receipts (Figure 10). When considering growth, we focus our discussion on data that have been adjusted for inflation. Data underlying Figure 10 were placed in 2022 dollar equivalents using [the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index inflation tool](#). The reference period utilized for Census of Agriculture observations was December 2017 to December 2022. In the Appendix, proportional changes without inflation adjustments (i.e. using nominal data) are reported via Figure A-1. The differences in magnitude between nominal and inflation-adjusted data are notable.

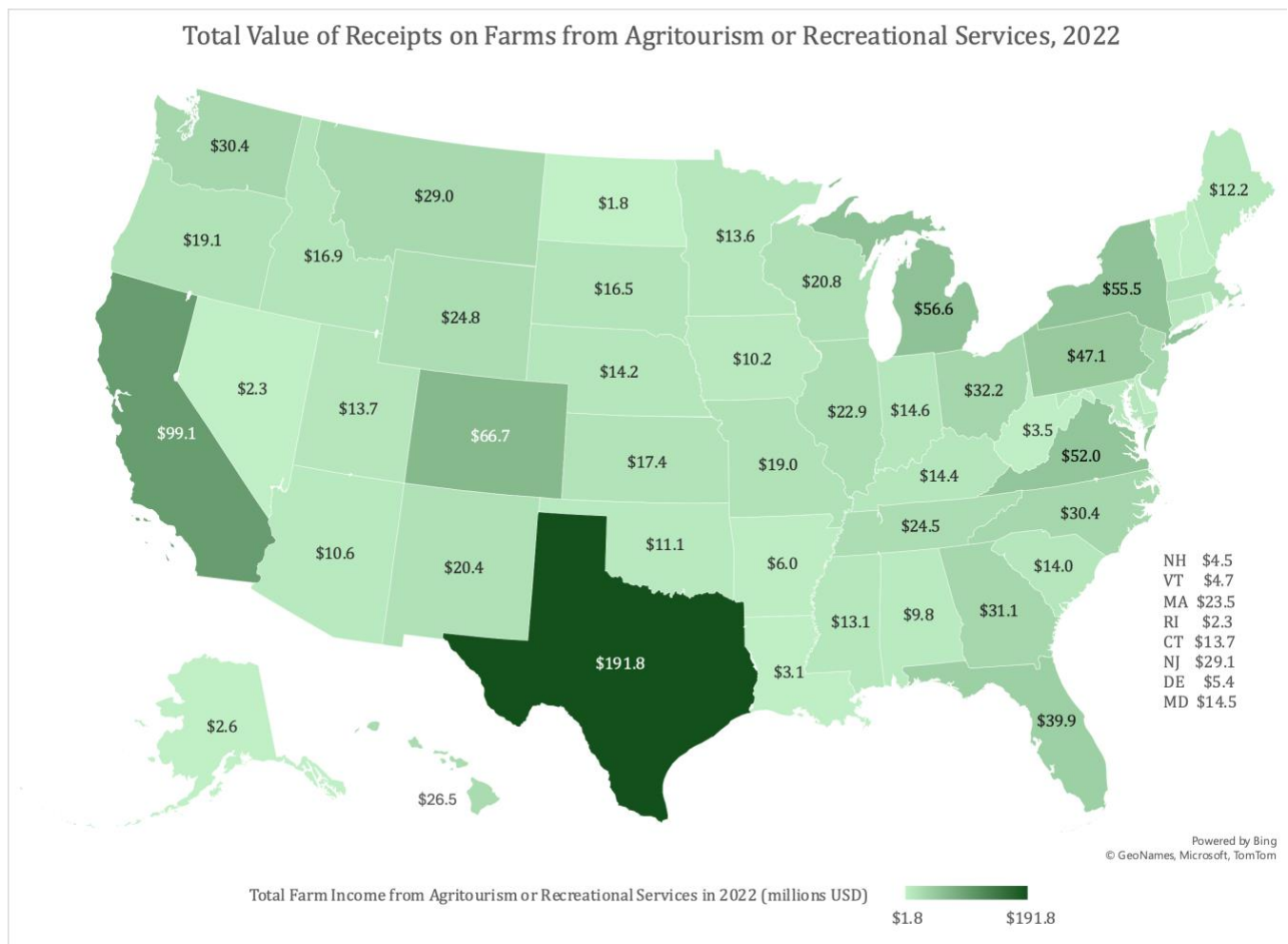


Figure 9. Total value of agritourism and on-farm recreational receipts by U.S. state in 2022

Thirty-two (32) U.S. states experienced growth in real total value of agritourism and recreational services receipts. Those with the largest¹ growth include Rhode Island (164%), Vermont (127%), Michigan (124%), and Kansas (102%), which all saw more than a doubling of inflation-adjusted value from agritourism between 2017 and 2022. Growth in agritourism receipts appears to particularly have been experienced among states in the Northeast and eastern Midwest, along with some pockets in the southeastern and northwestern U.S.

However, some states experienced notable declines in agritourism receipts, including Alaska (-46%), Arizona (-36%), Connecticut (-33%), and Kentucky (-30%). Notable regions of decline include the inter-mountain west (Wyoming southward to the border with Mexico) and the central Midwest (Minnesota through Wisconsin and Illinois to Kentucky).

¹ Delaware shows an exceptionally large change in total agritourism receipts between 2017 and 2022, with a calculated 1,171% increase with inflation adjustment included. This may be caused by USDA NASS’ statistical weighting procedures and low numbers of total observations; underlying data for this state’s total value of agritourism and recreational services receipts has a large coefficient of variation (CV), a measure of uncertainty of an estimate.

Proportional Change in Total Value of Receipts on Farms from Agritourism or Recreational Services between 2017 & 2022 (inflation adjusted)

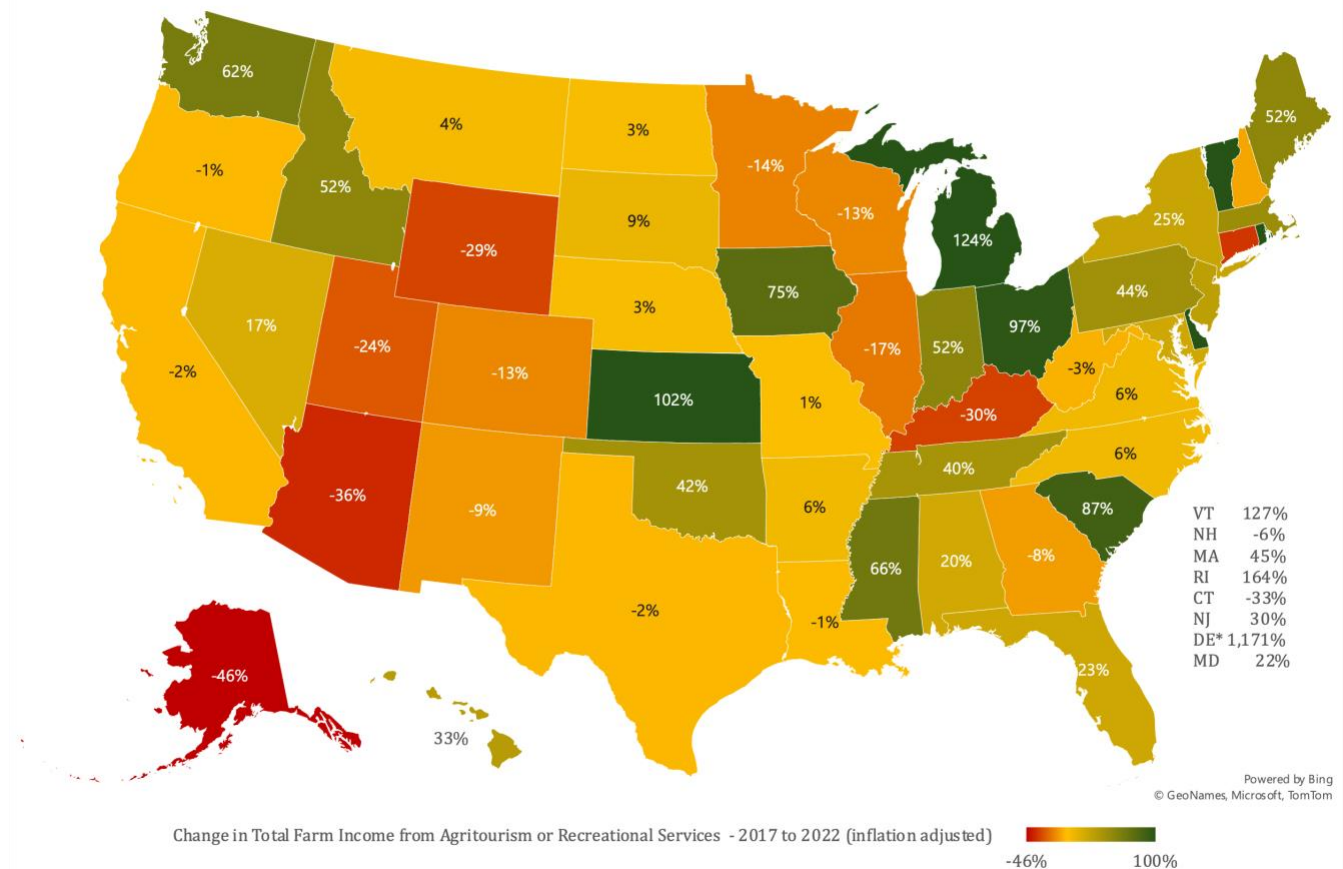


Figure 10. Proportional change in total value of receipts on farms from agritourism or recreational services, 2017 to 2022 (inflation adjusted)

As noted previously, farm-related income from sources other than sales of agricultural products and Federal support payments is a critical factor in the rural economy as it represents an important element in livelihood diversification and farm resilience. Figure 11 reports the proportion of each state’s total farm-related income generated by agritourism and recreational services, a measure of how much farm income diversification outside of product-based strategies relies on agritourism activities.

Agritourism and recreation income is a considerable part of farm-related sources in the two non-contiguous U.S. states; in Alaska it represents 56.6% of farm-related non-sales receipts, and in Hawai’i 36%. Agritourism receipts are also a notable proportion in four New England states: Maine (24.8%), Rhode Island (24.3%), Massachusetts (20.5%), and Connecticut (18.5%). Also among the states with the greatest proportion of farm-related income sourced via on-farm tourism and recreation are Wyoming (21.7%), New Jersey (21.2%), Virginia (18.9%), and New Mexico (16.7%). Midwestern plains states have the lowest reliance on agritourism and recreation sources for non-sales income with North Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, Kansas, South Dakota, and Illinois – plus Louisiana – as the lowest in rank with all less than 2.5%. Figure 10 indicates clustering among states of the northeast (Virginia along the coast northward to Maine) and inter-mountain west (Wyoming southward to the border with Mexico).

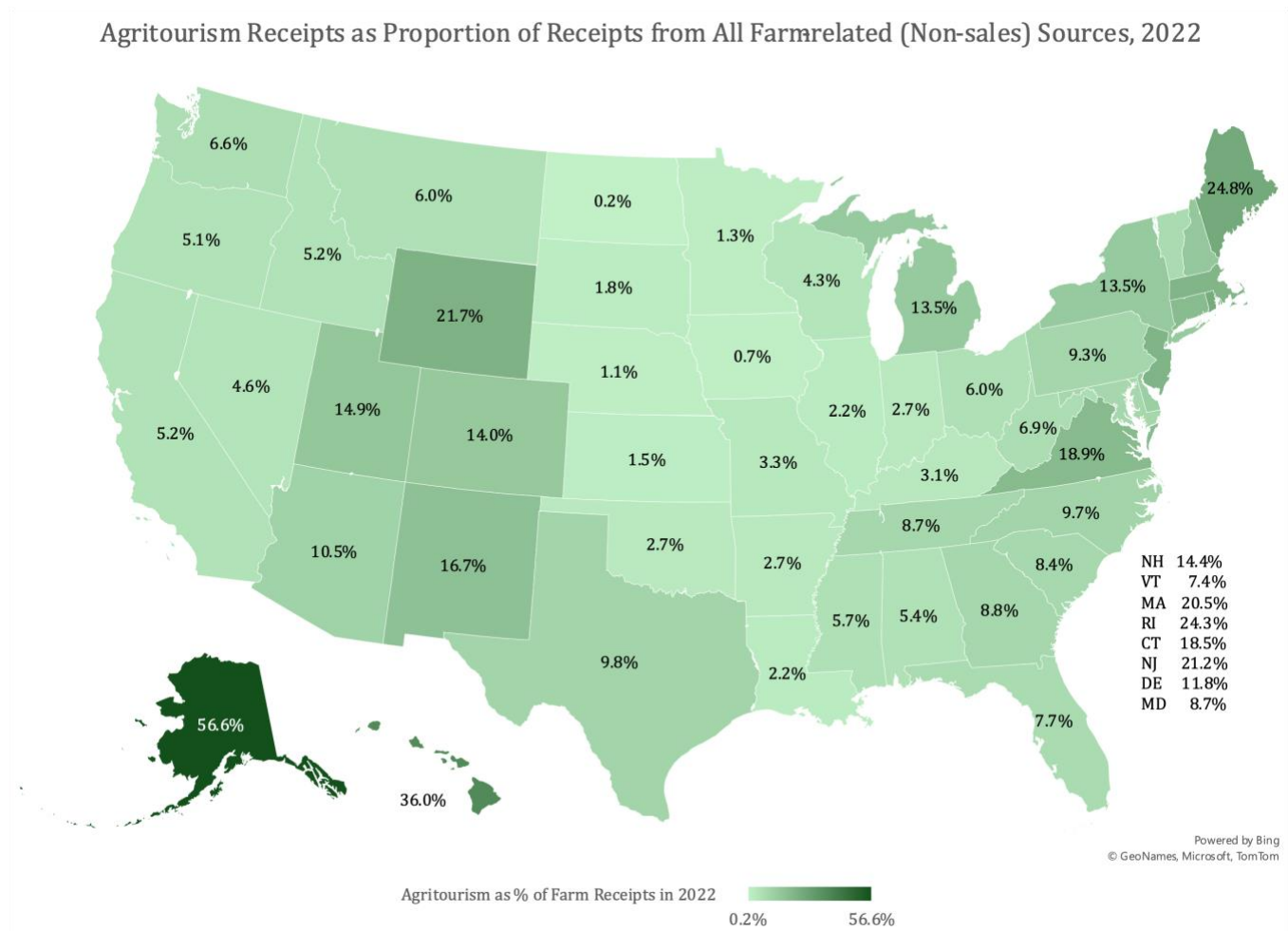


Figure 11. Agritourism and on-farm recreational services receipts as a proportion of all farm-related non-sales income by U.S. state in 2022

Average Farm-level Income from Agritourism

Data on the average agritourism receipts per farm within states also reveal the economic geography of the sector. With just 47 estimated agritourism operations, Delaware has the highest average at \$114,959 in agritourism income per farm. Hawai'i is not far behind at \$101,579 on average per agritourism operation. Vermont (\$14,461) and Louisiana (\$11,541) have the second-lowest and lowest average income per agritourism operation from activities that welcome visitors onto the farm. Figure 12 reports data for all states.

Similar to Figure 10, we also calculated proportional change in per-operation average receipts from agritourism and recreational services between the 2017 and 2022 Census of Agriculture estimates. These data are reported in Figure 13 and were placed in 2022 dollar equivalents using the same method as prior. Proportional changes without inflation adjustments (i.e. using nominal data) are reported in the Appendix's Figure A-2. The differences in magnitude between nominal and inflation-adjusted data are also notable for per-operation data.

Average Value of Farm Receipts from Agritourism and Recreational Services per Operation, 2022

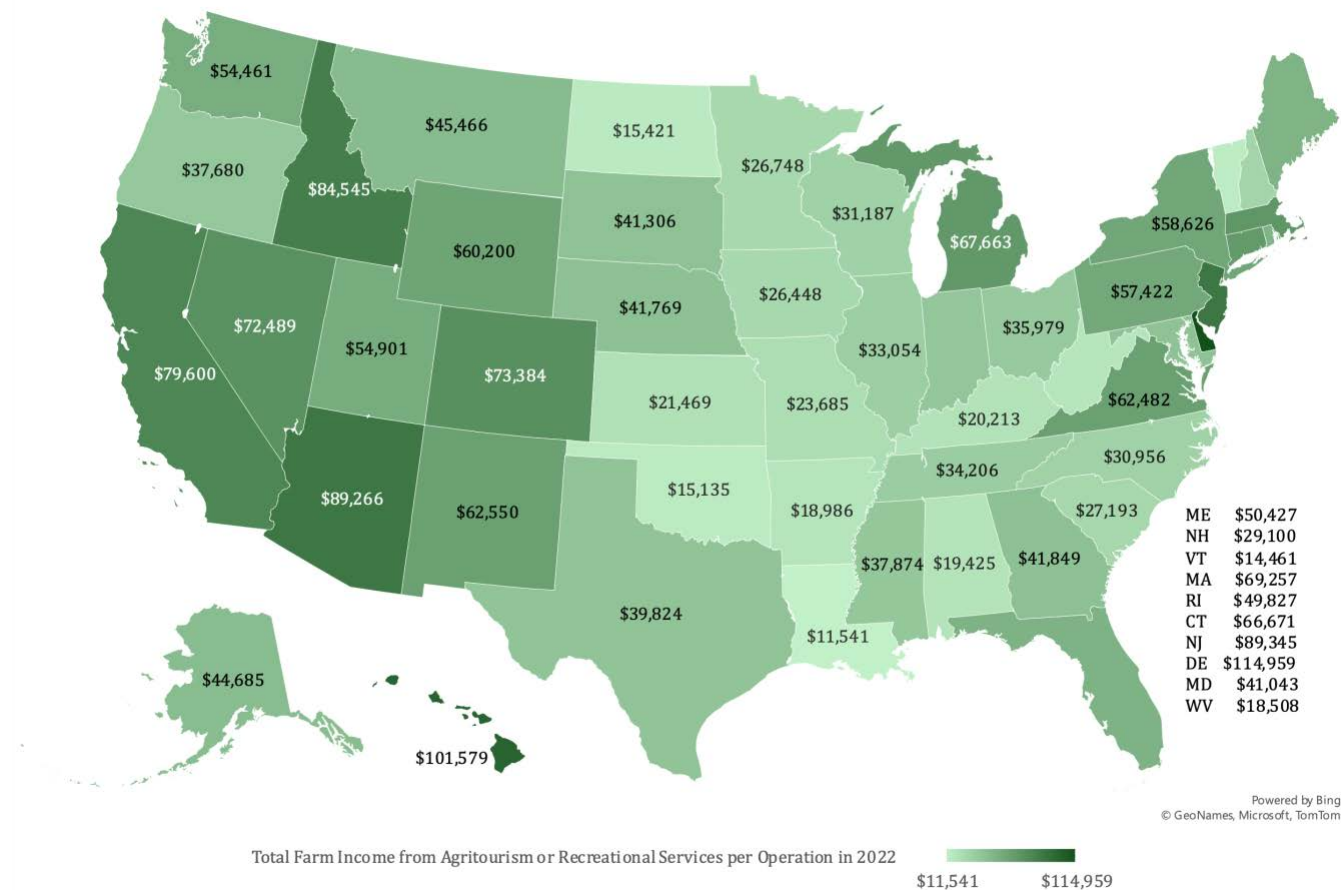


Figure 12. Average value of farm receipts from agritourism and recreational services per operation by U.S. state in 2022

When considering growth in income per farm from agritourism and recreation activities, Rhode Island remained at the top² (124%), followed by Nevada (109%), Kansas, and Michigan (each at 102%). These states showed more than a doubling of per operation income from agritourism over the five-year period bookended by the two Censuses of Agriculture. Alaska (-52%), Kentucky (-36%), and West Virginia (-30%) experienced the largest declines in per-farm agritourism receipts when adjusted for inflation during the reference period. Fifteen other states also saw declines in per-farm receipts, making the total number of jurisdictions where per-farm income from agritourism dropped from 2017 to 2022.

Notably, there are seven states where per-operation and total value of income from agritourism and recreational services did not change in the same direction. Three states – Nebraska, North Dakota, and Arkansas – experienced positive growth in total receipts from agritourism but declines in per-farm average receipts. Another four states – Colorado, Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico – saw declines in totals but increases in per-operation average revenues between 2017 and 2022. Both Arizona (-36% and 9%, respectively) and New Mexico (-9% and 29%, respectively) had differences of large magnitude between the total receipts and per-operation average receipts changes.

² Delaware’s figure of 792% growth for per-farm average retains the reliability concerns noted in Footnote 1.

Proportional Change in Average Receipts per Operation from Agritourism and Recreational Services between 2017 & 2022 (inflation adjusted)

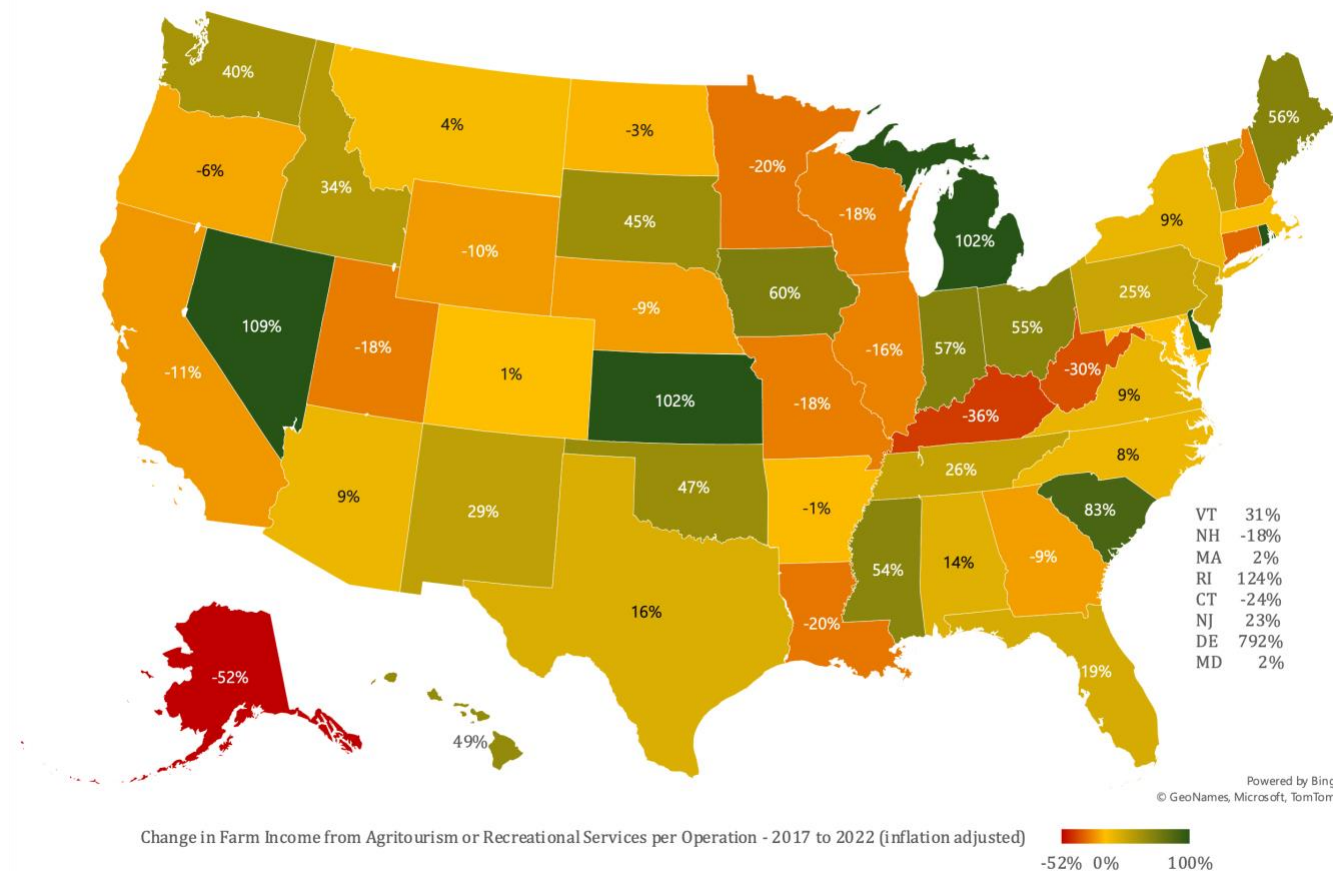


Figure 13. Proportional change in average value per operation of receipts on farms from agritourism or recreational services, 2017 to 2022 (inflation adjusted)

Conclusion

Agritourism remains an important diversification strategy for American farmers and ranchers. On average, U.S. agritourism operations earned \$44,004 in gross revenue from on-farm tourism and recreational services in 2022. Of the other farm-related income source types, only two generated higher per-farm average incomes from that source: crop and livestock insurance payments (\$52,819 average per farm engaged) and all other farm-related sources/miscellaneous (\$47,390).

However, only 1.5% of American farms and ranches receive income from agritourism. The estimated number of agricultural operations in the U.S. receiving income from agritourism and recreational services remained stable between 2017 and 2022, with a net increase in the total number of operations reporting income from these activities of only 42 operations at the national level. The landscape of agritourism across the United States presents a mixed picture of decline and growth. While Texas leads in both the number of agritourism operations and total agritourism income, it is also the state with the most significant decline in the number of operators claiming agritourism income, showing a decrease of 907 operations, from 5,723 to 4,816 (a 16% decline). According to Schmidt et al. (2023), most probably offer hunting, as 60% of these agritourism farms are cattle farms and ranches. Nonetheless, this assumption is based on informal data since the Census does not gather details regarding the specific types of activities that generate income for agritourism farms. Several states have seen notable growth in

their agritourism sectors. Vermont leads with a 74% increase (from 186 to 323 operations) and Massachusetts (from 240 to 340 operations) with a 42% increase. The distribution pattern of agritourism operations mirrors the broader trend in U.S. agriculture towards polarization, with an increase in small and large farms at the expense of mid-size farms. Geographic disparities also emerge, with agritourism more prevalent along the coasts, the Western inter-mountain zone, and non-contiguous states, and less common in the Midwest plains states.

The economic significance of agritourism is underscored by its contribution to farm-related income, especially in non-contiguous states and New England, where it represents a considerable percentage of non-sales receipts. The variation in agritourism income across states, from Delaware's high average income per operation to Louisiana's relatively low figures, reflects the diversity of opportunities and challenges within the sector. Interestingly, farms under 50 acres account for a quarter of agritourism income in the U.S. Critically, the average agritourism income per farm more than doubled between 2017 and 2022 for those with fewer than 10 acres. This trend suggests that size does not constrain the potential for agritourism revenue, highlighting the accessibility of agritourism as a diversification strategy for farms of all sizes.

Further Reading and Resources

Agritourism in the United States - State & National Factsheets:

<https://aese.psu.edu/outreach/agritourism/projects/nifa-agritourism/state-factsheets>

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Hollas, C. R., Chase, L., Conner, D., Dickes, L., Lamie, R. D., Schmidt, C., Singh-Knights, D., & Quella, L. (2021). Factors Related to Profitability of Agritourism in the United States: Results from a National Survey of Operators. *Sustainability*, 13, 13334. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132313334>

Schmidt, C., Tian, Z., Goetz, S. J., Hollas, C. R., & Chase, L. (2023). Agritourism and direct sales clusters in the United States. *Agricultural and Resource Economics Review*, 52(1), 168-188. <https://doi.org/10.1017/age.2023.1>

Schmidt, C., Chase, L., Barbieri, C., Rilla, E., Knights, D.S., Thilmany, D., Tomas, S., Dickes, L., Cornelisse, S., Lamie, R.D. and Callahan, R., 2022. Linking research and practice: The role of extension on agritourism development in the United States. *Applied Economics Teaching Resources (AETR)*, 4(3), pp.33-48. <https://www.aetrjournal.org/volumes/volume-4-2022/volume-4-issue-3-august-2022/extension-education/linking-research-and-practice-the-role-of-extension-on-agritourism-development-in-the-united-states>

Quella, L., Chase, L., Conner, D., Reynolds, T. and Schmidt, C., 2023. Perceived success in agritourism: Results from a study of US agritourism operators. *Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 18(1). <https://journals.brandonu.ca/jrcd/article/view/2115>

Citations and Sources

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Data underlying this publication is from published data under the USDA Census of Agriculture, made available to the public via the NASS QuickStats 2.0 Database: <https://quickstats.nass.usda.gov/>.

Appendix

Proportional Change in Total Value of Receipts on Farms from Agritourism or Recreational Services between 2017 & 2022 (nominal)

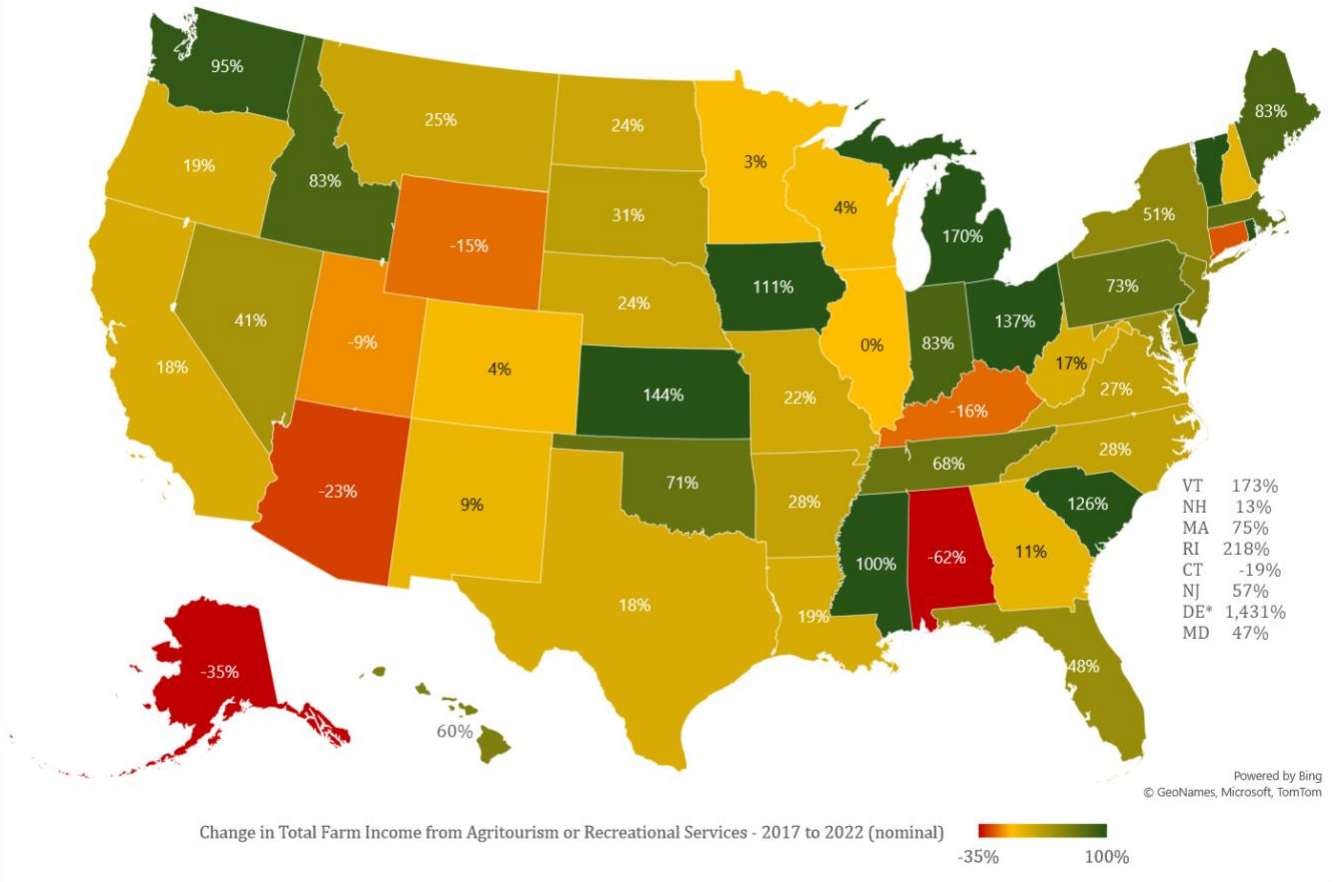


Figure A- 1. Proportional change in total value of receipts on farms from agritourism or recreational services, 2017 to 2022 (nominal)

Proportional Change in Average Receipts per Operation from Agritourism or Recreational Services between 2017 & 2022 (nominal)

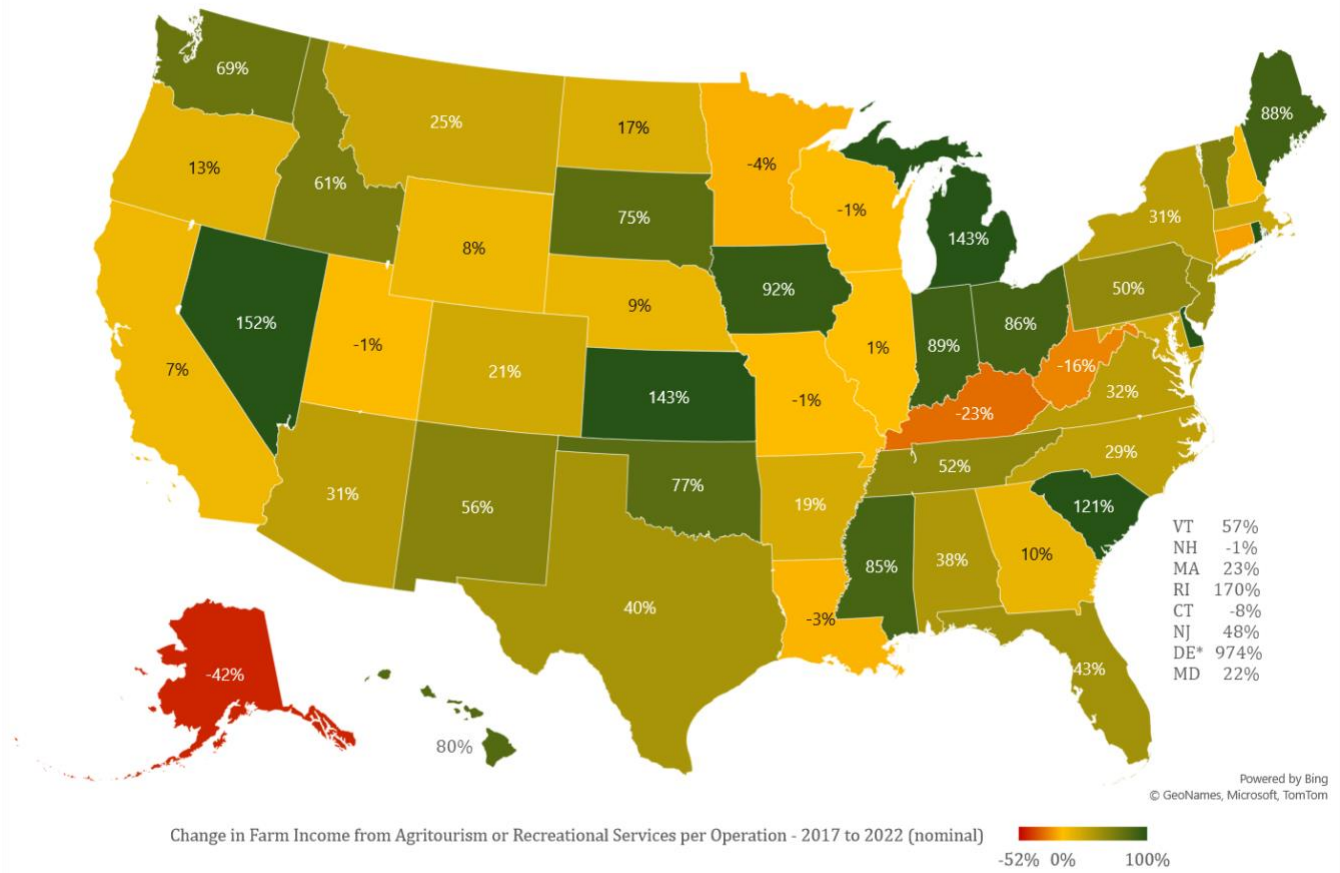


Figure A- 2. Proportional change in average value per operation of receipts on farms from agritourism or recreational services, 2017 to 2022 (nominal)