

## Agriculture

While the earlier settlers believed Vilas County might become an agricultural paradise, that dream was never realized because of the relatively short growing season, sandy soils and the Northwoods' great distance to the closest market. Nevertheless, the farms that did develop were able to provide food for the farming families as well as for the local neighboring area. In 1995 Vilas County ranked 71st in the state in the number of land acres in farms. Two specialty crops, cranberries and potatoes, are the main contributors to Vilas County's agricultural income, while beef cattle and other miscellaneous livestock and crops contribute in lesser amounts.

Historically, Vilas County's first "farming" activity was logging, however, the virgin timber had been mostly harvested by the early 1920's. Dairy farming along with the important farm crop of corn silage was initiated and by 1925 there were 3800 milk cows in Vilas County. By the late 1940's commercial potato farming had become the important agricultural endeavor in the area, followed later by cranberries. The depression and the general difficulties (short season, soil and distance from markets) took its toll on area farming, and the next several decades saw the rise of tourism as the main industry of the area.

	Vilas County			Wisconsin		
	Number of Farms	Ave. Size of Farms (in acres)	Land in Farms (in acres)	Number of Farms	Ave. Size of Farms (in acres)	Land in Farms (in acres)
1982	40	190	7,600	92,000	201.0	18,500,000
1990	50	158	7,900	80,000	220.0	17,600,000
1995	40	175	7,000	80,000	211.3	16,900,000
1996	40	175	7,000	79,000	213	16,800,000
1997	44*	172*	7,578*	65602*	227*	14,900,205*
1998	50	160	8,000	78,000	210	16,400,000
1999	na	na	na	78,000	209	16,300,000
2000	na	na	na	77,000	210	16,200,000
2001	na	na	na	77,000	209	16,200,000
2002	na	na	na	77,000	206	15,900,000

na - not available

\*Number adjusted by Department of Agriculture based on 1997 Census of Agriculture

SOURCE: Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics, 1991-2003; Wisconsin Blue Book, 1989-90; 1991-92; 1993-94; 1995-96; 1997-98, 1999-2000, 2003-2004

The following tables show the general decline in farms in both Vilas County and the State.

<b>Table 14-2 Farm Operators, 1987</b>								
	Total Farms	Tenure of Operators			Type of Organization			
		Full Owners	Part Owners	Tenants	Individual or Family	Partnership	Corporation	
							Family	Other
Vilas	46	27	13	6	38	1	7	--
Wisconsin	75,131	43,660	25,109	6,362	64,642	7,909	2,192	388

SOURCE: Wisconsin Blue Book, 1993-94

<b>Farm Operators, 1997</b>									
	Total Farms	Tenure of Operators			Type of Organization				
		Full Owners	Part Owners	Tenants	Individual or Family	Partnership	Corporation		Other*
							Family	Other	
Vilas	44	32	8	4	33	2	6	1	2
Wisconsin	65,602	39,217	21,921	4,464	56,598	5,746	2,651	219	388

\*includes cooperative, estate or trust, institutional, etc.

SOURCE: Wisconsin Blue Book, 1999-2000, 2001-02, 2003-04

**Table 14-3  
Agricultural Land Sales**

	Number of Transactions			Average Dollars Per Acre								
				Land Continuing in Agricultural Use			Agricultural Land Diverted to Other Uses			Total Sales		
	1990	1995	2000	1990	1995	2000	1990	1995	2000	1990	1995	2000
Vilas County	2	0	---	\$420	\$0	---	\$626	\$0	---	\$513	\$0	---
State	6,476		1,961	\$786		\$1,633	\$1,174		\$3,933	\$845		\$2,381

SOURCE: Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics, 1991, 1996, & 2001

**Agricultural Land Sales**

	Number of Transactions			Average Dollars Per Acre								
				Land Continuing in Agricultural Use			Agricultural Land Diverted to Other Uses			Total Sales		
	2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
Vilas County	---	1		---	---		---	\$1,000		---	\$1,000	
State	1,678	1,808		\$1,867	\$1,982		\$3,550	\$4,324		\$2,384	\$2,635	

SOURCE: Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics, 2002, 2003

**Table 14-4  
General Farming Facts for Vilas County**

	1987		1992		1997	
Number of Farms	46		37		44	
Land in Farms, acres	8,666		(D)		7,578	
Average Size of Farms, acres	188		(D)		172	
Average Value of Land & Buildings Per Farm	\$341,152		\$401,468		\$369,136	
Average Value of Land & Buildings Per Acre	\$1,811		\$1,793		\$2,143	
Average Value of Machinery & Equipment Per Farm	\$80,762		\$84,814		\$97,616	
Farms by Size	Number	Acreage	Number	Acreage	Number	Acreage
1 - 9 Acres	5	(D)	6	22	6	30
10 - 49 Acres	6	129	5	(D)	8	216
50 - 69 Acres	4	236	2	(D)	3	193
70 - 99 Acres	8	681	4	337	3	228
100 - 139 Acres	5	(D)	2	(D)	3	(D)
140 - 179 Acres	2	(D)	3	510	9	1444
180 - 219 Acres	4	(D)	3	636	2	(D)
220 - 259 Acres	2	(D)	-	-	1	(D)
260 - 499 Acres	6	2343	8	2976	7	2185
500 - 999 Acres	4	3005	2	(D)	-	-
1,000 - 1,999 Acres	0	0	2	(D)	2	(D)
2,000 or More Acres	0	0	-	-	-	-
Cropland Usage - Total	3964		3731		(D)	
Harvested Cropland	1859		2091		(D)	
Used only for Pasture & Grazing	747		1020		(D)	
Other Cropland	1358		620		778	
Woodland Acreage - Total	3163		3431		(D)	
Woodland Pastured	784		(D)		(D)	
Woodland Not Pastured	2379		(D)		2283	
Irrigated Acreage - Total	(D)		2950		3176	
Harvested Cropland	860		(D)		1329	
Other Cropland, excluding cropland pastured	1176		(D)		(D)	
Pastureland, excluding woodland pastured	(D)		-		(D)	
Farm Operators, by principal occupation						
Farming	22		20		24	
Other	24		17		20	
Farm Operators						
Living on Farm Operated	33		28		33	
Not Living on Farm Operated	10		9		11	
Not Reported	3		-		-	
Farm Operators, by years on present farm						
2 years or less	4		-		1	
3 or 4 years	5		1		4	
5 to 9 years	8		9		6	
10 years or More	25		20		27	
Not Reported	4		7		6	
Farm Operators, by age						
Under 25 Years	0		-		-	
25 - 34 Years	3		4		1	
35 - 44 Years	11		6		9	
45 - 54 Years	11		11		15	
55 - 64 Years	10		6		9	
65 Years or Over	11		10		10	

**Table 14-4  
General Farming Facts for Vilas County**

Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold, Average Amount (\$1,000) Average Per Farm	5266 114488		3594 97122		6190 140675	
Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold by Type Crops, including nursery & greenhouse Livestock & Poultry and Their Products	5118 148		3539 55		6059 131	
Farms and Total Sales by Value of Sales	Farms	Sales (\$1,000)	Farms	Sales (\$1,000)	Farms	Sales (\$1,000)
Less than \$1,000	14	(D)	8	(D)	7	2
\$1,000 - \$2,499	9	13	3	5	10	15
\$2,500 - \$4,999	4	(D)	7	(D)	1	(D)
\$5,000 - \$9,999	4	26	5	33	7	49
\$10,000 - \$19,999	2	(D)	4	60	7	101
\$20,000 - \$24,999	3	(D)	-	-	1	(D)
\$25,000 - \$39,999	3	(D)	3	94	2	(D)
\$40,000 - \$49,999	0	0	-	-	-	-
\$50,000 - \$99,999	0	0	-	-	2	(D)
\$100,000 - \$249,999	0	0	-	-	-	-
\$250,000 - \$499,999	3	1210	4	1409	2	(D)
\$500,000 and Over	4	3824	3	1965	5	5003
Sales of Crops by Commodity or Commodity Group (in thousands of dollars) - Total	5118		3539		6059	
Corn for Grain	0		-		-	
Wheat	0		-		-	
Soybeans	0		-		-	
Sorghum for Grain	0		-		-	
Barley*	(D)		1		(D)	
Oats	0		1		(D)	
Other Grains	0		(D)		(D)	
Tobacco	0		-		-	
Hay for Silage	22		20		20	
Vegetables, sweet corn and melons	(D)		-		(D)	
Fruits, nuts and berries	4595		2910		5312	
Nursery and Greenhouse Crops	(D)		71		71	
Other Crops	(D)		(D)		(D)	
Sales of Livestock, Poultry and Their Products by Type (in thousands of dollars) - Total	148		55		131	
Poultry and Poultry Products	(D)		-		(D)	
Dairy Products	0		-		-	
Cattle and Calves	39		(D)		32	
Hogs and Pigs	0		(D)		-	
Sheep, Lambs and Wool	(D)		(D)		(D)	
Other	109		24		58	

(D) data is suppressed but included in totals, if any-

\*1982 barley data is included with "other grains"

SOURCE: WisPOP Data, Tables #800, #802, #803, #804, #805, #806, #807, #820, #823, #825, #827, #831, #832, #833, #835, #838; & 1992 Census of Agriculture; 1997 Census of Agriculture