

# A Look at Montana Agriculture



Capital: Helena

Population: 967,440

Founded: November 8, 1889 (41<sup>st</sup>)

State Bird: Western Meadowlark

State Tree: Ponderosa Pine

State Flower: Bitterroot

Number of Counties: 56

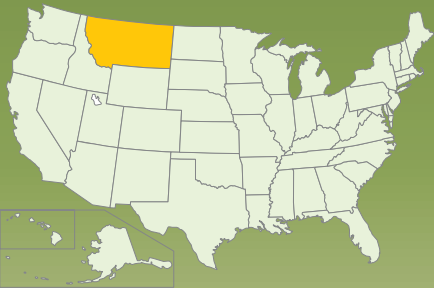
Largest City: Billings - 105,845

Nickname: Big Sky Country

Number of Farms: 29,500

Average Farm Size: 2,079

Total Farmland: 61.3 million acres



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## Climate & Soil

- In western Montana, as compared with the eastern plains area, winters tend to be milder while summers are cooler.
- The growing season is shorter in the west, where some intermountain areas experience only 50 to 100 days without frosts a year.
- Eastern Montana has colder winters, warmer summers, less cloudiness, the heaviest precipitation in late spring and early summer, and considerably higher average wind velocities. Frost-free periods in the east and in the state's low-lying river valleys range from 120 to 150 days per year.
- Snowfall normally is heaviest in the mountains of the west, with as much as 300" falling in some years. Storms of several types occur in Montana.
- Summer hailstorms may cause severe crop and property damage.
- Land in Conservation or Wetland Reserve Programs: 3.5 million acres

## Crops & Livestock

- In 2009, all field crops harvested in the state of Montana were valued at 1.8 billion dollars.
- Montana ranked second nationally, in 2007, for the production of lentils, dry peas and barley. The same year, the state ranked third for total wheat production.
- January 1, 2009:
  - Cattle and calves: 2, 550,000 head
  - Sheep and Lambs: 255,000 head
- Montana raises lots of sheep and goats on its rangeland. The state ranks 10th nationally for sheep and goat production and their products, like wool.
- Montana's most valuable crop is wheat, followed by hay, and then barley.
- Montana ranked second in 2009, nationally, for the production of Safflower and third for Canola. This seeds is used to make healthy cooking oils.
- Montana has many honey producers. The state is ranked fourth nationally for honey production.
- In 2009, Montana livestock were valued at 1.2 billion dollars.

## General

- The total land area of the state is 93.1 million acres. Approximately 66% of the total land areas are dedicated to farmland or agriculture.