## U.S. dairy 2023 statistics

The top dairy states maintained their positions on the leaderboard, with New York notching the most output growth.

by Abby Bauer

Milk produced per person averaged 676 pounds

ONSISTENCY was the name of the game when it came to the nation's top milk producing states in 2023. In fact, the top 10 states in that category remained unchanged from the year before. The 10 states with the most cows in 2023 also landed in the same order as they appeared in 2022.

California ranked first in cow numbers and most milk produced, leading both of these categories by a significant margin. In the Golden State, more than 1.7 million cows made nearly 41 billion pounds of milk. Following behind in a strong second place was Wisconsin, where close to 1.3 million cows produced more than 32 billion pounds of milk.

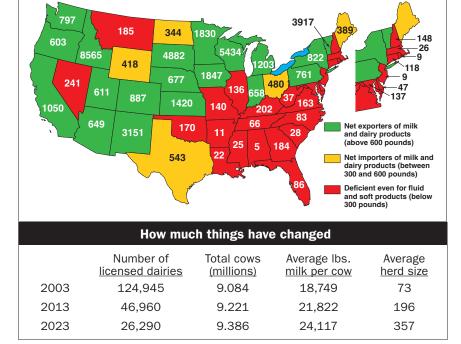
Idaho remained in third place in terms of cow numbers and milk production, followed by Texas. New York stayed in fifth place but had a strong showing in 2023, recording notable increases in cow numbers and milk production.

In fact, dairy farmers in New York tallied the most new milk produced in 2023, boosting their annual output by 433 million pounds. That was close to 100 million pounds more than Michigan, the state that ranked second in terms of new milk.

As one might expect, Michigan and New York were also some of the states that added the most cows in 2023, at 9,000 and 6,000 head, respectively, but the leader in this category was South Dakota with the addition of 15,000 cows. Idaho followed in second with 11,000 new cows in 2023.

Texas had been on a fast and furious growth spurt the past few

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years, but last year, the state's herd reduced by 4,000 head. That was a big swing in the opposite direction from the 24,000 cows the Lonestar State added in 2022.

Overall, the nation's herd size reduced by a small margin of 0.2% to sit at 9.386 million head. Nine states expanded their cow herds in 2023; the 41 remaining states reported no change or reduced herd size.

The Midwest and Northeast regions grew in herd size by small margins of 0.8% and 0.1%, respectively. The West fell by 0.6%, while the Southeast was down 2.3%. When looking at the change over the past five years, the Southeast lost nearly 15% of its cows and almost

40% of its dairies.

Michigan held the top spot in milk per cow for the sixth year in a row. Cows on Michigan dairies averaged 27,564 pounds of milk in 2023. Wyoming captured the second spot with 26,226 pounds per cow.

The national average for milk per cow was 24,117 pounds, up 30 pounds from the year before and setting a new record. The current average per cow is more than 1,200 pounds what it was just five years ago. In 2023, a dozen states sat above the national average for milk per cow.

The most milk per herd was found in New Mexico, where farms there sold 66.6 million pounds of milk in 2023. Arizona followed in a fairly close second place with 64.3 million pounds. The next highest production per herd came from Texas at 53.4 million pounds.

Cows in the nation's dairy herd produced 676 pounds of milk per U.S. citizen in 2023. Idaho remains the leader in milk per person, coming in at 8,565 pounds. Wisconsin was next, making 5,434 pounds of milk per person. In third place was South Dakota, at 4,882 pounds. New Mexico dairy farms made 3,151 pounds of milk per person, while Iowa was fifth, at 1,847. In all, 19 states were net exporters of milk in 2023, which means they produced more than 600 pounds of milk per citizen.

A handful of states are considered net importers of dairy products, with production between 300 and 600 pounds per citizen. Maine, Ohio, North Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming fall into this category. The rest of the country falls into the deficient category, which means they don't produce enough milk per capita to fulfill even fluid milk needs. These states either have low cow numbers, highly populated cities, or a combination of the two.

U.S. milk output in 2023 was down just slightly from the year before, coming in at 226.4 billion pounds. Again, the Midwest and Northeast saw slight gains of 1.4%and 0.9%, respectively. Meanwhile, the West and Southeast both saw production declines of 1.3%. Overall, the nation's production is up 4% from five years ago, when the national herd produced 217.6 billion pounds of milk with the same number of cows.

			IOP TO dall	y states in 20	23		
Most	COWS	Most milk (mil	lions of Ibs.)	<u>Most milk p</u>	er cow (lbs.)	<u>Most cows p</u>	er herd
California	1,714,000	California	40,902	Michigan	27,564	New Mexico	2,710
Wisconsin	1,270,000	Wisconsin	32,123	Wyoming	26,226	Arizona	2,640
Idaho	667,000	Idaho	16,827	Colorado	25,930	Texas	2,071
Texas	642,000	Texas	16,565	Texas	25,802	Wyoming	1,860
New York	630,000	New York	16,079	New York	25,522	Colorado	1,827
Pennsylvania	466,000	Michigan	12,073	Wisconsin	25,294	Florida	1,745
Minnesota	452,000	Minnesota	10,500	Idaho	25,228	Idaho	1,710
Michigan	438,000	Pennsylvania	9,859	Nebraska	24,815	Nevada	1,650
New Mexico	271,000	New Mexico	6,663	Iowa	24,679	California	1,602
Washington	258,000	Washington	6,223	New Mexico	24,587	South Dakota	1,500
Most milk p	er herd (lbs.)	Most nev	v cows	Most new milk (m	<u>nillions of Ibs.)</u>	Most new milk pe	er cow (lbs.)
New Mexico	66,630,000	South Dakota	15,000	New York	433	Alabama	3,333
Arizona	64,320,000	Idaho	11,000	Michigan	336	Montana	1,033
Texas	53,435,484	Michigan	9,000	South Dakota	327	Maryland	613
Wyoming	48,780,000	Iowa	6,000	Wisconsin	241	South Carolina	611
Colorado	47,381,818	New York	6,000	Idaho	199	Virginia	539
Idaho	43,146,154	Indiana	5,000	Iowa	153	Wyoming	463
Nevada	38,500,000	Kansas	3,000	Indiana	142	New York	448
California	38,226,168	Ohio	3,000	Ohio	132	Tennessee	421
Florida	35,454,546	Arizona	1,000	Arizona	52	Maine	412
South Dakota	34,523,077			Kansas	35	Ohio	260

## Top 10 dairy states in 2023

## **U.S.** dairy industry statistics, 2018 to 2023

			Total U.S. n	nilk product	tion (million	is of pounds	5)				Total o	ows (thous	sands of he	ad)		
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	1-year change	5-year change	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	1-year change	5-year change
Total U.S.	217,575	218,441	223,309	226,293	226,462	226,364	0.0%	4.0%	9,392	9,399	9,392	9,449	9,402	9,386	-0.2%	-0.1%
				Midv	vest						Γ	Midwe	st			
Illinois	1,878	1,748	1,787	1,770	1,714	1,708	-0.4%	-9.1%	90	84	83	82	80	79	-1.3%	-12.2%
Indiana	4,161	4,076	4,334	4,539	4,371	4,513	3.2%	8.5%	184	178	183	192	185	190	2.7%	3.3%
Iowa	5,268	5,291	5,374	5,538	5,770	5,923	2.7%	12.4%	220	218	218	226	234	240	2.6%	9.1%
Kansas	3,708	3,819	4,026	4,099	4,142	4,177	0.8%	12.6%	159	163	170	172	173	176	1.7%	10.7%
Michigan	11,168	11,385	11,685	11,952	11,737	12,073	2.9%	8.1%	424	426	430	441	429	438	2.1%	3.3%
Minnesota	9,868	9,922	10,167	10,538	10,472	10,500	0.3%	6.4%	453	448	448	461	453	452	-0.2%	-0.2%
Missouri	1,194	1,100	1,085	1,010	941	867	-7.9%	-27.4%	83	78	76	71	67	62	-7.5%	-25.3%
Nebraska	1,440	1,409	1,460	1,423	1,416	1,340	-5.4%	-6.9%	60	58	59	58	57	54	-5.3%	-10.0%
North Dakota	334	326	328	335	319	270	-15.4%	-19.2%	15	15	15	15	14	12	-14.3%	-20.0%
Ohio	5,532	5,425	5,618	5,640	5,526	5,658	2.4%	2.3%	259	251	254	257	250	253	1.2%	-2.3%
South Dakota	2,705	2,810	3,120	3,602	4,161	4,488	7.9%	65.9%	121	125	135	156	180	195	8.3%	61.2%
Wisconsin	30,579	30,588	30,749	31,708	31,882	32,123	0.8%	5.0%	1,274	1,268	1,259	1,274	1,272	1,270	-0.2%	-0.3%
TOTAL	77,835	77,899	79,733	82,154	82,451	83,640	1.4%	7.5%	3,342	3,312	3,330	3,405	3,394	3,421	0.8%	2.4%
U.S. share	35.77%	35.66%	35.71%	36.30%	36.41%	36.95%			35.58%	35.24%	35.46%	36.04%	36.10%	36.45%		
				North	east						Ν	orthea	ast			
Connecticut	427	428	438	435	430	427	-0.7%	0.0%	19	19	19	19	18	18	0.0%	-5.3%
Delaware	91.5	74	-30		48	48	0.0%	-47.5%	5	4	4	3	3	3	0.0%	-37.5%
Maine	618	621	593	572	554	543	-2.0%	-12.1%	30	29	27	27	26	25	-3.8%	-16.7%
Maryland	925	840	881	876	842	846	0.5%	-8.5%	45	43	42	42	41	40	-2.4%	-11.1%
Massachusetts	202	193	200	195	188	179	-4.8%	-11.4%	11	10	10	10	9	9	0.0%	-18.2%
New Hampshire	249	239	236	227	219	208	-5.0%	-16.5%	13	11	11	11	10	10	0.0%	-23.1%
New Jersey	110	100	101	90	88	86	-2.3%	-21.8%	6	5	5	4	4	4	0.0%	-33.3%
New York	14,882	15,122	15,296	15,540	15,646	16,079	2.8%	8.0%	623	627	626	627	624	630	1.0%	1.1%
Pennsylvania	10,665	10,108	10,279	10,114	9,949	9,859	-0.9%	-7.6%	519	490	482	474	468	466	-0.4%	-10.2%
Rhode Island	11.7	11	11	10	10	10	0.0%	-14.5%	0.7	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	0.0%	-28.6%
Vermont	2,680	2,697	2,603	2,567	2,554	2,536	-0.7%	-5.4%	127	126	122	120	118	117	-0.8%	-7.9%
West Virginia	111	90	89	75	75	66	-12.0%	-40.5%	7	6	6	5	5	5	0.0%	-28.6%
TOTAL	20.072	20 522	20 707	20 752	20 602	20.007	0.0%	0.20/	1 406	1 271	1 254	1 2/2	1 2 2 7	1 220	0 1 9/	E E %

				South	east						S	outhea	st				
Alabama	73	60	44	39	32	28	-12.5%	-61.6%	5	5	3	3	3	2	-33.3%	-60.0%	
Arkansas	74	67	64	60	45	33	-26.7%	-55.4%	6	5	5	5	4	3	-25.0%	-50.0%	
Florida	2,381	2,346	2,286	2,170	1,927	1,950	1.2%	-18.1%	120	116	113	108	96	96	0.0%	-20.0%	
Georgia	1,766	1,771	1,772	1,798	2,028	2,027	0.0%	14.8%	82	82	81	82	92	91	-1.1%	11.0%	
Kentucky	1,009	942	939	908	926	915	-1.2%	-9.3%	55	50	48	46	45	45	0.0%	-18.2%	
Louisiana	152	135	134	126	112	101	-9.8%	-33.6%	11	10	10	9	9	8	-11.1%	-27.3%	
Mississippi	129	126	131	106	90	74	-17.8%	-42.6%	9	8	8	7	7	6	-14.3%	-33.3%	
North Carolina	937	902	895	917	912	894	-2.0%	-4.6%	44	42	41	40	39	38	-2.6%	-13.6%	
Oklahoma	725	731	733	705	716	690	-3.6%	-4.8%	40	41	42	39	40	39	-2.5%	-2.5%	
South Carolina	242	206	186	161	161	148	-8.1%	-38.8%	14	12	10	9	9	8	-11.1%	-42.9%	
Tennessee	634	551	542	508	493	467	-5.3%	-26.3%	37	32	30	28	27	25	-7.4%	-32.4%	
Virginia	1,635	1,490	1,522	1,471	1,424	1,420	-0.3%	-13.1%	83	75	75	73	70	70	0.0%	-15.7%	
TOTAL	9,757	9,327	9,248	8,969	8,866	8,747	<b>-1.3</b> %	<b>-10.4</b> %	506	478	466	449	431	434	-2.3%	<b>-14.8</b> %	
U.S. share	4.48%	4.27%	4.14%	3.96%	3.92%	3.86%			5.39%	5.09%	4.96%	4.75%	4.59%	4.62%			

		I	fotal U.S. m	nilk product	tion (million	s of pounds	)				Total o	cows (thous	ands of hea	ad)				Aver	age milk pr	oduction p	er cow per	year (pound	s)			Averege
Total U.S.	<b>2018</b> 217,575	<b>2019</b> 218,441	<b>2020</b> 223,309	<b>2021</b> 226,293	<b>2022</b> 226,462	<b>2023</b> 226,364	<b>1-year</b> change 0.0%	5-year change 4.0%	<b>2018</b> 9,392	<b>2019</b> 9,399	<b>2020</b> 9,392	<b>2021</b> 9,449	<b>2022</b> 9,402	<b>2023</b> 9,386	<b>1-year</b> change -0.2%	<b>5-year</b> change -0.1%	<b>2018</b> 22,914	<b>2019</b> 23,149	<b>2020</b> 23,777	<b>2021</b> 23,949	<b>2022</b> 24,087	<b>2023</b> 24,117	<b>1-year</b> change 30	5-year change 1,203	Number of dairies 26,290	Average Average total milk ows/herd per dairy 357 8,610,270
				Midv	vest						Г	Midwe	st						М	idwest	t					
Illinois Indiana Iowa Kansas Michigan Minnesota Missouri Nebraska North Dakota Ohio South Dakota Wisconsin <b>TOTAL</b> U.S. share	1,878 4,161 5,268 3,708 11,168 9,868 1,194 1,440 334 5,532 2,705 30,579 <b>77,835</b> 35,77%	1,748 4,076 5,291 3,819 11,385 9,922 1,100 1,409 326 5,425 2,810 30,588 <b>77,899</b> 35.66%	1,787 4,334 5,374 4,026 11,685 10,167 1,085 1,460 328 5,618 3,120 30,749 <b>79,733</b> 35,71%	1,770 4,539 5,538 4,099 11,952 10,538 1,010 1,423 335 5,640 3,602 31,708 <b>82,154</b> 36.30%	1,714 4,371 5,770 4,142 11,737 10,472 941 1,416 319 5,526 4,161 31,882 <b>82,451</b> 36,41%	1,708 4,513 5,923 4,177 12,073 10,500 867 1,340 270 5,658 4,488 32,123 <b>83,640</b> 36,95%	-0.4% 3.2% 2.7% 0.8% 2.9% 0.3% -7.9% -5.4% -15.4% 2.4% 7.9% 0.8% <b>1.4%</b>	-9.1% 8.5% 12.4% 12.6% 8.1% 6.4% -27.4% -6.9% -19.2% 2.3% 65.9% 5.0% <b>7.5%</b>	90 184 220 159 424 453 83 60 15 259 121 1,274 <b>3,342</b> 35.58%	84 178 218 163 426 448 78 58 15 251 125 1,268 <b>3,312</b> 35.24%	83 183 218 170 430 448 76 59 15 254 135 1,259 <b>3,330</b> 35.46%	82 192 226 172 441 461 71 58 15 257 156 1,274 <b>3,405</b> 36.04%	80 185 234 173 429 453 67 57 14 250 180 1,272 <b>3,394</b> 36.10%	79 190 240 176 438 452 62 54 12 253 195 1,270 <b>3,421</b> 36.45%	-1.3% 2.7% 2.6% 1.7% 2.1% -0.2% -7.5% -5.3% -14.3% 1.2% 8.3% -0.2% <b>0.8%</b>	-12.2% 3.3% 9.1% 10.7% 3.3% -0.2% -25.3% -10.0% -20.0% -2.3% 61.2% -0.3% <b>2.4%</b>	20,867 22,614 23,945 23,321 26,340 21,784 14,386 24,000 22,267 21,359 22,355 24,002 <b>23,290</b>	20,810 22,899 24,271 23,429 26,725 22,147 14,103 24,293 21,733 21,614 22,480 24,123 <b>23,520</b>	21,530 23,683 24,651 23,682 27,174 22,694 14,276 24,746 21,867 22,118 23,111 24,423 <b>23,944</b>	21,585 23,641 24,504 23,831 27,102 22,859 14,225 24,534 22,333 21,946 23,090 24,889 <b>24,127</b>	21,425 23,627 24,658 23,942 27,359 23,117 14,045 24,842 22,786 22,104 23,117 25,064 <b>24,293</b>	21,620 23,753 24,679 23,733 27,564 23,230 13,984 24,815 22,500 22,364 23,015 25,294 <b>24,449</b>	195 126 21 -209 205 113 -61 -27 -286 260 -102 230 <b>156</b>	753 1,139 734 412 -1,224 1,446 -402 815 233 1,005 660 1,292 <b>1,159</b>	435 700 750 190 850 1,855 480 90 35 1,465 145 5,920 <b>12,915</b> 49.1%	1823,926,4372716,447,1433207,897,33392621,984,21151514,203,5292445,660,3771291,806,25060014,888,8893437,714,2861733,862,1161,34530,951,7242155,426,182 <b>2656,476,190</b>
				North	east						N	orthea	nst						No	rtheas	t					
Connecticut Delaware Maine Maryland Massachusetts New Hampshire New York Pennsylvania Rhode Island Vermont Vermont West Virginia <b>TOTAL</b> U.S. share	427 91.5 618 925 202 249 110 14,882 10,665 11.7 2,680 111 <b>30,972</b> 14.24%	428 74 621 840 193 239 100 15,122 10,108 11 2,697 90 <b>30,522</b> 13.97%	438 71 593 881 200 236 101 15,296 10,279 11 2,603 89 <b>30,797</b> 13,79%	435 52 572 876 195 227 90 15,540 10,114 10 2,567 75 <b>30,753</b> 13.59%	430 48 554 842 188 219 88 15,646 9,949 10 2,554 75 <b>30,603</b> 13,51%	427 48 543 846 179 208 86 16,079 9,859 10 2,536 66 <b>30,887</b> 13.64%	-0.7% 0.0% -2.0% 0.5% -4.8% -5.0% -2.3% 2.8% -0.9% 0.0% -0.7% -12.0% <b>0.9%</b>	0.0% -47.5% -12.1% -8.5% -11.4% -16.5% -21.8% 8.0% -7.6% -14.5% -5.4% -40.5% <b>-0.3%</b>	19 5 30 45 11 13 6 623 519 0.7 127 7 <b>1,406</b> 14.96%	19 4 29 43 10 11 5 627 490 1 126 6 <b>1,371</b> 14.58%	19 4 27 42 10 11 5 626 482 1 122 6 <b>1,354</b> 14.42%	19 3 27 42 10 11 4 627 474 1 120 5 <b>1,343</b> 14.21%	18 3 26 41 9 10 4 624 468 0.5 118 5 <b>1,327</b> 14.11%	18 3 25 40 9 10 4 630 466 0.5 117 5 <b>1,328</b> 14.14%	0.0% 0.0% -3.8% -2.4% 0.0% 0.0% 0.0% 1.0% -0.4% 0.0% 0.0% 0.0% 0.1%	-5.3% -37.5% -16.7% -11.1% -18.2% -23.1% -33.3% 1.1% -10.2% -28.6% -7.9% -28.6% -5.5%	22,474 19,063 20,600 20,556 18,364 20,750 18,333 23,888 20,549 16,714 21,102 15,857 <b>22,036</b>	22,526 17,976 21,414 19,535 19,300 21,727 20,000 24,118 20,629 17,667 21,405 15,000 <b>22,268</b>	23,053 18,553 21,963 20,000 21,455 20,200 24,435 21,326 21,326 21,800 21,336 14,833 <b>22,740</b>	22,895 17,333 21,185 20,857 19,500 20,636 22,500 24,785 21,338 20,200 21,392 15,000 <b>22,907</b>	23,889 17,815 21,308 20,537 20,889 21,900 22,000 25,074 21,259 20,000 21,644 15,000 <b>23,070</b>	23,722 17,815 21,720 21,150 19,889 20,800 21,500 25,522 21,157 19,400 21,675 13,200 <b>23,267</b>	-167 0 412 613 -1,000 -1,100 -500 448 -102 -600 31 -1,800 <b>197</b>	1,248 -1,248 1,120 594 1,525 50 3,167 1,634 608 2,686 573 -2,657 <b>1,231</b>	85 15 150 300 100 90 40 3,040 4,940 8 500 30 <b>9,298</b> 35.4%	2125,023,5292003,200,0001673,620,0001332,820,000901,790,0001112,311,1111002,150,0002075,289,145941,995,749631,250,0002345,072,0001672,200,0001433,321,897
				South	east						S	outhea	ast						So	utheas	st					
Alabama Arkansas Florida Georgia Kentucky Louisiana Mississippi North Carolina Oklahoma South Carolina Gklahoma Virginia <b>Totnal</b> U.S. share	73 74 2,381 1,766 1,009 152 129 937 725 242 634 1,635 <b>9,757</b> 4.48%	60 67 2,346 1,771 942 135 126 902 731 206 551 1,490 <b>9,327</b> 4.27%	44 64 2,286 1,772 939 134 131 895 733 186 542 1,522 <b>9,248</b> 4.14%	39 60 2,170 1,798 908 126 106 917 705 161 508 1,471 <b>8,969</b> 3.96%	32 45 1,927 2,028 926 112 90 912 716 161 493 1,424 <b>8,866</b> 3.92%	28 33 1,950 2,027 915 101 74 894 690 148 467 1,420 <b>8,747</b> 3.86%	-12.5% -26.7% 1.2% 0.0% -1.2% -9.8% -17.8% -2.0% -3.6% -8.1% -5.3% -0.3% <b>-1.3%</b>	-61.6% -55.4% -18.1% 14.8% -9.3% -33.6% -42.6% -4.6% -4.6% -4.8% -38.8% -26.3% -13.1% -10.4%	5 6 120 82 55 11 9 44 40 14 37 83 <b>506</b> 5.39%	5 5 116 82 50 10 8 42 41 12 32 75 478 5.09%	3 5 113 81 48 10 8 41 42 10 30 75 <b>466</b> 4.96%	3 5 108 82 46 9 7 40 39 9 28 73 9 28 73 <b>449</b> 4.75%	3 4 96 92 45 9 7 39 40 9 27 70 <b>431</b> 4.59%	2 3 96 91 45 8 6 38 39 8 25 70 <b>434</b> 4.62%	-33.3% -25.0% 0.0% -1.1% 0.0% -11.1% -14.3% -2.6% -2.5% -11.1% -7.4% 0.0% -2.3%	-60.0% -50.0% -20.0% 11.0% -18.2% -27.3% -33.3% -13.6% -2.5% -42.9% -32.4% -15.7% -14.8%	14,600 12,333 19,842 21,537 18,345 13,818 14,333 21,295 18,125 17,286 17,135 19,699 <b>19,283</b>	12,000 13,400 20,224 21,598 18,840 13,500 15,750 21,476 17,829 17,167 17,219 19,867 <b>19,513</b>	14,667 12,800 20,230 21,877 19,563 13,400 16,375 21,829 17,452 18,600 18,067 20,293 <b>19,845</b>	13,000 12,000 20,093 21,927 19,739 14,000 15,143 22,925 18,077 17,889 18,143 20,151 <b>19,976</b>	10,667 11,250 20,073 22,043 20,578 12,444 12,857 23,385 17,900 17,889 18,259 20,343 <b>20,295</b>	14,000 11,000 20,313 22,275 20,333 12,625 12,333 23,526 17,692 18,500 18,680 20,882 <b>20,154</b>	3,333 -250 240 232 -245 181 -524 141 -208 611 421 539 <b>190</b>	-600 -1,333 471 738 1,988 -1,193 -2,000 2,231 -433 1,214 1,545 1,183 <b>1,012</b>	10 25 55 90 360 60 40 120 75 25 130 365 <b>1,355</b> 5.2%	2002,800,0001201,320,0001,74535,454,5451,01122,522,2221252,541,6671331,683,3331501,850,0003177,450,0005209,200,0003205,920,0001923,592,3081923,890,411 <b>3186,455,351</b>
				We	st							West							,	West						
Arizona California Colorado Idaho Montana Nevada New Mexico Oregon Texas Utah Washington Wyoming <b>TOTAL</b> U.S. share	4,978 40,413 4,557 15,149 274 734 8,285 2,531 12,852 2,322 6,736 142.2 <b>98,973</b> 45.49%	4,771 40,595 4,807 15,632 259 762 8,187 2,635 13,850 2,260 6,783 147 <b>100,688</b> 46.09%	4,889 41,311 5,150 16,237 254 788 8,169 2,637 14,855 2,230 6,817 189 <b>103,526</b> 46,36%	4,818 41,861 5,275 16,412 243 829 7,804 2,622 15,599 2,224 6,504 220 <b>104,411</b> 46.14%	4,772 41,800 5,314 16,628 223 794 7,145 2,635 16,531 2,170 6,239 240 <b>104,491</b> 46.14%	4,824 40,902 5,212 16,827 210 770 6,663 2,554 16,565 2,089 6,223 244 <b>103,083</b> 45,54%	1.1% -2.1% -1.9% 1.2% -5.8% -3.0% -6.7% -3.1% 0.2% -3.7% -0.3% 1.7% <b>-1.3%</b>	-3.1% 1.2% 14.4% 11.1% -23.4% 4.9% -19.6% 0.9% 28.9% -10.0% -7.6% 71.6% <b>4.2%</b>	208 1,734 176 609 12 32 330 123 537 100 277 6 <b>4,144</b> 44.12%	198 1,725 186 625 12 33 326 126 565 98 280 6 <b>4,180</b> 44.47%	200 1,722 197 645 12 33 330 126 595 96 280 8 <b>4,244</b> 45.18%	198 1,720 203 652 11 33 318 125 622 96 271 9 <b>4,258</b> 45.06%	197 1,719 205 656 10 33 288 126 646 93 259 9 <b>4,241</b> 45.11%	198 1,714 201 667 9 33 271 122 642 90 258 9 258 9 <b>4,214</b> 44.90%	0.5% -0.3% -2.0% 1.7% -10.0% 0.0% -5.9% -3.2% -0.6% -3.2% -0.4% 0.0% -0.6%	-4.8% -1.2% 14.2% 9.5% -25.0% 3.1% -17.9% -0.8% 19.6% -10.0% -6.9% 50.0% <b>1.7%</b>	23,933 23,306 25,892 24,875 22,833 22,938 25,106 20,577 23,933 23,220 24,318 23,700 <b>23,883</b>	24,096 23,533 25,844 25,011 21,583 23,091 25,113 20,913 24,513 23,061 24,225 24,433 <b>24,088</b>	24,445 23,990 26,142 25,174 21,167 23,879 24,755 20,929 24,966 23,229 24,346 25,173 <b>24,396</b>	24,333 24,338 25,985 25,172 22,091 25,121 24,541 20,976 25,079 23,167 24,000 25,918 <b>24,524</b>	24,223 24,316 25,922 25,348 22,300 24,061 24,809 20,934 25,590 23,333 24,089 25,763 <b>24,638</b>	24,364 23,863 25,930 25,228 22,333 24,587 20,934 25,802 23,211 24,120 26,226 <b>24,462</b>	141 -453 8 -120 33 -728 -222 0 212 -122 31 463 - <b>176</b>	431 557 38 353 -500 395 -519 357 1,869 -9 -198 2,526 <b>579</b>	75 1,070 110 390 40 20 110 150 310 140 310 5 <b>2,720</b> 10.3%	2,640 64,320,000 1,602 38,226,168 1,827 47,381,818 1,710 43,146,154 225 5,250,000 1,650 38,500,000 2,710 66,630,000 813 17,026,667 2,071 53,435,484 643 14,921,429 832 20,074,194 1,800 48,800,000 <b>1,549 37,898,162</b>

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All data used to generate this table were provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service. Data for 2023 are preliminary and are subject to revision. Alaska and Hawaii were omitted since each state only has one dairy farm.

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## Dairy farm departures retracted slightly

The pace of dairy farm loss slowed in 2023 compared to the year before, but the number of U.S. dairy farms was still reduced by 5.9%.

by Abby Bauer, Managing Editor, Hoard's Dairyman

steep and steady incline. Out West,

the average herd size is now 1,549

cows. The Southeast averaged 318 cows per herd in 2023. Even in the

Midwest and Northeast, which have

traditionally had smaller herds,

average herd size has escalated over

the past few decades. In 2023, the

average herd size in the Midwest

was 265 cows, while in the North-

ally, the average herd size has

grown 382%. From 1992 to 2023,

the herd size climbed from 74 to

357 cows. Regionally, the West

(+489%) and the Midwest (+420%)

have seen the largest percentage

From 1992 to 2003, Hoard's

Dairyman partnered with the

American Farm Bureau Federation

to obtain milk permit data. Today,

USDA's National Agricultural Sta-

tistics Service (NASS) tabulates

Table 1. Licensed U.S. dairy farms

Number

131.509

124.945

117.732

111.825

106,181

99,413

91,508

87,527

82.937

76,875

74.012

70,375

66.830

64,540

62,070

59.130

57.127

54,932

53.132

51.291

49,281

46,975

44 809

43,534

41.819

40.199

37,468

34,207

31.652

29,842

27,932

26,290

% change

-5.0

-5.8

-5.0

-5.3

-6.4

-8.0

-4.4

-5.2

-7.3

-3.7

-4.9

-5.0

-3.4

-3.8

-4.7

-3.4

-3.8

-3.3

-3.5

-3.9

-4.7

-46

-2.8

-3.9

-3.9

6.8

-8.7

-75

-5.7

-6.4

-5.9

Table 2 provides an overview of the change since 1992. Nation-

east it was 143 head.

gains in herd size.

these numbers.

Year

1992

1993

1994

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

2000

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

ILK prices retreated from their record highs while feed prices climbed, resulting in tight margins for dairy producers in 2023. With those conditions, it is not surprising that some dairies chose to leave the business, although the rate of attrition was somewhat slower than the year before.

In 2023, 1,642 farms milked cows for the last time, reducing the number of licensed dairy farms to 26,290. That 5.9% loss in farm numbers compares to the 6.4% reduction tabulated in 2022, when 1,910 farms left the business.

The region with the most dairy farms saw the most departures, with the Midwest losing 7.8% of its dairies in 2023. That was a little higher than the 7.3% loss noted in 2022. In that region, Michigan lost the most farms at 15.8%, followed by Missouri (14.3%) and North Dakota (12.5%).

Over the last two decades, the Southeast region has been the loss leader a majority of the years, but that was not the case in 2023. Still, 7.2% of dairies exited last year, led by Arkansas and South Carolina, with dairy numbers falling by 16.7% in both states.

The West reduced dairy farm numbers by 4.4%. Two states, Montana and Oregon, lost more than 10% of their state's farms.

As a region, the Northeast showed the strongest retention numbers, losing just 3.4% of its dairies. Several states in that region remained unchanged from 2022, and the state with the most farms in the Northeast, Pennsylvania, only saw a 1.2% reduction.

Overall, Wisconsin is still home to the most dairy farms, at 5,920. In second place is Pennsylvania, with 4,940 dairies. Neighboring New York is third, with 3,040 dairy farms. Minnesota had 1,855 licensed dairies in 2023, while Ohio rounded out the top five with 1,465.

Table 1 shows the 31-year history detailing the number of dairy farms holding permits to sell milk. Since 1992, the dairy farms licensed to sell milk fell from 131,509 to 26,290. That's an 80% drop during that time, with 105,219 fewer farms but close to the same number of cows.

Those changing dynamics mean that average herd size has been on a

Table 2.	How ou	r indust	ry cha	nged fro	m 1992	2 to 20	23			
		1992			2023	Percent change				
		Cows	Cows/		Cows	Cows/			Cows/	
	Herds	(1,000s)	herd	Herds	(1,000s)	herd	Herds	Cows	herd	
Midwest	80,135	4,100	51	12,915	3,421	265	-84	-17	420	
Northeast	29,758	1,765	61	9,290	1,328	143	-69	-25	134	
Southeast	12,057	1,253	104	1,355	434	318	-89	-65	206	
West	9,559	2,515	263	2,722	4,214	1,549	-72	68	489	
U.S.	131,509	9,692	74	26,290	9,386	357	-80	-3	382	

State	2022	2023	Change	Percen
otate		/lidwest	onunge	chang
Illinois	480	435	-45	-9.4
Indiana	735	700	-35	-4.8
lowa	800	750	-50	-6.3
Kansas	210	190	-20	-9.5
Michigan	1,010	850	-160	-15.8
Minnesota	2,035	1,855	-180	-8.8
Missouri	560	480	-80	-14.3
Nebraska	100	90	-10	-10.0
North Dakota	40	35	-5	-12.5
Ohio	1,525	1,465	-60	-3.9
South Dakota	155	145	-10	-6.5
Wisconsin	6,350	5,920	-430	-6.8
	14,000	12,915	-1,085	-7.8
	N	ortheast		
Connecticut	85	85	0	0.0
Delaware	15	15	0	0.0
Maine	170	150	-20	-11.8
Maryland	310	300	-10	-3.2
Massachusetts	110	100	-10	-9.1
New Hampshire	95	90	-5	-5.3
New Jersey	40	40	0	0.0
New York	3,210	3,040	-170	-5.3
Pennsylvania	5,000	4,940	-60	-1.2
Rhode Island	10	8	-2	-20.0
Vermont	550 30	500 30	-50	-9.1 0.0
West Virginia			0	
	9,615	9,290	-327	-3.4
		outheast		
Alabama Arkansas	10 30	10 25	0 -5	0.0 -16.7
Florida	60	55	-5	-8.3
Georgia	95	90	-5	-5.3
Kentucky	380	360	-20	-5.3
Louisiana	65	60	-5	-7.7
Mississippi	45	40	-5	-11.1
North Carolina	130	120	-10	-7.7
Oklahoma	85	75	-10	-11.8
South Carolina	30	25	-5	-16.7
Tennessee	140	130	-10	-7.1
Virginia	390	365	-25	-6.4
	1,460	1,355	-105	-7.2
		West		
			0	0.0
Alaska	1	1	0	
Alaska Arizona	1 80	1 75	-5	-6.3
Arizona	80	75	-5	-4.0
Arizona California	80 1,115	75 1,070	-5 -45	-4.0 0.0
Arizona California Colorado	80 1,115 110 1 410	75 1,070 110	-5 -45 0	-4.0 0.0 0.0 -4.9
Arizona California Colorado Hawaii	80 1,115 110 1 410 45	75 1,070 110 1	-5 -45 0 0	-4.0 0.0 0.0 -4.9
Arizona California Colorado Hawaii Idaho Montana Nevada	80 1,115 110 1 410 45 20	75 1,070 110 1 390 40 20	-5 -45 0 0 -20 -5 0	-4.0 0.0 0.0 -4.9 -11.1
Arizona California Colorado Hawaii Idaho Montana Nevada New Mexico	80 1,115 110 1 410 45 20 110	75 1,070 110 1 390 40 20 100	-5 -45 0 0 -20 -5 0 -10	-4.0 0.0 0.0 -4.9 -11.1 0.0
Arizona California Colorado Hawaii Idaho Montana Nevada New Mexico Oregon	80 1,115 110 1 410 45 20 110 170	75 1,070 110 1 390 40 20 100 150	-5 -45 0 0 -20 -5 0 -10 -20	-4.0 0.0 0.0 -4.9 -11.1 0.0 -9.1 -11.8
Arizona California Colorado Hawaii Idaho Montana Nevada New Mexico Oregon Texas	80 1,115 110 1 410 45 20 110 170 320	75 1,070 110 1 390 40 20 100 150 310	-5 -45 0 0 -20 -5 0 -10 -20 -10 -10	-4.0 0.0 -4.9 -11.1 0.0 -9.1 -11.8 -3.1
Arizona California Colorado Hawaii Idaho Montana Nevada New Mexico Oregon Texas Utah	80 1,115 110 1 410 45 20 110 110 170 320 150	75 1,070 110 1 390 40 20 100 150 310 140	-5 -45 0 0 -20 -5 0 -10 -20	-4.0 0.0 -4.9 -11.1 0.0 -9.1 -11.8 -3.1 -6.7
Arizona California Colorado Hawaii Idaho Montana Nevada New Mexico Oregon Texas	80 1,115 110 1 410 45 20 110 170 320	75 1,070 110 1 390 40 20 100 150 310	-5 -45 0 0 -20 -5 0 -10 -20 -10 -10	-4.0 0.0 -4.9 -11.1 0.0 -9.1 -11.8 -3.1 -6.7
Arizona California Colorado Hawaii Idaho Montana Nevada New Mexico Oregon Texas Utah	80 1,115 110 1 410 45 20 110 110 170 320 150	75 1,070 110 1 390 40 20 100 150 310 140	-5 -45 0 0 -20 -5 0 -10 -20 -10 -10	-4.0 0.0 0.0 -4.9 -11.1 0.0 -9.1 -11.8 -3.1 -6.7 0.0
Arizona California Colorado Hawaii Idaho Montana Nevada Nevada New Mexico Oregon Texas Utah	80 1,115 110 1 410 45 20 110 170 320 150 310	75 1,070 110 1 390 40 20 100 150 310 140 310	-5 -45 0 0 -20 -5 0 -10 -10 -10 -10 -10 0	-6.3 -4.0 0.0 -4.9 -11.1 0.0 -9.1 -11.8 -3.1 -6.7 0.0 0.0 0.0 -4.4