

# La Paz County, AZ

## Arizona County Agricultural Economy Profiles University of Arizona Cooperative Extension

### Overview

La Paz County, located in western Arizona on the Colorado River, is bordered to the north by Mohave County and to the south by Yuma County. Population centers include Quartzite and Parker. La Paz County was established in 1983 when it separated from Yuma County. As of 2018 the population was just over 21,000, with more than 56% of the county's population residing in rural areas.

Top industries in La Paz County include government, tourism, and agriculture. Agricultural production is concentrated along the Colorado River within the Colorado River Indian Reservation, as well as in the east-central portion of the county near the towns of Vicksburg, Salome, and Wenden. Approximately 8% of county land is in farms.

Agriculture plays an important role in La Paz County. On-farm agriculture accounts for roughly 2.6% of La Paz County's GDP and 12.5% of all private industry jobs, significantly higher than the national and state averages. La Paz County accounts for 4% of Arizona's total agricultural cash receipts.



Map of La Paz County, Arizona

Indicator	La Paz County	Arizona
Land Area (square miles)	4,514	113,990
Land in Farms (Crops, Grazing) (square miles)	390	40,822
Population (2018)	21,098	7,171,646
Annual Average Population Growth Rate (2010-18)	0.4%	1.4%
Percent of Population Over 65 (2018)	39.3%	17.5%
Percent Population Rural (2010)	56.3%	10.2%
Total Employment (2018)	5,816	2,826,095
Share Federal, State, & Local Government Employment (2018)	36.8%	13.8%
GDP (2018)	\$670.0 million	\$348.3 billion
Ag, Forestry, & Hunting GDP (on-farm only) (2018)	\$17.1 million	\$2.3 billion

Industry	Location Quotient
<b>Hay farming</b>	<b>470.28</b>
<b>Cotton farming</b>	<b>89.85</b>
<b>Crop harvesting, primarily by machine</b>	<b>30.95</b>
<b>All other miscellaneous crop farming</b>	<b>30.52</b>
Lessors of other real estate property	10.71
<b>Farm labor contractors and crew leaders</b>	<b>8.64</b>
Residential site preparation contractors	3.94
Wired telecommunications carriers	3.77
Hotels and motels, except casino hotels	3.36
Automotive parts and accessories stores	2.02

Top 10 Private Industries in La Paz County by Employment LQ, 2018

An economy can be characterized by the industries that make up the “base” of the economy. A common way to measure this is with location quotients (LQs), which measure the ratio of a particular industry's share of employment within a region to the same industry's share of national employment. An industry with a LQ greater than 1.25 is considered part of the economic base, exporting goods and services and bringing money into the region. LQs also help identify a region's areas of specialization. Higher LQs indicate greater specialization. Of the top 10 most concentrated industries in La Paz County, agriculture account for 5. These include hay farming (with employment 470.28 times more concentrated than the national average), cotton farming (89.85), crop harvesting (30.95), all other miscellaneous crop farming (30.52), and farm labor contractors and crew leaders (8.64).

# La Paz County, AZ

Every 5 years, U.S. Department of Agriculture releases the Census of Agriculture, which provides the most comprehensive source of information on agricultural production by county. The Census provides information on the number of farms, types of crops and livestock produced, and farm characteristics, among other information. A farm is defined as any establishment that produced and sold, or could have sold, more than \$1,000 or more of agricultural products in the Census year. The following information comes from the most recent 2017 Census of Agriculture.

## Farms

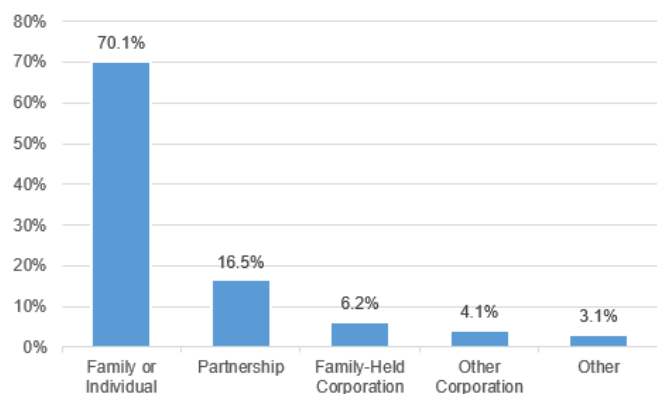
There were 97 farms in La Paz county in 2017, covering 96,204 acres of cropland. Acreage in pastureland is not disclosed to prevent identification of individual operators. The average farm size was 2,574 acres, significantly larger than the national average of 441 acres, with the top 19% of farms accounting for 89% of county acreage.

Of 97 farms, 31 had more than \$500,000 in sales, and only 4 farms had less than \$1,000 in sales. This distribution is very different from most other Arizona counties, where there are a large number of small farms and a small number of large farms. Most county farms are family- or individually-held farms (70%), nearly 17% are partnerships, 6% are family-held corporations, and 4% are non-family-held corporations.

Farms are classified by the type of agricultural products they produce. When a farm or ranch produces more than one agricultural product, they are classified by the product that constitutes more than 50% of their sales. The most common type of operation in La Paz County is hay and all other crop farming (71 farms).

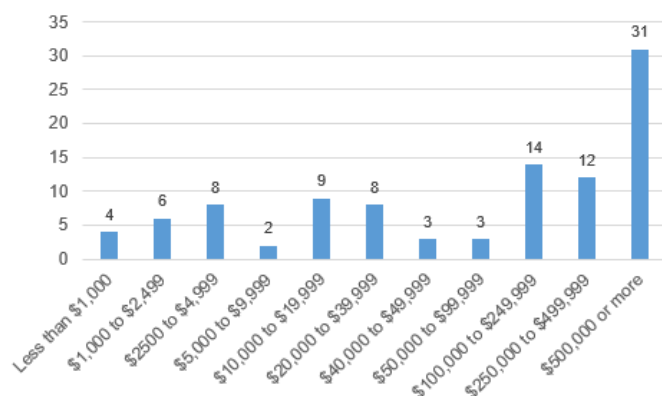
While the number of farms is helpful in understanding how many farms “specialize” in different types of agricultural production, it does not necessarily reflect the magnitude or scale of production by commodity, which is better captured by sales or cash receipts (next page).

### La Paz County Farms by Legal Organization, 2017



Source: USDA

### La Paz County Farms by Annual Sales, 2017



Source: USDA

### La Paz County Farms by Industry

Category	Farms
Total farms	97
Oilseed and grain farming	0
Vegetable and melon farming	0
Fruit and tree nut farming	0
Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production	0
Other crop farming	73
Cotton farming	2
Hay and all other crop farming	71
Beef cattle ranching and farming	13
Cattle feedlots	0
Dairy cattle and milk production	1
Hog and pig farming	3
Poultry and egg production	1
Sheep and goat farming	0
Aquaculture and other animal production	6

\* Includes farms where no single type of livestock accounts for more than 50% of farm sales.

# La Paz County, AZ

## Production & Marketing

La Paz County is a crop-dominant county, with 85% of county cash receipts originating from sales of crops, and 15% from livestock.

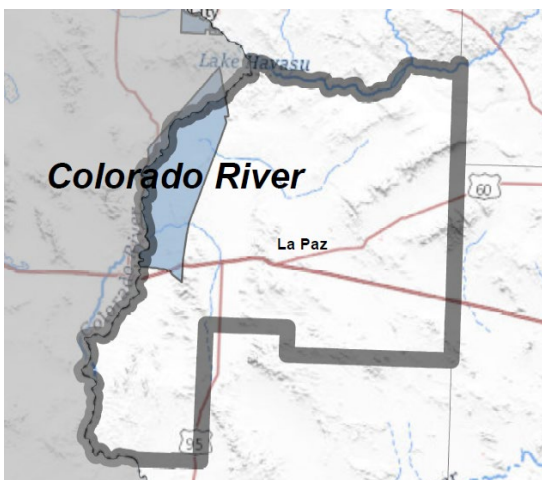
According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, major agricultural commodities by sales include **other crops and hay** (\$90.4 million) and **cattle and calves** (\$2.9 million). Sales data for **vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes** are not disclosed to protect individual producer privacy, but La Paz County ranks 4<sup>th</sup> among Arizona counties and 406<sup>th</sup> among 2,821 counties nationally, suggesting that the county derives a significant amount of sales from these products.

Local marketing sales are not disclosed for La Paz County. There was 1 farm with reported sales of organic production.

## Tribal Agriculture

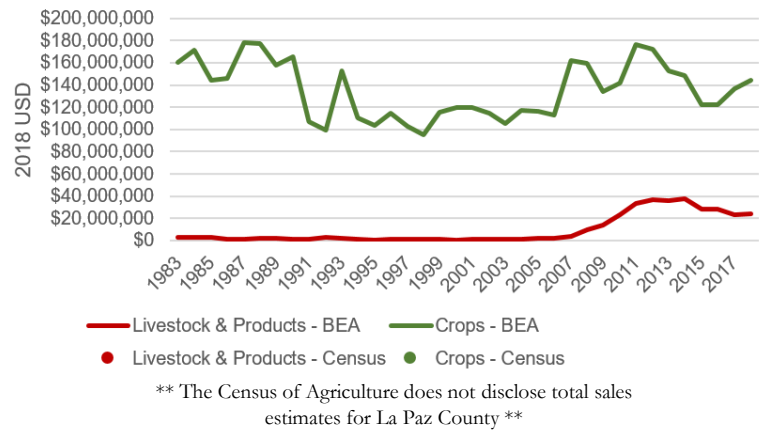
La Paz County contains portions of the Colorado River Indian Tribes reservation. The majority of the reservation is in La Paz County with smaller portions in California. Statistics reported below represent production within the entire tribal area, therefore production occurring within La Paz County is only a portion of the total reported.

In 2017, there were 55 farms and 70,780 acres of cropland on the reservation, generating \$78.1 million in sales of agricultural products. Of the 55 farms, 49 farms produced hay on 48,429 acres. In 2017, there were 3,532 acres of durum wheat grown and 3,675 acres of vegetables.



La Paz  
County  
Tribal  
Areas

## La Paz County Agricultural Cash Receipts for Crops & Livestock, 1983 to 2018



## Hay Production in La Paz County

With a LQ of more than 470, La Paz County is highly specialized in hay production. To put its specialization in perspective, the LQ for employment in auto manufacturing in Wayne County (home of Detroit) is 22 and the LQ for computer manufacturing in Santa Clara County (home of the region known as Silicon Valley) is 63.

In 2017, La Paz County had nearly 75,000 harvested acres of forage land, producing more than 595,000 tons of all types of hay and haylage. A large majority of hay produced is alfalfa hay, accounting for more than 95% of harvested acreage and 96% of tons produced.

By value of hay sales, La Paz County ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in Arizona, between Maricopa County (1<sup>st</sup>) and Pinal County (3<sup>rd</sup>). Combined, these three counties produce more than 2.1 million tons of hay annually, accounting for 75% of hay produced in Arizona. La Paz County, alone, accounts for approximately 20% of hay production in the state.

Nationally, the county ranks 13<sup>th</sup> among 3,040 counties in terms of its sales of other crops and hay.



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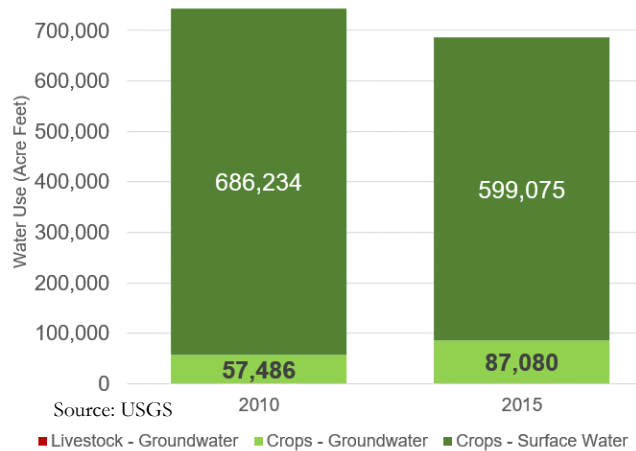
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## Irrigation Water Use

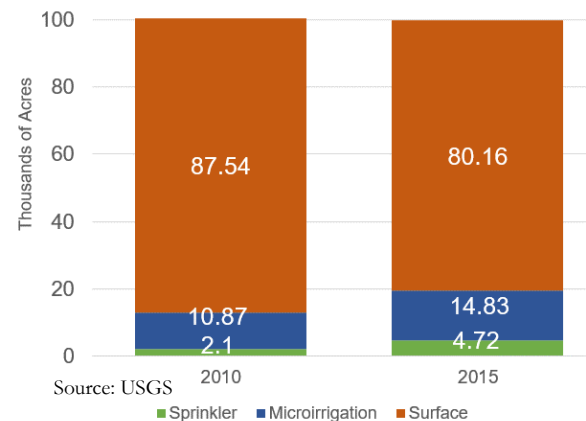
In Arizona, agriculture accounts for about 75% of the state's water use. More than half of withdrawals for agricultural uses in the state are from surface water. In some areas of the state with high demand, groundwater withdrawals for irrigated agriculture are limited by the 1980 Groundwater Management Act. This legislation established five Active Management Areas (AMA) as well as other Irrigation Non-Expansion Areas (INA) where groundwater pumping and expansion of irrigated agriculture are limited. Although La Paz County does not contain land in an AMA, approximately 6.1% of the county's area is located in the Harquahala INA, an area in eastern La Paz County where irrigated acreage cannot be expanded pursuant to the Groundwater Management Act.

Based on 2015 USGS estimates of water use, agriculture accounted for 99.4% of La Paz County water withdrawals. Agricultural irrigation water use in La Paz County is dominated by production of crops, with irrigation water sourced primarily from surface water. In 2015, an estimated 599,075 acre-feet (AF) came from surface water supplies and 87,080 AF were sourced from groundwater. An acre-foot is the amount of water required to cover one acre one foot deep in water. Irrigated crop production is concentrated along the Colorado River mainstem within the Colorado River Indian Tribes reservation, as well as in river valleys in the eastern portion of the county. Groundwater use increased between 2010 and 2015 and surface water use declined. Meanwhile, total irrigated acreage is estimated to have remained steady between 2010 and 2015, though acreage irrigated through gravity-flow irrigation declined and acreage irrigated through sprinkler and microirrigation increased.

La Paz County Agricultural Water Use by Use & Source



La Paz County Irrigated Acres by Irrigation Technology



La Paz County Water Map

