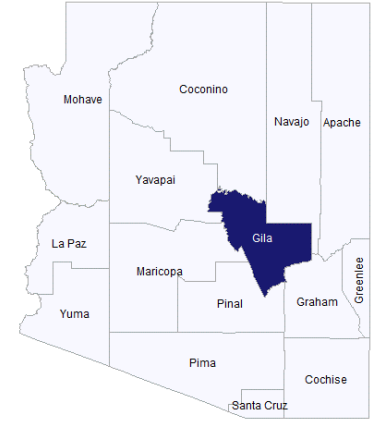


Gila County, AZ

Overview

Gila County is located in central Arizona, bordered to the north by Navajo and Coconino counties, to the west by Yavapai, Maricopa, and Pinal counties, and to the east by Graham County. As of 2022, the population was nearly 54,000 with approximately 44% of the county's population residing in rural areas. Major population centers include Payson and Globe. Top industries in Gila County include copper mining, mining-related industries, and government.

Although on-farm agriculture accounts for less than 1% of the county's GDP and less than 1% of all private industry jobs, Gila County is specialized in beef cattle ranching, with employment in ranching over 3 times more concentrated than the national average. Gila County has the highest average farm size of all Arizona counties at 6,953 acres. Land in farms accounts for approximately 44% of total county land area. Gila County represents less than 1% of Arizona's total agricultural cash receipts.



Map of Gila County, Arizona

Indicator	Gila County	Arizona
Land Area (square miles)	4,758	113,591
Land in Farms (Crops, Grazing) (square miles) (2022)	2,075	39,883
Population (2022)	53,922	7,359,197
Annual Average Population Growth Rate (2010-22)	0.1%	1.2%
Percent of Population Over 65 (2022)	30.8%	18.8%
Percent Population Rural (2020)	44.4%	10.7%
Total Employment (2022)	14,640	3,075,427
Share Federal, State, & Local Government Employment (2022)	35.3%	13.5%
GDP (2022)	\$2.2 billion	\$475.7 billion
Ag, Forestry, & Hunting GDP (on-farm only) (2022)	\$12 million	\$2.6 billion

Industry	Location Quotient
Nonresidential site preparation contractors	7.73
RV (recreational vehicle) parks and campgrounds	6.75
Specialized freight (except used goods) trucking, local	4.84
Tire dealers	4.26
Water supply and irrigation systems	4.02
Lessors of other real estate property	3.98
Motor vehicle towing	3.85
Nursery, garden center, and farm supply retailers	3.60
Beef cattle ranching and farming	3.28
Residential flooring contractors	3.23

Top 10 Private Industries in Gila County by Employment LQ, 2022

An economy can be characterized by the industries that make up its "base". A common way to measure this is with location quotients (LQs), 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 Gila County, agriculture accounts for two industries, including water supply and irrigation systems, and beef cattle ranching and farming, in both cases employment is nearly 4 times more concentrated than the national average.

Gila County, AZ

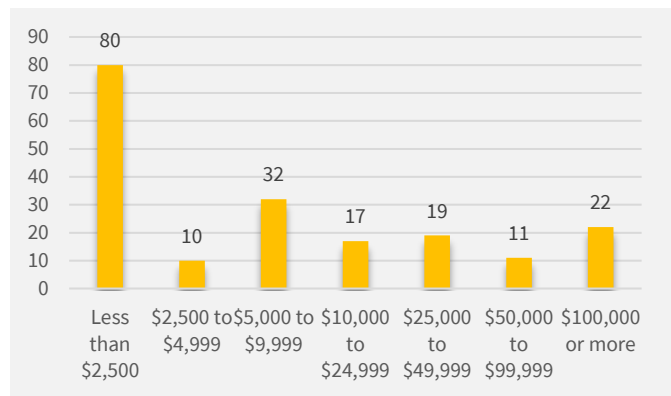
Every 5 years, U.S. Department of Agriculture releases the Census of Agriculture, the most comprehensive source of information on agricultural production by county. The Census provides information on the number of farms, types of crops and livestock produced, and farm characteristics, among other information. A farm is defined as any establishment that produced and sold, or could have sold, \$1,000 or more of agricultural products in the Census year. The following information comes from the most recent 2022 Census of Agriculture.

Farms

There were 191 farms in Gila County in 2022, covering 2,570 acres of cropland (100% of harvested cropland irrigated) and 1,325,473 acres of pastureland (<1% irrigated). The average farm size was 6,953 acres, significantly larger than the state average of 1,528 acres, with the top 5% of farms accounting for 97% of county acreage. Of 191 farms, 80 had less than \$2,500 in sales and 22 farms had more than \$100,000 in sales. A large majority (72%) of county farms are family- or individually-held farms, 8% are partnerships, 5.2% family-held corporations, and only 1.6% are non-family-held corporate farms.

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 Gila County is beef cattle ranching and farming (85 farms), followed by aquaculture and other animal production (66 farms). While the number of farms is helpful in understanding how many farms “specialize” in different types of agricultural production, it does not reflect the magnitude or scale of production by commodity, which is better captured by sales or cash receipts (next page).

Gila County Farms by Annual Sales, 2022



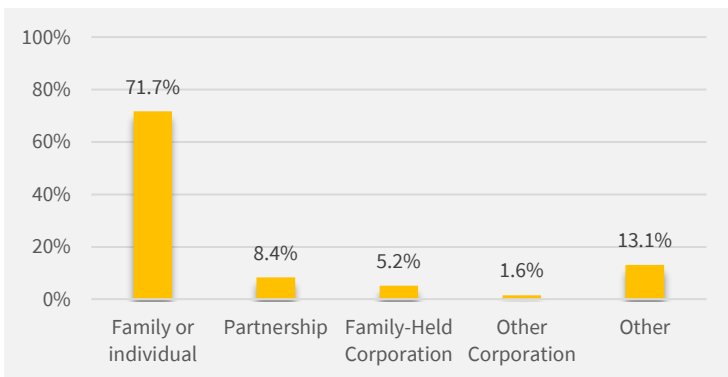
Source: USDA

Gila County Farms by Industry, 2022

Category	Farms
Total farms	191
Oilseed and grain farming	0
Vegetable and melon farming	3
Fruit and tree nut farming	17
Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production	1
Other crop farming	5
Cotton farming	0
Sugarcane farming, hay farming, and all other crop farming	5
Beef cattle ranching and farming	85
Cattle feedlots	2
Dairy cattle and milk production	4
Hog and pig farming	0
Poultry and egg production	7
Sheep and goat farming	1
Aquaculture and other animal production	66

Source: USDA

Gila County Farms by Legal Organization, 2022



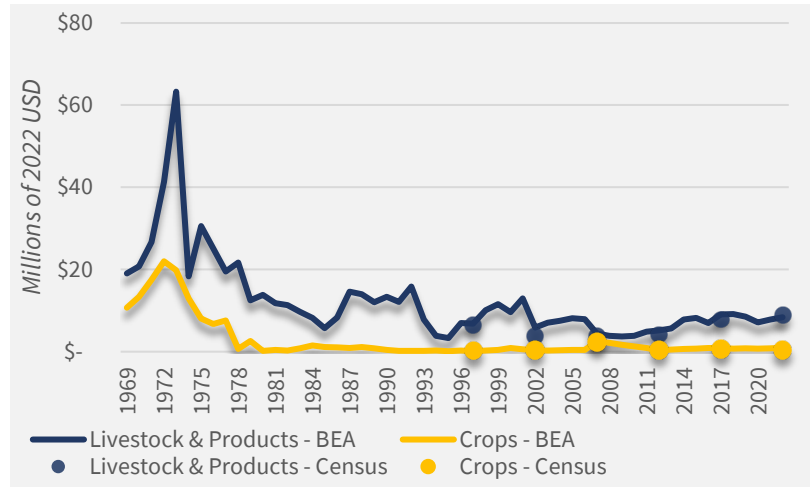
Source: USDA

Gila County, AZ

Production & Marketing

Gila County is a livestock-dominant county, with an estimated 96% of county cash receipts originating from sales of livestock and animal products. Sales of cattle and calves represented 62% of county agricultural cash receipts in 2022, followed by sales of horses, ponies, mules, burros, and donkeys, at 22% of cash receipts. Cattle growers in the county sold 6,784 head of cattle in 2022. Crop sales totaled just over \$400,000 in 2022.

Gila County Agricultural Cash Receipts, Crops & Livestock, 1969-2022



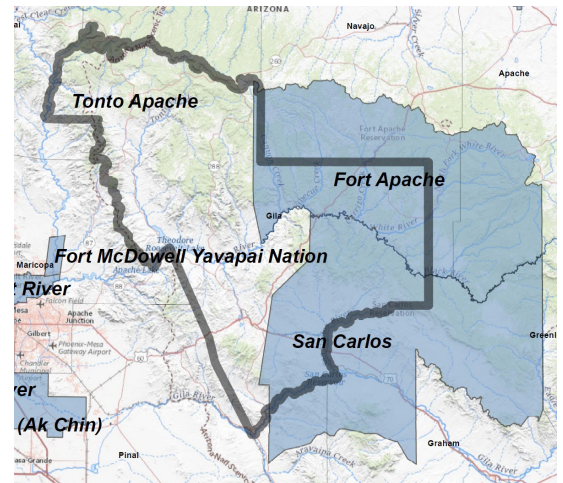
Source: USDA & BEA

Tribal Agriculture

Gila County contains portions of the Fort Apache, San Carlos Apache, and Tonto Apache reservations. Of these three tribal areas, the Census of Agriculture only reports on the San Carlos Apache. Statistics reported for San Carlos Apache agricultural production represent production within the entire tribal area, therefore production occurring within Gila County is only a portion of the total reported.

The San Carlos Apache reservation spans portions of Gila, Graham, and Pinal counties. A total of 198 farms operated on the San Carlos Apache reservation in 2017. A large majority of these farms were small, both in terms of size and value of sales. Of 198 farms, 187 farms were between 1 and 9 acres in size and 169 farms sold less than \$1,000 in agricultural products. Almost all farms (193 farms) had inventory of cattle and calves, but only 66 farms sold cattle in 2017.

Tribal Land in Gila County



Ranching & Public Lands

Federal lands account for 59% of county land area in Gila County. As a livestock-dominant county, many Gila County livestock producers rely on federal grazing leases for grazing their livestock. The Forest Service (FS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are the two federal agencies that issue grazing permits. In Gila County, roughly 1.8 million acres are managed by the FS and 57,000 acres are managed by the BLM, accounting for nearly all federal lands in the county.

Ranching on public lands presents a series of unique considerations for producers, including coordinating with one or many land managers, complying with federal or state regulations, obtaining permits, and paying fees. These considerations have implications for operations and the cost of doing business (Arizona Ranching Budgets: 2016, Teegerstrom & Tronstad, 2017).

Gila County, AZ

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. There is no land in Gila County within an AMA nor within an INA.

The largest water user in Gila County is mining. In fact, the county is a major producer of copper and other minerals. In terms of land management, the county’s land base consists of 38% Tribal, 57% federal, 1% state, and 4% private land. Much of the county includes Forest Service lands, important watersheds that supply critical surface water sources including the Salt and Gila Rivers.

For more information on water in Gila County, please visit the University of Arizona Water Resource Research Center county water factsheets by clicking [here](#) or scanning the QR code →



Gila County Water Map



About Us

Extension Regional Economic Analysis Program

The Extension Regional Economic Analysis Program (EREAP) conducts applied research and economic analysis addressing economic development issues around Arizona. We work serving the needs of Cooperative Extension and its stakeholders, such as Arizona agricultural and agribusiness industries, natural resource users and organizations, and regional economic groups, to provide specialized analysis and targeted information. For more information or to contact us, please click [here](#) or scan the QR code to visit our site →

