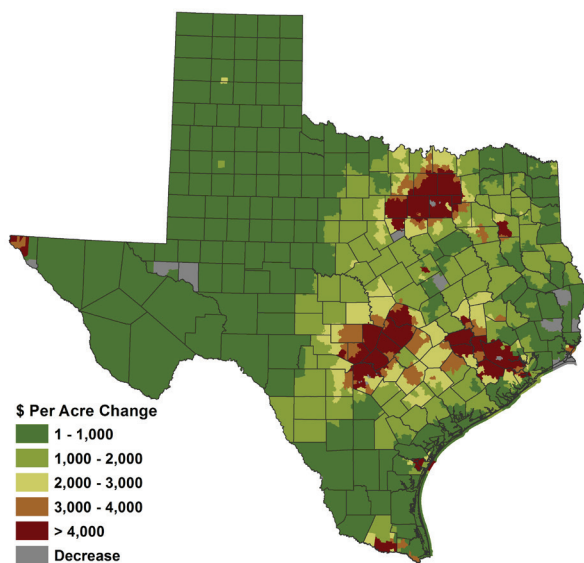


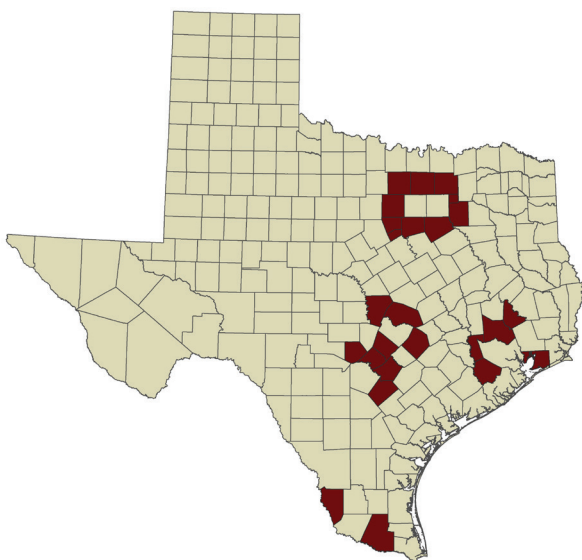
# Texas Land Trends

## What are working lands?

**Working lands are privately owned farms, ranches, and forests that produce food and fiber, support rural economies, and provide wildlife habitat, clean air and water, and recreational opportunities.**



Market value change per acre, 1997–2012



Top 25 high growth rate counties

Former President and native Texan Lyndon B. Johnson once said, “Saving the water and the soil must start where the first rain drop falls.” In Texas, where more than 95 percent of the land is privately owned, that raindrop is likely to fall on a private farm, ranch or forest, also known as *working lands*. Texas has more than 142 million acres of these private working lands and leads the nation in land devoted to farms, ranches and forests. These working lands account for 83 percent of the state’s total land base and provide substantial economic, environmental and recreational resources that benefit the state’s population.

Texas working lands are undergoing a fundamental change, one that has implications for rural economies, national and food security, and conservation of water and other natural resources. Native landscapes are increasingly threatened by suburbanization, rural development and land fragmentation driven by rapid population growth. The goal of the Texas Land Trends report, published every 5 years, is to provide public and private decision-makers with information needed to plan for the conservation of Texas’ working lands. Key findings following the recently released 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture data are outlined below.

## Report Key Findings

### Population Growth

- According to 2013 U.S. Census Bureau data, Texas has seven of the 15 most rapidly growing cities in the nation.
- From 1997 to 2012, the Texas population increased from 19 million to 26 million residents, an increase of 36 percent or approximately 500,000 new residents annually.
- The majority (87 percent) of the population increase occurred within the state’s top 25 most populated counties.

### Land Loss

- From 1997 to 2012, there was a net loss of more than 1.1 million acres of working lands, converted to non-agricultural uses. From 2007 to 2012, we observed a substantial decline in the rate of conversion of Texas working lands to non-agricultural uses.
- More than 54 percent of total land conversion occurred in the state’s 25 highest growth rate counties. During this period (1997 to 2012), approximately 590,000 acres were lost from the agricultural land base in these counties.
- Texas continues to lead the nation in the loss of working lands (total acres). From 1982 to 2010, the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Resources Inventory data reported the conversion of more than 4.1 million acres of Texas working lands to urban uses, with significantly higher conversion rates occurring from 1992 to 2007.

## Report Key Findings (cont.)

### Land Values

- In 2012, the average appraised market value of Texas working lands was \$1,573 per acre, an average 32 percent increase since 2007, and 214 percent increase over the 15-year period. The largest increases in land values were observed in areas surrounding major metropolitan growth areas.
- The significant decline in the conversion of Texas working lands from 2007 to 2012 may be attributed to a weak economy resulting from the economic recession that occurred during that period. With Texas' current economic growth, an acceleration in working lands loss is anticipated.

### Ownership Size

- Texas gained about 1,400 new working farms and ranches annually, while the land base for Texas agriculture decreased by approximately 1.1 million acres from 1997 to 2012.
- Average ownership size declined from 581 acres in 1997 to 521 acres in 2012.
- By the end of 2012, the USDA Census of Agriculture accounted for nearly 249,000 farming and ranching operations in the state, representing a 9 percent increase since the 1997 census.

### Background to Texas Land Trends

Developed by the Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources (IRNR), Texas Land Trends ([txlandtrends.org](http://txlandtrends.org)) is an interactive website and database detailing current working land trends within the state.

The 2014 Texas Land Trends report describes key findings of recent changes in land use, ownership size and property values of private working lands from 1997 to 2012. Primary data sources used include the Texas State Comptroller of Public Accounts, which provided a 1997 to 2012 annual compilation of land use and land value data from independent school districts, and the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau, USDA National Resources Inventory, and the U.S. Department of Commerce/Bureau of Economic Analysis–Regional Economic Information System also were used.

IRNR will continue to release a series of Texas Land Trends reports on key issues of interest to the state (e.g., water, energy, wildlife) over the course of the next one to two years. All reports will be available on the Texas Land Trends website ([txlandtrends.org](http://txlandtrends.org)) as they are published.

Texas Land Trends was developed in cooperation with Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Agricultural Land Trust (TALT). Texas Land Trends was funded by the Meadows Foundation, Houston Endowment, Mitchell Foundation, Hershey Foundation and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

### Contacts

- Dr. Roel Lopez, IRNR director, [roel@tamu.edu](mailto:roel@tamu.edu), (210) 277-0292 x202
- Todd Snelgrove, IRNR associate director, [todd.snelgrove@agnet.tamu.edu](mailto:todd.snelgrove@agnet.tamu.edu), (979) 862-1510
- Blair Fitzsimons, TALT chief executive officer, [bfitzsimons@txaglandtrust.org](mailto:bfitzsimons@txaglandtrust.org), (210) 416-8234

