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## **FARM SCENE: More farmers are using computers, but pace slowing**

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**WICHITA, Kan.** - American farmers are buying computers and using them for business, but at a much slower pace than they did just two years ago, a new federal study shows.

The rate for both computer ownership and business usage increased just 1 percent from 2003 to 2005, according to a survey conducted every two years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"It appears that computer usage, ownership, and Internet access on farms are leveling off," the report, released Friday, said.

Of more than 32,400 farms of all kinds and types surveyed by the USDA's National Statistics Service, 55 percent own or lease a computer - up slightly from 54 percent in 2003 - and 31 percent use it in their operations.

About 51 percent have Internet access, compared with 48 percent in 2003.

The agency asked farmers for the first time how they accessed the Internet. More than two-thirds - 69 percent - use dial-up. Roughly 26 percent also said they used the Internet in the past 12 months for nonagricultural business.

Kentucky farmers have the least Internet access in the nation - 30 percent. It is also low for other Southern states: 37 percent in Alabama, 36 percent in Georgia, 37 percent in Mississippi and 47 percent in Louisiana.

Just 38 percent of Missouri farmers and 49 percent of Kansas farmers had Internet service. In North Dakota, 58 percent of farmers were connected.

Farmers who have the greatest Internet access - 76 percent - live in New Hampshire and Pennsylvania. Western states also have higher access: Montana at 70 percent, Oregon at 68 percent, Colorado at 65 percent, Idaho at 68 percent and Washington state at 65 percent.

Not surprisingly, farms that made the most money had more Internet access and used their computers more than smaller farms.

About 77 percent of farms with sales and government subsidies of \$250,000 or more said they owned or leased a computer, and 72 percent of those had Internet access.

By comparison, among those farms that had revenues of at least \$10,000 but still made under \$100,000, just 51 percent owned or leased a computer, and 47 percent had Internet access.

For crop farms, 60 percent had computer access and 33 percent used a computer for their farm business in 2005, the same as 2003. Internet access for crop farms increased to 52 percent in 2005 compared to 49 percent in 2003.

For livestock farms, 57 percent had computer access and 48 percent had Internet access, both up 1 percent from 2003. The use of a computer for farm business has increased to 29 percent for livestock farms, up 2 percent from 2003.

### **ON THE NET**

The report: <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/other/computer/>