Crossroads Resource Center

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Tools for Community Self-determination

Background Data for

Wasatch Front Metro Counties of Utah

(Davis, Salt Lake, Utah, & Weber Counties)

Second of Two Data Reports Supplementing the October, 2021 Report, "How Feasible is a Food Hub for Northern Utah?"

Note that the "Metro Counties" named in this report are the Wasatch Front metro counties, and differ from the Salt Lake City MSA as defined by the federal census. The latter definition is used for health data on page 13.

Compiled by Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center
For the City of Salt Lake, Utah
June 7, 2021

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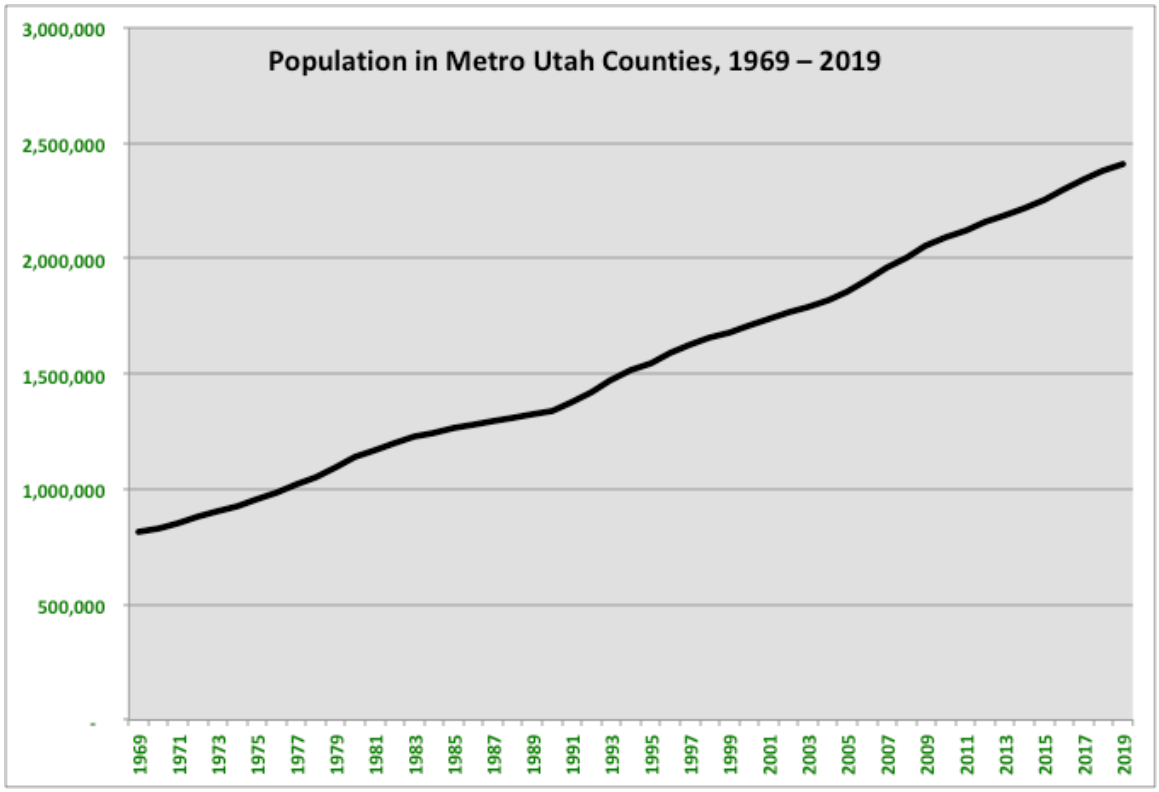
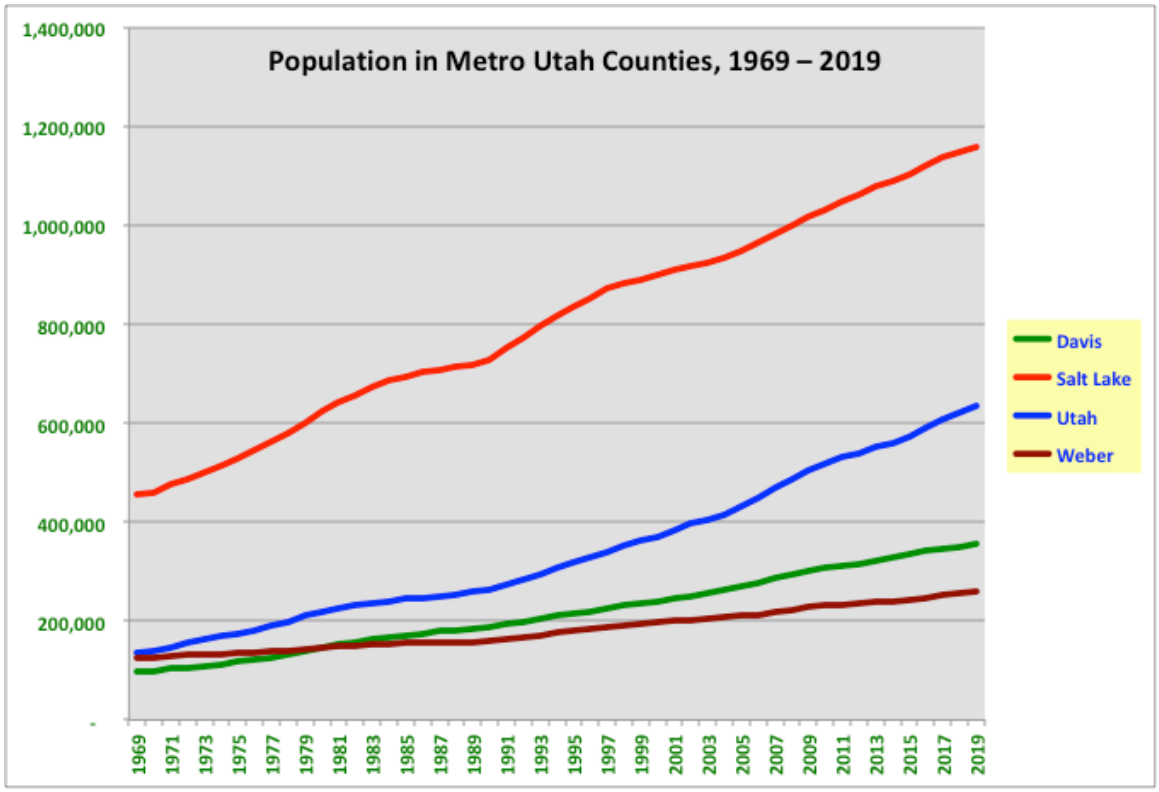
Chart 1: Population of Metro Utah Counties, 1969–2019



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

The population of Metro Utah counties nearly tripled from 1969 to 2019, increasing from from 812,000 to 2.4 million.

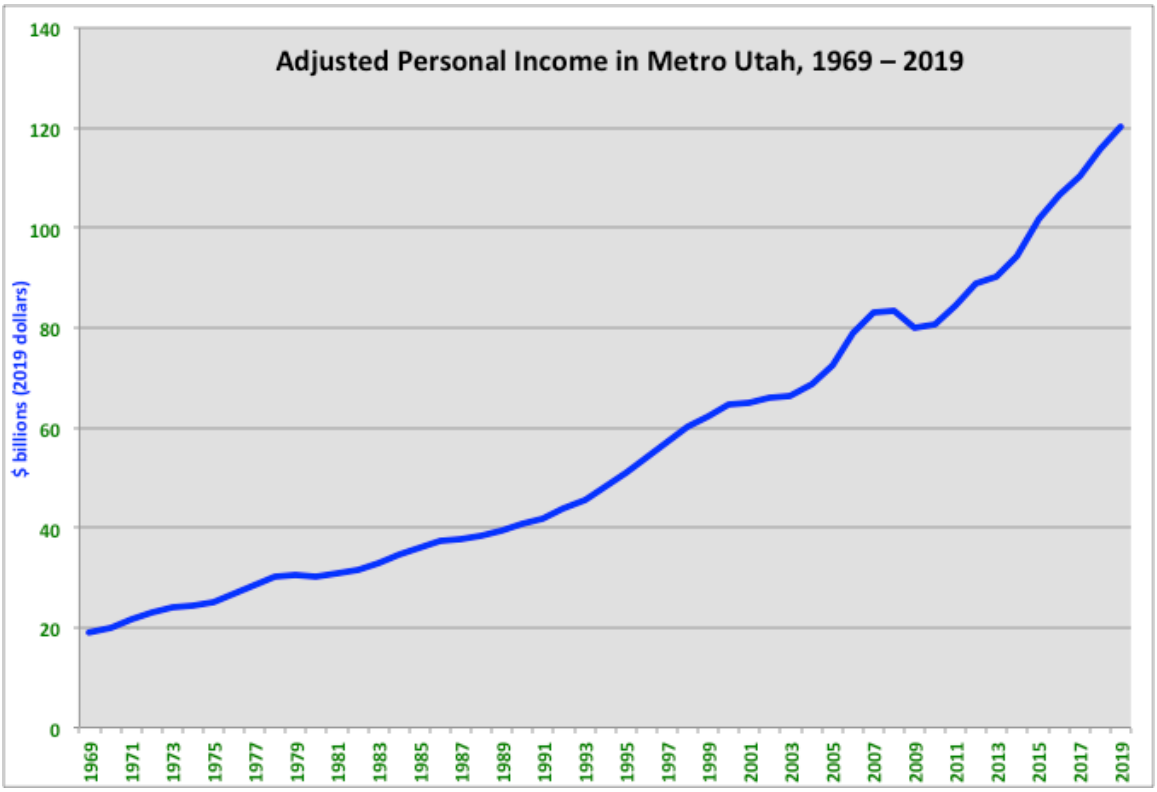
Chart 2: Population of Metro Utah Counties, 1969–2019



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

While Salt Lake County had the largest population of the four metro counties, Utah County experienced the fastest growth, with population rising nearly four-fold (373%), Davis ranked second, with an increase of 266%. Salt Lake County population rose 155%, and Weber County population increased 107%.

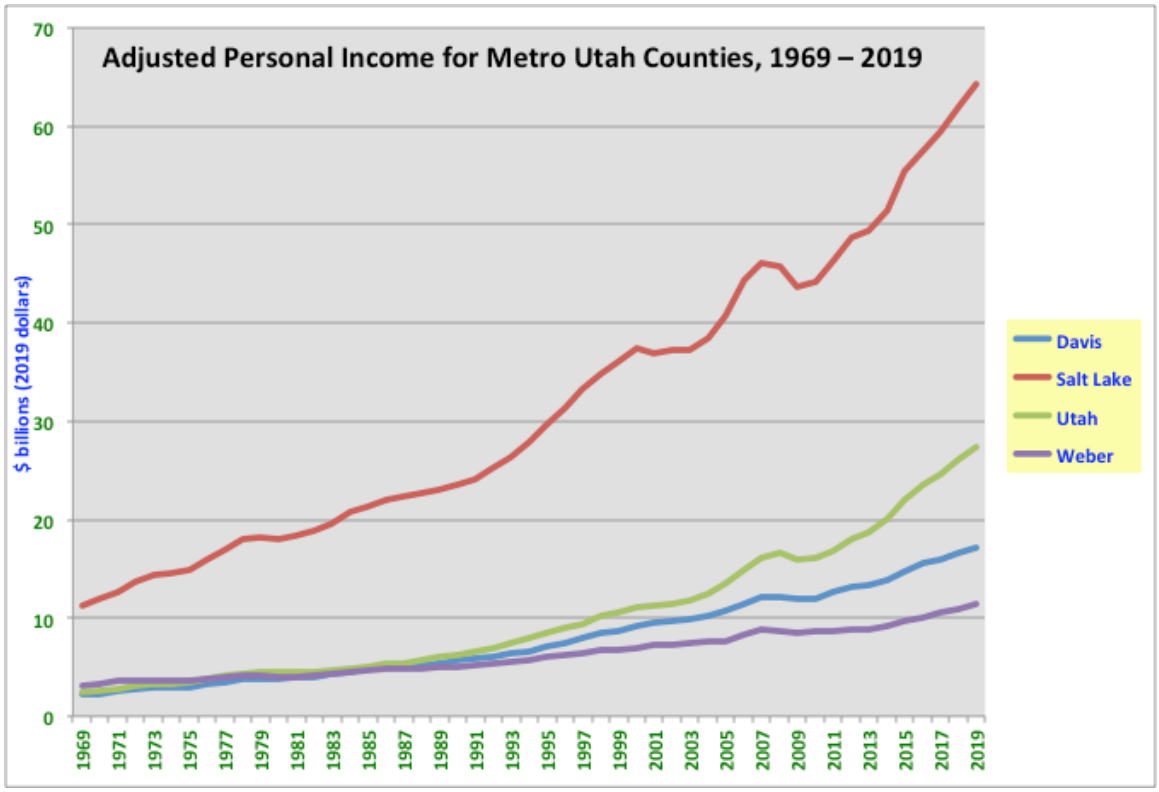
Chart 3: Adjusted Personal Income in Metro Utah, 1969–2019



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Adjusted for inflation using Consumer Purchasing Index published by Minneapolis Federal Reserve.

Personal income increased more than six-fold over the years 1969 – 2019, from $19 billion to $120 billion.

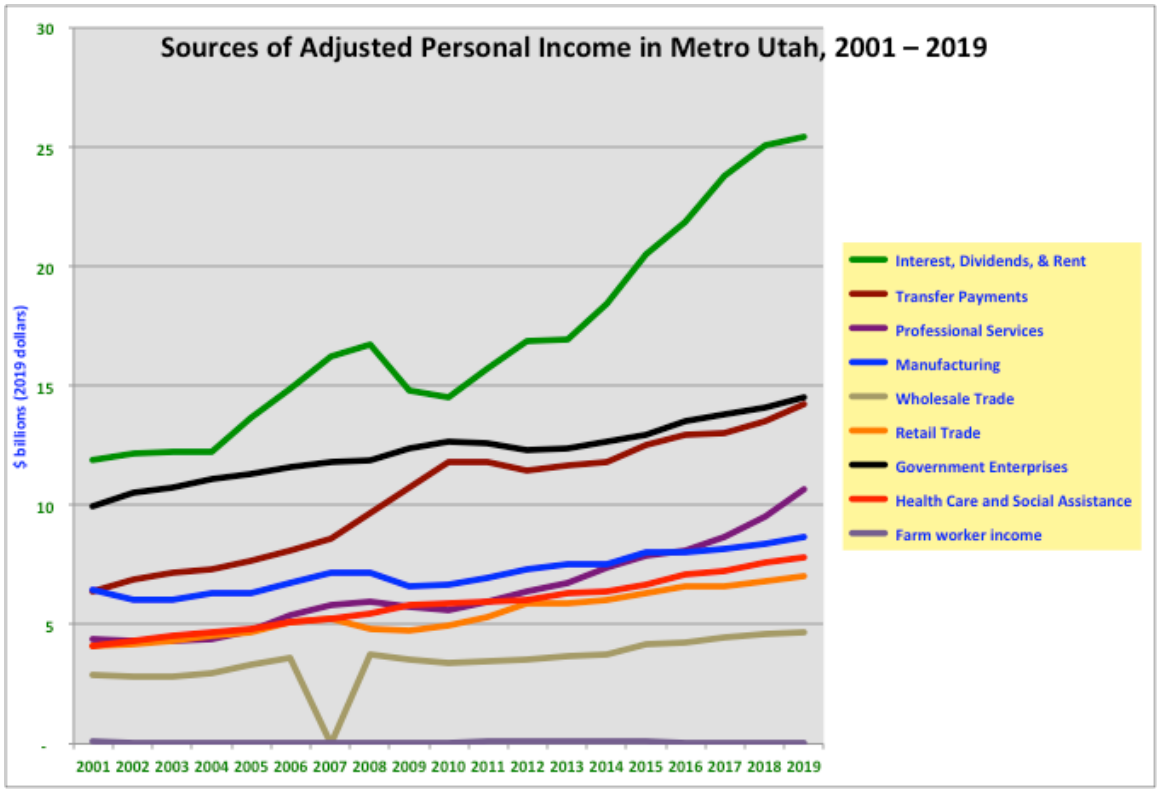
Chart 4: Adjusted Personal Income for Metro Utah Counties, 1969–2019



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Adjusted for inflation using Consumer Purchasing Index published by Minneapolis Federal Reserve.

Although Salt Lake County, with the largest population, held the highest income among metro counties, income growth was faster in Utah County (11-fold rise) and Davis County (nearly 8-fold). Salt Lake County's personal income grew nearly 6-fold. Weber County grew nearly 4-fold.

Chart 5: Sources of Adjusted Personal Income in Metro Utah, 2001–2019



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Adjusted for inflation using Consumer Purchasing Index published by Minneapolis Federal Reserve.

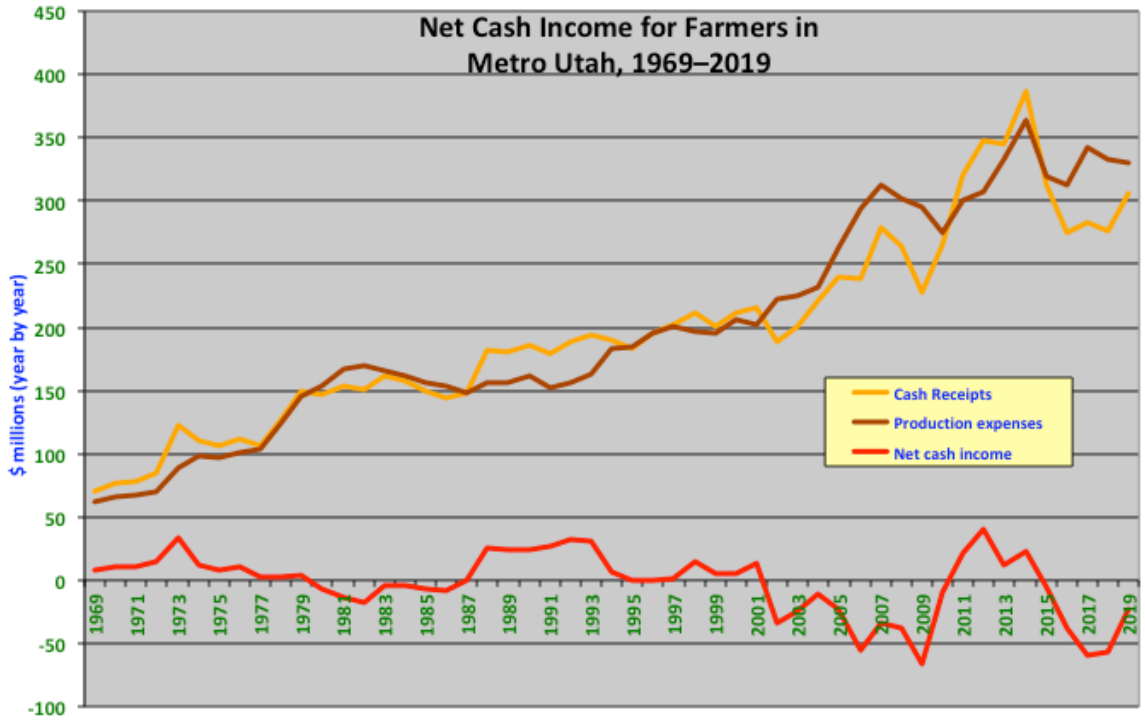
Chart 3 shows that the largest source of personal income was capital income (from interest, rent or dividends), at $25.5 billion. Government jobs (this includes schools and colleges as well as state and local government) ranked second, with workers earning $14.5 billion. Transfer payments (from government programs such as pensions) ranked third, accounting for $14.1 billion of personal income *[see detail below]*. Professional careers ranked fourth, with $10.4 billion. Manufacturing, construction, and health care workers also ranked high.

Note that 27% of personal income earned in the region derived from public programs. Government income includes $10.3 billion earned by state and local government workers and $3.7 billion of income earned by federal workers. Military personnel earned $768 million of personal income.

Farmworkers (laborers, not owners) earned about $80 million in 1969, and $60 million in 2019 (adjusted for inflation). Their income peaked at $120 million during the years 2012–2014.

Income earned from transfer payments included $5.0 billion of retirement and disability insurance benefits; $5.3 billion of medical benefits; $1.2 billion of income maintenance benefits; $112 million of unemployment insurance; and $594 million of veterans' benefits.

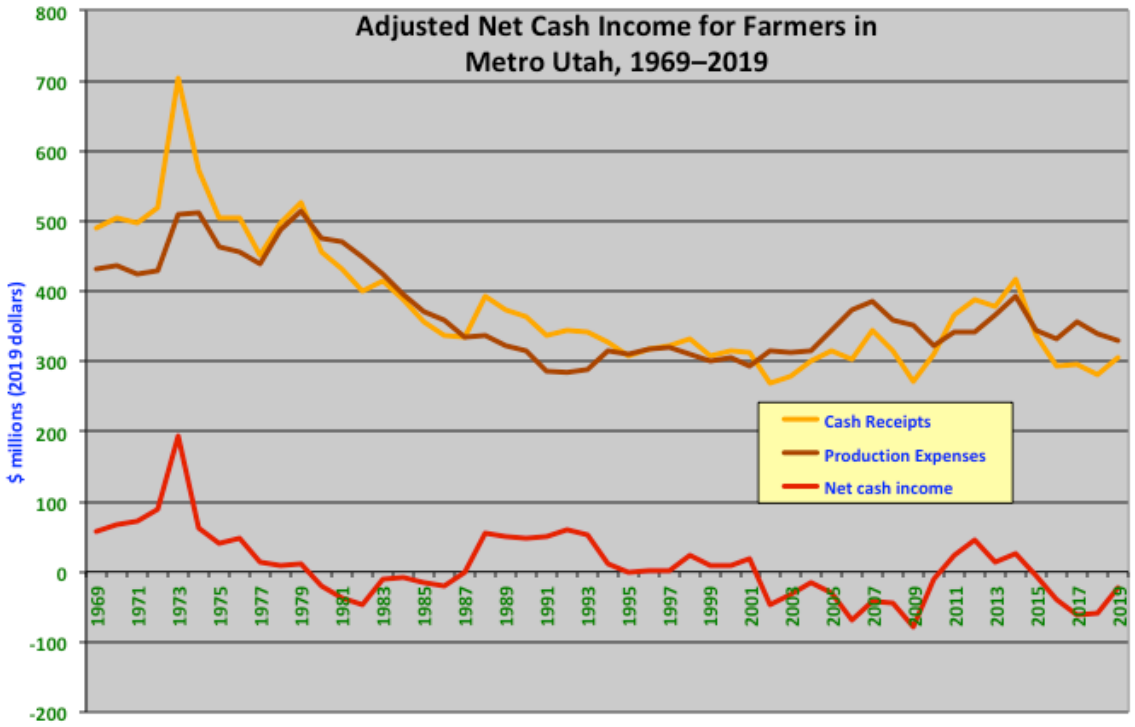
Chart 6: Net Cash Income for Farmers in Metro Utah, 1969–2019



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Chart 6 shows that net farming income in metro counties has eroded steadily over the past 50 years, despite increases in sales. Farms in these counties have been displaced for the sake of development, as well. Returns hovered near zero until 2011, when a brief price spike, sparked by investors speculating in commodities following the global housing crisis, provided three years of better returns. Returns then fell to more normal levels. In 16 of the past 31 years farmers earned less selling crops and livestock than they spent to produce them.

Chart 7: Adjusted Net Cash Income for Farmers in Metro Utah, 1969–2019

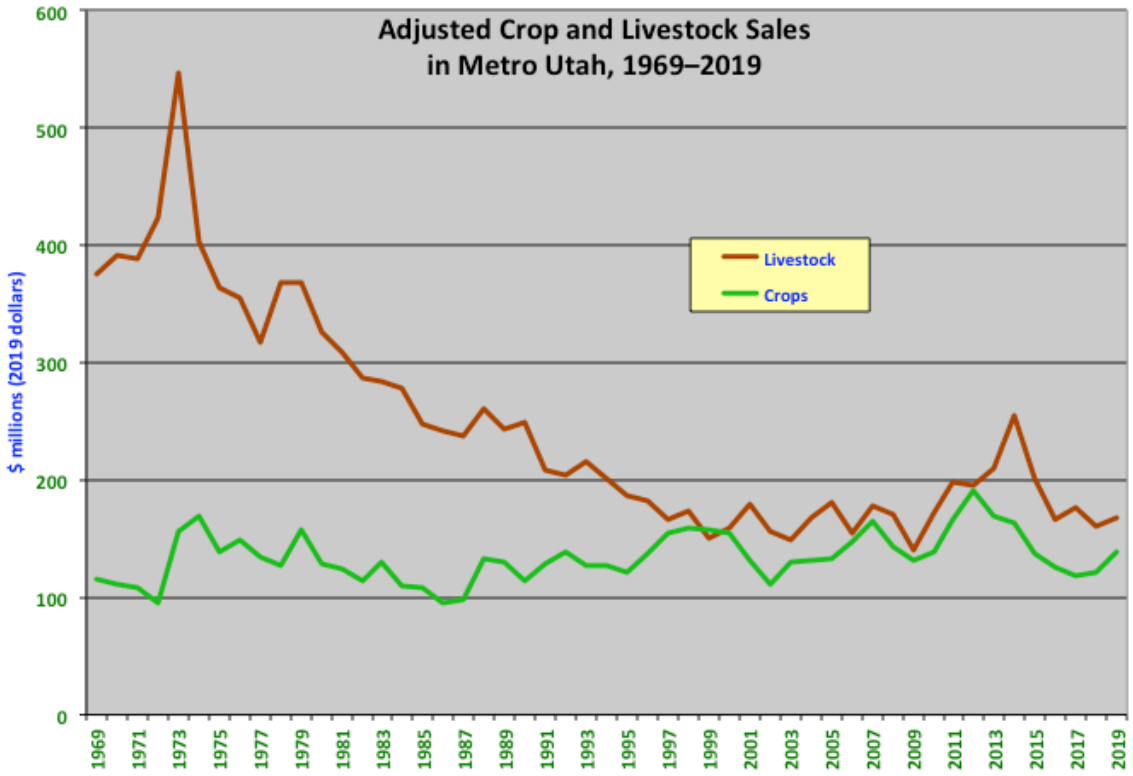


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Adjusted for inflation using Consumer Purchasing Index published by Minneapolis Federal Reserve.

Chart 7 shows the data presented in Chart 6 once adjusted for inflation. Different patterns appear, because the value of the dollar was so much larger in earlier years (Currently the dollar is worth about one-seventh of the value it held in 1969). Chart 7 shows that cash receipts have declined from $500 million in 1969 to $300 million in 2019. Despite doubled farm productivity (Economic Research Service Farm Productivity data) and declining farm numbers, production expenses fell to their lowest levels in 1992, and have risen slowly ever since. Overall, metro farmers earned $82 million less in 2019 than they did in 1969. Since the end of the 1980s farm credit crisis, metro farmers have lost an average of $119 million each year by producing commodities, 40% of sales. This is a combined loss of $4 billion since 1989.

The best year portrayed is 1973, when grain and livestock prices were artificially high due to the energy crisis. In that year, metro farmers earned a surplus of $193 million by selling commodities. Farmers face considerable uncertainty that other businesses in the market do not face: Both cash receipts and production expenses are highly variable, as global markets fluctuate and weather changes. The overall trend is declining net farm income. This is exacerbated by displacement of farms due to housing and commercial development.

Chart 8: Crop and Livestock Sales (Adjusted) in Metro Utah, 1969–2019

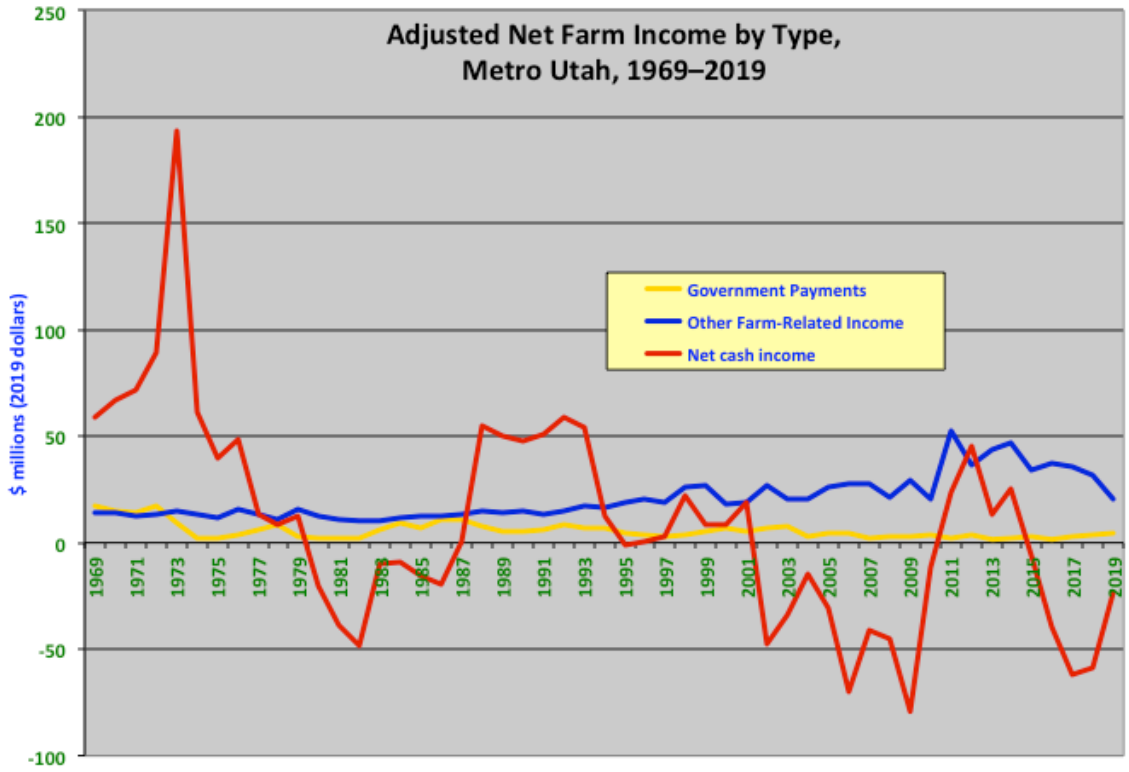


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Adjusted for inflation using Consumer Purchasing Index published by Minneapolis Federal Reserve.

Chart 8 shows that livestock sales declined steadily from 1973 to 2009, rising as livestock prices increased following the global housing crisis. It also seems likely that farmers sold livestock because they could not afford to feed them when purchased grain prices held high during that era. Livestock farmers earned $200 million less selling livestock in 2019 than they had earned in 1969, after adjusting for inflation. Livestock farms often experience greater conflict with urban development, as well.

Crop sales have remained fairly steady over the past 50 years, after dollars are adjusted for inflation, increasing just slightly.

Chart 9: Adjusted Net Farm Income by Type in Metro Utah, 1969–2019



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Adjusted for inflation using Consumer Purchasing Index published by Minneapolis Federal Reserve.

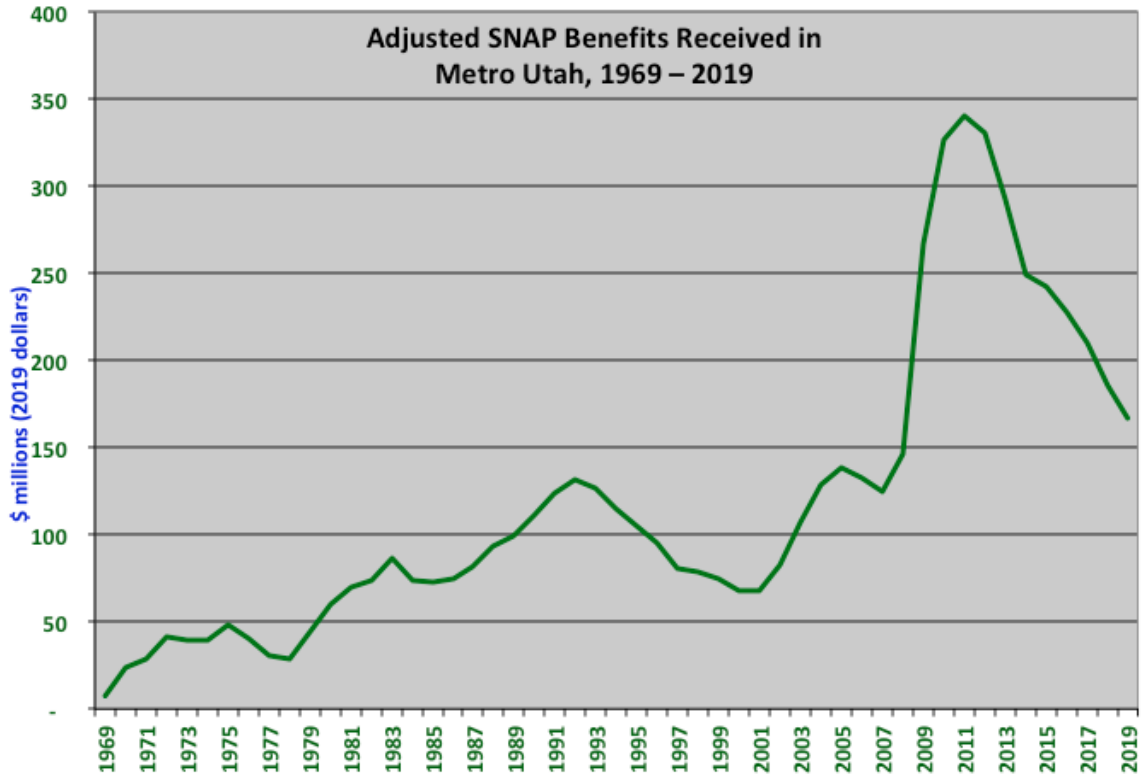
Chart 9 shows the three main sources of net income for farmers in Northern Utah. The steadiest source of income is not farming itself, but rather what is called "farm-related income." This averaged $800 million per year over the past 31 years. This consisted mostly of custom field work for a neighbor or income from renting land. *These data are drawn from the 2017 Census of Agriculture.*

The second largest source of net income for farm families was government subsidies (orange line), which averaged $136 million over the years 1989 to 2019. These subsidies only were given to about 4% of the metro region's farmers. For those farmers, it represents a relatively predictable source of income.

Raising crops and livestock earned farmers a net cash loss of $119 million per year over the past 31 years. Moreover, these returns are highly unstable, shaped by global market forces, increased concentration of markets, and weather change.

Given these trends, many landowners find it is more lucrative to rent out land to someone else to farm, rather than shouldering the risks of farming themselves.

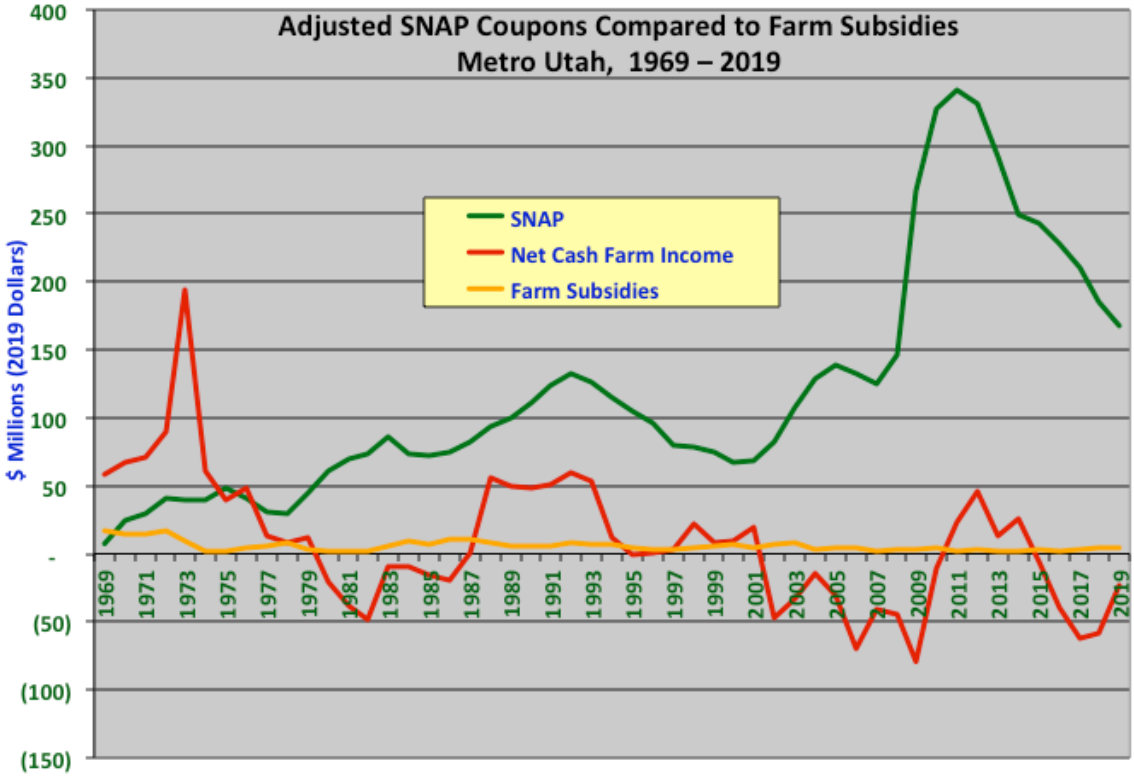
Chart 10: Adjusted SNAP Benefits Received in Metro Utah, 1969–2019



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Adjusted for inflation using Consumer Purchasing Index published by Minneapolis Federal Reserve.

Food assistance has become a permanent feature of the Metro Utah landscape over the past 51 years. SNAP benefits were minimal in 1969, totaling $7 million in adjusted dollars. They spiked at $341 million after the global housing crisis, and then fell to $167 million in 2019.

Chart 11: Adjusted SNAP Benefits Compared to Farm Subsidies, 1969–2019



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Adjusted for inflation using Consumer Purchasing Index published by Minneapolis Federal Reserve.

Chart 11 shows that since 1977, more net income has been earned through SNAP benefits than through either farming (red line) or farm support programs (orange line).

Food-Related Health Conditions in Salt Lake City Metro Statistical Area, 2017

These data cover Salt Lake and Tooele Counties of Utah.

32% of Metro Salt Lake residents reported in 2017 that they eat less than one serving of fruit per day, while 18% eat less than one serving of vegetables. This is a key indicator of health, since proper fruit and vegetable consumption has been connected to better health outcomes. Many providers recommend consumption of at least five servings of fruit and vegetables each day, while others suggest even higher rates.
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention BRFSS.

60% of Metro Salt Lake residents were overweight (25%) or obese (35%) in 2017. *Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention BRFSS.*

7% of Metro Salt Lake residents have been diagnosed with diabetes as of 2017. Medical costs for treating diabetes and related conditions in the state of Utah are estimated at $1.75 billion annually.
Source: American Diabetes Association.

13% of Metro Salt Lake residents have no health insurance coverage.
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention BRFSS.