

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ECONOMY

#### Occupations

While the economy of Rappahannock County has historically been based upon agriculture, it no longer employs as high a percentage of the work force as once was the case. Indeed, the decade of 1990-2000 saw the most precipitate decline in Agricultural employment in our county's history. Although the percentage of persons employed in that sector of the economy increased slightly between 1980-1990, it is still far below the 1970 figure, which in turn was lower than figures for previous decades. There have been a number of major investments made in agriculture over the past four years, particularly in heretofore "niche" areas such as grapes and organic products that may reverse this trend. While agriculture is still the foundation of the County's economy, more residents depend on other sectors of the economy for their main employment needs (see Table 4.1).

More generally, between 1980 and 2000, the total number of employed persons increased from 2,517 in 1980 to 3,375 in 1990 and to 3,591 in 2000. Reflecting the rural character of the County, production, crafts, operations, farming and general labor of all kinds were represented in Rappahannock County at a rate greater than that for the State.

It is worth noting that the proportion of workers who are classified by the Bureau of the Census as self-employed remains substantially higher in Rappahannock than many other jurisdictions; 612 of total employment of 3,591. This translates to 17.1% of workers as opposed to lesser percentages, generally in single digits, in adjacent counties. Reflecting the increasing commuting trend towards the governmental employment centers to the north and east, adjacent counties had an average of 15% of their worker populations employed in Federal, State or Local governments. Rappahannock, in an increase of over 5% since 1990, had 17% of its workforce employed by a governmental entity.

The County unemployment rate has historically lagged behind that of adjacent jurisdictions, the Commonwealth as a whole, and of the nation. This is not inconsistent with the experience of other rural communities, whose citizens' access to employment opportunities are constrained by transportation limitations. Be that as it may, between 1990 and 2000 the County's unemployment rate has precipitately declined, to the point that it generally has the lowest rate in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region (RRRC). In the year 2000, the unemployment rate was 1.5%, and it has not exceeded 3% through 2003 (see Table 4.2).

**Table 4.1**  
**Occupation of Employed Persons**

	1980		1990		2000 <sup>1</sup>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Executive, Administrative &amp; Managerial</b>	152	6.0	313	9.3	1,287	35.8
<b>Professional-Specialty</b>	162	6.5	360	10.6		
<b>Technicians &amp; Related Support</b>	41	1.6	91	2.7		
<b>Sales</b>	184	7.3	305	9.0	727	20.2
<b>Administrative Support/Clerical</b>	308	12.2	451	13.3		
<b>Private Household</b>	77	3.1	34	1		
<b>Protective Service</b>	46	1.8	49	1.4		
<b>Service Occupations (except protective/household)</b>	210	8.4	208	6.1	552	15.4
<b>Farming, Forestry, Fishing</b>	295	11.7	394	11.6	74	2.1
<b>Precision Production, Craft, &amp; Repair</b>	373	14.8	651	19.3	607	16.9
<b>Machine Operators, Assemblers, &amp; Inspectors</b>	337	13.4	217	6.4		
<b>Transportation-Material Moving Handlers, Equipment Cleaner</b>	143	5.7	158	4.7	344	9.6
<b>Laborers</b>	189	7.5	144	4.3		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2517</b>		<b>3375</b>		<b>3,591</b>	

SOURCE: U. S. Bureau of the Census

<sup>1</sup> 2000 categories are as follows:  
 Management, Professional, & Related Occupations  
 Sales & Office Occupations  
 Service Occupations  
 Farming, Fishing, & Forestry  
 Construction, Extraction, & Maintenance  
 Production, Transportation, & Material Moving

**Table 4.2**  
**Unemployment**

<b>Year</b>	<b>County %</b>	<b>RRRC %</b>	<b>VA %</b>	<b>U.S. %</b>
<b>1998</b>	2.9	2.1	2.9	4.5
<b>1999</b>	2.0	1.8	2.8	4.2
<b>2000</b>	1.3	1.4	2.2	4.0
<b>2001</b>	1.6	2.0	3.5	4.7
<b>2002</b>	2.3	3.2	4.1	5.8

*SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics*

The importance of women in the civilian labor force has grown dramatically in the decades since the World War II, with Rappahannock experiencing the same trend as the nation, albeit at a more modest pace. The 2000 Census revealed that approximately 1,188 women 16 years of age or older were not in the labor force, while approximately 1,641 were. Of this latter group, only 52, or approximately 3%, were unemployed.

This labor force participation rate (58.0%) is slightly higher than that of other rural areas of the United States. By comparison Fauquier, Culpeper, Madison, Warren and Page Counties had a female labor force participation rate of 62.0%, 58.2%, 57.6%, 59%, and 55%, respectively.

### **Employer Types**

In contrast to the type of occupation a person holds, employer types describe the type of industry in which a person is employed. Historically, one of the most conspicuous aspects of this classification for Rappahannock County has been the continued decline of agricultural employment. As previously noted, this decline not only slowed over the previous decade, but in fact underwent a very modest resurgence.

In 1970, 20.3% of County residents were employed by the agricultural industry. This figure dropped to 11.8% in 1980 and increased slightly to 12.1% in 1990 before declining through 2000 as noted above. Management, professional, and related occupations have replaced construction as the most important industry sector in Rappahannock County with 35.8% of those employed registering this as their employer type in 2000. Perhaps functioning as a mirror of the sweeping changes in occupation in the country as a whole, the dominant occupation sector for each Census from 1970 through 2000 has been, respectively, Agriculture, Manufacturing, Construction and Management, Professional and Related.

Anecdotally, it is worth noting that Rappahannock County residents endure the third highest average travel time to work (34.7 minutes) of any jurisdiction in the Commonwealth.

Table 4.3 compares County employer types from 1980-2000.

**Table 4.3**

**Civilian Industries By Which Employed 1980-2000**

	1980		1990		2000	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries &amp; Mining (&amp; Hunting in 2000)</b>	297	11.8	409	12.1	289	8.0
<b>Construction</b>	431	17.1	649	19.2	555	15.5
<b>Manufacturing</b>	489	19.4	416	12.3	185	5.2
<b>Transportation</b>	79	3.2	144	4.3	*	*
<b>Communications &amp; Other Public Utilities</b>	33	1.3	105	3.1	282	7.8
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	42	1.7	102	3.0	51	1.4
<b>Retail Trade</b>	312	12.4	385	11.4	281	7.8
<b>Finance, Insurance, Real Estate</b>	88	3.5	122	3.6	145	4.0
<b>Business, Repair Service</b>	135	5.4	155	4.6	--	--
<b>Personal, Entertainment, Recreation Services</b>	170	6.7	193	5.7	310	8.6
<b>Health Services</b>	150	6.0	154	4.5	*	*
<b>Educational Services</b>	-	-	144	4.3	533	14.8
<b>Other Professional Services</b>	101	4.0	179	5.3	428	11.9
<b>Public Administration</b>	89	3.5	218	6.46	279	7.8
<b>Other</b>	-	-	-	-	253	7.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	2517		3375		3591	

*SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau*

\*Combined with next reported figure

## Major Employers

As reported by the Virginia Employment Commission, there were 220 establishments in Rappahannock County offering some form of employment in 2002. During the fourth quarter of 2002, these establishments employed 1,351 persons with average weekly wages per worker being \$574.

The largest employer in the County is the Rappahannock County School Board.

## Wholesale-Retail Trade

The U.S. Bureau of the Census lists six merchant wholesalers in Rappahannock County in 1997. As of 1997, 33 retail establishments were located within the County with total sales of \$23,351,283. This represents an increase of 99% in retail sales since 1987.

Current retail sales data show the relative strength of each commodity or sector in Rappahannock County (see Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4**

### Taxable Retail Sales and Use By Group 1992-2003

	1992	1997	1999	2001	2003
<b>Apparel</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Automotive</b>	900,000	1,472,423	1,614,640	1,647,507	2,015,554
<b>Food</b>	7,300,000	11,773,852	13,610,766	16,161,359	16,230,434
<b>Furniture, Home Furnishings, &amp; Equipment</b>	1,000,000	1,308,217	1,681,526	1,585,999	1,831,355
<b>General Merchandise</b>	1,900,000	1,804,495	1,691,114	745,643	328,453
<b>Lumber, Bldg. Materials and Supply</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Fuel</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Machinery, Eqmt. &amp; Supp.</b>	300,000	221,955	207,813	172,309	157,473
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	4,200,000	4,265,881	4,385,636	4,800,463	6,362,945
<b>Hotels, Motels and Tourist Camps</b>	700,000	1,431,277	1,190,763	1,097,209	1,089,392
<b>Other Misc.</b>	0	1,073,183	866,849	1,159,194	1,158,911
<b>TOTAL</b>	16,300,000	23,351,283	25,249,107	27,369,683	29,174,517

*SOURCE: Virginia Department of Taxation*

NOTE: 1992 Figures are rounded to nearest \$100K. "-" = figures are withheld to avoid identification of individual businesses, but are included in total taxable sales.

## **Agriculture**

Historically, Rappahannock County has been an agricultural community with most residents depending upon the production of agricultural products for their employment and income. Today, the rural nature of the County continues to reflect the importance of agriculture to County residents.

Of increasing importance are the production of grapes and the rise of organic farming. While dwarfed in economic terms by traditional agricultural and horticultural operations, both endeavors have been continuously reinforced by new investment over the past decade. This trend may reasonably be expected to continue in the coming five years.

## **Farms**

Between 1949 and 1974, the total number of farms in Rappahannock County declined nearly 63% from 687 to 257. A slow reverse in that trend has followed with an increase to 443 farms as shown in the 2002 Census of Agriculture. The percentage of total County land area devoted to farm usage has fairly steadily decreased since 1974.

While the number of County farms has begun to very slightly increase, the average farm size has been decreasing. In 1974, the average size was 298 acres, in 1982 279 acres, in 1987 268 acres, in 1992 253 acres, in 1997 185 acres, and in 2002 an average of 177 acres.

In 1982, 49.2% of the County' s farms had less than 100 acres, 39.0% had between 100 and 499 acres, while 11.8% had more than 500 acres. Comparatively, in 1974, 37.4% of the County' s total farms had less than 100 acres and 14.8% had more than 500 acres. By 1992, 50% of the County' s farms were less than 100 acres in size, 36% were between 100 and 499 acres in area, and farms of 500 acres or more represented only 14% of the total. In 1997, 59% of the County' s farms were less than 100 acres in size, 32% were between 100 and 499 acres in area, and farms of 500 acres or more represented only 9% of the total. In 2002, 65% of the County' s farms were less than 100 acres in size, 28.4% were between 100 and 499 acres in area, and farms of 500 acres or more represented only 6.7% of the total area.

Table 4.5 presents the number of farms by acreage for the years 1982, 1987, 1992, 1997, and 2002.

**Table 4.5**  
**Farms by Acreage 1982-2002**

<b>Acres</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>1 - 9</b>	10	13	14	9	17
<b>10 - 49</b>	71	71	79	146	161
<b>50 - 69</b>	31	20	29	44	54
<b>70 - 99</b>	42	26	34	45	54
<b>100 - 139</b>	25	32	32	40	29
<b>140 - 179</b>	28	17	24	38	22
<b>180 - 219</b>	21	19	13	13	19
<b>220 - 259</b>	11	16	7	8	19
<b>260 - 499</b>	37	33	36	32	38
<b>500 - 999</b>	25	28	32	28	17
<b>1000-1999</b>	7	11	9	8	9
<b>2000+</b>	5	2	3	2	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>443</b>

*SOURCE: U.S. Census Of Agriculture*

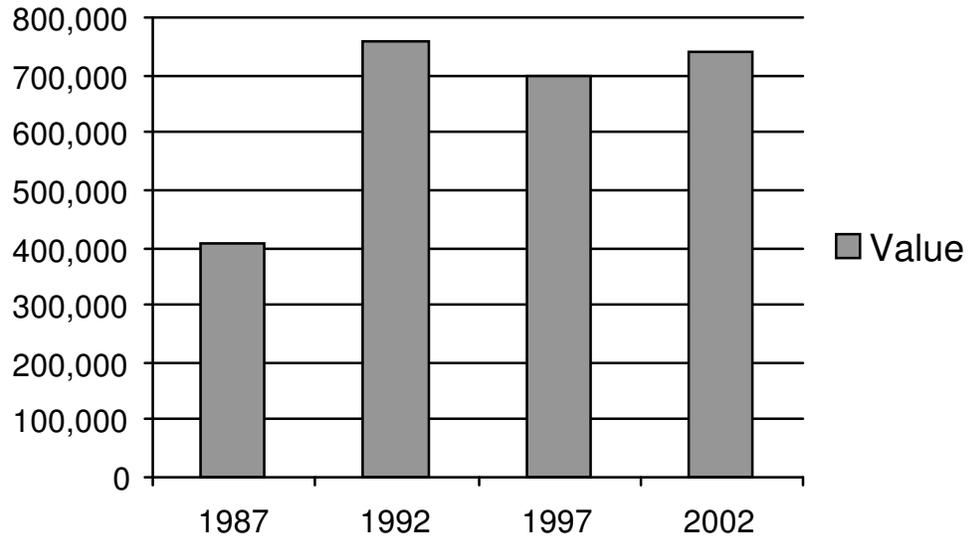
### **Value of Farmland**

As with most land use categories, the total value of agricultural land has dramatically increased in recent years. Between 1974 and 1982 the average value per farm acre in Rappahannock County increased 79.6% from \$672 to \$1,207. During this same time, the average value per County farm increased 90% from \$191,349 to \$364,163. In 1987, the average value per farm acre had increased to \$1,696, rocketed up to \$2,921 in 1992, was \$3,154 in 1997, and \$3,690 in 2002. Similarly, in 1987, the average value per county farm stood at \$407,631 but had ballooned to \$757,386 by 1992, fell to \$697,214 in 1997, and was back up to \$740,667 in 2002.

The overall average value per farm and average value per farm acre between 1987 and 2002 is illustrated in Graphs 4.1 and 4.2.

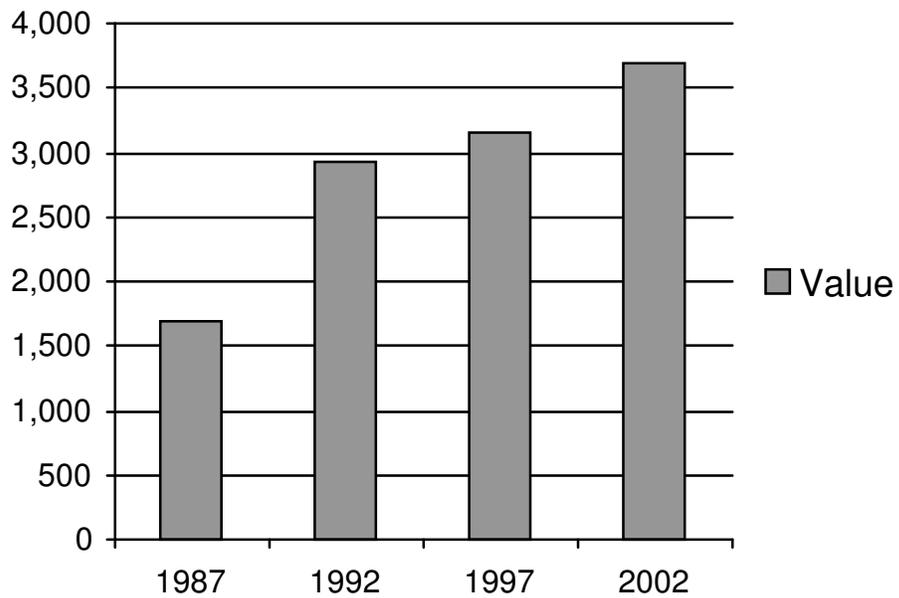
**Graph 4.1**

**Average Value Per Farm 1987-2002**



**Graph 4.2**

**Average Value Per Acre 1987-2002**

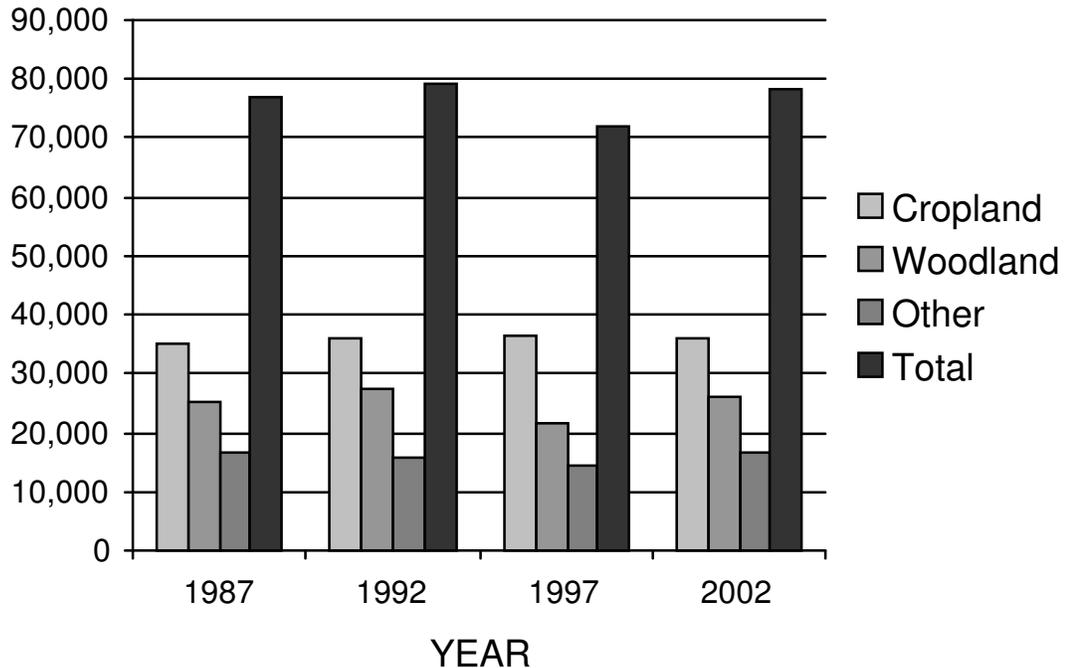


## Types of Farmland

In 2002, 78,483 acres of County land were in farmland, down 10% from 87,434 acres in 1982. Of the total farmland in 2002, 35,817 acres or 45% was classified as "cropland", 26,022 acres or 33% was classified as "woodland", and 16,644 acres or 22% was classified as "other farm land".

This breakdown of farmland by "cropland", "woodland", and "other farm land" is delineated in Graph 4.3 for the period 1987-2002.

**Graph 4.3**  
**Land in Farms 1987-2002**



## Cattle

Beef cattle operations have grown in importance over the past several decades, both as a principal farming operation and as one aspect of an integrated farm management plan. Since 1986, for example, the number of beef cattle and calves has increased from 11,900 to 15,500 in 1992, 16,041 in 1997, and 17,548 in 2002. This trend has steadily shaded upwards, with occasional retraction due to the nationwide cattle market fluctuations.

## Harvested Cropland

Of the total 443 County farms in 2002, 303 or 68% harvested some cropland. This compares with 79.7% in 1969 and 74.8% in 1982. This figure remained relatively constant between 1987 and 1997, hovering between 74-75%.

In 2002, 85% of the farms that harvested cropland harvested less than 100 acres of cropland while 13% harvested between 100 and 499 acres. Only 7 farms, or 2% of the total, harvested 500 acres or more.

Table 4.6 lists the number of farms by cropland harvested for the period 1969-2002.

**Table 4.6**  
**Number of Farms by Cropland Harvested 1969-2002**

Acres	1969	1974	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002
1 - 9	38	24	32	33	30	38	52	45
10 - 19	31	31	32	37	24	35	44	67
20 - 29	34	30	30	42	23	30	35	40
30 - 49	33	37	30	35	45	35	51	59
50 - 99	41	39	38	37	45	43	53	46
100-199	26	23	31	24	22	29	30	27
200-499	14	17	16	22	23	17	15	12
500-999	2	2	1	2	5	4	3	6
1000+	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	1
<b>Total Farms with Cropland Harvested</b>	220	203	211	234	217	231	284	303
<b>All Farms</b>	276	257	266	313	288	312	413	443

SOURCE: U.S. Census Of Agriculture

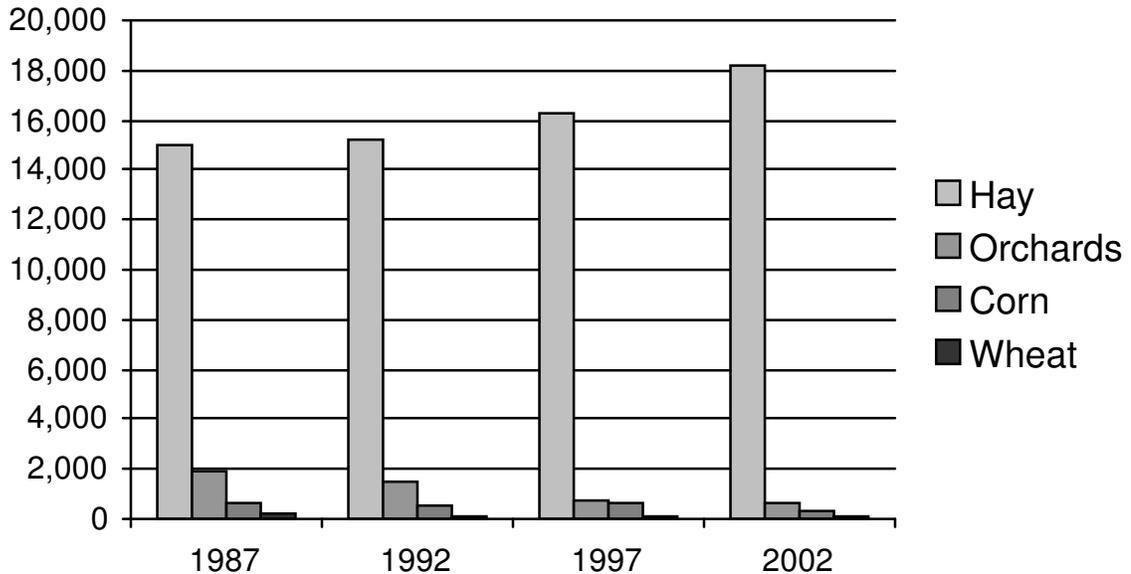
## Crop Types

During the 4-year period, 1978-1982 the total amount of cropland harvested in Rappahannock County increased 21% from 15,568 acres to 18,958 acres. This figure had declined to 17,768 by 1987, 17,397 by 1992, jumped to 17,724 by 1997, and to 19,208 in 2002. In 2002, hay represented 95% of the total cropland harvested while corn represented 1.6%. Orchards and wheat represented 3% and 0.4% respectively.

Graph 4.4 portrays the breakdown of crops by total acres harvested for the 1987-2002 period.

**Graph 4.4**

**Harvested Acres By Crop Type 1987-2002**



As a further measure of the overall importance of these crops, Table 4.7 presents the number of farms that were involved in their production between 1982 and 2002.

**Table 4.7**

**Number of Farms Producing 1982-2002**

Crop	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002
Corn	50	26	27	18	8
Wheat	11	12	9	4	3
Hay	202	195	199	220	253
Orchards	61	47	53	40	46

*SOURCE: U.S. Census Of Agriculture*

NOTE: Soybeans are an increasingly important crop for Rappahannock County farmers, however, reported harvested acreages have not yet exceeded 500.

The Orchard land in Rappahannock County consists primarily of apple production, although the County also harvests a considerable peach crop. In 1992, 43 County farms produced 14.31 million pounds of apples, while 21 farms produced

5.48 thousand pounds of peaches on 80 acres. The overall production of these orchard crops has sharply declined over the years to the point that only 32 farms still raise apples while only 19 still raise peaches. Table 4.8 presents the total number of apple and peach producing farms in the County from 1992-2002.

**Table 4.8**  
**Orchard Crops 1992-2002**

	1992	1997	2002	% Of Change 1997-02
<b>APPLES:</b>				
<b>Total # of Farms</b>	43	31	32	3.2
<b>Total Acres</b>	1,378	644	380	-41
<b>Farms-Non Bearing Age</b>	22	22	15	-32
<b>Farms-Bearing Age</b>	40	30	28	-6.6
<b>Farms Harvested</b>	35	23	NA	-
<b>Pounds Harvested (millions)</b>	14.31	9.005	NA	-
<b>PEACHES:</b>				
<b>Total # of Farms</b>	21	14	19	35.7
<b>Total Acres</b>	80	61	94	54
<b>Farms-Non Bearing Age</b>	12	7	7	-
<b>Farms-Bearing Age</b>	18	12	13	8.3
<b>Farms Harvested</b>	15	8	NA	-
<b>Pounds Harvested (millions)</b>	.548	.253	NA	-

*SOURCE: U.S. Census Of Agriculture - NA (not available)*

The historical importance of the Apple industry in Rappahannock orcharding justify a more detailed look at production figures (see Table 4.9).

**Table 4.9**

**Apple Production (in thousands of bushels) 1991-2002**

	1991	1994	1997	2002
Bushels	353	241	331	88

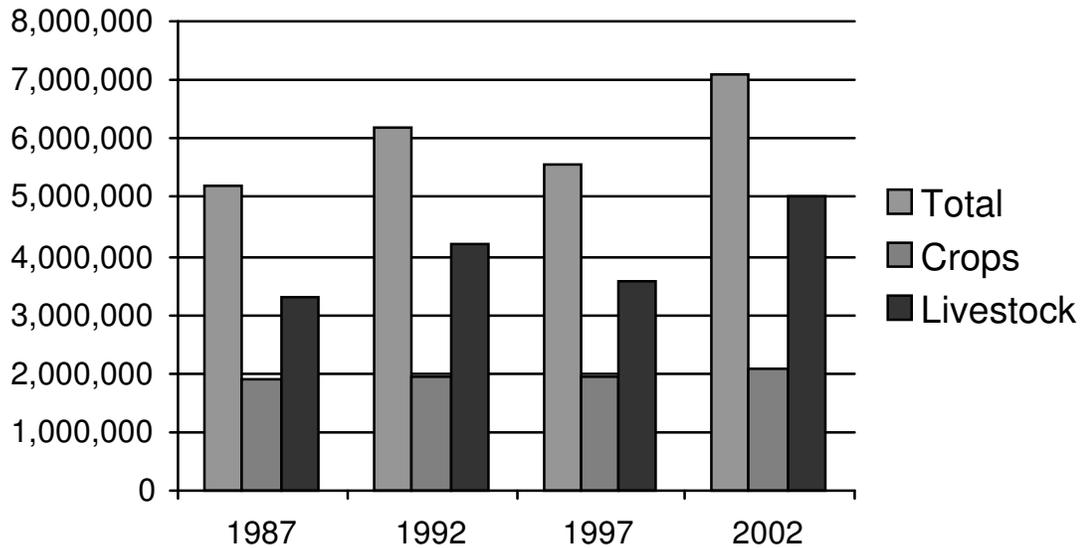
*SOURCE: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA*

**Value of Products Sold**

Graph 4.5 shows that between 1987 and 2002 the total value of County agricultural products sold increased 34.6% from \$5.2 million to \$7 million.

**Graph 4.5**

**Value Of Products Sold 1987-2002**



## **Prime Farmland**

Because of importance of agriculture to Rappahannock County, an attempt has been made to identify and record the suitability of soils for farming activities. It is important to base any land use policies designed to preserve farmland on an accurate and complete inventory of the County' s soil capabilities. Soil capabilities are used because soils are the greatest determinant of farmland productivity. **Map No. 8: Prime Agricultural Soils on Moderate Slopes** shows location of prime agricultural soils for Rappahannock County.

While areas of prime farmland exist throughout the County, major concentrations are found in F. T. Valley, the Rediviva area, north and southeast of Washington, the Amissville vicinity, Laurel Mills to Viewtown, east and north of Flint Hill and the Huntly area.