

## Farms by Sales Class

Table 4 indicates the number of Virginia farms in 1997 grouped by extension district and five sales categories, as well as the proportional change in number of farms in each sales category since 1992. Starting from the smallest sales category, it can be seen that 24,956 farms (61 percent) farms sell less than \$10,000 in agricultural products. It is unlikely that \$10,000 in sales will generate more than \$3,000 in profit to contribute towards family expenses. At the other end of the spectrum, approximately 2,300 farms (6 percent) sell more than \$250,000 in agricultural products. With respect to changes in farm numbers across sales categories, farm numbers of the smaller sales categories did not change very much (with the exception of Central District). Declines of a similar proportion (from 2-5 percent) are seen across the categories below \$10,000, \$10,000-\$40,000 and \$40,000-\$100,000. Only farms in the largest sales category increased substantially between 1992 and 1997 across all districts. The most substantial loss in number of farms was recorded by the \$100,000-\$250,000 sales category, which lost 15 percent of its farms between 1992 and 1997. It is likely that a few farms in this sales category simply became larger. However, approximately 300 farms in the \$100,000-\$250,000 decreased their sales in 1997 relative to 1992, or they went out of business.

Extension District	Below \$10,000 (%)	\$10,000 – \$40,000 (%)	\$40,000 – \$100,000 (%)	\$100,000 – \$250,000 (%)	Over \$250,000 (%)
Central	5,758 1	1,981 -11	618 -15	490 -10	397 25
Northeast	1,437 -4	534 -5	242 -3	167 -8	179 23
Northern	4,436 1	1,535 6	392 5	202 -10	194 8
Northwest	4,419 1	1,746 -1	487 -1	466 -13	906 12
Southeast	925 3	434 -14	293 -8	248 -34	420 1
Southwest	7,981 -6	3,046 -7	710 7	285 -14	167 10
Virginia	24,956 -2	9,276 -5	2,742 -3	1,858 -15	2,263 12

Central District had 9,244 farms in 1997, and the proportion of farms in each sales category was very similar to state proportions. However, the increase in farms with sales over \$250,000 was far in excess of the state change. A substantial proportion of the district's largest farms (39 percent) are in Franklin, Pittsylvania, and Amelia counties, each of which recorded substantial increases in the number of farms in the largest sales category. The number of small farms increased substantially in the Piedmont Planning District and decreased substantially in Southside. The latter may be attributable to retirements in small farms or consolidation of small tobacco quotas.

Northeast District had 2,559 farms in 1997. Compared to the state, a larger proportion of Northeast farms are in the two largest sales categories (14 percent). The most dramatic change in number of farms by sales category in Northeast District is the 23 percent increase in the number of farms selling more than \$250,000 in agricultural products. This increase, far in excess of the state average, is led by increases in the number of large farms in the Northern Neck Planning District (55 percent).

Northern District had 6,759 farms in 1997. The district has approximately the same proportions of the smallest and largest farms as the state average and experienced changes in the number of farms similar to changes reported at the state level. Some counties exhibit a different pattern. Loudon and Prince William counties experienced a sharp increase in the number of farms in the \$40,000-\$100,000 sales range. Albemarle County experienced decreases in farm numbers in all three top sales categories. The sharp increase in farms of the largest sales category in Caroline County is similar to the pattern observed in the Northern Neck.

Northwest District had 8,024 farms. The district had a smaller proportion of small farms and a larger proportion of large farms than the state average. However, the change from 1992-97 in number of farms is very consistent with the state average. The number of farms in the smaller size categories has remained steady since 1992. The region has 40 percent of the state's farms in the largest sales category, reflecting its strong dairy and poultry industries. The number of farms in the largest sales category increased 12 percent between 1992-97. Rockingham County has 21 percent of the state's farms in the highest sales category. In Fifth Planning District, farms in the larger two sales category declined by 34 percent and 14 percent, respectively. In 1997, only 38 farms in the planning district reported sales greater than \$100,000.

Southeast District had only 2,320 farms in 1997. However, the district had 19 percent of the state's largest farms and a much larger proportion of farms with sales greater than \$100,000 than any other district. Much unlike the changes observed between 1992-97 in other regions, there was a very large decrease (34 percent) in the number of farms with sales between \$100,000-\$250,000, and a very small increase in the number of largest farms (1 percent). It may be that as many as 80 farms in the \$100,000-\$250,000 sales category ceased operating during 1992-97. Most counties in the district experienced decreases in the number of farms in both the largest two sales categories. Perhaps best indicating this pattern are Suffolk and Virginia Beach, two important agricultural counties. Suffolk experienced 51 percent and 12 percent declines in farm numbers of the largest sales categories, and Virginia Beach experienced 25 percent and 29 percent decreases in the number of farms in the largest sales categories.

Southwest District had 12,189 farms in 1997. The district had 32 percent of the state's smallest farms, but only 7 percent of the state's largest farms. Changes in farm numbers in Southwest District followed roughly the same pattern as in other districts, except that Southwest lost a large number of farms selling less than \$40,000 in products. Because of the small size of Southwest farms, the percentage declines in small farms form a large portion of total Virginia farm losses. For example, the decline of 6 percent in farms with less than \$10,000 in sales represents approximately 500 farms. Looking across planning districts, the pattern of changes in farm numbers is similar in Mount Rogers, New River Valley and West Piedmont, but not in Lenowisco and Cumberland Plateau, which did not increase their number of large farms. The decline in the number of small farms may reflect a loss of small tobacco quotas as observed in Southside.