

Supporting Statement - Part B

FIELD CROPS PRODUCTION

OMB No. 0535-0002

B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

- 1. Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection method to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g., establishments, State and local government units, households, or persons) in the universe covered by the collection and in the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular form for the universe as a whole and for each of the strata in the proposed sample. Indicate expected response rates for the collection as a whole. If the collection has been conducted previously, include the actual response rate achieved during the last collection.**

The potential respondent universe is all 2.2 million farmers in the United States, excluding those who have already been selected for the national agricultural probability surveys program, OMB No. 0535-0213. Each Field Office maintains a list of farmers known to grow crops of interest and to represent all crop growing areas within a State. Sample sizes are determined for each crop as shown in Item A-12 (table). Telephone follow-up is conducted for any survey which does not reach at least an 80 percent response rate, subject to available funds, to ensure reliable indications. These follow-on surveys are required to cover small or specialty crops that are not adequately represented in our probability surveys.

Cooperative Extension Service agents are the primary respondents for the weekly Crop Progress and Condition Inquiry. Other sources include farmers, FSA county officials, and farm loan representatives of banks serving agricultural areas.

The New Cash Rent survey will be targeting operations that historically cash rent land. The sample will be supplemented with operations reporting acres rented (cash and non-cash) on the 2007 Census of Agriculture. The cash rental questions have been placed on a stand alone questionnaire targeting operations who rented either non-irrigated cropland, irrigated crop land, or permanent pasture land.

Field Crop Production Response Rates 2008					
Survey	Sample Size	Freq.	Total Contacts	Total Responses	Response Rate
Commodity Specific Surveys					
Alfalfa/Other Grass Seed	350	1	350	313	89.4%
Dry Beans					
Dry Bean Cleaner Survey	50	2	100	90	90.0%
Dry Bean Inquiry	7,700	3	23,100	15,939	69.0%
Dry Bean Seed Inquiry	1,100	3	3,300	2,399	72.7%
Mint					
Mint Grower	300	1	300	226	75.3%
Mint Dealer	10	1	10	8	80.0%
Oilseeds, special	1,900	1	1,900	1,385	72.9%
Sunflower, non-oil	10	3	30	30	100.0%
Potatoes					
Acreage, Production and/or Marketings	4,500	3	13,500	9,869	73.1%
Acreage and Disposition	1,800	3	5,400	4,109	76.1%
Sweetpotatoes	1,150	1	1,150	975	84.8%
Sugarbeets	10	4	40	40	100.0%
Sugarcane	20	6	120	120	100.0%
Tobacco	2,200	6	13,200	7,828	59.3%
Variety Surveys					
Wheat and Barley	14,500	1	14,500	7,830	66.8%
County Estimates					
County Agricultural Production Survey (CAPS) ^{1/}	150,000	1	150,000	91,950	61.3%
Fall Agricultural Survey (Crops and Livestock – County Estimates)	250,000	1	250,000	166,750	66.7%
Crop Progress and Condition Report (Crop Weather)	4,000	35	140,000	82,880	59.2%
Cash Rent Survey ^{2/}	170,000	1	170,000	137,700	81.0%
Total	609,600		787,000	530,441	67.4%

1/ CAPS survey will be replacing the County Estimates Survey entirely, in the near future. In the fall of 2008 we replaced the old County Estimates questionnaire with the new standardized questionnaire in fifteen States.

2/ The Cash Rent Survey is new in 2008.

2. Describe the procedures for the collection of information.

The specialty surveys listed in the first part of the table above target commodities that cannot be covered adequately in general purpose surveys. Most are grower surveys using a mail phase with telephone nonresponse followup until a prescribed cutoff date. The sample sizes cited often represent over 50 percent of the sampling population and contain a large number of matched reports from survey to survey. These surveys are coordinated with other collections to avoid duplicate contacts. The Dry Bean Cleaner Survey, the Mint Dealer Survey, the Sunflower, non-oil Survey, the Sugarbeet and Sugarcane surveys are all censuses of all processors using a mail phase with phone followup.

The Wheat and Barley Variety surveys and the County Estimates surveys obtain the information needed to estimate proportions and averages only. No direct indications or estimates are derived from these data. Official State and U.S. estimates are set from the quarterly Crops/Stocks survey (OMB No. 0535-0213), a national probability survey with full followup. The results of the Variety and Acreage surveys are used to allocate the official estimate into classes (variety) or to geographic sub domains (district and county). These surveys employ a mail phase with phone followup until a prescribed time deadline. Nonreponse followup is directed to achieve sufficient coverage and full followup is not required. Operations selected for the Crops/Stocks probability surveys are excluded from the Acreage survey (to avoid duplicate contacts); however data collected are pooled when computing the proportions and averages. The Crops/Stocks surveys and the 5-year Census of Agriculture (OMB No. 0535-0226) are used to evaluate potential bias.

The Crop Progress surveys are a weekly panel of respondents made up largely of government employees, USDA Extension Agents and USDA Farm Service Agency personnel. It is a quick turnaround (same day) survey using a Web-based instrument. Data are collected by noon and estimates are published by 4:00 pm Eastern Time. No followup is done for these surveys.

Modes of data collection include original mailing of questionnaires, follow-up mailing of questionnaires to non-respondents, post card reminders, phone follow-up, and limited face to face enumeration in certain situations. The amount of time allotted to collect the data as well as amount of funds available for data collection will be considered when determining the modes to be used on each of the surveys. Each State is responsible for utilizing the resources available to them to maximize the response rates while minimizing the respondent burden and out of pocket expenses.

Questionnaires are mailed to the entire sample/universe. They are returned to the State Field Offices (FOs) and reviewed for reasonableness prior to keying into data processing media for summarization. Questionnaires are summarized by crop reporting districts and the indications weighted for the State based on the relative importance of the commodity in the district.

- 3. Describe methods to maximize response rates and to deal with issues of non-response. The accuracy and reliability of information collected must be shown to be adequate for intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided for any collection that will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.**

Since we are relying on the mail for a great deal of data collection for these surveys, it is very important for the respondents to know who NASS is and how we will be using the data that they provide. This is accomplished both by including publicity materials with the questionnaires and sending out survey results to the respondents once the summaries are published. Statisticians from the Field Offices also attend growers meetings, trade shows, State Fairs, etc., to meet with farmers and answer any questions they have about NASS or the data that is collected.

With the heavy dependence on a mail phase for these surveys, Field Offices are directed to perform sufficient non-response followup to reduce the possible impact of a self-selecting sample. All samples and estimators are designed to provide unbiased point estimates of the items of interest. Surveys that do not require full followup can only provide approximations of measures of precision. Estimates of proportions and averages have very narrow ranges and standard errors tend to be small given the large sample sizes.

NASS Field Offices constantly monitor responses, particularly for the acreage and production surveys, to ensure adequate coverage for all counties requiring estimation. Targeted non-response follow-up occurs regularly when coverage deficiencies are identified. This involves extensive telephone follow-up in addition to personal enumeration when resources allow.

The Cash Rents Survey was added to this docket in 2008 in response to the 2007 Farm Bill. Both, the base-line information from 2008 survey results and lessons learned from the first year's collection have enabled NASS to implement new strategies for the 2009 Cash Rents Survey. For 2009, a targeted probability sample will be selected based primarily on operations that have historically cash rented non-irrigated cropland, irrigated cropland, and/or pasture; in this case cash rented in 2008.

The county-level Cash Rents Survey will be designed and administered as a "stand-alone" probability based survey. Contacts for selected samples will be coordinated with other surveys to manage multiple contacts and minimize respondent burden. Full non-response follow up will be performed. Screening questions, designed to identify operations that cash rent, will remain on the Crop County Estimates Survey to further develop the sampling universe for the three items of interest.

As part of NASS' methodology review from this year's effort, four standard 'acres operated' questions will be included on the Cash Rents Survey instrument. This will allow for a new approach for estimating acres rented for each land type in the Cash Rents Survey which will center on the following ratio estimates:

Cash Rented Acres Irrigated/ Total Acres Operated
Cash Rented Acres Non-Irrigated/ Total Acres Operated
Cash Rented Acres Pasture/ Total Acres Operated

These ratios, with their associated standard errors, will be computed at the state, district, and county level. The ratio at the state level will be applied to the NASS official State level estimates of land in farms (released in February) to derive a current year base for acres cash rented by type. The district and county ratios will be applied to their respective total acres operated from the 2007 Census of Agriculture to generate indications of cash rented acres. These indications will be scaled to sum to the current year state level estimate. Once these acreage weights are reviewed and accepted, mean cash rents can be estimated, the precision of the estimates can be monitored, and publication standard coverage rates can be applied (which were unavailable for 2008 estimates).

4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken.

No testing is done.

5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

Sample size for each State is determined by the Sampling Branch, Census and Survey Division; Branch Chief is William Iwig, (202)720-3895. Summary programs are prepared by the Agency's Statistical Methods Branch; Branch Chief is Dave Aune, (202)720-4008.

Data collection is carried out by NASS Field Offices; Deputy Administrator for Field Operations is Marshall Dantzler, (202)720-8220. Survey data are also reviewed and summarized by the State Field Offices. Publications are released from the State Offices and Headquarters.

May, 2009 (revised)