

Supporting Statement

2009-2010 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE CONTENT TEST

OMB No. 0535-0243

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.**

Phase I. The cognitive phase sample will consist of about 450 contacts. NASS will contact 450 respondents by personal interview to test the 2012 Census Content Test questionnaire. Respondents will be divided into three groups of 150 each. After each group has been interviewed and their comments and suggestions have been evaluated and incorporated when deemed beneficial the questionnaire will be updated before the next group of 150 will be interviewed. These respondents will be selected to ensure that an adequate number of respondents will be selected that may report information and potentially exhibit reporting problems for all targeted sections of the form. The diversity of the test samples will be reflective of the diversity found in the farming population. The testing will take place during 2009 continuing into 2010. Respondents will be asked to complete the questionnaire while a specially trained enumerator observes them. After the respondent completes the questionnaire, the enumerator will ask the respondent questions to determine how questions were interpreted and how the information was gathered. The completed questionnaire and the enumerator observations will all be used by survey methodologists and questionnaire designers to address any problems with the questionnaire prior to the final design of the Census Content Test questionnaire.

Phase II. A first mailout test will comprise 5,000 cases drawn from a universe of approximately 2.2 million census records. This sample will be selected to include records expected to report data in any section of the questionnaire that has been modified. Approximately 200 operations who respond will be recontacted and

interviewed to verify their data and provide information on any problems reporting on these questionnaires.

Phase III. The final test version will comprise 30,000 cases randomly drawn from a universe of approximately 2.2 million census records. They include the entire diverse spectrum of the census mail list so that producers of specialty commodities will be included in the sample. Since NASS will not publish summarized test data, a minimum 50 percent response with this sample size will adequately support the test design.

2. **Describe the procedures for the collection of information including:**
- **statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection,**
 - **estimation procedure,**
 - **degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification,**
 - **unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures**

Phase I, the cognitive testing, is made up of 3 rounds of interviews. Each round will contact 150 respondents and asking them to respond to certain portions of the questionnaire. This will be followed up by detailed questions about the respondent's answers and how they interpreted the questions and what type of data they felt the questions were asking for. The questionnaires will be updated after reviewing each group's responses. This process will be repeated three times. The responses from these 450 respondents will help measure response accuracy.

Phase II, information collected during this phase will be collected by mail-out/mail-in and Web from a sample size of 5,000 respondents. About 200 respondents will be selected for re-interview. Copies of the cover letter, final versions of the content test questionnaire (paper and Web), and instruction sheets will be submitted to OMB as soon as they are available.

Phase III, is the final mail-out test. The sample size of 30,000 will be representative of the farming population. The sample will be drawn from our list frame of known farmers. Factors that will be considered when drawing the sample will include, but not be limited to: type of livestock or poultry, field crops, specialty crops, on-farm storage facilities, value of sales, acres operated, geographic location, demographic characteristics, etc. Unlike Phase II, this phase does not consist of a follow up interview.

Both Phases II and III, consist of a testing of the screening portion of the questionnaire to see if respondents are screening out of the survey correctly and active farm operators are not accidentally screening out. This will help to reduce

the burden on non-farming individuals and help prevent the loss of data from active farmers.

- 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.**

Because results are not intended for publication, the anticipated response rate of 50 - 75 percent should suffice to provide sound basis for determining final instrument design.

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

The methodology for this information collection is based on content tests conducted previously and follows accepted practices for surveys of this nature.

- 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.**

Survey design and methodology are determined by the Research and Development Division; Chief Cognitive Research Methodologist is Jaki S. McCarthy, 703-877-8700.

Sampling is conducted by the Sampling Branch, Census and Survey Division; Branch Chief is William Iwig, (202) 720-3895.

Data collection is carried out by NASS Field Offices; Deputy Administrator for Field Operations is Marshall Dantzler, (202) 720-3638.

The Census Content Test procedures are overseen by the Census Planning Branch, Census and Survey Division; Branch Chief is Chris Messer, (202) 690-8747. The Branch is responsible for coordination of sampling, questionnaires, data collection, data processing, and analysis and the design of final census forms.

August 2009