January 23, 2013

NASS's Proposal for Adjusting Response Rate Calculations

NASS uses nearly 12,000 questionnaire versions per year. Approximately 4,000 of these questionnaires are used in the larger, core surveys conducted by NASS and have been standardized for many years. NASS has begun working on standardizing the nearly 8,000 remaining questionnaires. Standardization is projected to be completed within the next 3 to 5 years.

For voluntary surveys - NASS agrees to use the "OMB" approved response rate calculation method when publishing response rates for future data collections. This adjustment to the method used to calculate response rates should be completed within the next 5 years. Surveys that are a part of our core programs and use questionnaires that have already been standardized will be adjusted first. We will still need to update the office use codes on the questionnaires and adjust the edit and summaries but these changes should be completed within the first year.

Over the next few years, NASS will need to make adjustments to "Office Use Codes" on all the remaining questionnaires to allow for these changes to be calculated. This change will also impact our: Survey Administration Manuals; our NASDA Enumerator Manuals; centralized computer edits and summaries; and some of our Standards and Policy documents. These changes could take up to 3 to 5 years to complete. In summary, as questionnaires are updated or standardized we will begin implementing the OMB approved method of calculating response rates. These rates will be reflected in future docket renewal packages.

For mandatory surveys such as the Census of Agriculture, NASS requests an opportunity to further investigate changing or altering of the calculation of response rates before accepting these terms.