

Supporting Statement – Part B

REQUEST FOR GENERIC CLEARANCE OF SURVEY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS from the NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE (NASS)

OMB No. 0535 – 0248

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 information gathered will be used mainly for questionnaire development and other research and evaluation. The studies will cover a broad range of topics designed to improve NASS' data collection. Generally, small purposive samples of respondents/participants will be recruited to volunteer in the projects. Sampling in any projects related to this docket will be to make methodological comparisons; not to generate substantive survey estimates.

However, when a sampling plan is necessary (for instance, in the case of a pilot study or split-panel test), this plan will be described in the clearance request for each specific data collection.

NASS estimates that the total number of respondents to not exceed 25,000 participants or 15,000 total hours for the three year approval period.

2. **Describe the procedures for the collection of information.**

The techniques that NASS envisions using are widely accepted standard industry methods of developing, testing, and evaluating surveys, such as: focus groups, cognitive and usability laboratory and field techniques, exploratory interviews, behavior coding, respondent debriefing, pilot surveys and split-panel tests. Descriptions of these methods were provided in Part A of this request. The particular technique (or techniques) chosen will depend on the objectives of the study under investigation.

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.**

Operations to be tested will be selected based on the presence of the item(s) of interest (i.e. livestock, crops, hired workers, etc.); additionally, they will generally have a historical record of participating in most surveys. In testing a mail survey, NASS may need to conduct phone or personal contact follow up to see why someone did not respond or to ask post-survey cognitive questions.

Most testing by NASS will not incorporate any sampling methodology, unless we incorporate a survey improvement technique such as a Pilot Survey.

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

This submission covers tests of survey instruments and survey procedures. NASS expects that all tests conducted under this clearance will result in questionnaires with greater clarity and understandability for the respondents and reduction in burden for subsequent information collections. Additionally, this should result in improvements to the quality of data collected and reductions of cost to the Federal Government.

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 Editing and Questionnaire Branch, Census and Survey Division; Branch Chief is Scott Cox, (202) 720-6201.

Sample size for each State is reviewed by the Agency's Statistical Methods Branch; Branch Chief is Dave Aune, (202) 720-4008.

Selection of methods of testing and providing of training is done by the Research and Development Division, Chief Cognitive Research Methodologist is Jaki McCarthy, (703) 877-8000. Statistical Methodology Research Branch Chief is Wendy Barboza, (703) 877-8000. Geospatial Information Branch Chief is Jeff Bailey, (703) 877-8000.

Testing and survey coordination is conducted by the Survey Administration Branch, Branch Chief is Barbara Rater, (202) 720-3895.

Data collection is carried out by NASS Field Offices; Western Field Operations Director, Kevin Barnes (202) 720-8220 and Eastern Field Operations Director, Norman Bennett (202) 720-3638.

March, 2013