

April - May, 2014

Current Agricultural Industries Report (CAIR)

Enumerator and Field Office

Pretesting Guide

1. GENERAL

NASS has recently acquired approval to conduct a new information collection, the 2013 Current Agricultural Industrial Reports (CAIR). The Current Industrial Reports (CIR) program was conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau previously. It was discontinued on April 30, 2012. The previous approval was for 47 different surveys. NASS requested the authority to reinstate nine data collection instruments previously used by the Census Bureau.

Data from these instruments will be used to generate four separate publications. The data from these surveys will supply data users with important information on the utilization of many of the crops, livestock, and poultry produced in the United States. NASS currently collects crop data on acres planted and harvested, production, price and stocks for these crops (grains, oilseeds, cotton, nuts, olives, etc.) along with livestock data on the number of animals and poultry produced, slaughtered, prices, and the amount of meat kept in cold storage. This new data series will provide data users with vital information on how much of these commodities were processed into fuels, cooking oils, flour, fabric, etc. These data are needed to provide a more complete picture of the importance of agriculture to the American population.

Primary users of these data include government and regulatory agencies, business firms, trade associations, and private research and consulting organizations. The USDA World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB) uses the data in many of their indexes. The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) use the data in the estimation of components of gross domestic product (GDP) and the estimate of output for productivity analysis, respectively. Many government agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture, Food and Drug Administration, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and International Trade Administration use the data for industrial analysis, projections, and monitoring import penetration.

This is a pretest to evaluate the 2014 Current Agricultural Industries Report and the Operation Profile. The Operation Profile will be used to develop a complete and comprehensive list of operations. The main emphasis of this testing is whether the respondent is able to provide the information asked on the form (can the respondent find their commodities, report all the items pertaining to their operation in the correct unit of measure etc.). Provided are probes for you to use, however these probes are only suggestions. Written comments from your observations and conversations with the respondents are extremely helpful as we evaluate the CAIR questionnaires. We want to make sure all of the questions:

1. Are asked in a manner that is understandable to the respondent
2. The terms and answer choices are presented correctly

3. That the structure of the questions elicit the desired information

Of primary interest are any questions that respondents have general difficulty with or any terms and definitions within a question that are problematic. The key to fixing these situations is determining “why” something is unclear or a problem, and then asking the respondent how they would fix it - e.g. “how can we make this better for you?” Our goal in pretesting is twofold: to gather feedback on the questions as they are currently presented, as well as solicit suggestions for improvements.

Introducing the Interview:

Before the interview begins, explain the interview process to the respondent. The primary objective in a pretest interview is to find out how respondents are interpreting and answering the questions. For the CAIR pretesting we will also be collecting actual data. Data will be collected on an operation profile questionnaire and data will be collected for the time frame preceding the pretest visit. . I.e. if we do the quarterly interview in April 2014 we will collect data for the time period January to March 2014. If the CAIR questionnaire just collects monthly data just the preceding month’s data will be collected at the time of the initial interview.

Sample testing:

Conducting the Pre-test for flour mills:

The purpose of the Flour Milling Products questionnaire is to provide accurate, quarterly measures of flour production for six classes of wheat and rye. This data will be used to satisfy economic policy needs and for market analysis, forecasting, and decision making in the private sector. Government agencies, analysts and business organizations nationwide will rely on flour milling estimates for generating key economic reports. Response to the quarterly flour milling questionnaire is required by law.

Conducting the Interview:

Unlike a standard interview you are encouraged to interact with the respondent. Ask the respondent to think aloud as they are completing the questionnaire. Probe the respondent when he or she seems confused about a question. Encourage the respondent to describe their thought process when coming up with the answer.

Be sure to emphasize that everything we discuss or that is written as part of this pretesting is completely confidential.

During the interview ask the respondent to complete the questionnaire and then work through the probing questions relating to the completed questionnaire.

We must be careful not to lead the respondent or “interpret” items they may be having difficulty on. If the respondent has questions, ask them to fill out the form as if they were filling it out WITHOUT you. First, we want to ensure that the question is not problematic - not that they are

just thinking about their answer. Next, we need to find out what exactly was difficult to answer or not understandable. Finally, we want to determine the need to find out what exactly was difficult to answer or not understandable. Finally, we want to determine the respondent's interpretation of what we are asking and how the respondent would be better able to understand the question. It is often useful to ask the respondent to paraphrase the question, by repeating the question in their own words.

By getting the respondent's interpretation, we learn how they are hearing what we are asking. A question could potentially be completely misinterpreted from what we intended to ask. Hopefully, this is not the case (or at least a very rare occurrence) but in the event that it occurs, we need to hear how respondents perceive what we are asking and take this into consideration as we revamp a question.

Note if the respondent has any difficulty entering data correctly on the form. For example, if they enter figures in the wrong box or skip boxes that should have been completed, please note this.

By the same token, positive feedback is also welcome. Anytime respondent comments on something that is asked well, terms correctly used, usefulness of instructions or definitions, etc. we want to record or note that as well.

Throughout the interview you should be keeping notes of when a respondent gives any unexpected responses, such as their own definitions/interpretations, reporting units, etc.

The following are questions to ask when the respondent has completed the questionnaire. You may need to rely on observation and follow up probing of respondents to determine the answers. If respondents appear to have any other problems, please feel free to add additional follow up questions. Don't assume you know what respondents are doing - ASK THEM!

2. DUE DATE - April 1, 2014 to May 30, 2014

All forms need to be returned to:

Attention: Nancy J. Dickey
3251 Old Lee Highway
Room 305
Fairfax, VA 22030-1504

You may fax the information to:

Attention: Nancy J. Dickey
Fax number: 03-877-8044

Probing Instrument

INTRODUCTION:

We are in the process of testing the questionnaire that will be utilized for the < Survey Title>. I am going to ask you to fill out the questionnaire. Please fill out the form based on the time frame indicated. If possible, talk aloud as you go through the questionnaire. This helps us to see where there are problems in our questions. When you have completed the questionnaire I will ask you some general questions about how you came up with your answers.

Respondent POID _____
Operation Name _____
Respondent Name _____
Address _____
Type of Operation _____
Date _____

Person conducting pretest _____
State of pretest _____

Phone number _____

Probes

1. Did the respondent read that, if necessary, they could make corrections to the name, address, and ZIP Code?

¹ Yes what information did they read?

³ No skipped directly to question 1. WHY?

2. Did the respondent read the paragraph pertaining to the Title V; Subtitle a, Public Law 107-347 etc.?

¹ Yes what information did they read?

³ No skipped directly to question 1. WHY?

3. Did the respondent understand that this survey is confidential?

¹ Yes what information did they read?

³ No skipped directly to question 1. WHY?

4. Did the respondent understand that this survey is required by law?

¹ Yes what information did they read?

³ No skipped directly to question 1. WHY?

5. Are the prelisted units for the commodities on the questionnaire the units you use to report?

¹ Yes

³ No How do you report?

6. When reporting for the commodities did the respondent estimate or go to books or the computer for their data?

¹ Estimated

² Looked up their data either via books, computer, etc.

7. If the respondent utilized books or computer etc. how do they keep their records?

¹ Records are kept by month.

² Records are kept by quarter.

³ Records are kept by year.

⁴ Other methods of keeping records.

8. For <question XX> <capacity, stocks production>, did the respondent have any difficulty answering the questions?

¹ Yes - Explain

³ No

9. Ask the respondent if there are any other commodities related to <insert commodity> that should be considered on this questionnaire.

¹ Yes - list those commodities.

³ No

Additional Comments:

Summary of Interview:
