

## **Farmers Feedback Focus Group Discussion Guide**

**Length of Focus Group is 90 minutes**

### **Research Questions:**

- Do you respond to NASS surveys?
- Why or why not?
- How can NASS better serve you as a farm operator?

### **Materials and supplies for focus groups:**

- Sign-in sheet
- Name tents
- Focus Group Discussion Guide for Moderator
- 1 recording device
- Batteries for recording device
- Markers for notetaking
- Board for notetaking
- Refreshments

### **Before focus group:**

- Light continental breakfast
- Have farm operators sign in on sign-in sheet
- Have them sign consent form to be recorded

### **Introduction:**

#### a. Welcome (15 minutes)

(Moderator) Introduce yourself and the note taker. Then review the following:

- Who we are and what we're trying to do
- What will be done with this information
- Why we asked you to participate

#### b. Explanation of the process

Ask the group if anyone has participated in a focus group before. Explain purpose of the focus group: to understand the WHY farmers choose to respond, or not respond, to NASS Surveys?

#### *About focus groups*

- We learn from you (positive and negative)
- Not trying to achieve consensus, we're gathering information
- There are no right or wrong answers and it's okay to disagree with each other

#### *Logistics*

- Focus group will last about 60-90 minutes
- Feel free to move around
- Where is the bathroom? Exit?

- Help yourself to refreshments

c. Ground Rules

Ask the group to suggest some ground rules. After they brainstorm some, make sure the following are on the list.

- Everyone should participate. Don't be afraid to voice your opinion.
- Information provided in the focus group must be kept confidential
- Stay with the group and please don't have side conversations
- Turn off cell phones if possible
- Have fun

d. Turn on Tape Recorder

e. Ask the group if there are any questions before we get started, and address those questions.

f. Introductions (**5 minutes**)

- Go around table: favorite football team and maybe what they farm?

*Discussion begins, make sure to give people time to think before answering the questions and don't move too quickly. Use the probes to make sure that all issues are addressed, but move on when you feel you are starting to hear repetitive information.*

**Questions**

g. I want to begin with a little exercise. When I say a word, I want you to tell me what comes to mind and I'll write it down on the whiteboard. (**10 minutes**)

- When I say USDA, what do you think of?
  
- When I say NASS or the National Agricultural Statistics Service, what do you think of?

h. So what do you know about NASS? (**15 minutes**)

- Have you ever received a survey from NASS?
  
- If so, do you remember which one?
  
- How do you usually complete it? In-person, Paper, Phone, Online?

- (Focus on the DCC) How was the experience completing the survey? Please tell us about it...
  - (Focus on the DCC) Why or why don't you decide to pick up the phone when NASS calls you?
  - (Focus on the DCC) What would be a better way to contact you?
  - (For those completing it in another mode) How was the experience completing the survey? Please tell us about it...
- i. (For those that regularly respond) Why do you respond to NASS surveys? (list reasons on the board) **(15 minutes)**
- Do you think it's important to respond? Tell me more about this...(list reasons on board)
  - Have you ever looked at or used data collected by NASS?
  - If so, how did you use it?
- j. (For those that DO NOT regularly respond) Why don't you respond to NASS surveys? (list reasons on the board) **(15 minutes)**
- Do you think it's important to respond? Tell me more about this...(list reasons on the board)
  - What would encourage YOU respond to a NASS survey? Tell me about this...(list reasons on the board)
  - Have you ever looked at or used data collected by NASS?
  - If so, how did you use it?

- k. Now I want to get your feedback on common reasons that we hear from farmers as to why the respond to NASS surveys. **(15 minutes)**
- I want to make sure I'm represented.
  - It's my duty as a citizen.
  - I realize my survey data affects farm policy, loan, crop insurance and rental rates.
  - Because I know it affects futures and commodity prices.
  - I like censuses and surveys and want to make sure the data is as accurate as possible.
  - I filled out the survey because I did last time and I might as well be consistent.
  - I want to make sure the government knows I produce more than my competitor.
- l. Okay, we're just about out of time. So one last question. **(10 minutes)**
- If you had to pick one of the messages above as a reason to reply to a NASS survey, which reason would you pick?
  - Do you have any other comments before we go?

That concludes our focus group. Thank you so much for coming and sharing your opinions with us!