

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Generic Testing – Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey

OMB No. 0535-0248

This mini-supporting statement is being submitted to OMB to define the need for conducting qualitative research, in the form of cognitive interviews, in an effort to reduce measurement error in the next iteration of the Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey (FRIS). No more than 25 operations will be interviewed in this research effort.

The FRIS asks questions about irrigation and water distribution methods using ground water, on-farm and off-farm surface water, and pumps, as well as production for irrigated and non-irrigated land, by commodity. Irrigation practices, expenditures, and other questions are also asked.

The FRIS is conducted every five years as a Census of Agriculture (COA) follow-on survey. Questions are asked on the COA that are used to screen respondents into the universe for the FRIS. The next iteration of the survey is planned for mailout in January 2019 to cover the 2018 calendar year. Response to the FRIS is mandatory.

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances making collection of information necessary.

During the last iteration of the FRIS (for calendar year 2013), two irrigation survey forms were combined into one. The two report forms were the 2008 FRIS and the 2008 Horticulture Irrigation Survey. Due to resource constraints, very limited cognitive testing was done for the iteration of the survey. Conducting more extensive cognitive interviewing for the 2018 FRIS will help to reduce potential measurement error(s) by respondents.

2. How, by whom, and for what purpose information is to be used.

The information gathered through the qualitative research will be analyzed by NASS's Methodology Division and Census and Survey Division to determine the changes to the format and content of the FRIS, as well as the best way to ask questions about the constructs of interest on the survey.

The questionnaire is shown in Attachment A. A draft of the types of questions asked during the cognitive interview is shown in Attachment B.

3. Use of improved information technology.

The cognitive interviews proposed would be done in person by trained cognitive interviewers in the field or in HQ.

4. Efforts to identify duplication.

No additional efforts will be taken to identify duplication. Operators who are selected for the cognitive interviews will be drawn from NASS list of known farm operations who have reported using irrigation in the past. Duplication is removed before operators are added to the NASS list frame.

5. Methods to minimize burden of small businesses.

For these cognitive interviews, no special efforts will be made to minimize burden of small businesses.

6. Consequence if information collection were less frequent.

This is a one-time cognitive interview project. The questionnaire for the survey is due in March 2018 for submission with the FRIS docket. Therefore, these cognitive interviews are planned for July – December 2017, so that any changes can be incorporated into the version submitted at that time.

7. Special circumstances.

There are no special circumstances associated with this information collection.

8. Federal register notice and consultation with outside persons.

Not applicable.

9. Payments or gifts to respondents.

There are no payments or gifts to respondents.

10. Confidentiality provided to respondents.

The same confidentiality that is applied to the FRIS will be applied to data collected during the cognitive interviews.

11. Questions of a sensitive nature.

The FRIS contains questions related to irrigation expenditures, water management and irrigation practices, technical and financial assistance received, and value of sales that could be considered sensitive. These questions have been used on the FRIS in the past.

12. Hour burden and annualized costs to respondents.

All interviews will be conducted by trained cognitive interviewers or survey methodologists who work at either NASS headquarters or one of the NASS Field Offices to explore how respondents understand the underlining constructs within the questionnaire, and make sure that the respondents understand the intent of each question and are able to provide the requested information.

We plan to conduct a maximum of 25 one and a half hour cognitive interviews for a total of 37.5 total burden hours.

NASS uses the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment Statistics (most recently published on March 31, 2017 for the previous May) to estimate an hourly wage for the burden cost. The May 2016 mean wage for bookkeepers was \$19.34. The mean wage for farm managers was \$36.44. The mean wage for farm supervisors was \$23.47. The average of the three is \$26.42. The annual estimated reporting time of 25 hours is multiplied by \$26 per hour for a total cost to the public of \$975.

13. Total annual cost burden to respondents.

There are no capital/start-up or ongoing operation/maintenance costs associated with this information collection.

14. Annualized costs to federal government.

Costs for conducting the qualitative research interviews are estimated at \$20,000. This will cover expenses for staff payroll, travel, survey analysis, and any other expenses that may be incurred while updating survey materials based on our findings. Several NASS employees who have been trained in conducting cognitive interviews in several states or in NASS HQ will conduct the cognitive interviews.

15. Reasons for changes in burden.

This mini-supporting statement addresses the use of burden to conduct testing for the FRIS.

16. Tabulation, analysis, and publication plans.

No data will be published from these tests. Data are for internal use only, but results may be presented at outside conferences or seminars.

17. Request for approval of non-display of expiration date.

There is no request for approval of non-display of the expiration date.

18. Exceptions to certification statement.

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.

B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS:

1. Respondent universe, sampling, and response rate.

NASS will use list frame data and survey data to identify operations or operators that meet the screening criteria for the FRIS. The operators will not be statistically sampled; rather, they will be hand selected based on whether they reported the use of irrigation on past surveys. HQ staff, NASS State Statisticians, Regional Field Office staff, and NASDA interviewers will recruit respondents for the interviews.

2. Procedures for the collection of information.

Interviewers will follow standard pretesting techniques as defined in the original Supporting Statement Part A for the Generic Clearance docket (0535-0248).

3. Information collected adequate for intended uses.

Operations will be selected based on specific criteria as stated above.

4. Test of procedures or methods.

Not applicable.

5. Individuals consulted on statistical aspects of survey.

Selection of methods of testing for this qualitative research was done by the Methodology Division; Chief Cognitive Research Methodologist is Jaki McCarthy, (202) 690-2389. Senior Survey Methodologist is Kathy Ott, (202) 720-1114.

July 2017