

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Generic Testing – Agricultural Labor 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 test new questions for the Agricultural Labor Survey. No more than 100 farm operations and farm labor contractors will be interviewed in this research effort.

The Agricultural Labor Survey asks questions about hired labor hours and wages. The U.S. Department of Agriculture would like to ask a more expanded set of questions regarding wages in order to collect data on bonus pay and incentive pay paid to workers.

The Agricultural Labor Survey is currently conducted twice a year, collecting data for a reference week in two different quarters. For the purpose of testing, the questionnaire will only ask about one reference week in one quarter. Response to the survey is voluntary. The survey is collected predominantly by mail and telephone, so cognitive interviews will be conducted to mimic those two data collection modes.

We would like to include these new questions on the April 2018 operator questionnaire, and on a new contractor questionnaire in April 2019. This supporting statement includes the testing planned for both questionnaires.

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances making collection of information necessary.

This testing is needed for three reasons. First, a new set of questions asking about the base rate paid to workers is being added to the Agricultural Labor Survey for farm and ranch operations. Secondly, respondents will be asked to categorize their workers by the work they are hired to do, as well as the base hourly wage they are paid. This is different from the current questionnaire where respondents are asked to combine all of their workers who are hired to do the same work into one data cell, totaling their wages. Finally, a new population (farm labor contractors) will be included in the survey, with its own new questionnaire. That questionnaire will be similar to the questionnaire sent to farm and ranch operations, but will include terms appropriate for contractors.

The cognitive testing will be divided into two rounds of testing – one round

to test the paper questionnaires and one round to test the Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) questionnaires. Round 1 testing will include up to 20 operators and up to 20 contractors to test the paper questionnaire. Round 2 testing will include up to 30 operators and up to 30 contractors to test the CATI questionnaire

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

The information gathered through the qualitative research will be analyzed jointly by NASS's Research and Development Division, Methodology Division, Statistics Division, and Census and Survey Division to determine the changes to the format and content of both versions of the Agricultural Labor Survey, as well as the best way to ask the new questions.

The operator questionnaire is shown in Attachment A. The contractor questionnaire is shown in Attachment B. A draft of the types of questions asked during the cognitive interviews is shown in Attachment C.

3. Use of improved information technology.

The cognitive interviews proposed would be done in person or on the telephone by trained cognitive interviewers from NASS's Headquarters office in Washington, DC or, if necessary, by NASS's Field Office personnel.

4. Efforts to identify duplication.

No additional efforts will be taken to identify duplication from the testing done for operators. Farm and ranch operators who are selected for the cognitive interviews will be drawn from NASS's list of known farm operations who have reported hired labor in the past. Duplication is removed before operators are added to the NASS list frame.

NASS will obtain a list of contractors from the Department of Labor (DOL). In addition to the DOL efforts to reduce duplication on the list, NASS will also compare the contractor list against our List Frame and remove any duplication.

5. Methods to minimize burden of small businesses.

For these cognitive interviews, no special efforts will be made to minimize burden of small businesses. Any contractor or operation who hires five or more employees will be eligible for the testing.

6. Consequence if information collection were less frequent.

This is a one-time cognitive interview project, divided into two rounds. The interviews with farm operators are planned for December 2017 through February 2018, in order to provide findings and recommendation for the operator questionnaire to be ready for March 2018. The interviews with farm contractors are planned for January 2018 through July 2018, in order for the contractor questionnaire to be further tested in October 2018.

7. Special circumstances.

NASS does not maintain a list of agricultural labor contractors. If NASS is unable to obtain a list of contractors from DOL, we will not be able to test the contractor version of the questionnaire.

8. Federal register notice and consultation with outside persons.

NASS has consulted with the DOL on topics related to the contractors.

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 Agricultural Labor Survey will be applied to data collected during the cognitive interviews.

11. Questions of a sensitive nature.

The Agricultural Labor Survey contains questions related to wages paid to workers that could be considered sensitive. These questions have been used on the Agricultural Labor Survey in the past, and are the main focus of the data collection.

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.

We plan to conduct a maximum of 100 one and one half hour cognitive interviews for a total of 150 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 150 hours is multiplied by \$26 per hour for a total cost to the public of \$3,900.

13. Total annual cost burden to respondents.

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

14. Annualized costs to federal government.

Costs for conducting the qualitative research interviews are estimated at \$80,000. 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. Efforts will be made to reduce travel expenses wherever possible.

15. Reasons for changes in burden.

This mini-supporting statement addresses the use of burden to conduct testing for the two versions of the Agricultural Labor Survey.

16. Tabulation, analysis, and publication plans.

No data will be published from these tests. Data are for internal use only, but results will be provided to USDA headquarters and 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 operator version of the Agricultural Labor Survey. The operators will not be statistically sampled;

rather, they will be hand selected based on whether they reported having labor on past surveys. HQ staff, NASS State Statisticians, Regional Field Office staff, and NASDA phone and field interviewers may recruit respondents for the interviews.

NASS will use a list obtained from the DOL to identify contractors that employ farm workers for the contractor version of the Agricultural Labor Survey. HQ staff and NASDA phone and field interviewers may 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 and contractors 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 Research and Development Division and Methodology Division; Senior Survey Methodologists are Heather Ridolfo (202) 692-0293 and Kathy Ott (202) 720-1114.

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