

**Request for Approval under the “Generic Clearance for the Collection of  
Routine Customer Feedback” (OMB Control Number: 0503-0021)**

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**TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION:**

Focus Groups for 2017 Census of Agriculture Promotion Material

**PURPOSE:**

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts the Census of Agriculture once every five years by mailing a census questionnaire to all known and potential farm operations in the United States. Although response to the census is mandatory, NASS relies largely on the willingness of recipients to respond. Unfortunately, data indicate response rates are trending downward. Also, data show persons involved with U.S. agriculture are increasingly diverse, with significant numbers of African American, Hispanic, Asian, women, and Millennial Generation farmers.

Consequently, NASS needs promotional messages for the 2017 Census of Agriculture that resonate across diverse agricultural audiences. This project will involve conducting 20 focus groups across the U.S. to obtain input from farmers and ranchers on current and alternative messages that promote the Census of Agriculture. The intent is to identify messages and promotional material that best encourage responding to the census.

**DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS:**

The focus groups participants (i.e., respondents) are farmers and ranchers who will receive the 2017 Census of Agriculture questionnaire.

**TYPE OF COLLECTION:** (Check one)

- Customer Comment Card/Complaint Form
- Usability Testing (e.g., Website or Software)
- Focus Group

- Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Small Discussion Group
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**CERTIFICATION:**

I certify the following to be true:

1. The collection is voluntary.
2. The collection is low-burden for respondents and low-cost for the Federal Government.
3. The collection is non-controversial and does not raise issues of concern to other federal agencies.

4. The results are not intended to be disseminated to the public.
5. Information gathered will not be used for the purpose of substantially informing influential policy decisions.
6. The collection is targeted to the solicitation of opinions from respondents who have experience with the program or may have experience with the program in the future.

Name: David Hancock, NASS OMB Clearance Officer

To assist review, please provide answers to the following question:

**Personally Identifiable Information:**

1. Is personally identifiable information (PII) collected? [ ] Yes [X] No
2. If Yes, is the information that will be collected included in records that are subject to the Privacy Act of 1974? [ ] Yes [ ] No
3. If Applicable, has a System or Records Notice been published? [ ] Yes [ ] No [X] N/A

**Gifts or Payments:**

Is an incentive (e.g., money or reimbursement of expenses, token of appreciation) provided to participants? [ ] Yes [X] No

**BURDEN HOURS**

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time	Burden
Farmers and Ranchers	200	1.5 hours	300 hours
<b>Totals</b>			<b>300 hours</b>

The number of respondents is based on: 20 focus groups, each with 10 individuals.

**FEDERAL COST:** The estimated annual cost to the Federal government is \$50,000

The \$50,000 includes the cost of the contract to fund the public relations firm that will conduct the focus groups, the cost of NASS staff involved with the project, and travel expenses.

**If you are conducting a focus group, survey, or plan to employ statistical methods, please provide answers to the following questions:**

**The selection of your targeted respondents**

1. Do you have a customer list or something similar that defines the universe of potential respondents and do you have a sampling plan for selecting from this universe?  

[X] Yes [ ] No

If the answer is yes, please provide a description of both below (or attach the sampling plan)? If the answer is no, please provide a description of how you plan to identify your potential group of respondents and how you will select them?

Focus Group participants will be selected from a variety of sources including: NASS’s lists of farm operators, national and state associations membership lists, community based organization membership lists, NASS data users, and engaged digital community members (Twitter followers). Participants will be chosen at random based on three selection criteria:

1. Geographic Areas (low response-rate areas in past Censuses of Agriculture)
2. Demographic Characteristics (women farmers, ethnic minority groups, traditional/general farming population)
3. Special Populations (beginning farmers, urban farmers).

The number of focus groups (20) was chosen as it was sufficient to ensure participants representing the above criteria were included in at least one focus group. The number of participants per focus group (10) was chosen as it is regarded as the optimal size for a focus group. The location and target population for each focus group is included in a separate document.

#### **Administration of the Instrument**

1. How will you collect the information? (Check all that apply)
  - Web-based or other forms of Social Media
  - Telephone
  - In-person
  - Mail
  - Other, Explain: Via Video Teleconference (VTC).
2. Will interviewers or facilitators be used?  Yes  NO

**Please make sure that all instruments, instructions, and scripts are submitted with the request.**

#### **Instructions for completing Request for Approval under the “Generic Clearance for the Collection of Routine Customer Feedback”**

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**TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION:** Provide the name of the collection that is the subject of the request. (e.g. Comment card for soliciting feedback on xxxx)

**PURPOSE:** Provide a brief description of the purpose of this collection and how it will be used. If this is part of a larger study or effort, please include this in your explanation.

**DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS:** Provide a brief description of the targeted group or groups for this collection of information. These groups must have experience with the program.

**TYPE OF COLLECTION:** Check one box. If you are requesting approval of other instruments under the generic, you must complete a form for each instrument.

**CERTIFICATION:** Please read the certification carefully. If you incorrectly certify, the collection will be returned as improperly submitted or it will be disapproved.

**Personally Identifiable Information:** Provide answers to the questions.

**Gifts or Payments:** If you answer yes to the question, please describe the incentive and provide a justification for the amount.

**BURDEN HOURS:**

**Category of Respondents:** Identify who you expect the respondents to be in terms of the following categories: (1) Individuals or Households;(2) Private Sector; (3) State, local, or tribal governments; or (4) Federal Government. Only one type of respondent can be selected.

**No. of Respondents:** Provide an estimate of the Number of respondents.

**Participation Time:** Provide an estimate of the amount of time required for a respondent to participate (e.g. fill out a survey or participate in a focus group)

**Burden:** Provide the Annual burden hours: Multiply the Number of responses and the participation time and divide by 60.

**FEDERAL COST:** Provide an estimate of the annual cost to the Federal government.

**If you are conducting a focus group, survey, or plan to employ statistical methods, please provide answers to the following questions:**

**The selection of your targeted respondents.** Please provide a description of how you plan to identify your potential group of respondents and how you will select them. If the answer is yes, to the first question, you may provide the sampling plan in an attachment.

**Administration of the Instrument:** Identify how the information will be collected. More than one box may be checked. Indicate whether there will be interviewers (e.g. for surveys) or facilitators (e.g., for focus groups) used.

**Please make sure that all instruments, instructions, and scripts are submitted with the request.**