

**Generic Testing – Prices Paid**

OMB No. 0535-0248

This mini-supporting statement is being submitted to OMB to define the need for conducting up to 40 early stage scoping interviews under the Generic Testing docket. Early stage scoping interviews are planned for fall 2016.

The purpose of this research study is to explore whether and how respondents can answer questions regarding potential new content for all five of the Prices Paid Surveys (feed, fuel, seed, machinery, and chemicals/fertilizers). In addition to (or instead of) asking the price paid per unit, we would like to add a total quantity sold or a total value of sales from each product or item. However, the Prices Paid team would like to find out how accessible this information is to agriculture businesses, how easy it would be for them to report, the best time frame to ask about, and the best wording and format for the questions. In addition, other issues with the Prices Paid Survey will be explored such as the types of products to list, units of measure that should be reported, and comprehension issues.

The study will use early stage scoping interviews and cognitive interviews in two phases. The first phase, early stage scoping interviews, will examine whether respondents can answer the new questions on value of sales or total products sold and explore the optimal way to ask the questions. After Phase 1, new questionnaires will be developed for use in Phase 2, cognitive interviews. Phase 2 will examine respondents' question response process when answering the new questions in a formal interview setting, similar to how the survey will be administered. Only Phase 1 is covered in this supporting statement. Phase 2 will be submitted once revised questionnaires are ready for cognitive testing.

A maximum of 40 scoping interviews will be conducted using respondents from the NASS list frame who are in the universe for the Prices Paid program. The 40 interviews will be spread across the Prices Paid Surveys and spread geographically throughout the US. The current survey questionnaires are provided as attachments. The current questionnaires may be shown to the respondents for the scoping interviews, but the respondent will not be asked to fill them out. Instead, they will be asked questions about the topics shown in the attached scoping interview guide questions document. The questionnaire will be revised based on the findings from the scoping interviews.

## **A. JUSTIFICATION**

- 1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.**

The Prices Paid survey collects data on the prices farmers paid for a variety of products including feed, seed, fuel, machinery, fertilizers, and chemicals. Because of increased data needs, we need to collect data on the total value of sales or the total number of units of a product that were sold. In order to make this as accurate as possible, and as easy as possible for respondents, we will ask respondents from agriculture businesses that are in the survey universe for their feedback on how to ask these questions and how accessible the information is to them.

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

The information gathered through the early stage scoping interviews will be analyzed by our Methodology Division along with our Statistics Division Environmental and Economic Surveys Section to determine how to ask the new questions. Approved changes will be implemented into the Prices Paid survey in 2018 (currently planned for March 2018).

- 3. Use of improved information technology.**

The scoping interviews will be conducted using face-to-face interviews.

- 4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.**

Routine duplication procedures are performed before names were added to our List Frame. No additional efforts will be taken to identify duplication. Agriculture businesses selected for the scoping interviews will be drawn from our list frame. Depending on results from the scoping interviews, we may ask the same agriculture business to participate in both a scoping interview now and a cognitive interview at a later date. At this point, we do not anticipate doing this.

- 5. Methods to minimize burden of small businesses.**

We will attempt to conduct the scoping interviews with businesses of varying size. Any modifications to the interview process will impact all operations in future Prices Paid surveys, regardless of size.

**6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.**

This is a one-time data collection, with scoping interviews planned for the fall of 2016.

**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 Prices Paid Survey will be applied to data collected during the scoping interviews.

**11. Questions of a sensitive nature.**

There are no questions of a sensitive nature on the current survey.

**12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens in Item 13 of OMB Form 83-I. Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories.**

The tests will be conducted by trained cognitive interviewers to make sure that the respondents understand the intent of each question and that they are able to provide the requested information. Our plan is to conduct up to 40 scoping interviews, covering all five Prices Paid Surveys. Each scoping interview will last a maximum of 1.5 hours.

Phase	Number of Respondents	Hours per Interview	Total Burden Hours
Phase 1: Scoping interviews	40	1.5	60

Cost to the public to complete the questionnaire is assumed to be comparable to the hourly rate of those requesting the data. Reporting time of 60 hours are multiplied by \$25 per hour for a total cost to the public of \$1,500.

NASS regularly checks the Bureau of Labor Statistics' [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) (Published March 30, 2016). Mean wage rates for bookkeepers, farm managers, and farm supervisors are averaged to obtain the wage for the burden cost. The May 2015 mean wage for bookkeepers is \$18.74. The mean wage for farm managers is \$33.60. The mean wage for farm supervisors is \$23.22. The mean wage of the three is \$25.19.

- 13. Provide estimates of the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information, (do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in items 12 and 14). The cost estimates should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component annualized over its expected useful life; and (b) a total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component.**

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

- 14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government; provide a description of the method used to estimate cost which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (equipment, overhead, printing, and staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.**

Costs for conducting the scoping interviews are estimated at \$60,000. This will cover expenses for staff payroll, travel, survey analysis, and processing. NASS employees who have been trained in conducting cognitive interviews will travel to the establishments in the selected states to conduct the surveys.

- 15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-I (reasons for changes in burden).**

This mini-supporting statement addresses the use of burden to conduct qualitative testing for the Prices Paid Survey.

- 16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.**

No data from this test will be published. Summarized results and information about the scoping interviews may be presented at national conferences and presented in peer reviewed journals.

- 17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.**

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

- 18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions" of OMB Form 83-I.**

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.

**B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS:**

- 1. Respondent universe, sampling and response rate.**

This Prices Paid Survey qualitative testing project will purposefully sample agriculture businesses that are in the universe for the Prices Paid Survey, in locations selected to minimize interviewer travel time and costs.

- 2. Procedures for the collection of information.**

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

- 3. Information collected adequate for intended uses.**

Agriculture businesses of varying size will be selected for this test. Non-response is not expected to be an issue for this test.

- 4. Test of procedures or methods.**

Not applicable.

**5. Individuals consulted on statistical aspects of survey.**

The survey administrator for this survey is Julie Weber (202)-720-7216 of the Survey Administration Branch, Census and Survey Division.

The estimates and survey publication are supervised by Tony Dorn, (202) 690-3223, Section Head of the Economics Section, Environmental, Economics and Demographics Branch, Statistics Division.

Selection of testing methods and training is provided by the Research and Development Division and the Methodology Division; Senior Cognitive Research Methodologist is Jaki McCarthy, (202) 690-2389 and Senior Survey Methodologist is Kathy Ott, (202) 720-1114.

August 2016

## Attachment

### Prices Paid Scoping Interview Guide

Note: In this Interview Guide, the word “products” is used as a generic term to represent the type of product/item that is asked about on each Prices Paid Survey, i.e., seed, feed, fuel, machinery, fertilizer/chemicals.

This is a guide – the questions presented here will not necessarily be asked exactly as worded in the protocol or in this order. It is important to note that not all questions will be asked in every interview.

*Note: As much information about interview participants should be obtained prior to the interview as possible. In some cases probing may need to be adjusted based on the background research that was conducted.*

#### Purpose of visit

NASS collects data from businesses like yours each year on the prices that farmers paid for products. Increasing data needs are causing us to consider changing the way we collect data about these products. I would like to talk to you today about the products/items your business sells to farmers and whether you can provide sales information about those products. I am going to ask you several questions, but keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers or opinions to any of my questions. I also want to encourage you to think aloud during our conversation and share your immediate thoughts and/or reactions. It is ok if you are not sure or do not know about some of the things we discuss. If this is the case just let me know.

Do you have any concerns or questions before we get started?

#### Respondent Background

Before we start with more specific questions, I would like to ask a few questions about this business and your role in it. For today, the focus is on this company -- (NAME).

1. (For each person in the room) What is your formal job title?
  - a. Could you tell me a little about your role and responsibilities?
  - b. How do NASS Surveys typically get completed at your company?
    - i. Have you completed the Prices Paid Survey for us before? If yes, tell me about that process...
    - ii. If no, who would complete the survey for your business? (record name and title/role)

## Products Sold

What types of the following products does this business sell? (maybe show list and ask to check those they sell and add any other ones)

- Fertilizers?
- Fungicides?
- Herbicides?
- Insecticides?
- Other?

Does this business have records for how much of these products it sells? What types of information are in this business's records?

Does this business sell products to farms throughout the year? Or does it sell products to farms only during certain times of the year? Tell me about this...

Does this business generally sell the same products from year to year? What impacts which products this business sells from year to year?

Does this business sell several brands for the same type of product? If asked questions about *prices* for individual products, would it be easier to report prices for each brand or by combining brands? Likewise, if this business was asked questions about *the quantity sold* of a certain product, would combining the prices data for those brands be preferable to giving data by individual brand?

Does this business sell most products in only one size or do it sell most products in a variety of sizes? Which products does this business sell in a variety of sizes? How easy is it for this business to report in "bulk" units such as gallons, drums, pounds or tons? What units are used to track this information in the records?

## Prices

Does the prices this business charges for these products change throughout the year? If so, why do they change? Do they change seasonally? In response to supply/demand? Increase over time? Other?

For chemicals/fertilizers, do prices include application costs?

Are shipping or delivery costs charged separately or included in the cost of products? Does this depend on the product?

If asked, could the following for any/all of these products? How easy/difficult would that be? Why?

- Price per unit as of a certain day? Price per unit for a month? Price per unit average for a 12 month period?

- Total value of sales for the product for a 12 month period? How about 6 month period, 3 month period, one month period, one week period?
- Total quantity sold in a 12 month period? How about 6 month period, 3 month period, one month period, one week period?
- If reported for a 12 month period, what is the best 12 month period for this business to report for? Calendar year (Jan – Dec), a growing season (i.e., March – October), some other 12 month period?
- Is there one month that has consistently higher prices? Lower prices? Average price for the year? Why? Do prices change daily, weekly, monthly, annual, ad hoc?
- Change in price from last year? Last month? Last week?

Do you sell any products online? If so, do farmers/ranchers pay a different price?

#### Record keeping/reporting issues

- Does this business keep records of the products it sells?
- Can this business distinguish in its records which products are sold specifically to farmers?
- Does this business use the records to fill out data requests from NASS?
- How would this business prefer to be contacted for data requests from NASS?

<Show examples of ways to collect data differently for each table>. Would this business be able to answer these questions for the products you sell?

If this business filled out the Prices Paid Surveys in the past, about how long did it take to fill it out? Would it take a longer or shorter amount of time for this business to answer these potential new questions about the total value of sales or the total number of products sold <interviewer will reiterate how the respondent could answer from previous questions>? How long do you think it would take you to fill out the entire questionnaire with these new questions?

#### Other issues/topics

What time of year is the best to collect prices data from this business for these products? Why? Is the time of year dependent on the category of product (i.e., is there a better time for fertilizers vs herbicides)? Why?

Can this business report actual sales or spot sales, or both? Tell me about this...which is easier?

<Look at each listing of products (i.e., fertilizers, herbicides, etc.)> Does this business sell any of these products? What other products does this business sell in this category?

Do you have any issues you would like to discuss related to how we ask about prices and products you sell?

Would you be willing and able to fill out an online version of this questionnaire? Do you think that would be easier or more difficult than completing it on paper? How would you prefer to answer this survey – online, on the phone, with an interviewer, or by yourself on paper?

Do you have any other issues about any other topics related to this survey?