

OMB Control Number 0535-0226: Census of Agriculture
Non-substantive Change Request

Background

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is currently conducting the 2017 Census of Agriculture. The original due date for reporting to the Census of Agriculture was February 5, 2018. All members of the Census of Agriculture mail list have been mailed up to three paper questionnaires and have been provided opportunities to report on the web. As of April 2, 2018, NASS has not received responses from over one-third of the initial Census of Agriculture mail list. To ensure proper representation of various geographic areas and sub-populations in the results, NASS is submitting this non-substantive change to document an adjustment to the next phase of non-response follow-up. NASS will contact Census of Agriculture non-respondents by using both telephone and in-person interviews. NASS will also make an additional contact to non-respondents via mail to encourage response either by mail or on the web. Due to budget and time limitations, contacting all non-respondents for interviews is not possible; therefore, NASS will target its efforts on certain geographic areas and sub-populations as detailed below. NASS will use well-established statistical weighting and calibration techniques to ensure the results from the 2017 Census of Agriculture properly represent the intended population of interest.

This non-substantive change request will address the allocation of respondents to the different non-response treatments listed below. This request for additional non-response follow-up activities is not expected to result in any increase in respondent burden compared to the initial OMB approved amount, due to fewer than expected pre-survey outreach attempts.

Web Response Push

NASS will send a second letter to encourage web response (called a *web response push*) to all remaining non-respondents, excluding those with the highest anticipated total value of production and those with a high predicted propensity to respond¹. This mailing will contain a message that explains that NASS has not yet received the recipient's 2017 Census of Agriculture, which is required by law. The message will also encourage the recipient to use the included URL and personal access-code to complete the Census of Agriculture on the web.

NASS will send the web response push mailing to an estimated 500,000 Census of Agriculture non-respondents. The respondent burden and contacts are covered by the remainder of the burden not used for the auto-dial reminders in the original clearance.

Additional Non-Response Calling

After allowing approximately two to three weeks for an auto-dialer² and web response push contacts to elicit response, NASS will contact by telephone (and possibly a limited number of in-person interviews) a

¹ For each Census of Agriculture non-respondent who NASS has contacted in the past for censuses and/or sample surveys, NASS creates a response propensity based on previous NASS contacts. These non-respondents are not part of this non-substantive change because NASS already planned to contact them by telephone interview in the original clearance (OMB Control Number 0535-0226).

² Using a telephone auto-dialer, NASS will provide a message that explains NASS has not yet received the recipient's 2017 Census of Agriculture (which is required by law) and encourages the person who answers the telephone to respond either on the web or by returning the paper questionnaire NASS previously sent. The auto-dialer will leave a message if an answering machine is reached. Use of an auto-dialer to encourage completing the Census of Agriculture was included in the original clearance (OMB Control Number 0535-0226).

sample of the non-respondents who received one of these treatments to attempt a final appeal to respond to the Census of Agriculture.

NASS will use historical data to prioritize which non-respondents to contact. Priority will be given to non-respondents: in low-response counties; those believed to produce commodities with low-coverage in past Censuses of Agriculture; those believed to produce commodities or perform production practices NASS will target in future Census of Agriculture follow-on studies; or those believed to be members of minority groups, which are also known to have lower coverage in previous censuses of agriculture. After the non-respondents meeting these criteria are identified, priority for calling will be given to those with a higher response likelihood based on previous contact for NASS censuses and surveys.

Specifically, the following high-priority items/characteristics will be used to identify non-respondents to contact by telephone (or limited in-person interviews). The expected presence of each item/characteristic is based on data NASS acquired during previous census/survey contacts.

High-Priority Items/Characteristics ^{1/}
Low-response Counties
Organic Operations
Goat Operations
Aquaculture Operations
Christmas Tree Operations
Horticulture Operations
Local Foods Operations
Race - Black Producers
Race - Asian Producers
Race - Other Non-White Producers
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish Producers
Age - Producers <= 35 Years Old
Sex - Female Producers

^{1/} These items/characteristics are known to have low-coverage in past Censuses of Agriculture and/or will be used to identify samples for future Census of Agriculture follow-on studies.

NASS will make non-response calls (or limited in-person interviews³) to an estimated 200,000 Census of Agriculture non-respondents. In the original OMB approval, NASS was approved to attempt 653,095 surveys by phone enumeration and 98,750 by personal visit, if funding and time permit. These 200,000 non-respondents, together with the follow-up attempts already planned (and covered by the original clearance) will not exceed the follow-up attempts (and burden) in the original approval.

³ In-person interviews will be limited to larger and more complex operations. The total number of in-person interviews NASS will conduct for the 2017 Census of Agriculture will not exceed the number in the original clearance (OMB Control Number 0535-0226).