Supporting Statement – Part A

**AGRICULTURAL SURVEYS PROGRAM**

OMB No. 0535-0213

This supporting statement is requesting a three year renewal for a group of list frame and one area frame surveys that comprise the National Agricultural Statistics Service’s (NASS) core program.

**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 primary functions of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) are to prepare and issue State and national estimates of crop and livestock production, disposition, and prices and to collect information on related environmental and economic factors. Crop and livestock statistics help maintain a stable economic atmosphere and reduce risk for production, marketing, and distribution operations. Modern agriculture increasingly calls upon NASS to supply reliable, timely, and detailed information in its commodity estimation program. The surveys in this docket make up the most scrutinized reports published by NASS because of their impact on the commodities market, government policy, imports, exports, prices, and private industry.

The Agricultural Surveys Program is a combination of surveys utilizing several different sampling frames. Basic agricultural data is collected from farmers and ranchers throughout the nation and used to prepare agricultural estimates and forecasts of crop acreages, yields, and production; stocks of grains and oilseeds; hog and pig inventory; sheep inventory and lamb crop; goat and kid inventory; cattle inventory; cattle on feed, and land values. The surveys provide the basis for estimates of the current season’s crop and livestock production and supplies of grain in storage. Survey results provide the foundation for setting livestock and poultry inventory numbers. Estimates derived from these surveys supply information needed by farmers to make decisions for both short- and long-term planning.

The list surveys in this information collection are grouped together because they are interrelated probability surveys that make up much of the NASS core estimating program. An integral part of this estimating program is the area sampling frame used to select the samples for the June Area Frame Survey (JAS). Indications from this survey are used to estimate the major crops grown, livestock inventories, on-farm grain stocks, and agricultural land values and rents. Being an area frame survey, all land in a State is represented. Current Agency survey design utilizes area frame surveys to measure incompleteness of various commodity list frame surveys. To determine incompleteness, operators found in the area sample are matched against all names on the list frame for that commodity. When there is a match, the operator is "overlap" and represented by the list frame. When there is not a match, the operator is "non-overlap" and will be expanded by the inverse of the probability of selection on the area frame to account for incompleteness of the list frame. The two frame components combine to provide an unbiased estimate of the population.

The JAS is also used to measure incompleteness of the Agricultural Labor Survey, OMB 0535-0109, and the Agricultural Resources Management Study, OMB 0535-0218. The survey also provides the area sampling base for Objective Yield Surveys, OMB 0535-0088; objective yield samples are selected from tracts reporting the crop of interest on the June Agricultural Survey. The JAS is also used to measure coverage of the Census of Agriculture (0535-0226), the area frame concept helps to ensure that all agricultural areas are accounted for down to the county level.

These surveys are timed to ensure that data collection occurs as infrequently as possible, yet often enough to maintain statistically defensible crop, livestock, and stocks estimates. These commodities affect the well being of the nation’s farmers, commodities markets, and national and global agricultural policy.

General authority for these data collection activities is granted under U.S. Code Title 7, Section 2204(a) which specifies that "The Secretary of Agriculture shall procure and preserve all information concerning statistics ... and shall distribute them among agriculturists."

**2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.**

Uses of NASS statistical information are extensive and varied. The producer is the primary user; other users of agricultural statistics are farm organizations, agribusinesses, State and national farm policy makers, foreign buyers of agricultural products, universities, and various researchers. Federal farm programs require information on acreages, production potential, stocks, prices, and income. Agricultural statistics are used to plan and administer other related federal and State programs in such areas as consumer protection, conservation, foreign trade, education, and recreation. Estimates are used by producers to determine production and marketing strategies, by the agricultural industry to assess markets and potential demand for products, and by the federal government to analyze potential and actual production.

Federal agricultural agencies that use information from these surveys are the Economic Research Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, Agricultural Marketing Service, Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency. The Bureau of Economic Analysis in the Department of Commerce is a major non-USDA agency that uses data from this information collection to prepare national and regional estimates of farm income and products. The Forest Service and Department of Interior use data collected on forage values to establish public land grazing rates in Western States.

Several agricultural agencies utilize NASS data to carry out programs required by legislation. Examples are the school lunch program, administration of marketing orders, grazing fee rates, and establishment of foreign trade policies. The Secretary of Agriculture uses information collected to help determine agricultural policy.

**3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.**

Nearly all of NASS information collections have been converted to Web-based data collections, what NASS calls electronic data reporting or EDR. A small number of questionnaires are impractical or otherwise unsuitable for EDR. A questionnaire repository system has been built which enables the simultaneous creation of comparable paper and Web based survey instruments for each survey. The current percentage of farmers and ranchers that employ the use of the Web to report their data on these surveys continues to hold around two percent. NASS is investigating ways to encourage more respondents in using this cost effective means of data collection.

The main portal for our on-line surveys is <http://www.agcounts.usda.gov>. Once there, the respondents have to enter the valid survey code and the user ID printed on the label of the questionnaire mailed to them. In order to protect the respondent’s information along with the data, we limit access to the Web pages to only those chosen to complete the survey and they can only access the questionnaire(s) they are selected to complete.

NASS has equipped all of our Field Enumerators with iPads that they can use on nearly all of the surveys included in this docket. If the enumerator can obtain internet connectivity and the farm operator does not object to the use of the iPad we can collect the data by this method. NASS is continuing research on using mobile mapping on the iPads for the data collection of the Area Frame Survey. Two staff research reports have been completed and two more are under agency review. This effort has the primary benefits of eliminating the cost and need to print the aerial photographs and enhanced data quality and timeliness. The research has shown that it is challenging for the enumerators to draw the fields on the digital maps during the interview and the tools are being enhanced to overcome the difficulties. Research has been conducted in four different states that give a variety of landscapes.

The surveys in this docket that have not been converted to EDR are the June Area Frame Survey which is conducted only by personal interviews and four small surveys (list and area frame quality control forms, the Iowa Cattle on Feed Survey (operations with less than 1,000 head capacity) and the crop and livestock loss survey) that are not suitable for internet data collection.

**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.**

NASS cooperates with other agencies in the Department of Agriculture, State and local governments, State departments of agriculture, and land grant universities to conduct agricultural surveys. Examples of this effort are the integration of questions into the January Cattle Survey and the January Sheep and Goat Survey every five years to collect non-ambulatory data for APHIS NAHMS. This cooperation provides information meeting both State and federal needs, thus minimizing duplication and reporting burden on the agricultural industry. The death loss questions are scheduled to be rotated into the January 2020 Sheep and Goat Survey and the January 2021 Cattle Survey.

NASS takes every precaution to ensure that respondents are not visited or interviewed unnecessarily. Through the use of computer databases, the name, address, and previous crops grown by respondents are maintained and not asked repeatedly for each survey. If a respondent grows or raises more than one commodity, information for all commodities is obtained during one interview. If the respondent is in the sample for more than one survey in the same data collection period the Regional and State Field Offices will coordinate the data collection and the respondent will be contacted only once to complete the different surveys.

**5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities (Item 5 of OMB Form 83-I), describe any methods used to minimize burden.**

Sampling techniques can minimize unnecessary contacts by ensuring that respondents with a low likelihood of having the item of interest are sampled at a very low rate. Under the current survey concept, operations with multiple commodities have a chance for selection in only one survey as opposed to multiple chances using commodity-specific surveys. A replicated sampling scheme is utilized to minimize burden. Most responses can be supplied without resorting to record books, which keeps burden to a minimum.

Through the use of our Survey Management System (SMS), farm operators that are selected to participate in more than one survey during a given time period (i.e. quarterly Crops/Stocks and quarterly Hogs) are contacted only once to collect data for both surveys, in order to reduce as much respondent burden as possible.

**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.**

Less frequent data collection would eliminate data needed to keep the

Government and agricultural industry abreast of changes at the State and

National levels. Timing and frequency of the various reports dependent on these surveys have evolved to meet the needs of government and the industry while minimizing the burden on the reporting public.

**7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the general information guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5.**

There are no special circumstances associated with this information collection.

**8. Provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8 (d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments.**

The Federal Register Notice soliciting comments was published on Wednesday, January 25, 2017 on pages 8396 - 8397. NASS received two public comments, one from Dennis Fixler, Chief Statistician for the Bureau of Economic Analysis and one from Gwyn Beattie, Chair of the American Phytopathological Society, Public Policy Board, both were in support of these data collections.

**Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and record-keeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.**

NASS’s Research and Development Division (RDD) developed livestock models for cattle and hogs that combine information from surveys, administrative data, and expert opinion. RDD has partnered with the University of Cincinnati to alter the hog model to be effective in the early stages of a disease outbreak. In addition, NASS established a cooperative agreement with the National Research Council’s Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) to organize a public workshop on model-based methods for producing estimates of livestock with appropriate measures of uncertainty. The purpose of the workshop is to provide feedback on the appropriateness of the models and to suggest improvements or possible alternative approaches.

NASS’s RDD has partnered with the University of Florida to develop a Decision Support System that is a compilation of robust-science-based tools that identify, measure, and monitor the effect of climate variability and extreme weather events on crop yields during the growing season.

NASS consults with the Economic Research Service (ERS) regarding cross-tabulations of type and size of farms, land use patterns and land values, and rental rates. NASS also collaborates with the National Animal Health Monitoring System (APHIS) for collection of information on animal health management. Data from some of the surveys included in this docket are used by several different USDA agencies, including RMA, FSA, AMS, and NRCS. NASS also receives regular feedback and input from the Ag Advisory Committee on our various programs.

Throughout the year, numerous NASS statisticians and managers attend private industry and producer’s association meetings around the country. They take note of changes within the various industries and update our data collection instruments when possible, to keep our data current and useful to all data users.

**9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents.**

There are no payments or gifts to respondents.

**10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.**

Questionnaires include a statement that individual reports are confidential. U.S. Code Title 18, Section 1905; U.S. Code Title 7, Section 2276; and Public Law 107-347, Title V (CIPSEA) provide for confidentiality of reported information. All employees of NASS and all enumerators hired and supervised under a cooperative agreement with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) must read the regulations and sign a statement of compliance.

Additionally, NASS employees and NASS contractors comply with the OMB implementation guidance document, “Implementation Guidance for Title V of the E-Government Act, Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (CIPSEA).” CIPSEA supports NASS’s pledge of confidentiality to all respondents and facilitates the agency’s efforts to reduce burden by supporting statistical activities of collaborative agencies through designation of NASS agents, subject to the limitations and penalties described in CIPSEA.

The following confidentiality pledge statement will appear on all NASS questionnaires.

The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only. Your responses will be kept confidential and any person who willfully discloses ANY identifiable information about you or your operation is subject to a jail term, a fine, or both. This survey is conducted in accordance with the Confidential Information Protection provisions of Title V, Subtitle A, Public Law 107-347 and other applicable Federal laws. For more information on how we protect your information please visit: <https://www.nass.usda.gov/confidentiality>.

**11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature.**

There are no questions of a sensitive nature.

**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.**

Burden hours based on the average completion time per questionnaire are summarized below.

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 168,342 hours is multiplied by $26 per hour for a total cost to the public of $4,376,892.





**13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or record-keepers resulting from the collection of information.**

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, and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.**

The cost to the Federal government for the Agricultural Surveys Program is expected to total $30.5 million annually.

**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).**

The two program changes involved the discontinuation of the July Sheep Survey. The July sheep survey was suspended in 2013 due to budget cuts, but was left active in the OMB docket, in the event that funding would be restored. However, since this did not occur it is now being dropped from the OMB approval. The other program change was to the Cattle on Feed survey conducted in Iowa of operations with less than 1,000 head capacity on their operation. NASS collects data for all the operations with greater than 1,000 head capacity in all the major cattle producing states; only Iowa conducts this survey for the smaller operations. The Iowa Regional Field Office conducts a census of all cattle feed operations in January of each year. From the positive reports they receive, they create a sample master of approximately 500 operations that are contacted monthly.



The remainder of the reduction in responses and burden hours is due to adjustments in the sample size to reflect changes in the population and the inclusion of burden for the cover letters and internet access instructions that are mailed out to respondents with the questionnaires.

**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.**

Each Regional Field Office (RFO) is responsible for manually editing its own questionnaires. The JAS surveys are still conducted on paper and the field and tract level data is drawn off on aerial photographs. Due to the amount of work that is involved with this survey in collecting information, editing, analyzing and reviewing of summarized data, we must incorporate all of our Regional Field Offices to help conduct this survey and complete the work in a very short period of time. In order to maintain consistent handling and analysis of the data we conduct a National training workshop through our Regional Field Office located in St. Louis, MO during the last week of April. Each of our offices is provided with editing guidelines and estimation manuals to help insure that all questionnaires are edited in a consistent manner. After the data has been key entered and run through computer edits, detailed computer analyses and summaries of the data are provided by Headquarters to each RFO for evaluation and estimation. In Headquarters, State summaries and estimates are combined to regional and U.S. totals.

Collection of data from the June Area Survey and the June Quarterly Agricultural Survey will be done the last day of May through mid-June. In late June estimates of crop acreage will be published in the *Acreage* report:

<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1000>.

The other 3 quarterly Agricultural Surveys will also be published following each survey:

March – Planting Intentions: <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1136>

September – Small Grains Summary: <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1268>

December – Crop Production – Annual Summary:

<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1047>

The quarterly *Hogs and Pigs* report is generally released on the last Friday of the survey month, except for the December report which must be released at least one day prior to one full commodity market trading day. Hog and pig data will be published in the *Quarterly Hogs and Pigs* report:

<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1086>

Grain stocks and crop acreage and/or production estimates are released four to six weeks after the survey reference date in a quarterly acreage release and the annual summary. Grain stocks will be published in the *Grain Stocks* report:

<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1079>.

Farm numbers will be published in *Farms and Land in Farms* in mid – February:

<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1259>.

The Agricultural Surveys data collection reference date for livestock inventories and grain stocks are the first of the survey month. Crop acreage and production are collected for the current crop year. The majority of all data are collected during the first 15 working days of the month. All release dates for the year are scheduled at one time and a release calendar is published and distributed prior to January 1.

Data collection for the Agricultural Yield Surveys centers on the first of the month, starting about 3 days prior to the date to which the report relates.

<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1046>.

Data collected for the January and July Cattle Reports are generally released during the last weeks of January and July, respectively.

<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1017>.

The Cattle On Feed reports are generally released during the third week of the month. Monthly estimates of inventory, placements, marketings, and other disappearance of cattle in 1,000+ (capacity) feedlots are published for the eleven largest States, for “Other States,” and for the U.S.

<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1020>.

The *Agricultural Land Values and Cash Rents* report is based on the June area frame plus a supplemental January list survey (land values) and a supplemental cash rents survey (0535-0002) conducted in March. The combined data is published the first week of August.

<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1446>

Data from the January Sheep and Goat Report are generally released during the last week of January.

<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1145>.

Data from the On Farm Rice Stocks Survey are collected in the same 6 states (AR, CA, LA, MS, MO, and TX) that the off-farm rice stocks (OMB # 0535-0007) data are collected. The combined data report is published in January, March, June, August (CA only) and October.

<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1141>.

| **Survey Schedule: Data Collection and Publication** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Survey | Data Collection | Release Date | Publication |
| June Area – Agricultural Survey | Jun | late June | *Acreage, Hogs and Pigs, Grain Stocks* |
| Mid-Feb | *Farms, Land in Farms, & Livestock Operations* |
| 1st week Aug | *Agricultural Land Values and Cash Rents* |
| Agricultural Survey | Mar | late Mar | *Prospective Plantings* |
| Jun | late Jun | *Acreage* |
| Sep | late Sep | *Grain Stocks, Small Grains Summary* |
| Dec | mid-Jan | *Crop Production Annual Summary* |
| Ag Yield Survey | May- Nov | mid-month | *Crop Production, Monthly* |
| Cattle Report | Jan | Last week  of Jan | *Cattle* |
| Jul | 4th week Jul |
| Cattle on Feed | Jan - Dec | 3rd week of each month | *Cattle on Feed* |
| Hog Report | Qtrly | last Friday in survey month | *Hogs and Pigs* |
| Agricultural Land Values | Jan | 1st week Aug | *Land Values* |
| Sheep Report | Jan | 4th week Jan | *Sheep and Goats* |
| On Farm Rice Stocks | Dec, Mar, Jun, Aug, and Oct | Late Jan, Mar, Jun, Aug, and Oct (CA only) | *Rice Stocks* |

Release dates for all surveys are published in advance on the NASS Web Home Page, [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov). Publications are available on-line immediately after release at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_Subject/index.php>. Once there, you can select the Sector, Group, Commodity, and Data Item you wish to review for a specific commodity or publication.

**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.**

No approval is requested for 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.

April 2017