

1 Supporting Statement Part B

ORGANIC SURVEY OMB No. 0535 – 0249

B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

- 1. Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection method to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g., establishments, State and local government units, households, or persons) in the universe covered by the collection and in the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular form for the universe as a whole and for each of the strata in the proposed sample. Indicate expected response rates for the collection as a whole. If the collection has been conducted previously, include the actual response rate achieved during the last collection.**

The target population for the 2019 Organic Survey is all certified organic farms, farms exempt from certification, and transitioning farms. Certified organic farms must meet the qualifications set out by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) of the USDA and be certified compliant by an approved agent of AMS. Farms employing organic practices but selling less than \$5,000 of organic products are exempt from certification. Transitioning farms have filed a plan and begun the process of becoming certified organic. The 2019 Organic Survey is a census of all entities that meet the criteria described above. The 2014 Organics Production Survey conducted in 2015 was a complete census of operations identified as certified organic producers, farms exempt from certification, and transitioning farms. The final mail list included 17,063 farms that met the above criteria and the response rate was 69.1 percent.

In 2008 the Organic Survey was conducted as a mandatory follow-on survey to the 2007 Census of Agriculture. In 2011 the survey was conducted as a voluntary, reimbursable survey. In 2014 the survey was again conducted as a mandatory, follow-on survey to the 2012 Census of Agriculture. In 2016 the survey was again changed back to a voluntary survey. The 2019 survey will again be funded under the Census of Agriculture appropriations and response to the survey will be mandatory. The estimated sample size for the 2019 census is estimated to be less than 25,000 and the target response rate is estimated at 80 percent or higher.

Response Rates					
Survey	Sample Size	Freq.	Total Contacts	Total Responses	Response Rates
2014 Organic Production Census	17,063	1	16,441	11,362	69.1%
2016 Organic Production Survey	18,424	1	15,845	8,787	55.5%

* The 2014 survey was mandatory.

* The 2016 survey was voluntary.

* In 2014, approximately 8% of the sample responded by EDR.

* In 2016, approximately 4% of the sample responded by EDR.

* In 2014, the sample consisted of operations that were classified as either certified organic, transitional organic, or exempt from certification (organic sales of less than \$5,000).

* In 2016, the sample consisted of operations that were classified as certified organic. We excluded operations that were either transitional organic, or exempt from certification (organic sales of less than \$5,000).

2. **Describe the procedures for the collection of information including:**
- **statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection,**
 - **estimation procedure,**
 - **degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification,**
 - **unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures.**

Data Collection: Extensive efforts will be used to maximize response, and thus reduce the extent of non-response adjustment to the survey. Approximately 20,000 questionnaires will be mailed in January with a second mailing for non-respondents in February. All questionnaires will be keyed from image at the National Processing Center (NPC) in Jeffersonville, IN. The initial mailing to respondents will consist of a folded post card that will contain information on how the respondents can go online and complete the questionnaire through our Electronic Data Reporting (EDR) system. This will be followed up with a second mailing to non-respondents which will contain a blank questionnaire, a cover letter, return envelope and an Electronic Data Reporting (EDR) instruction sheet. For non-respondents, the third mailing will contain another copy of the questionnaire, a cover letter, and an EDR instruction sheet and a return envelope. There will be phone follow up for those who do not respond to the mail requests. There will also be a limited number of face-to-face interviews conducted.

Stratification: All operations will be stratified based on their organic total value of sales or their organic acres under production. Due to the influence on published totals, extremely large operations will be made “must” records and will be classified in an extreme operator (EO) stratum. Operations in an EO stratum that do not respond to the survey will be estimated by Regional Field Office personnel. Due to the diversity of organic farming operations from state-to-state, the EO definitions will vary by state. Approximately 10% of the total sample size will be targeted for an EO stratum within each State. For all other non-EO strata, there will be a non-response weight applied to the responding operations, in order to account for the non-respondents. This non-response weight will be a simple factor derived by taking the stratum size and dividing by the number of responding operations within the stratum population.

Item Imputation: For individual questions that go un-answered, but are determined to be necessary for a completed report, an imputation algorithm will be utilized. An analyst in a Regional Field Office can trigger imputation by coding a cell value with a “-1”. Single imputation of missing values is done using sequential regression also known as chained equations based on a fully conditionally specified methodology.

Weighting: For non-EO strata’s each record’s weight will include a non-response adjustment and a coverage adjustment. The record’s weight for EO strata’s will include a coverage adjustment. This will become the final weight used to generate all published estimates.

- 3. Describe methods to maximize response rates and to deal with issues of non-response. The accuracy and reliability of information collected must be shown to be adequate for intended uses. For collections based on sampling a special justification must be provided for any collection that will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.**

In NASS’s attempt to get industry buy-in and participation in the data collection efforts, Adam Cline (NASS Census Planning Branch, Census Section, Head) attended the National Organic Standards Board Meeting on April 24-26, 2019 in Seattle, WA to discuss the importance of this survey. Adam addressed many issues and answered numerous questions. He also encouraged the different organizations to promote the survey with their members and explain the need for each of them to respond to this survey.

A public information campaign will be used by NASS for the Organic Survey. The objective is to make organic producers aware of the survey, its importance to them and the Nation, and to encourage their response. This campaign will work through farm organizations, radio broadcasters, farm press, agribusinesses, and the NASS Regional Field Offices.

To ensure a high response rate and to reduce the non-response bias in the final Organic Survey estimates, NASS will attempt to collect data from non-respondents by telephone. A limited number of interviews will be completed by personal enumeration. The telephone and personal enumeration activities will begin in mid-January, and extend through much of March.

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has been asked to include an article in their organic newsletter in late 2019, telling their readers that NASS will be conducting this survey in early 2020. In this article AMS will give a brief statement on how this data is important to the organic industry and why producers need to respond to the NASS survey.

4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken.

Seven confirmatory cognitive interviews were conducted between April 26 – May 31, 2019 in the states of California, Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, Washington and Wisconsin. In general, respondents had little difficulties with the retrieval, judgement and communications steps of the cognitive response process when answering questions on the draft certified organic survey. However, there were a few instances where comprehension of the question/task was unclear to respondents. For example, when respondents were asked about their certified organic vegetables grown in the open in Question 3, Section 2, many respondents interpreted the question as being redundant and did not comprehend that the question was determining if commercial processing had occurred during the reference year. To remedy this, a screener question was proposed to skip respondents past this question that only have 100% fresh use of their open vegetables in order to reduce respondent burden and increase data quality. These changes were also made to other sections that ask for commodity utilization. In addition, usability issues emerged during the cognitive testing; for example, respondents frequently reported their tenths of acres using decimal points, which were not preprinted on the draft certified organic survey. These changes will be made moving forward to provide a visual cue for respondents.

5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

Sample size for each State is determined by the Sampling Branch, Census and Survey Division; Branch Chief is Mark Apodaca, (202) 690-8141.

Summary programs are prepared by the Agency's Statistical Methods Branch; Branch Chief is Jeff Bailey, (202) 690-8141.

Data collection operations are carried out by NASS Regional Field Offices; Western Field Operation's Director is Troy Joshua, (202) 720-8220. Eastern Field Operation's Director is Jay Johnson, (202) 720-3638.

The survey will be administered by the Census and Survey Division. The Branch Chief is Donald Buysse (202) 690-8747.

The NASS commodity statisticians in Headquarters in the Crops and Livestock Branches located in the Statistics Division are responsible for reviewing the data and are responsible for looking at the summary and publication. The Crops Branch Chief is Lance Honig (202) 720-2127, the Livestock Branch Chief is Travis Averill (202) 720-6433, and the Environmental, Economics and Demographics Branch Chief is Jody McDaniel (202) 720-6146.

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