



United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service



May 29, 2019

Dr. Helga Willer, FiBL

Dear Dr. Willer,

Thank you for your recent letter concerning the renewal of the Organic Survey. 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, whole farm characteristics, and operator demographics. Timely, reliable, and detailed statistics help maintain a stable economic atmosphere and reduce risk for production, marketing, and distribution operations. NASS is the primary data collection Agency of the US Dept. of Agriculture.

The content of the Organic Survey has been developed over the years at the request of numerous data users, including, but not limited to: Risk Management Agency, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, Agricultural Marketing Service, Economic Research Service, Natural Resource and Conservation Service and many others. NASS has been conducting cognitive interviews in the larger organic producing states looking for ways to improve the questionnaire. NASS is also looking for ways to streamline the questionnaire to reduce respondent burden and data collection costs, while still providing data users with the detailed data they need.

Recommendation 1: We think it would be very useful, if the data from the NASS Certified Organic Survey could be made available in a more accessible format than a PDF (e.g. as an interactive online database with the option to extract MS Excel excerpts).

Reply: Currently, NASS data is also available through our QuickStats feature https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/ that allows data users to pull customized fields rather than the entire pdf release. Data users can also request Special Tabulations from the following link https://www.nass.usda.gov/Data_and_Statistics/Special_Tabulations/Request_a_Tabulation/index.php.

Recommendation 2: It would also be good, if the survey could be carried out annually and if the data were published annually.

Reply: Currently, NASS is funded to collect the comprehensive data collection once every five years as a follow-on survey to the Census of Agriculture. In the past, the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) was able to secure funding for a shorter version of the questionnaire to be conducted in several of the years between the Organic Surveys.

Once a finalized draft of the questionnaire is ready it will be submitted to OMB along with the supporting statements, samples of publicity materials, and other documents for the public to review for 30 days. After that OMB will be able to begin their review of the complete docket materials. The materials will be available in the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs system <https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain>.

The Organic Survey is extremely important to our data users. Your comments will be provided as a part of this submission to the Office of Management and Budget.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Again, many thanks!

Joseph L. Parsons
Chair, Agricultural Statistics Board
U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service