

**SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORTING STATEMENT Part A**  
**ARMS II, ARMS III, and Vegetable Chemical Use Surveys**

**Substantive Change**

**OMB No. 0535-0218**

This substantive change is being submitted as a supplemental supporting statement to the Agricultural Resource Management Surveys (ARMS).

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

**1. Circumstances making collection of information necessary.**

NASS is requesting a substantive change to the ARMS and Chemical Use Survey docket (0535-0218) to accommodate changes to the ARMS II and ARMS III surveys.

NASS conducts the ARMS program as a part of a cooperative agreement with the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS). In addition, the USDA Office of Pest Management Policy (OPMP) has provided input on the ARMS II (chemical use survey) as well as the Vegetable Chemical Use Survey. The Costs and Returns (Phase III) surveys collect both whole farm data and commodity specific data. The whole farm data can be linked to the cropping practices and chemical use data collected in the ARMS II phase. The majority of the questions that are asked in the Phase III surveys are a part of the ARMS core program and rarely have any changes made to them. The cooperative agreement allows ERS to ask additional research questions each year to address changes in the farming industry. The OMB approval process is for a three-year period, so NASS projects ahead with the surveys and commodities that will be targeted for the next three years. Each year NASS will provide changes to the questionnaires to OMB for approval. Attached to this submission is an itemized listing of the changes made to the ARMS III Cost and Returns Report and the Hogs Costs and Returns Report for 2020 questionnaires.

Historically, the majority of the surveys that are conducted under this OMB approval have been conducted by personal interviews. However, due to the pandemic, NASS has made changes to our data collection efforts to accommodate social distancing. NASS uses the National Association of State Department of Agriculture (NASDA) enumerators to collect the data. The surveys have been changed to allow for data collection by computer assisted web interviews (CAWI) and computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI).

Due to these changes, the ARMS II and ARMS III surveys that target rice farmers will be postponed until 2021. In an earlier change request, the corn versions were also postponed until 2021.

Additional questions or revisions to existing questions have been made that reference the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on farmers.

The following table is a revised listing of surveys conducted in 2020 and in 2021 referencing 2020 calendar year.

|      | Survey   | Versions                             |
|------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 2020 | ARMS Phase II Production Practices and Costs Report (PPCR) | <del>Corn and Rice</del>             |
|      | ARMS Phase II Production Practices Report (PPR)            | Soybeans                             |
|      | Chemical Use   | Vegetables                           |
|      | ARMS Phase III Cost and Returns Report                     | Core, <del>Corn, Rice</del> and Hogs |
|      | Maryland Pesticide   | All                                  |
|      | Minnesota Pesticide & Fertilizer                           | All Wheat, All Hay                   |
|      | Mississippi Cropping Practices Survey                      | Corn, Cotton, Rice, Wheat            |

|   |
|---|
| The MD, MN, and MS surveys are funded through State cooperative agreements. |
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**2. How, by whom, and for what purpose information is to be used.**

In addition to the long list of data users of the ARMS and chemical use data that was provided in the original approval, anyone who is interested in the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the farming industry will be able to use this supplemental data. The additional research questions will also enhance research into additional topics that are impacting US farms and ranches.

**3. Use of improved information technology.**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing, NASS has been developing a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI), a computer assisted Web Interview (CAWI) and a Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) for this particular group of surveys. Not all three platforms will be available for all versions at this time, but the potential exists for future

surveys. Enumerators will be able to use the CAPI instrument by telephone until it is safe to interview farmers in person.

**4. Efforts to identify duplication.**

There are no changes from the original approval related to duplication reduction.

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

With the use of the CATI and CAWI instruments, the incorporated screening questions and skip patterns should help minimize burden as much as possible.

**6. Consequence if information collection were less frequent.**

There are no changes to the frequency of these surveys than was originally approved.

**7. Special circumstances.**

No special circumstances are associated with this information collection.

**8. Federal register notice and consultation with outside persons.**

Not applicable.

**9. Payments or gifts to respondents.**

No payments or gifts will be given to respondents.

**10. Confidentiality provided to respondents.**

Confidentiality will be provided to respondents in accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA) of 2002. All confidentiality protections that are applied to all products released from these surveys will remain the same as originally approved.

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

No questions of sensitive nature will be asked.

**12. Hour burden and annualized costs to respondents.**

The burden minutes for the ARMS III questionnaires were increased to

account for the additional questions added to each version in the previous submission. No additional burden is being added for the changes included in this submission.

A detailed listing of the questions that have been updated are attached to this submission.

The delaying of the ARMS II and ARMS III rice surveys till 2021 results in a decrease in respondent burden for 2020 but an increase in 2021 resulting in no changes to the annual average burden.

The estimated overall cost to the public will remain at \$3,931,876.98.

|                                       | Burden Hours | Estimated Hourly Rate \$ | Total Cost \$   |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Revised burden hours for total docket | 104,934      | \$ 37.47                 | \$ 3,931,876.98 |

NASS uses the Bureau of Labor Statistics' [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) (most recently published on March 31, 2020 for the previous May) to estimate an hourly wage for the burden cost. The May 2019 mean wage for bookkeepers was \$20.65. The mean wage for farm managers was \$38.63. The mean wage for farm supervisors was \$25.25. The mean wage of the three is \$28.18. To calculate the fully loaded wage rate (includes allowances for Social Security, insurance, etc.) NASS will add 33% for a total of \$37.47 per hour.

**13. Total annual cost burden to respondents.**

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

**14. Annualized costs to federal government.**

There are no changes to the annual average cost of \$18 million for the Agricultural Resource Management Surveys and the Chemical Use programs because of these changes.

**15. Reasons for changes in burden.**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing, NASS and our enumerators have had to alter the modes of data collection to begin using internet responses and an increase in data collection by telephone. With the anticipated decrease in response rates, NASS and ERS felt it would be best to postpone the ARMS II and ARMS III rice versions until 2021 and concentrate our data collection efforts on the remaining versions.

Many of the questions that were updated in the ARMS III questionnaires deal with the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the farming industry.

The burden minutes for the ARMS III questionnaires were increased to account for the additional questions added to each version in the previous submission. No additional burden is being added for the changes included in this submission.

A detailed listing of the questions that have been updated are attached to this submission.

The delaying of the ARMS II and ARMS III rice surveys till 2021 results in a decrease in respondent burden for 2020 but an increase in 2021 resulting in no changes to the annual average burden under this three year approval.

**16. Tabulation, analysis, and publication plans.**

The changes to the questionnaires will be incorporated in the publications that are listed in the original approval docket.

**17. Request for approval of non-display of expiration date.**

No request is being made for approval of non-display of the expiration date.

**18. Exceptions to certification statement.**

No exceptions to the certification statement are requested.

September 2020