



United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service



April 22, 2021

James Ogsbury
Executive Director
Western Governors Association

Dear Mr. Ogsbury,

Thank you for the letter of support for the 2022 Census of Agriculture. As you are probably aware, NASS is one of only thirteen Federal Agencies whose primary mission is statistical in nature. Our data is protected under the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA). The data we collect from farm and ranch operators is kept confidential and is only released to the public as summarized data. NASS does use data collected by States whenever possible to minimize respondent burden, and any raw data that NASS obtains from other government agencies is also protected by CIPSEA. Rest assured that NASS will not disclose any PII data.

NASS is a non-regulatory agency; we are strictly a statistical agency. In your detailed letter you provided a great deal of insight into how accurate and timely data are important to you and how it impacts both State and Federal policies. We greatly appreciate the information. We will be happy to share your letter with other USDA agencies, so they are aware of your concerns.

NASS works closely with other USDA agencies such as AMS, NRCS, NIFA, RD, FS, and ERS. NASS also works with agencies outside of the USDA such as the Department of Labor, Census Bureau, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis. We collect data that addresses the needs of many other agencies as well as land-grant universities and other research organizations.

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), all Federal Agencies are required to minimize respondent burden on the general public by limiting the amount of data collected and the frequency of the data collections. The PRA also restricts the collection of data that is available within the Federal Government already. We would not be able to collect any information such as broadband or internet availability that the FCC may be collecting, and instead we must identify unique data that targets farm and ranch operators that is not available elsewhere.

NASS is currently testing a questionnaire for the 2022 Census of Agriculture (OMB control number 0535-0243) that includes updates based on feedback we received from the 2017 Census. I have attached a copy of the questionnaire.

You commented on the need for data on a regular and timely basis. NASS data is released according to our calendar of publications, which can be found at https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Calendar/reports_by_date.php.

NASS also collects data through cooperative agreements that we have with other Federal agencies, State Departments of Agriculture, universities and some producer associations. This data is also made public, but in aggregate form only.

NASS would greatly appreciate any encouragement your organization could provide, for farmers and ranchers in your area to participate in NASS data collection efforts.

I think that the data collected by NASS addresses many of the issues you mentioned in your letter. However, if there are additional questions that we could add to existing surveys that would provide clarity or target a specific issue, we would be happy to discuss this further with you.

Sincerely,

 Digitally signed by
JOSEPH PARSONS
Date: 2021.04.28
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Joseph L. Parsons
Chair, Agricultural Statistics Board
U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service