

1 Supporting Statement – Part A

NATIONAL CONSERVATION PRACTICE ADOPTION MOTIVATIONS SURVEY

OMB No. 0535-NEW

This supporting statement addresses a new data collection effort for the National Conservation Practice Adoption Motivations Survey for a period of three years. This request is for the production survey. A previous request for this project was submitted for the pilot study under control number 0535-0264.

The National Conservation Practice Adoption Motivations Survey (NCPAMS) is a joint data collection effort between NASS and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The purpose of the national survey is to target producers who own or operate cropland, grazing land, confined livestock feeding operations, and/or forestry depending on funding. NASS will collect information about these types of operations to understand conservation practices within the United States in terms of the following:

- 1) How often are specific conservation practices adopted without assistance, with technical assistance and/or financial assistance.
- 2) How does adoption evolve over time? What proportion of producers who “try” a given practice continue or expand use over time? How many discontinue the practice?
- 3) What motivates farmers to initially try a practice and then continue, expand, or discontinue use? The questions reflect a range of factors including conservation need, experience of neighbors, financial benefits or costs, producer time and effort, availability of technical and financial assistance, regulation or conservation compliance, and concern about environmental quality.

NRCS voluntary conservation programs seek to leverage long-term changes in the use of crop, livestock, and forestry practices that conserve resources and protect the environment by providing technical and financial assistance to producers/landowners who agree to adopt or install conservation practices. While NRCS programs seek to leverage long-term changes in conservation behavior, farmers and landowners ultimately decide whether to continue or expand adoption (without on-going financial assistance).

In 2022, the targeted versions are cropland and confined livestock feeding operations. As plans for 2023 and 2024 are determined, NASS will submit a substantive change for consideration.

A. JUSTIFICATION

These surveys are being conducted through an interagency agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service. NASS is being fully reimbursed for all expenses. NASS has agreements with other USDA Agencies to fulfill USDA's mission of providing timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to United States agriculture. These agencies often seek the assistance of NASS to provide statistics beneficial to agriculture but are not covered by NASS's annual Congressional appropriation. General authority for conducting cooperative projects is granted under U.S. Code Title 7, Section 450a which states that USDA officials may, "enter into agreements with and receive funds...for the purpose of conducting cooperative research projects..."

NASS benefits from these agreements by: (1) obtaining additional data to update its list of farm operators; (2) encouraging both parties to coordinate Federal survey activities and activities funded under a cooperative agreement to reduce the need for overlapping data collection and/or spread out respondent burden; and (3) facilitating additional promotion of NASS surveys and statistical reports funded by annual Congressional appropriations.

Respondents benefit from these cooperative agreements by: (1) having their reported data protected by Federal Law (Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2018, Title III of Pub. L. No. 115-435, codified in 44 U.S.C. Ch. 35); (2) having data collection activities for Federal and Cooperative surveys coordinated to minimize respondent burden; and (3) having high-quality agricultural data that are important to a state or region be collected and published.

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 function of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is to prepare and issue current official state and national estimates of crop and livestock production, value, disposition, and resource use.

General authority for these data collection activities is granted under U.S. Code Title 7, Section 2204. This statute specifies that "The Secretary of Agriculture shall procure and preserve all information concerning agriculture which he can obtain ... by the collection of statistics ... and shall distribute them among agriculturists."

NRCS voluntary conservation programs seek to leverage long-term changes in the use of crop, livestock, and forestry practices that conserve resources and protect the environment. NRCS accomplishes this goal by providing technical and financial assistance to producers/landowners who agree to adopt or install

conservation practices. While NRCS programs seek to leverage long-term changes in conservation behavior, farmers and landowners ultimately decide whether to continue or expand adopted practices typically without on-going financial assistance.

To aid in this goal for NRCS, the CPAMS will obtain practice, technical assistance, financial assistance, and obtain likert question data about motivations for each of the topic areas:

- Cropland practices, including:
 - Cover Crops,
 - Nutrient management,
 - Pest management,
 - Tillage practices,
 - Drainage water management,
 - Runoff Management practices,
 - Edge of field improvements,
 - Wetland conservation practices, and
 - Irrigation management and system improvements.

- Confined livestock practices, including:
 - Waste storage facilities,
 - Animal mortality facilities,
 - Waste separation facilities,
 - Comprehensive nutrient management,
 - Waste utilization,
 - Diversion of Runoff, and
 - Stabilization or protection of heavily used areas.

For crop producers, the CPAMS will also obtain information about the extent the producer participated in Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Confined livestock operations are not eligible for the CSP.

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.

NASS will conduct a survey of farmers and ranchers that own or operate cropland, grazing land, confined livestock feeding operations, and/or forestland. According to the NASS report “Farms and Land in Farms, 2020 Summary”, there are an estimated 2,019,000 farms in the United States. Data from the production survey will be analyzed and a report will be compiled. NASS will publish data from the survey results. NASS will release a publication on September 15, 2022. It is anticipated that this information will be used to inform conservation program policy decisions and outreach efforts designed to encourage adoption of conservation practices.

- 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.**

During this data collection, NASS will mail out a paper questionnaire along with a cover letter, instructions to respond by Computer Aided Self Interviewing (CASI), and return envelope. Operators who do not respond to this mailing will be sent a second one-page mailing/reminder encouraging response by CASI. Operators who do not respond to this mailing or CASI will be contacted for a Telephone Interview by a trained National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) enumerator. Depending on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic, in person interviews may be conducted.

- 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 State departments of agriculture, land grant universities, and other State and Federal agencies to conduct surveys. Wherever possible, surveys meet both State and Federal needs, thus eliminating duplication and minimizing reporting burden on the agricultural industry.

- 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.**

This information collection will not have a significant economic impact on small entities. Out of the estimated sample size of 35,200, between 95 and 96 percent of the samples are estimated as small operations (i.e. have TVP less than \$1 million dollars).

- 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.**

The objectives of the production survey are to collect data on the extent and motivations for initially adopting or not adopting a conservation practice; for initially adopted practices we will then collect similar extent and motivation data on the subsequent decisions made about continuing, expanding, or discontinuing the practice. Not conducting the survey will limit the information available to USDA-NRCS and State agencies to improve the effectiveness of conservation programs.

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 July 2, 2021. One comment was received by Robin Charlton, Administrative Chair of Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act "FIFRA" Endangered Species Task Force (FESTF). The comment and NASS's response are both included as attachments to this renewal.

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.

The NRCS team requested and received input on the data needs and questions from the following:

- Kristin Floress, Research Social Scientist, USDA Forest Service, People & Their Environments, Northern Research Station and Co-Editor-in-Chief, Society & Natural Resources, kristin.m.floress@usda.gov.
- Linda Prokopy, Department Head and Professor, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture; Director, Indiana Water Resources Research Center, lprokopy@purdue.edu.
- J. Arbuckle, Professor of Sociology at Iowa State University, Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture Faculty Affiliate Faculty, Center for Agricultural and Rural Development, arbuckle@iastate.edu.
- Ben Gramig, Associate Professor, Director of Graduate Recruiting and Admissions, ACE, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, bgramig@illinois.edu.
- Robin Wilson, Professor of Risk Analysis and Decision Science at The Ohio State University, Sustainability Institute Faculty Advisory Board, School of Environment and Natural Resources ~ Environmental and Social Sustainability Lab, wilson.1376@osu.edu.
- Douglas Jackson-Smith, Associate Director and Professor of Water Security, The Ohio State University, Jackson-smith.1@osu.edu.
- Steven Wallander, Economist at the USDA Economic Research Service, steve.wallander@usda.gov.

- Maria Bowman, Research Agricultural Economist (Conservation Liaison), USDA Economic Research Service, Maria.Bowman@usda.gov.
- David Donaldson, chief of the Conservation and Environment Branch in the Resource and Rural Economics Division of USDA-ERS, david.donaldson@usda.gov.
- Rich Iovanna, USDA Farm Production and Conservation mission area, rich.iovanna@usda.gov.
- Mindy Selman, USDA Office of Chief Economist, mindy.selman@usda.gov.
- Kathryn Zook, USDA Office of Chief Economist, kathryn.zook@usda.gov.

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

No payment or gifts will be provided 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. Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2018, Title III of Pub. L. No. 115-435, codified in 44 U.S.C. Ch. 35 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, all NASS employees and NASS contractors must also fully comply with all provisions of the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2018, Title III of Pub. L. No. 115-435, codified in 44 U.S.C. Ch. 35. 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 III of Pub. L. No. 115-435, codified in 44 U.S.C. Ch. 35 and other applicable Federal laws. For more information on how we protect your information please visit: <https://www.nass.usda.gov/confidentiality>.

All individuals who may access these confidential data for research are also covered under Titles 18 and CIPSEA and must complete a Certification and Restrictions on Use of Unpublished Data (ADM-043) agreement.

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.

Burden hour calculations for the 2022 survey are shown below. The minutes-per-response figures were estimated based on cognitive testing (using OMB Control Number 0535-0248), the pilot study (using OMB Control Number 0535-0264) as well as consultation with NASS survey methodologists. Cost to the public of completing the questionnaire is assumed to be comparable to the hourly rate of those requesting the data. Reporting time of 24,458 hours is multiplied by \$36.97 per hour for a total cost to the public of \$ 904,212.26.

NASS uses the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment Statistics (most recently published on March 31, 2021 for the previous May) to estimate an hourly wage for the burden cost. The May 2020 mean wage for bookkeepers was \$21.20. The mean wage for farm managers was \$36.93. The mean wage for farm supervisors was \$25.25. The mean wage of the three is \$27.79. To calculate the fully loaded wage rate (includes allowances for Social Security, insurance, etc.) NASS will add 33% for a total of \$36.97 per hour.

Burden for the 2023 and 2024 surveys will be included in the substantive change request that includes the targeted farm types for those surveys.

0535-NEW - Projected Respondent Burden for 2022 Conservation Practice Adoption Motivations Pilot Survey													
Commodity	Sector	Survey	Sample Size	Waves of Data Collection	Resp. Count	Waves X Count	Min. / Resp	Burden Hours	Non-Resp Count	Waves X Count	Min / Non Resp.	Burden Hours	Total Burden Hours
Conservation Practice Adoption Motivations Survey	Various	First Mailing											
		Cropland Version: National	20,350	1	2,035	2,035	60	2,035	18,315	18,315	2	611	2,646
		Con Lvstk Ver National	14,850	1	1,485	1,485	60	1,485	13,365	13,365	2	446	1,931
		Second Mailing											
		CAWI Reminder - Cropland Version	18,315	1	1,832	1,832	60	1,832	16,483	16,483	2	549	2,381
		CAWI Reminder - Con Lvstk Ver	13,365	1	1,337	1,337	60	1,337	12,028	12,028	2	401	1,738
		Subtotal	35,200		6,689	6,689		6,689	60,191	60,191		2,007	8,696
		Phone & Field 1/ Follow-Up	28,511	1	12,671	12,671	60	12,671	15,840	15,840	2	528	13,199
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		Cover Letter and/or CAWI Instruction Sheet One mailings at 5 minutes each	35,200		6,689	6,689	5	557	60,191	60,191	2	2,006	2,563
		TOTALS	35,200		19,360	19,360		19,917	15,840	76,031		4,541	24,458
1/ Field followup using in-person enumeration may be used depending on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic.													

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 projected cost to conduct the 2022 National Conservation Practice Adoption Motivations Survey is approximately \$5,924,500, most of which is staff costs (the fully loaded wage rate includes allowances for Social Security, insurance, etc.). The costs will be reimbursed by the USDA-NRCS.

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).

This is a new request, so there is no current inventory.

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.

The Regional Field Office (RFO) is responsible for manually editing and processing the questionnaires. The RFO, in consultation with Survey Administration Branch, creates and provides editing guidelines to help ensure that all questionnaires are edited and analyzed in a consistent manner. After the data has been key entered and run through computer edits, survey data will be made available to approved USDA-NRCS personnel for analysis and summarization through a secure data lab operated by the NASS. Only summarized data that meets NASS disclosure standards will leave the data lab.

2022 Survey:

Survey design.....August, 2021 – January, 2022
Sample selection.....March, 2022
Questionnaire design.....August, 2021 - January, 2022
Mail Survey.....April, 2022
Phone Follow-up.....April, 2022 – May, 2022
End of Data Collection.....May, 2022
Analysis.....June, 2022 – August, 2022
Publication.....September 15, 2022

- 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.

October 2021