SUPPORTING STATEMENT

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Economic Research Service
Generic Clearance for Survey Research Studies
OMB No. 0536 - 0073

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 data collected will be used for research activities which improve data collection process, rather than to produce estimates about populations. For the most part, the small-scale testing activities undertaken as part of this clearance will involve purposive or quota samples, with respondents selected either to cover a broad range of demographic subgroups or to include specific characteristics related to the topic of the survey. In some instances, a probability sample may be drawn, for example, for mail surveys or to permit statistical comparisons about the effectiveness of alternative procedural treatments. When a sampling plan is necessary, such a plan will be described in the clearance request for each specific data collection.

ERS estimates that the total number of respondents to not exceed 3,630 participants or 1,815 total hours for the three-year approval period.

2. Describe the procedures for the collection of information.

The techniques that ERS envisions using are widely accepted standard industry methods of developing, testing, and evaluating surveys, such as: focus groups, cognitive and usability laboratory and field techniques, exploratory interviews, behavior coding, respondent debriefing. Data collection procedures for the testing conducted under this clearance will be varied, and will most likely include personal visit, telephone, mail, and Internet surveys. The particular technique(s) (or data collection procedures) chosen will depend on the objectives of the study under investigation. A description of the data collection plans will be provided to OMB at the time each study is submitted.

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 general, callbacks will be used to maximize response rates in personal visit or telephone field tests; reminder phone calls or letters or second questionnaires will be used to maximize response rates in mail surveys. For cognitive interviews, participants will be reimbursed for their time and travel expenses. Reminder phone calls and/or letters to participants will be used to encourage them to keep their appointments. Tallies will be kept of the number of nonrespondents to all testing activities. More specific information will be contained in the description provided to OMB at the time each study is submitted.

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

This submission covers tests of data collection instruments and survey/census procedures. ERS expects that all tests conducted under this clearance will result in questionnaires with greater clarity and in simpler data collection procedures for the respondents and thus reduced respondent burden for subsequent information collections. Additionally, this should result in improvements to the quality of data collected and reductions of cost to the Federal Government.

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), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

Dr. Pheny Weidman (202-694-5013) served as the general methodological consultant for this project. The following individuals also were consulted concerning the statistical design during the development of this study:

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Additional advice on statistical aspects of each individual survey will be sought as the testing program proceeds. Depending on the nature of the research, staff from subject-matter divisions and projects' contractors (if applicable) will have primary responsibility for data collection and analysis. The specific research project will also determine whether the data will be collected by the ERS or through a contractor. Other contact persons for questions regarding data collection and statistical aspects of the design will be provided to OMB at the time the research projects are submitted.

Attachments

Attachment A - 7 USC 2204a
Attachment B - 60-day FRN
Attachment C - Public Comment
Attachment D - ERS Consent Form
Attachment E - Summary of Comments from NASS Review