



TO: Anthony Nerino, Office of Management and Budget

FROM: Sophia Tanner, Economic Research Service

DATE: October 26, 2023

SUBJECT: OMB CONTROL NUMBER: 0536-0073
Non-Substantive Change Resulting from the Pilot Interviews and Expert Review for the *Paying for Cover Crops: Does Experience Change Farmer Incentives?*

This memo describes revisions to the survey. Recruitment Procedures, and new Informational Flyer for the cognitive interviews relating to the Information Collection: ‘*Paying for Cover Crops: Does Experience Change Farmer Incentives?*’ These revisions result from requests from the Office of the Chief Economist (OCE), ERS management, and other academic stakeholders, as well as feedback from farmers during pilot interviews. The changes do not impact cost, burden, or project objective. In the pilot interviews, we verified that the additional questions did not increase burden.

In the survey, changes were made to improve understanding, ease response, and add new questions per expert review. These include re-wording or re-framing questions, changing select open-ended questions to multiple-choice response options, and editing introductory and clarifying text throughout the survey.

Changes to the Survey include:

- Consent: MSU IRB consent text was added.
- A.0a: A screening question was added to ensure we are interviewing farmers with at least one field in a corn or soybean rotation.
- A.1: A question on state was added because we are conducting interviews in multiple states, so county alone was insufficient.
- A.4: A question on farm-level question on organic farming was added
- B.0.a2: In Version 1 of the field selection set of questions, we ask whether that field had an EQIP or CSP contract for cover cropping.
- B.0.b2-B.0.b5: The purpose of “Version 2” of the field selection question set is to target (if applicable) the farmer’s largest corn/soy field that was under contract for cover cropping. We revised this set of questions and the associated skip logic to ensure we are really asking about the intended field.
- Section B: A set of questions on herbicide use and termination were added to Section B:
 - B.8 (how many herbicide applications on the field)
 - B.11.c-B.11.e (follow up questions on the most recent cover crop)
 - B.13 (herbicide cost added to the potential barriers table)
- B.10: A field-level question on organic status were added because organic certification may have a cover cropping requirement.

- B.13: Carbon sequestration added to the potential benefits table. The second to last row on the potential barriers table were revised, and herbicide cost or availability was added as a barrier (noted above).
- B.14.1-B.14.2: Table-formatted questions on expected corn [soy] yield under different conditions after cover cropping were added following discussion with ERS management about importance of more information on yield risk and expectations. Skip logic is used so that we only ask about a relevant crop for the selected field.
- Section C: In the choice experiment, application time and location are combined into a single attribute.
- Section C: In the choice experiment, payment is split into two parts: a one-time signing bonus and a per-acre payment. This is to reflect the fact that some barriers occur one time (anything related to application), and others recur every year that cover crops are planted (planting and termination costs).
- Section C: A set of follow-up questions after Version 2 of the choice experiment were removed.
- Section E: All demographics were moved to the end of the survey.
- Section E: Questions on herbicide use and termination were added:
 - E.7 (how have you terminated cover crops anywhere on the farm)
 - E.8 (how do cover crops affect herbicide applications)
- E.5: A question on most recent cover crop anywhere on the farm was added to parallel the earlier question on most recent cover crop on selected field.
- E.12: University Extension was added as a source of technical assistance

An Informational Flyer was added in response to conversations with officials at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Health Division (SHD). The flyer will help ease NRCS constraints in providing farmer contact information.

In addition, we are expanding our sampling frame scope to work with academic partners in addition to NRCS SHD.

Finally, we have simplified the language in recruitment emails 6a, 6b, and 9. See documents ERS-MSU cc 6-contacts and ERS-MSU cc 9-contacts.