

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency
County Committee (COC) Elections -OMB Number 0560-0229**

FSA is requesting an extension of a currently approved information collection associated with FSA County Committee (COC) Elections.

The Spanish form will be provided for OMB approval via a change worksheet request. The Forms office will be sending it out to be translated until the FSA-669A is approved by OMB.

Justification:

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

As specified in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, the Secretary must prepare a report of election that includes, among other things, “the race, ethnicity and gender of each nominee, as provided through the voluntary self-identification of each nominee” (Page 405, Sec. 10708 (b) para. VI and V ff). This information may be best obtained through a set of questions, through the FSA-669A, “Nomination Form for County FSA Committee Election”. The instructions for completing this part of the form indicate that completion is voluntary.

2. How, by whom, and for what purpose will this information be used?

This request is an extension with a change of a currently approved collection.

The data collected on the FSA Nomination Form will be used in the County Office for the upcoming COC Election.

- Information collected will include “race, ethnicity and gender of each nominee, as provided through the voluntary self-identification of each nominee.”
- The information will be entered into the FSA system and used by FSA in preparation for the upcoming election.
- The nominee or the nominator will be allowed to bring the form into the office in person, or the form may be mailed, or submitted electronically.
- The information will be collected annually and be provided to Secretary for review.

FSA will make all data required to be collected and computed under section 2501A(c) of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, clause (iii)(V) as amended, that has been collected since the most recent Census of Agriculture available to the public. After each Census of Agriculture, FSA for the Secretary will report to Congress the rate of loss or gain in participation by each socially disadvantaged group, by race, ethnicity, and gender, since the previous Census.

Committee members are elected by the producers of the community they represent. The Secretary has the authority to appoint a member to each committee when statistical evidence identifies fair representation of underserved groups has not been obtained through the regular election process. Demographic information of each COC is analyzed yearly to identify deficiencies in representation of identified groups and the Secretary exercises his authority to appoint a member from the identified group.

Demographic information is further used to increase targeted outreach activities in identified areas and identify potential customers who may not have received the opportunity to self-certify to this information. Additional opportunities to obtain information and identify areas in need of additional outreach support will result in more equitability among COCs.

The FSA-669A is being submitted for approval; the FSA-669A-1, Nomination Form for Makeup County FSA Committee Election, and FSA-669A-2, Nomination Form for County FSA Committee SDA Appointment will be used, as needed, for SDA appointments and special elections. Corresponding changes to those existing, approved forms, will be made after the FSA-669A is approved by OMB and when we have the election dates finalized for 2024; they will be provided for OMB approval via a change worksheet request. The 3 forms are the essentially the same form, but differ by the type of election – the name of the election and the dates to return the forms are the only differences across the 3 forms. The REG data will be updated to be the same as the FSA-669A when we have the election dates finalized for 2024.

3. Use of Information Technology.

The form is available to the producer electronically at <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eForms>. The nominee or the nominator may bring the form into the office in person, by mail, or submit the form by email. Electronic signatures by an approved source are accepted. FSA anticipates 25 percent of responses will be submitted electronically.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

FSA is not aware of any form that may duplicate this effort.

5. Methods to minimize burden on small businesses or other small entities.

The collecting of this information is being done only for individuals. It has no impact on small business or other small entities.

6. Consequences if information collection were less frequent.

This is a voluntary and ongoing information collection request. This information is required to be collected on all nominees for COC. It is only requested when an individual agrees to run for the position. If it were not collected in any given year, the Secretary would not be able to prepare the report that he has been charged with preparing.

7. Special Circumstances.

Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:

- a. Requiring respondents to report information more than quarterly. There are no information collection requirements that require reporting on more than a quarterly basis.
- b. Requiring written responses in less than 30 days. There are no information collection requirements that require written responses in less than 30 days.
- c. Requiring more than an original and two copies. There are no information collection requirements that require more than an original document or a single copy of a document.
- d. Requiring respondents to retain records for more than 3 years. There are no such requirements.
- e. Not utilizing statistical sampling. There are no such requirements.
- f. Requiring use of statistical sampling which has not been reviewed and approved by OMB. There are no such requirements.
- g. Requiring a pledge of confidentiality. There are no such requirements.
- h. Requiring submission of proprietary trade secrets. There are no such requirements.

The collection of information is conducted in a manner consistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5. The detailed REG data is not appropriate at this time because FSA is following the agency standards for collecting the data and at this time it's minimum data.

FSA has been charged with computing annually the participation rate of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers as a percentage of the total participation of all farmers and ranchers for each program of the Department of Agriculture established for the farmers or ranchers. Therefore, the respondents may be asked for this information any time they are nominated and accept the nomination.

8. Federal Register notice, summarization of comments and consultation with persons outside the Agency.

A Federal Register Notice Request for an Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection on and request for comments was published on Wednesday, December 20, 2023 (88 FR 88041). There were no received comments.

The following three non-FSA employee names are provided. There were no comments on all aspects of the information collection request.

Brian C.
Albuquerque, NM

Michelle S.

Neenah, WI.

Nicki S.
Cameron, NC.

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

No payments or gifts are provided to persons completing a nomination form.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

Information collected is handled according to established FSA procedures implementing the Privacy Act, Freedom of Information Act, and OMB Circular 130, "Responsibilities for the Maintenance of Records about Individuals by Federal Agencies".

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, etc. that are commonly considered private.

From the information collected, the Secretary will report the participation rate of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers according to race, ethnicity, and gender. No other questions of a sensitive nature are asked, and no personally identifiable information will be shared with the public.

12. Provide estimates of burden.

An estimated 10,500 eligible voters will complete a nomination form.

The estimated number of responses per nomination form is 1.

The estimated average time to respond is 0.25 hours; $0.25 \times 10,500 = 2,625$ burden hours.

Respondent cost per hour was derived by using U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2022, 11-9013 Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers. The U.S. mean household income (75 percent percentile), as measured by the Bureau of Labor, is \$49.58. Fringe benefits for all private industry workers are an additional 29.6 percent, or \$12.77, resulting in a total of \$66.48 per hour. The estimated cost is \$174,510 ($\$66.48 \times 2,625$ burden hours).

13. Provide estimates of cost burden to respondents or record or record keepers.

There is no capital and startup cost associated with this collection.

14. Provide estimates of annualized costs to the Federal Government and to the respondents.

Program administration at the County Office is estimated at \$118,021 which is computed based on 2,600 hours to process the forms times the average FSA employee wage of \$31.26 (estimated employee average hourly wage; based 2024 General Schedule-DC-MD-VA-WV-PA, Grade 7, Step 6). Fringe benefits for all government workers are an additional 31 percent, or \$14.13, resulting in a total of \$45.39 per hour.

This total annualized cost to the Federal Government: \$118,021.

15. Explain reasons for changes in burden, including the need for any increase.

This is an extension with change of a currently approved collection. There are no changes to the burden hours in this request.

16. Tabulation, analysis, and publication plans.

Data reported will be recorded in FSA systems. A National report will be presented to the Secretary within 90 days of election results being finalized. The Secretary will use this information to identify areas that are lacking SDA representation and exercise his authority to appoint members where required. Following the Secretary appointments, election results, including total demographics, will be posted to the FSA election website and available to the public.

17. Reasons display of expiration date of OMB approval is inappropriate.

FSA is displaying OMB expiration date.

18. Exceptions to 83-1 certification statement.

FSA is able to certify compliance with all provisions in the certification statement.