Supporting Statement – Part B

REQUEST FOR GENERIC CLEARANCE OF SURVEY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS
from the
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISICS SERVICE (NASS)

OMB No. 0535 – 0248

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 information gathered will be used mainly for questionnaire development and testing, and other research and evaluation. The studies will cover a broad range of topics designed to improve NASS' data collection. Generally, small purposive samples of respondents/participants will be recruited to volunteer in the projects. Sampling in any projects related to this docket will be to make methodological comparisons; not to generate substantive survey estimates.

However, when a sampling plan is necessary (for instance, in the case of a pilot study or split-panel test), this plan will be described in the clearance request for each specific data collection.

NASS estimates that the total number of respondents to not exceed 25,000 participants or 15,000 total hours for the three-year approval period.

2. Describe the procedures for the collection of information.

The techniques that NASS envisions using are widely accepted standard industry methods of developing, testing, and evaluating surveys, such as: focus groups, cognitive and usability studies and other field techniques, exploratory interviews, behavior coding, respondent debriefing, pilot surveys and split-panel tests. Descriptions of these methods were provided in Part A of this request. The particular technique (or techniques) chosen will depend on the objectives of the study under investigation.

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.

Operations to be tested will generally be selected based on the presence of the item(s) of interest (e.g., livestock, crops, hired workers, etc.) or the use of a particular practice (e.g., irrigation, no-till practices, organic production, etc.). In testing a mail survey, NASS may need to conduct phone or personal contact follow up to see why someone did not respond or to ask post-survey cognitive questions.

Most testing by NASS will not incorporate any sampling methodology, unless we incorporate a survey improvement technique such as a Pilot Survey.

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

This submission covers the different types of tests employed in the testing of survey instruments and survey procedures. NASS expects that all tests conducted under this clearance will result in questionnaires or mailout materials with greater clarity and understandability for the respondents and reduction in 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.

Data collection instruments for each survey will be coordinated through our Data Collection Branch, Branch Chief is Scott Cox. His email is scott.cox@usda.gov. His phone number is (202) 720-6201. Testing and survey coordination are conducted by the Survey Administration Branch, Branch Chief is Suzanne Adams. Her email is suzanne.adams@usda.gov. Her phone number is (202) 720-4028.

Sample size for each State will be reviewed by our agency's Sampling, Editing, and Imputation Methodology Branch; Branch Chief is Andrew Dau. His email is andrew.dau@usda.gov. His phone number is (202) 690-8141

Selection of methods of testing and providing of training is done by the Methodology Division, Senior Survey Methodologists are Kathy Ott and Kenny Herrell. Kathy's email is kathy.ott@usda.gov and phone number is (202) 720-1114. Kenny's email is kenneth.herrell@usda.gov and phone number is (202) 720-3159.

Data collection is carried out by NASS State and Regional Field Offices. The Director of Field Operations is King Whetstone. His Email is king.whetstone@usda.gov. His phone number is (202) 720-9567.

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