

1Supporting Statement – Part A

2025 Area Screening Survey, a Pilot Study for the June Area Survey

OMB No. 0535-0264

This supporting statement addresses a new data collection effort, the 2025 Area Screening Survey, a pilot study aimed at testing a new screening questionnaire for the June Area Survey under IC 0535-0213.

A. JUSTIFICATION

- 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 USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA-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."

The 2025 Area Screening Survey is a pilot study for the June Area Survey. The June Area Survey (JAS) is a critical component of the National Agricultural Statistics Service's (NASS) efforts to provide accurate and reliable agricultural statistics in the United States. The June Area Survey is necessary to:

- 1. Measure the Number of Farms and Land in Farms:** The JAS helps determine the total number of farms, the acreage of land in farms, and the area dedicated to various crops and livestock operations.
- 2. Support Policy and Decision Making:** Accurate agricultural statistics are essential for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and researchers to make informed decisions on agricultural policies, market developments, and resource allocations.
- 3. Evaluate Incompleteness of the List Frame:** The survey helps identify agricultural operations that may not be included in the NASS List Frame, ensuring the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the NASS database.
- 4. Facilitate Follow-On Surveys:** The JAS data provide the foundational information necessary for complete population measurement within subsequent surveys such as the Crops Acreage, Production, and Stocks Survey (APS),

Hog & Pigs Survey, Cattle Survey, Sheep & Goats Survey, Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS), and Labor Survey.

The Role of the 2025 Area Screening Survey, a Pilot Study for the June Area Survey:

NASS plans to conduct the 2025 Area Screening Survey, as a pilot study to support potential improvements and validate the methodology to the JAS. The proof-of-concept and pilot study results will inform changes to the information collection approach and ensure the updated methodology is robust and effective. If successful, this initiative could lead to significant cost reductions and/or decreased respondent burden for the June Area Survey.

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.

Uses of NASS statistical information are extensive and varied. The producer is the primary user; other users of agricultural statistics are farm organizations, agribusinesses, State and national farm policy makers, foreign buyers of agricultural products, universities, and various researchers. Federal farm programs require information on acreages, production potential, stocks, prices, and income. Agricultural statistics are used to plan and administer other related federal and State programs in such areas as consumer protection, conservation, foreign trade, education, and recreation. Estimates are used by producers to determine production and marketing strategies, by the agricultural industry to assess markets and potential demand for products, and by the federal government to analyze potential and actual production.

The Role of the 2025 Area Screening Survey, a Pilot Study for the June Area Survey:

The 2025 Area Screening Survey is pilot study designed to validate and potentially improve the methodologies used in the JAS. It serves as a critical step for fine-tuning survey instruments and processes. The results from the 2025 Area Screening Survey, a pilot study for the JAS will help in:

1. Testing New Approaches:

- Assessing the feasibility and accuracy of new data collection methods.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of different statistical techniques and models.

2. Refining Methodology:

- Identifying and addressing any issues related to survey coverage, nonresponse, and data processing.
- Ensuring that the data collection processes are robust and can be successfully scaled for the full survey.

3. Enhancing Data Quality:

- Improving the overall quality, reliability, and timeliness of the statistical outputs.
- Achieving potential cost savings and reducing burden if successful.
- Providing insights that may lead to more efficient and cost-effective survey operations.

This questionnaire has two forms. A sampled operation will only receive one of the two forms, depending on which state their operation is in. The difference between the two forms is in how NASS counts sheep/lambs and goats/kids in different states.

In Illinois, New York, and Texas, sheep/lambs and goats/kids are counted based on how many are on the operation, regardless of ownership. In Colorado and Oregon, sheep/lambs and goats/kids are counted based on how many are owned by the operation. As such, the version that is sent to operations in Illinois, New York, and Texas has one livestock headcount question (Section 2, Question 6), which asks about all of the target livestock population by the maximum number on the operation in the year, regardless of ownership. In the version sent to Colorado and Oregon, there are two livestock count questions; sheep/lambs and goats/kids are counted in a separate question (Question 7), and respondents are asked to report the number of these livestock that are owned, regardless of location.

By leveraging the data collected through the JAS and the findings from 2025 Area Screening Survey, a pilot study for JAS, NASS and other users ensure that agricultural practices and policies are based on accurate, reliable, and current data, which supports the operational, research, and policy needs of the agricultural community.

- 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 the 2025 Area Screening Survey, a pilot study for JAS, USDA-NASS will mail out a paper questionnaire along with a cover letter, map and return envelope. There will be one mailing of the questionnaire, cover letter, map, and return envelope. The mailing will include instructions to respond via Computer Assisted Self Interviewing (CASI) – i.e., on the internet. Operators who do not respond to the mailing or by CASI will be contacted by an enumerator using Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI). CATI data will be collected by a trained National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) enumerator. If necessary, a reminder email or text message will be sent.

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.**

USDA-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. Approximately 85% are estimated to be classified as small operations, as defined in the Small Business Administration's Table of Small Business Size Standards: [SBA Table of Size Standards](#)

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.**

Pilot studies are essential for testing new data collection methods and ensuring they are reliable before large-scale implementation. Without these studies, unvalidated methods risk leading to inaccuracies and unreliable data. Policymakers rely on the accuracy ensured by pilot studies for effective decision-making. Skipping this validation can result in flawed data, leading to ineffective policies and wasted resources, especially in critical sectors like agriculture.

Additionally, pilot studies identify and address issues in survey design and implementation. Conducting them less frequently delays improvements, ultimately slowing down the enhancement of data collection processes. They also help streamline data collection by pinpointing the most efficient methods. Without these studies, inefficiencies can increase costs and reduce operational efficiency.

From a technical and legal standpoint, pilot studies validate survey instruments and procedures, ensuring data quality. Infrequent studies reduce this rigor, risking data inaccuracies. Federal regulations often require method validation through pilot studies and not conducting them can result in non-compliance and credibility issues. Stakeholders, including federal agencies and data users, expect reliable data—insufficient pilot studies can undermine their confidence.

Moreover, pilot studies aid in testing new technologies for data collection. Conducting these studies less frequently can slow technological advancement and

hinder modernization. Budget constraints may push to reduce pilot study frequency in a bid to save costs, but this short-term measure can lead to long-term inefficiencies and higher costs from using untested methods.

In conclusion, pilot studies are vital for validating methods, improving survey processes, and ensuring high-quality, reliable data. Skipping them risks significant inaccuracies, ineffective policies, and increased costs. Technical and legal challenges make these studies indispensable for maintaining data integrity and compliance.

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 original Federal Register Notice for this generic docket, soliciting comments, was published on August 20, 2024, on pages 67410 and 67411. No comments were received.

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.

NASS's Research and Development Division (RDD) established a cooperative agreement with the National Research Council's Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) to organize a public workshop on model-based methods for producing estimates of livestock with appropriate measures of uncertainty. The workshop panel provided feedback on the appropriateness of the models and suggested improvements and possible alternative approaches. NASS is moving forward based on this feedback.

NASS's RDD has partnered with the University of Florida to develop a Decision Support System that is a compilation of robust-science-based tools that identify, measure, and monitor the effect of climate variability and extreme weather events on crop yields during the growing season. The system is being tested as a tool for developing components of NASS's weekly Crop Progress and Condition Report.

NASS's RDD collaborates with Worcester Polytechnic Institute to develop small

area models for county estimates. Recent efforts have focused on county estimates of planted acreage, harvested acreage, yield and production of all crops for which NASS is mandated to produce county-level estimates on an annual basis. Farm labor and cash rents are two other county-level small area models that are under development.

NASS's RDD has initiated collaborative efforts with Texas A&M University and the USDA Agricultural Research Service to evaluate the potential of using geospatial data, such as remote sensing, administrative, soil, and weather, as a foundation for its agricultural estimates and census programs. Survey and census data would be used to correct for biases in other data sources and to provide information not available from other sources.

NASS consults with the Economic Research Service (ERS) regarding cross-tabulations of type and size of farms, land use patterns and land values, and rental rates. NASS also collaborates with the National Animal Health Monitoring System (APHIS) for collection of information on animal health management. Data from some of the surveys included in this Information Collection Request are used by several different USDA agencies, including Risk Management Agency (RMA), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). NASS also receives regular feedback and input from the Ag Advisory Committee on our various programs.

Throughout the year, numerous NASS statisticians and managers attend private industry and producer's association meetings around the country. They take note of changes within the various industries and update our data collection instruments, when possible, to keep our data current and useful to all data users. In addition, various commodity groups will send representatives to NASS data releases and ask questions regarding survey methodology, sampling, timing of surveys, etc. This helps to improve transparency and understanding of the data collected and published by NASS.

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. U.S. Code Title 18, Section 1905; U.S. Code Title 7, Section 2276; and Title III of Pub. L. No. 115-435 (CIPSEA) 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, NASS employees and NASS contractors comply with the OMB implementation guidance document, "Implementation Guidance for 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 and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2018, 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>. Response to this survey is voluntary.

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.

The time required to complete the 2025 Area Screening Survey is expected to average 15 minutes per respondent. Time will vary since operations differ in size, scope of production, and practices utilized. Response burden hours are shown in the table below.

The estimated annual cost to the public of completing a questionnaire is assumed to be comparable to the hourly rate of those requesting the data. Using the estimated annual reporting time of 3,540 hours is multiplied by \$45.32 per hour for a total cost to the public of \$161,494.80.

NASS uses the Bureau of Labor Statistics' [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) (most recently published on April 2, 2025 for the previous May) to

estimate an hourly wage for the burden cost. The May 2024 mean wage for bookkeepers was \$25.01. The mean wage for farm managers was \$46.75. The mean wage for farm supervisors was \$30.46. The mean wage of the three is \$34.07. To calculate the fully loaded wage rate (includes allowances for Social Security, insurance, etc.) NASS will add 33% for a total of \$45.32 per hour

0535-0264 - Projected Respondent Burden for 2025													
Commodity	Sector	State	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
Land	Farmers and Ranchers	First Mailing											
		Area Screening Survey	12,000	1	4,200	4,200	15	1,050	7,800	7,800	2	260	1,310
		Subtotal	12,000		4,200	4,200		1,050	7,800	7,800		260	1,310
		Phone Follow-Up	7,800	1	5,400	5,400	15	1,350	2,400	2,400	2	80	1,430
Publicity Materials													
Cover Letter and/or EDR Instruction Sheet and Reminder Email/Text			12,000		4,200	4,200	7	490	7,800	7,800	2	260	750
Cognitive Testing													
Debriefing Interviews			50	1	50	50	60	50					50
TOTALS			12,000		9,600	9,650		2,940	2,400	10,200		600	3,540

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 2025 Area Screening Survey, a pilot study for JAS, is approximately \$75,000, most of which is staff costs.

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.

USDA-NASS's Regional Field Office (RFO) is responsible for manually editing and processing the questionnaires. The RFO creates and provides editing guidelines and estimation documentation to help ensure that all questionnaires are edited and analyzed in a consistent manner.

No data will be published from this collection.

2025 Survey:

Survey design.....	June - October, 2025
Sample selection.....	July - August, 2025
Questionnaire design.....	June - July, 2025
Mail Survey.....	October, 2025
Phone Follow-up.....	October, 2025
End of Data Collection.....	October, 2025
Analysis.....	November - December, 2025

- 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.

July 2025