

**Supporting Statement for SSA-7156
Farm Self-Employment Questionnaire
20 CFR 404.1095 and 404.1082(c)
OMB No. 0960-0016**

A. Justification

1. Introduction/Authoring Laws and Regulations

The Social Security Administration (SSA) uses Form SSA-7156, Farm Self-Employment Questionnaire, to obtain information from self-employed farmers who wish to have their farming income considered for coverage under Social Security. This collection provides a general description of the farming operation when determining the reasonableness of the reported net earnings from self-employment. It serves as an aid in determining whether SSA considers the income derived covered self-employment income (SEI) for Social Security retirement benefits purposes. The SSA-7156 is used when SEI (posted or unposted) for one or more years in the period open to correction is needed for insured status. The nature of the farming operation or the identity of the farm operator requires clarification to determine the coverage status of the earnings.

SSA is authorized to collect this information under Section 211 of the *Social Security Act* (Net Earnings From Self-Employment) and 20 CFR 404.1095 and 404.1082(c) of the Code of Federal Regulations, which define agricultural trade or business and rules for farm rental income and material participation

2. Description of Collection

SSA collects the information on Form SSA-7156 on a voluntary, as-needed basis to determine the existence of an agriculture trade or business which may affect the insured status or monthly benefit of a retirement applicant. Respondents learn about the program through accountants, tax professionals, farming peers, SSA technicians when they are applying for benefits, as well as through SSA's website and other available resources. Then respondents can access the fillable SSA-7156 ssa.gov as well as through our Upload Documents portal (OMB No. 0960-0830).

When an applicant indicates self-employment as a farmer, SSA requests the information on the SSA-7156 to determine the existence of an agricultural trade or business, and to calculate subsequent covered earnings for Social Security entitlement purposes the applicant is claiming. As part of the application process, we conduct a personal interview with the applicant either face-to-face or via telephone, and document the interview using Form SSA-7156. Alternately, applicants have the option of using our Upload Documents portal (OMB No. 0960-0830), which allows them to complete and submit the form online in lieu of an interview.

We identified the following psychological cost based on the requirements for this information collection:

Psychological Cost:

- **Requirement for Program:** While the questions are noninvasive and the cognitive load is minimal, we ask the respondent to gather information regarding their self-employment status and the existence of an agricultural trade or business. In some cases, we may ask the respondent to request information from other participants or farming peers.
- **Psychological Cost:** Some individuals may experience a level of stress in gathering information from other participants as needed to complete the form.

We understand this psychological cost may cause respondents to delay their completion of the information collection or cause them to abandon the information collection entirely. However, we require full completion of this collection to receive benefits. Therefore, we have taken this potential psychological cost into account when calculating our burden in #12 below.

The respondents are applicants for Social Security benefits whose entitlement and amount of benefits depend on establishing if the worker received covered earnings from self-employment as a farmer, and if so how much they earned.

3. Use of Information Technology to Collect the Information

This collection has a public-facing fillable and submittable version which the respondent can submit using SSA's Upload Documents Portal (OMB No. 0960-0830). Upload Documents allows the respondent to complete the fillable PDF, electronically sign it, and submit the information through the Upload Documents Portal. The submittable version mirrors the paper version and provides respondents with an online service option as an alternative to mailing, faxing, or bringing the form to an SSA field office. Use of the Upload Documents Portal does not require respondents to download and install the application locally on their device or pay any subscription or licensing fees, and we account for the burden for using Upload Documents under OMB No. 0960-0830. Per our management information (MI) data, approximately 90% of respondents complete and submit this information collection using the electronic Upload Documents version.

During the personal interview process, SSA technicians record the information directly on Form SSA-7156, and then scan the form into the respondent's electronic folder. Per our MI data, only about 10% of respondents request a personal interview to submit this information.

This collection does not currently have a fully public-facing Internet version, as we prioritized other information collections for full electronic conversions. Given that IT Mod programming is an ongoing, dynamic project, we cannot provide specific timelines for when we will be able to make any particular ICR available via Internet web-based application. We will ultimately convert most existing ICRs to full electronic versions depending on how they fall within our overall IT Mod schema, but this may be unconnected to the PRA approval lifecycle.

4. Why We Cannot Use Duplicate Information

The nature of the information we collect and the manner in which we collect it precludes duplication. SSA does not use another collection instrument to obtain similar data.

5. Minimizing Burden on Small Respondents

This collection does not affect small businesses or other small entities.

6. Consequence of Not Collecting Information or Collecting it Less Frequently

If SSA did not collect this information, self-employed individuals wishing to have their farming income activity considered for Social Security would not receive the necessary credit for Social Security coverage. SSA only collects the information as needed when there is farming activity to be considered and cannot collect it less frequently. There are no technical or legal obstacles to burden reduction.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances that would cause SSA to conduct this information collection in a manner inconsistent with 5 *CFR* 1320.5.

8. Solicitation of Public Comment and Other Consultations with the Public

The 60-day advance Federal Register Notice published on July 31, 2026, at 91 FR 48470, and we received no public comments. The 30-day FRN published on September 24, 2026, at 91 FR 60677. If we receive any comments in response to this Notice, we will forward them to OMB. We did not consult with the public in the development revision of this form.

9. Payment or Gifts to Respondents

SSA does not provide payments or gifts to the respondents.

10. Assurances of Confidentiality

SSA protects and holds confidential the information it collects in accordance with 42 *U.S.C.* 1306, 20 *CFR* 401 and 402, 5 *U.S.C.* 552 (Freedom of Information Act), 5 *U.S.C.* 552a (Privacy Act of 1974), and OMB Circular No. A-130.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

The information collection does not contain any questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Estimates of Public Reporting Burden

Please see the burden chart below:

Method of Completion	Number of Respondents	Frequency of Response	Average Burden Per Response (minutes)	Estimated Total Annual Burden (hours)	Average Theoretical Cost Amount (dollars)*	Average Wait Time in Field Office or Teleservice Centers (minutes)**	Total Annual Opportunity Cost (dollars) ***

SSA-7156 (Fillable PDF – Upload Documents)	54	1	15	14	\$18.09*	N/A	\$253***
SSA-7156 – (In-Person Interview)	6	1	15	2	\$18.09*	11**	\$54***
Totals	60			16			\$307***

* We based this figure on an average Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop Nursery, and Greenhouse salary (\$18.09) as reported by Bureau of Labor Statistics data ([Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics](#)).

** We based this 11-minute figure on the average combined August 2026 wait times for field offices (21 minutes, as captured by management information data and posted on our public-facing website, ([Social Security performance | SSA](#))) and for teleservice centers (1 minute, which represents the average time it takes for a call to be picked up automatically by our systems and then routed to an SSA technician; this figure also comes from management information data). As the figures fluctuate, the actual wait times may differ slightly from the averages reported here. We will update these figures periodically to reflect the most accurate available data.

*** This figure does not represent actual costs that SSA is imposing on individuals; rather, these are theoretical opportunity costs for the additional time respondents will spend to complete the information collection. **There is no actual charge to respondents to complete the information collection.**

In addition, OMB’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) is requiring SSA to use a rough estimate of a 30-minute, one-way, drive time in our calculations of the time burden for this collection. OIRA based their estimation on a spatial analysis of SSA’s current field office locations and the location of the average population centers based on census tract information, which likely represents a 13.97 mile driving distance for one-way travel. We depict this on the chart below:

Total Number of Respondents Who Visit a Field Office	Frequency of Response	Average One-Way Travel Time to a Field Office (minutes)	Estimated Total Travel Time to a Field Office (hours)	Total Annual Opportunity Cost for Travel Time (dollars)*****
6	1	30	3	\$54.27*****

*****We based this dollar amount on the Average Theoretical Hourly Cost Amount in dollars shown on the burden chart above.

Per OIRA, we include this travel time burden estimate under the 5 *CFR* 1320.8(a)(4), which requires us to provide “time, effort, or financial resources expended by persons [for]...transmitting, or otherwise disclosing the information,” as well as 5 *CFR* 1320.8(b)(3)(iii) which requires us to estimate “the average burden collection...to the extent practicable.” SSA notes that we do not obtain or maintain any data on travel times to a field office, nor do we have any data which shows that the average respondent drives to a field office, rather than using any other mode of transport. SSA also acknowledges that respondents’ mode of travel and, therefore, travel times vary widely dependent on region, mode of travel, and actual proximity to a field office.

NOTE: We included the total opportunity cost estimate from this chart in our calculations when showing the total time and opportunity cost estimates in the paragraph below.

We calculated the following Learning Cost time burden based on the estimated time and effort we expect respondents will take to learn about this program, its applicability to their circumstances, and to cover any additional research we believe respondents may need to take to understand how to comply with the program requirements (beyond reading the instructions on the collection instrument):

Total Number of Respondents	Frequency of Response	Estimate Learning Cost (minutes)	Estimated Total Annual Burden (hours)	Total Annual Learning Cost (dollars)*****
60	1	15	15	\$271.35*****

*****We based this dollar amount on the Average Theoretical Hourly Cost Amount in dollars shown on the burden chart above.

NOTE: We included the total opportunity cost estimate from this chart in our calculations when showing the total time and opportunity cost estimates in the paragraph below.

We base our burden estimates on current management information data, which includes data from actual interviews, as well as from years of conducting this information collection. Per our management information data, we believe that **15** minutes accurately shows the average burden per response for learning about the program; receiving notices as needed; reading and understanding instructions; gathering the data and documents needed; answering the questions and completing the information collection instrument; scheduling any necessary appointment or required phone call; consulting with any third parties (as needed); and waiting to speak with SSA employees (as needed). Based on our current management information data, the current burden information we provided is accurate. The total burden for this ICR is **16** burden hours (reflecting SSA management information data), which results in an associated theoretical (not actual) opportunity cost financial burden of **\$632.62**. SSA does not charge respondents to complete our applications.

13. Annual Cost to the Respondents (Other)

This collection does not impose a known cost burden on the respondents.

14. Annual Cost To Federal Government

The annual cost to the Federal Government is approximately **\$4,149**. This estimate accounts for costs from the following areas:

Description of Cost Factor	Methodology for Estimating Cost	Cost in Dollars*
Designing and Printing the Form	Design Cost + Printing Cost	\$350
Distribution, Shipping, and Material Costs for the Form	Distribution + Shipping + Material Cost	\$0**
SSA Employee (e.g., field office, 800 number, DDS staff) Information Collection and Processing Time	GS-9 employee x # of responses x processing time	\$379
Full-Time Equivalent Costs	Out of pocket costs + Other expenses for providing this service	\$0*
Systems Development, Updating, and Maintenance	GS-9 employee x man hours for development, updating, maintenance	\$3,420
Quantifiable IT Costs	Any additional IT costs	\$0*
Total		\$4,149

* We have inserted a \$0 amount for cost factors that do not apply to this collection.

**As we do not print this form or distribute it to respondents, we have no costs associated with printing, distribution, or shipping for this form. As mentioned above, most respondents complete this information collection using Upload Documents (OMB No. 0960-0830), and those who do not complete it via a personal interview process (for which they do not need a printed form).

SSA is unable to break down the costs to the Federal government further than we already have. First, as field office staff often help respondents fill out several forms at once, the time it takes to do so can vary greatly per respondent. Also, because so many employees have a hand in each aspect of our forms, we use an estimated average hourly wage, based on the wage of our average field office employee (GS-9) for these calculations. However, we have calculated these costs as accurately as possible based on the information we collect for creating, updating, and maintaining these information collections.

15. Program Changes or Adjustments to the Information Collection Request

When we cleared the this ICR in 2024, the burden was 167 hours. However, we are currently reporting a burden of **16** hours. This change stems from a decrease in the number of responses and an increase in burden time per response. Responses decreased

from **1,000** to **60**, as the increase in electronic submissions has increased our ability to track this form. Per our current MI data, fewer people are using this form to allege self-employment on a farm. Although the number of responses changed, SSA did not take any actions to cause this change. In addition, the burden time increased by five minutes per response as we updated the burden based on usability testing in Upload Documents. Even though we increase the overall burden per response, the use of Upload Documents streamlines the form and makes it easier for respondents to submit.

*Note: The total burden reflected in ROCIS is **33**, while the burden cited in #12 of the Supporting Statement is **16**. This discrepancy is because the ROCIS burden reflects the following components: field office waiting time + telephone call system wait times + a rough estimate of a 30-minute, one-way, drive burden + learning costs. In contrast, the chart in #12 above reflects actual burden.

16. Plans for Publication Information Collection Results

SSA will not publish the results of the information collection.

17. Displaying the OMB Approval Expiration Date

For the paper form SSA-7156 we will not publish the OMB approval expiration date. OMB granted SSA an exemption from the requirement to print the OMB expiration date on its program forms. SSA produces millions of public-use forms with life cycles exceeding those of an OMB approval. Since SSA does not periodically revise and reprint its public-use forms (e.g., on an annual basis), OMB granted this exemption so SSA would not have to destroy stocks of otherwise useable forms with expired OMB approval dates, avoiding Government waste.

For the Upload Documents version of Form SSA-7156, SSA is not requesting an exception to the requirement to display the OMB approval expiration date

18. Exceptions to Certification Statement

SSA is not requesting an exception to the certification requirements at 5 *CFR* 1320.9 and related provisions at 5 *CFR* 1320.8(b)(3).

B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

SSA does not use statistical methods for this information collection.