

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Generic Testing – 2017 Census of Agriculture

OMB No. 0535-0248

This mini-supporting statement is being submitted to OMB to define the need for conducting the 2017 Census of Agriculture Condensed Form Testing.

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances making collection of information necessary.

Every 5 years, NASS conducts the Census of Agriculture with farms of all sizes across the entire US. The questionnaire used in 2012 was 24 pages and may have appeared burdensome, especially to small farms. NASS has entered into a cooperator agreement with Washington State University (WSU) to develop condensed paper and Internet versions of the 2017 Census of Agriculture to be used for some portion of the sample to reduce respondent burden. Testing is necessary in order to ensure that the shortened paper and Internet forms obtain the best possible data when used with the entire farm population during the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

2. How, by whom, and for what purpose information is to be used.

The information gathered through this testing will be used by our Census Data Collection Testing Team and the Census Content Team to determine the best format and layout for the paper and Internet versions of the questionnaire. Approved changes will be part of future testing that will be conducted in December 2015 and January 2016 (OMB No. 0535-0243).

3. Use of improved information technology.

The testing will be done via mail and Internet.

4. Efforts to identify duplication.

The NASS list frame is constantly updated to eliminate duplication, and will be used to create the universe to draw a test sample, so duplication should be minimal.

5. Methods to minimize burden of small businesses.

The condensed questionnaire being tested will target mainly small farms. We hope that the test will allow us to reduce overall burden for the 2017 Census of Agriculture by making the form easier and faster to fill out.

6. Consequence if information collection were less frequent.

This is a one-time data collection test. Results will be used for future testing and implementation for the Census of Agriculture.

7. Special circumstances.

There are no special circumstances associated with this information collection.

8. Federal register notice and consultation with outside persons.

Not applicable.

9. Payments or gifts to respondents.

There will be no payments or gifts to respondents.

10. Confidentiality provided to respondents.

The same confidentiality that is applied to the Census of Agriculture will be provided to respondents. All WSU personnel who work on the project will sign the ADM-043 NASS Certification and Restrictions on the Use of Unpublished Data. All mailings will be done by NASS. Identifying information including names, addresses, and phone numbers will not be shared with WSU.

11. Questions of a sensitive nature.

The questions on race and ethnicity on the report form comply with the OMB Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity. The question on total household income of the principal operator is a collapse of the strata breaks used on the OMB approved Agriculture Resource Management Survey, OMB Control #0535-0218.

12. Hour burden and annualized costs to respondents.

The test will consist of mailing a pre-survey letter to the selected sample followed by mailing the shortened questionnaire along with instructions on how to access the internet. This will be followed by a post card reminder and a second mailing of the questionnaire to non-respondents. The respondents will be asked to complete the questionnaire by either return mail or by internet. The amount of data being collected will be similar to the longer version of the questionnaire used in 2012. However, the questions will be displayed differently, and therefore, possibly answered differently. Approximately 6,000 operations will be contacted by mail. NASS is expecting a 33% response rate from this mailout strategy.

Survey	Estimated Sample Size	Estimated Responses			Non-response			Total Burden Hours
		Resp. Count	Min./ Resp.	Burden Hours	Nonresp Count	Min./ Nonr.	Burden Hours	
2017 Census of Agriculture Testing								
Pre-Survey Mailing	6,000	3,600	5	300	2,400	2	80	380
First Mailing of Quest.	6,000	900	20	300	5,100	2	170	470
Post Card Reminder	5,100	510	20	170	4,590	2	153	323
Second Mailing of Quest.	4,590	588	20	196	4,002	2	133	329
Total	6,000	1,998		966	16,092		536	1,502

Cost to the public for completing the questionnaire is assumed to be comparable to the hourly rate of those requesting the data. Average annual reporting time of 1,502 hours, are multiplied by \$25 per hour for a total annual cost to the public of \$37,550. NASS regularly checks the Bureau of Labor Statistics' [Occupational Employment Statistics](#). Mean wage rates for bookkeepers, farm managers, and farm supervisors are averaged to obtain the wage for the burden cost. The May, 2013, mean wage for bookkeepers is \$17.91. The mean wage for farm managers is \$35.20. The mean wage for farm supervisors is \$22.09. The mean wage of the three is \$25.07.

13. Total annual cost burden to respondents.

There are no capital/start-up or ongoing operation/maintenance costs associated with this information collection.

14. Annualized costs to federal government.

Costs for conducting the test interviews are estimated at \$186,000. This will cover expenses for the contracted work as well as staff time for NASS personnel and minimal out-of-pocket costs for labels.

15. Reasons for changes in burden.

This mini-supporting statement addresses the use of burden to conduct testing for the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

16. Tabulation, analysis, and publication plans.

No data will be published from these tests. Data are for internal use only.

17. Request for approval of non-display of expiration date.

There is no request for approval of non-display of the expiration date.

18. Exceptions to certification statement.

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.

B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS:

1. Respondents universe, sampling and response rate.

NASS will select up to 6,000 operations nationwide to be divided into one or more treatment groups. The operations will likely be small operations as identified on our list frame. With a mailout and Internet only approach, we expect a 33% response rate.

2. Procedures for the collection of information.

With the exception of the sampling of operations and labeling of envelopes, WSU will conduct the data collection and analysis for the test. They will use a mail and Internet only methodology, most likely using an advance letter, two questionnaire mailings, and a post card reminder.

3. Ways to maximize response, information collected adequate for intended uses.

Four mailings will be done, along with Internet data collection to help achieve at least a 33% response rate. This rate will be sufficient to detect differences between the treatment group(s) and the control group as well as to make generalized statements about those differences.

4. Test of procedures or methods.

There may be testing of different mailout strategies or Internet recruiting messages as part of the testing, but the main focus is on the data collection instrument.

5. Individuals consulted on statistical aspects of survey.

WSU will conduct the development work, as well as almost all of the testing data collection. Danna Moore, Senior Research Fellow at the Social & Economic Sciences Research Center at WSU is the lead contact.

Dan Beckler, Branch Chief of the Standards and Survey Development Methodology Branch (202)720- 8858 will be the lead contact on the project, in consultation with Chris Messer, Branch Chief of the Census Planning Branch (202)690-8747.

Others at WSU and NASS may be consulted as the testing plans are finalized.

November 2014