

*Use these FAQs to provide information to your constituents about the Census or share them as weekly or monthly “Did you know” tidbits in your organizations communications.*

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. *What is the Census of Agriculture?***

The Census of Agriculture is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census, taken only once every five years, looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures. For America’s farmers and ranchers, the Census of Agriculture is their voice, their future and their responsibility.

### **2. *Why is the Census of Agriculture important?***

The Census provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive and impartial agricultural data for every county in the nation. Through the Census, producers can show the nation the value and importance of agriculture, and they can help influence the decisions that will shape the future of American agriculture for years to come. By responding to the Census, producers are helping themselves, their communities and all of U.S. agriculture.

### **3. *Who uses Census of Agriculture data?***

Census data are used by all those who serve farmers and rural communities – federal, state and local governments, agribusinesses, trade associations and many others.

- Farmers and ranchers can use Census data to help make informed decisions about the future of their own operations.
- Companies and cooperatives use the facts and figures to determine the locations of facilities that will serve agricultural producers.
- Community planners use the information to target needed services to rural residents.
- Legislators use the numbers from the Census when shaping farm policies and programs.

### **4. *How is the Census conducted?***

NASS will mail questionnaires for the 2012 Census of Agriculture to farm and ranch operators in late December 2012 to collect data for the 2012 calendar year. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2013. Producers can return their forms by mail or can fill out the Census online via a secure website at [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov).

**5. *Is the information an individual provides kept confidential?***

Yes. Respondents are guaranteed by law (Title 7, U.S. Code, and CIPSEA, Public Law 107-347) that their individual information will be kept confidential. NASS uses the information only for statistical purposes and publishes data only in tabulated totals. The report cannot be used for purposes of taxation, investigation or regulation. The privacy of individual Census records is also protected from disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act.

**6. *Must I respond to the Census of Agriculture?***

Yes. United States law (Title 7, U.S. Code) requires all those who receive a Census report form to respond even if they did not operate a farm or ranch in 2012.

**7. *What if I only have a small operation or do not participate in government farm programs, do I have to fill out a Census form?***

The Census of Agriculture is the responsibility of *every* farmer and rancher, regardless of the size or type of operation. For Census purposes, a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the Census year.

**8. *What if I did not receive or I lost my Census of Agriculture form?***

If you need more information, or need help completing your Census form, call toll-free (888) 424-7828 or visit [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov).

**9. *When will 2012 Census results be released?***

NASS will release Census data, in both electronic and print formats, beginning in February 2014. Detailed reports will be published for all counties, states and the nation.

**10. *Where can I find Census of Agriculture data?***

Census of Agriculture data is available through the local NASS field office in your area and at many depository libraries, universities and other state government offices. It is also available online at [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov) or [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov). For additional information on the Census of Agriculture and other NASS surveys, call the Agricultural Statistics Hotline at (800) 727-9540.

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