

# Partnering to Count and Serve U.S. Farmers

A Handbook to Increase Participation

2012 | CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE



United States Department of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Statistics Service

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## Preface

This Handbook is the product of a partnership between USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and three Texas community-based organizations (CBOs)—the Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers Community-based Organization, the Texas/Mexico Border Coalition Community-based Organization, and the Landowners Association of Texas.

Carol House, retired NASS Deputy Administrator for Programs and Products, provided the vision for this project and served as the executive sponsor. After NASS field offices and community-based organizations across the country successfully partnered to get more minority and other underserved farm operators to participate in the 2007 Census of Agriculture, NASS saw a need and an opportunity to capture the lessons learned from those partnerships by developing a handbook for future efforts to increase census coverage.

During the 2007 census, NASS, CBOs, and other stakeholders put high priority on improving the coverage and response of minority and other underserved farm operators. CBOs worked with NASS to contact these operators and encourage them to participate. NASS is grateful to the many CBOs that contributed to the success of the 2007 census. The partnerships helped NASS reach more underserved farmers and ranchers and obtain a higher than usual response rate, and gave the CBOs an opportunity to introduce their members and constituents to a new agricultural resource. The partnerships served both the community-based organizations' mission of providing service to every producer and NASS's goal of counting every producer.

NASS conducts the Census of Agriculture every five years. As we approach the 2012 census, we have created this Handbook to build on the 2007 successes. It offers lessons and "how to" guidelines to help community-based organizations and NASS field offices strengthen existing partnerships, build new partnerships, and advance our common goal of accurately representing all farms and all farm operators in the 2012 census.

We at NASS are grateful to the CBO representatives who helped develop the Handbook: Anita Ross and Wade Ross of Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers; Edward Cline, Bertha Cline, and Barbara Lange of Landowners Association of Texas; and Omar Garza of Texas/Mexico Border Coalition. They worked with NASS staff to identify the lessons from the 2007 census partnerships and to develop tools and tips for future efforts. We appreciate the time, energy, thoughtfulness, and creativity they brought to the task.

We hope the Handbook helps remove or reduce barriers due to misunderstandings or misconceptions and that it motivates the patience and perseverance NASS and community-based organizations need to forge productive and effective partnerships.

*Hubert Hamer*  
Chair, Agricultural Statistics Board

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## Contributors

### **National Agricultural Statistics Service**

1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250-2014  
[www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov)  
[www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)

Michelle Radice

Director, Outreach and Diversity  
Email: [Michelle.Radice@nass.usda.gov](mailto:Michelle.Radice@nass.usda.gov)  
Tel: (202) 690-8141

Doug Rundle

Director, Texas Field Office  
Email: [Doug.Rundle@nass.usda.gov](mailto:Doug.Rundle@nass.usda.gov)  
Tel: (512) 916-5581

### **Landowners Association of Texas**

3726 Parkwood Drive  
Houston, TX 77021

Bertha Cline

Edward Cline

Barbara Lange

Tel: (713) 748-0451

Fax: (713) 747-3465

### **Texas/Mexico Border Coalition**

P.O. Box 127  
San Isidro, TX 78588  
[www.tm-bc.org](http://www.tm-bc.org)

Omar Garza

Email: [tmbc@tm-bc.org](mailto:tmbc@tm-bc.org)

Tel: (969) 481-3256

Fax: (969) 481-3950

### **Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers**

8855 Wheelock Hall Road  
Hearne, TX 77859  
[www.TexasSmallFarmersandRanchersCBO.com](http://www.TexasSmallFarmersandRanchersCBO.com)

Anita Ross

Wade Ross

Email: [3300Ross1@msn.com](mailto:3300Ross1@msn.com)

Tel: (979) 589-3649

Fax: (979) 589-4659

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# 1. Why Partner?

The Census of Agriculture is the leading source of facts and statistics on U.S. agricultural production. Conducted every five years by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Census of Agriculture provides a detailed picture of U.S. farms and ranches. It is the only uniform, comprehensive agricultural data set for every state and county or county equivalent in the United States, including detailed data at the county level with respect to race, ethnicity, and gender.

Farm organizations, businesses, state departments of agriculture, elected representatives and legislative bodies at all levels of government, public and private sector analysts, news media, academics, community-based organizations, and USDA agencies all routinely use agriculture census data for a wide variety of purposes. They use the data to:

- Formulate, evaluate, change, and promote policies and programs that help agricultural producers, including underserved producers.
- Study historical trends, assess current conditions, and plan for the future.
- Develop market strategies, create more efficient production and distribution systems, and identify services and facilities needed in rural communities.
- Develop and improve methods to increase agricultural production and profitability.
- Allocate local and national funds for farm programs (including extension service projects, agricultural research, conservation programs, farm loan programs, and land grant colleges and universities).
- Develop grant proposals to address rural and agricultural issues.

Obtaining a complete count of farming operations is important. The 2012 Census of Agriculture is an opportunity for NASS and partner organizations to ensure all farms and ranches are included. Decisions based on census data will affect agricultural operations and producers for years to come (Box 1).

## Counting Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

In the 2002 Census of Agriculture, minority, female, and limited-resource farmers and ranchers, as well as those with small, new, and beginning operations, were hard to reach, and as a result were underrepresented in the census. In planning the 2007 census, NASS wanted to make sure all farms and ranches were included, regardless of size, location, or type of operation.

To increase the participation of underrepresented and often underserved agricultural producers in the 2007 census, NASS needed both to add more underserved operators to its initial census mailing and to maintain a good response rate to the census questionnaire. To accomplish this, NASS actively sought the cooperation and support of organizations that had existing relationships with these producers and had already earned their trust and respect. This included farming and ranching associations, businesses that provide goods and services to the agricultural sector, and community-based organizations (CBOs) with ties to these farmers and ranchers.

### Box 1. The 2012 Census of Agriculture: Why It Matters

Farmers and ranchers benefit when the agriculture census takes a complete count of farms, ranches, and the producers who operate them. USDA uses the information to develop short- and long-term improvements, strategies, and safeguards to better serve U.S. agriculture.

The data collected in the 2012 Census of Agriculture will play a role in determining future decisions about:

- Farm programs
- Transportation and marketing locations
- Telecommunications connectivity
- Rural economic development
- Production practices
- New agricultural technologies
- Conservation programs
- And more

A CBO is a nonprofit organization that works to serve the disadvantaged in the community where it is located. CBOs may focus on individuals of African-American, Hispanic, American Indian, or Asian origin or with other social or demographic characteristics. Many CBOs have an agriculture focus and provide training on agricultural practices or on USDA programs. CBOs generally have excellent contacts and respect within their communities.

## 2007 Census: NASS and CBOs Partner

For the 2007 Census of Agriculture, NASS turned to CBOs for help in identifying and reaching minority and other underserved farmers and ranchers, establishing credibility with them, and promoting the Census of Agriculture.

Approximately six weeks before mailing the 2007 census questionnaire, NASS conducted a two-and-a-half day national workshop in Kansas City, Missouri, for representatives from 37 CBOs. The workshop provided basic information on NASS, training on the 2007 Census of Agriculture, and ample time for CBO representatives to work among themselves and with NASS staff to develop preliminary NASS-CBO partnering plans. By the end of the workshop, 21 partnership plans had been developed; many more were submitted in the days and months that followed.

The 2007 experience showed that partnerships between NASS field offices and state-specific community-based organizations can 1) build a more complete census list by adding many producers who had previously been missed, and 2) generate additional responses to the census form. New farmers, minority farmers, and other underserved producers learned that participation in the census gives them a voice in demonstrating the value of U.S. agriculture and their role in it. By participating they affected the future of their operations and the entire community (Box 2).

USDA cited NASS's 2007 Census of Agriculture outreach efforts to minority, limited-resource, and other underserved farmers and ranchers as one of the Department's top civil rights accomplishments of 2008. NASS's partnership efforts were also recognized by small and large CBOs in various ways, including a

national award from the Rural Coalition citing NASS's "partnership and dedicated and invaluable service to CBOs and people."

## 2012 Census: Using this Handbook

In preparation for the 2012 Census of Agriculture, we have created this Handbook to help CBOs and NASS field offices develop and maintain effective partnerships. Such partnering is essential to securing accurate agricultural statistics and census data for all farms and ranches, but especially underserved operations.

The Handbook provides strategies and activities to help CBOs and NASS get to know each other and build trust (section 2), clarify expectations and move ahead (section 3), create specific plans to increase participation in the 2012 Census of Agriculture (section 4), and continue the partnership after the census (section 5). Use the notes boxes throughout the text, and then use the template in Appendix A to develop your own partnership plan. Appendix B summarizes the results of a survey on how USDA agencies use NASS data.

### Box 2. County Census Data by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender

Using Census of Agriculture data, NASS offers county-level agriculture profiles by the race, ethnicity, and gender of farm operators.

NASS created the county-level profiles in response to requests from community-based organizations. Farmers, ranchers, CBOs, USDA state and county-level staff, cooperative extension staff, researchers, and policymakers use the data to:

- Target education and outreach efforts to underserved farmers and ranchers.
- Learn what these farmers produce.
- Determine whether USDA and other programs reach underserved farmers.
- Include accurate and timely information in grant applications and other documents.

The profiles are based on 2007 census findings and will be updated after the 2012 census. See the profiles at [www.agcensus.usda.gov/regprofiles](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/regprofiles).



## 2. Get to Know Each Other

A primary responsibility of NASS field office directors is to build and maintain support for NASS programs in their state. Traditionally, directors work through commodity organizations, producer organizations, and state cooperators (for example, state departments of agriculture) to gain support for NASS programs and maintain good levels of participation in surveys. In return, NASS delivers reliable agricultural production statistics for the state.

Working with CBOs requires a different kind of relationship than working with NASS's traditional partners, but the results will be equally productive and rewarding. CBO constituents are more likely than other producers to be underrepresented in government statistics and therefore more likely to be underserved by government programs. NASS has perhaps not contacted them previously or has not had opportunity to include them on its lists of agricultural producers.

Since the purpose of the Census of Agriculture is to accurately represent all farms and ranches, NASS–CBO partnerships have tremendous potential for mutual benefit. But be prepared—these relationships are mostly about people, not data, and the partnerships are largely built on personal trust.

### CBOs Should Know

*If you are a CBO representative*, you should know some basic information about NASS's mission, structure, goals, and operations.

- NASS provides timely, accurate, and useful statistics on U.S. agricultural production, economics, land, water, energy, environmental management, and farmer and rancher demographics.
- NASS is a relatively small USDA agency, with offices across the country (for a complete list, see p. 25).
- NASS has no political appointees, provides impartial statistics, and does not engage in political advocacy.
- NASS collects and delivers data; it does not deliver grants or agricultural assistance programs.
- NASS conducts hundreds of surveys each year and prepares reports with official estimates on almost every aspect of U.S. agriculture. These objective reports are released in various formats (electronic, print, or both) on a preannounced schedule that is fair and impartial. See NASS publications ([www.nass.usda.gov/Publications](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications)) for more information.

- NASS conducts the Census of Agriculture every five years. The census covers the United States and Puerto Rico, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.
- By law, all responses to NASS surveys and the Census of Agriculture are confidential. NASS will not disclose data about an individual farm or ranch operation, and will not share information about any individual or operation with any other federal, state, or local agency (Box 3).
- NASS career paths are largely technical; most NASS managers were recruited and trained to be analysts. For some field office directors, community outreach may be a relatively new activity. However, all field office directors understand the importance of meaningful outreach; they care about the mission of collecting comprehensive, high-quality data and want to work with CBOs in a mutually beneficial way.
- NASS field office directors have limited staff resources, so outreach is often a one-person effort. But they can attend meetings, give talks, and meet with your organization. When time and resources permit, they may be able to assemble special data products for you and other CBOs.

#### Box 3. NASS Pledges: Your Identity and Your Data Are Secure

Participants in the Census of Agriculture and other NASS surveys can rest assured that their information is confidential. NASS will not publish data in a way that identifies them or their information.

Confidentiality is required by specific U.S. laws (Title 7, U.S. Code, Section 2276, and the Confidential Information Protection provisions of Title V, Subtitle A, Public Law 107–347). NASS goes to extraordinary measures to ensure that no NASS employee and no one acting on behalf of NASS discloses any information about any individual person or operation.

## NASS Should Know

*If you are a NASS official*, you should learn about the mission, values, and goals of community-based organizations in general, and then learn in detail about potential CBO partners in your area.

- Agriculture-related CBOs that partner with NASS are likely to be nonprofit organizations operating within a defined local community or communities. Like many other nonprofits, they may be self-funded and run by volunteers.
- CBOs vary in size and organizational structure. Some are formally incorporated, with a written constitution and a board of directors (sometimes called a committee); others are small and more informal.
- CBO leaders and their constituents may have little or no knowledge about NASS. Even if they have worked with other USDA agencies, they may not know much about NASS.
- CBOs have varying histories, missions, structures, resources, and outreach. As a NASS official, whether at headquarters or in a field office, you must take time to listen and understand what individual CBOs do, and what their interests are, to determine what partnering opportunities may exist.

- To learn about a particular CBO, participate at a local event, talk with CBO representatives, and talk with representatives from USDA agencies that have worked with the CBO.
- CBOs place high value on personal integrity, trust, and service to others. Ultimately, whether they partner with NASS may rest on your personal trustworthiness and commitment to serving all farm and ranch operators.

## Trust: Essential to a Successful Partnership

The importance of developing trust cannot be overstated. Trust must be the cornerstone of any NASS–CBO partnership because without trust the partnership will not function. Although it may feel awkward at first, take steps to get to know each other (Box 4). Early face-to-face meetings are a good idea. The discovery phase of getting to know your partner is important. Trust generally develops at a personal level first, and then organizational trust can follow. Honesty and sincerity are essential. As Brian Patterson, President, United South and Eastern Tribes, says, “Relationships are paramount. Everything else is derivative.”

<b>Box 4. Getting to Know You</b>	
<i>If you are a NASS official . . . . .</i>	<i>If you are a CBO representative . . . . .</i>
Make new contacts, particularly in organizations new to NASS (e.g., federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program agents and specialists from the Tribal Technical Assistance Network).	Reach out to NASS officials; let them know who your constituency is. Invite NASS officials to attend and to speak at your meetings.
Adapt and use the resources on the Census of Agriculture website ( <a href="http://www.agcensus.usda.gov">www.agcensus.usda.gov</a> ) for your state and your audience. Additional resources are available at the PRIME Center on the NASS intranet.	Distribute materials about NASS and the Census of Agriculture at your meetings and to your members.
Attend meetings, participate in and exhibit at community events, conduct media outreach to local radio, television, and print (newspapers, online) outlets, etc.	Ask “Why does the Census of Agriculture matter to me and to people like me?” and then tell the producers you serve why the census is important.
Accept speaking invitations at CBO meetings and conferences, bring a high-quality PowerPoint presentation, serve on state and local committees.	Learn and talk about the data available through the Census of Agriculture and how your community benefits from the information.
Learn from other USDA agencies about their contacts with CBOs.	Use Census of Agriculture web banners to link your website to the census site ( <a href="http://www.agcensus.usda.gov">www.agcensus.usda.gov</a> ).
Learn how CBOs communicate with their members. Do they use a newsletter? Is it mailed? Emailed? How frequently? How else?	If you are a farmer or rancher yourself, lead by example and fill out your Census of Agriculture form.

### 3. Create a Partnership

After the initial phase of getting to know each other and building trust, NASS officials and prospective CBO partners should clarify their expectations of the partnership, define the terms of the agreement, and make a plan of specific strategies and activities.

#### Clarify Expectations

The joint expectation of NASS and CBOs working together is to get the best possible count and a complete description of farmers, ranchers, and their operations. In addition to their shared expectation of a census that counts even hard-to-reach producers, each side brings particular interests and expectations.

*If you are a NASS official*, for example, you can expect CBOs to:

- Help identify underserved farm and ranch operators to add to the census mail list (the list to whom NASS sends the census questionnaire).
- Help promote the census and other NASS activities at the local level.
- Provide access and outreach to CBO constituents and other agricultural or rural groups.
- Pursue an ongoing relationship, not just during census years.

*If you are a CBO representative*, you can expect NASS to:

- Represent all farmers, ranchers, and their operations accurately in official Census of Agriculture results/reports.
- Show the status and trends on issues affecting underserved producers and their operations at county, state, and national levels.
- Provide CBOs access to NASS technical resources and guidance in supporting NASS activities.
- Maintain the partnership and support CBO efforts on a continuing basis not just during the census.

NASS headquarters has an important role in supporting these state-based partnerships. NASS headquarters staff support NASS field office–CBO partnerships by doing the following:

- Create a dynamic Census of Agriculture website ([www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)) with materials that field offices and CBOs can use in all phases of census promotion and data collection.

- Post materials prepared by field offices and CBOs to the PRIME Center on NASS's intranet for internal sharing across NASS field offices.
- Partner with other USDA agencies to inform them about the census timeline and to obtain their help in building the list, promoting the census, and encouraging producers to complete the census form.
- As funds allow, periodically conduct national workshops to train and support CBOs.

#### Define the Agreement

The working relationship between a NASS field office and a CBO will depend on the field office's needs and the particular CBO's capacity and requirements. The relationship may be detailed in a formal agreement or may be informally agreed upon. In either case, an understanding of what each partner expects from the other, what a CBO and NASS jointly expect to accomplish, and what resources each brings to the partnership provides clarity for both the NASS field office and the CBO.

Resources may be financial, technical, or in the form of human capital. NASS has only limited funding and CBOs may not have funding to take on additional tasks. However, CBOs can do many things to support and promote the census at little or no cost. They can, for example, disseminate information as part of their regular work. The Texas/Mexico Border Coalition, for example, partners with others on about 20 outreach meetings per year; hosting a NASS speaker or sharing printed information about the Census of Agriculture at such meetings brings real value at little cost to the sponsoring organizations.

Whether through a handshake, an informal memo, or a more formalized memorandum of understanding (MOU), an agreement requiring accountability benefits both parties. For many NASS-CBO partnerships, an informal agreement may be all that is needed. In other situations, the NASS field office or CBO may want more formal documentation to better define the opportunities and objectives of the partnership. An MOU sets out in broad terms a plan for both parties to coordinate their outreach efforts. NASS field offices can find an MOU template, a sample statement of work, and related documents at the PRIME Center on the NASS intranet.





## 4. Partner for the 2012 Census

Successfully conducting the Census of Agriculture requires three phases of activity—

- Developing the mailing list of U.S. farms and ranches,
- Promoting the census among farmers and ranchers, and
- Collecting the census data.

However, the phases are not entirely sequential; they occur continuously, frequently overlap, and generally reinforce each other. In partnering to increase the participation of underserved populations in the 2012 Census of Agriculture, NASS and CBOs must develop effective plans and activities for each phase.

### Build the Census Mailing List

An important first step in conducting any census is determining who needs to be included. The goal is to account for all farms and ranches that produced and sold, or had the potential to sell, at least \$1,000 of agricultural products during the census year. This requires building a complete and accurate name and address list for all agricultural operations that meet this definition (Box 5).

Well before the census starts, NASS and participating partners work hard to develop a comprehensive list of agricultural producers (farm and ranch operators). Most list-building is completed by July 1 of the census year. For example, in preparation for the 2012 Census of Agriculture, NASS completed a screening survey of over 1.2 million potential farming operations in June 2012 to determine whether they should be included in the census mailing.

Identifying large agricultural operations is relatively straightforward. USDA may have had many prior contacts with such operations. Large farms and ranches are visible and well known, they participate in a variety of agricultural and community programs, and their impact can be seen and quantified. Smaller operations—particularly those owned by individuals from an underserved population—may be harder to find.

#### Box 5. Who Gets Counted?


Determining *who is farming what land* is an important initial step in conducting the agriculture census. In the language of the census and surveys, this is “building the list.” An accurate list of farm and ranch operators results from a careful process of asking questions, talking with people in the community, consulting various available lists, and reaching out in many ways to agricultural producers and others in the community.

The farm or ranch *operator* may be the owner, hired manager, cash tenant, share tenant, and/or a partner. The operator is the person who runs the farm or ranch, making the day-to-day management decisions. If land is rented or worked based on shares, the renter or tenant is the operator.

With their excellent contacts with their own constituencies, CBOs can reach agricultural producers who might not be on the NASS list. These producers can sign up:

- Online ([www.nass.usda.gov/counts](http://www.nass.usda.gov/counts))
- By phone (1-800-892-1660)
- By mail (returning the postage-free signup card)

NASS will mail the 2012 census questionnaire to all names received from these sources by January 1, 2013, so they can participate in the census.



**CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE**  
Make Sure You Are Counted.  
Online: Sign up at [www.nass.usda.gov/counts](http://www.nass.usda.gov/counts).  
By Phone: Call toll free (800) 892-1660.  
By Mail: Fill in the information and mail this card, postage-free.

USDA AGRICULTURE

**YOUR VOICE. YOUR FUTURE. YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.**  
Sign up now to ensure that you receive a 2012 Census of Agriculture report form.  
(to be mailed in December 2012)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity:  Hispanic or Latino  
 Not Hispanic or Latino

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: (Mark one or more)  
\_\_\_\_\_  American Indian or Alaska Native  
 Asian  
 Black or African American  
 Native Hawaiian or Other  
Pacific Islander  
 White

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Sex:  Male  Female

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The OMB number is 0535-0140. The time required to complete this information is estimated to average 5 minutes. Approval expires 02/28/2013.

## NASS Activities

NASS headquarters and field offices share responsibility for creating materials CBOs can use to inform themselves and others about the census. In addition to the signup card (available in English and Spanish), NASS has produced a brochure (English and Spanish) and public service announcements (audio and video) that can help CBOs encourage signup and build the list. NASS field office staff also can:

- Give CBOs enough census signup brochures and postcards to distribute at meetings and other events, in their communities, and in their day-to-day encounters. Ask CBOs to collect the completed cards on site and send them to NASS.
- Ask CBOs for lists of farm operators in order to mail out the signup brochure and postcard. As part of the request, NASS can offer to compile, reorganize, or reformat the lists or, if funds are available, to reimburse a CBO for this work.
- Conduct a training workshop bringing together CBOs to work with the field office and with each other.
- Hold information meetings for list building, both locally and regionally.
- Attend, exhibit, and speak at CBO information meetings or annual meetings. Secure a spot on the agenda to promote the census. Be accessible.
- Attend, exhibit, and speak at local and national trade shows and symposia.
- Serve on state and local committees that reach out to constituents to discover best practices used by other agencies and organizations.
- Work with tribal leaders. Consistent with Executive Order 13175 requiring consultation with tribes, develop an outreach strategy with the tribal leadership to promote census awareness and participation.

- Work with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) to hire, train, and certify qualified individuals from CBOs or from American Indian and Alaska Native communities as census enumerators. Certified enumerators can perform many list-building activities.

## CBO Activities

Helping NASS identify underrepresented producers and signing them up to receive the census questionnaire is a key aspect of the partnership to promote the Census of Agriculture. Specifically, CBOs can:

- Ask members and clients to complete the signup postcard at every meeting and other opportunity. Immediately collect the cards and send them to NASS.
- Provide NASS a current list of members and clients.
- Distribute the NASS signup brochure and postcard with an endorsement letter from your organization to members and clients.
- Provide the NASS signup brochure and postcard to members and affiliates to use in their day-to-day contact with other producers.
- Encourage members and clients to sign up for the census online ([www.nass.usda.gov/counts](http://www.nass.usda.gov/counts)), by phone (1-800-892-1660), or by mail (returning the postage-free signup card).
- Contact local countywide appraisal districts in your area and request listings of agricultural landowners.
- Post census signup public service announcements to your website or Facebook page. Use them in presentations. If you have a smart phone, play them when you are out and about in the community.

## Notes

<i>Use this space for note taking or to brainstorm additional strategies and activities to add underserved farmers and ranchers to the census mail list.</i>	NASS	CBO

## Promote the Census

Even as NASS and partners continue to identify producers and build the census mailing list, a serious effort must begin in late 2012 to promote the census and encourage individuals to complete their census questionnaire when they receive it in early January 2013. NASS provides tools, ideas, and opportunities.

Some materials are perfect for CBO members and clients; others can be adapted for particular audiences.

### Box 6. Tools to Promote the 2012 Census of Agriculture

- Banners
- Brochures (English and Spanish)
- Logos (English and Spanish)
- Posters and window clings
- Website buttons and banners
- PowerPoint presentations
- Letterhead and footers
- Sample press releases, blogs, and tweets
- Key messages/frequently asked questions
- Public service announcements (audio and video)
- “There’s Strength in Numbers” video
- Census facts pocket card
- Articles and drop-in ads for agricultural journals and other publications
- Fact sheets, profiles, and stories showing my census data matter

Many of these materials are available directly on the Census of Agriculture website ([www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)). Others are available through the NASS field office.

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## NASS Activities

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To help CBOs encourage broad participation in the census, NASS field offices can:

- Point CBOs to the “Help Us Promote the Census” web page ([www.agcensus.usda.gov/Partners](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Partners)). Encourage them to use the 2012 Census of Agriculture logos (English and Spanish) and other materials.
- Adapt existing print and web-based materials (including PowerPoint presentations and videos) for use in communicating with producers.

- Develop talking points localized for your state—*NASS data are timely, useful, and reliable; they are widely used for program development, resource allocation, and other purposes; obtaining good census data requires universal participation; underrepresented farmers and ranchers must participate to be visible and heard in future decision making; census data provide useful information to local producers (with examples from the 2007 census).*
- Speak out. Participate in media outreach and interviews (radio, television, print, and web); create public service announcements; speak at CBO meetings and community events; participate in and exhibit at local and national trade shows and symposia.
- Work with tribal leaders. Consistent with Executive Order 13175 requiring consultation with tribes, develop an outreach strategy with the tribal leadership to promote awareness and participation.
- Collaborate with other USDA agencies conducting educational and outreach activities. Piggybacking census outreach on related activities helps to maximize limited resources. USDA agencies with related missions and themes include the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development.
- Work with CBOs to plan effective use of limited funds. Distributing flyers, placing articles in a local newspaper, securing local radio coverage, putting announcements in church bulletins, and mailing material directly from CBO partners are all effective and cost-effective ways to secure local participation.
- Send information to NASS Public Affairs ([Krissy.Young@nass.usda.gov](mailto:Krissy.Young@nass.usda.gov)) about CBO activities and outreach for posting to Twitter, including pictures and information on speeches, meetings, and other events. With thousands of followers, Twitter is a great tool for sharing about NASS, the census, and CBO partners.

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## CBO Activities

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CBOs—with their links to members, clients, and the communities in which they live—are ideally suited to promoting the Census of Agriculture and encouraging underserved populations to participate. Consider the following suggestions. Identify your own innovative ideas for reaching underserved producers in your

area. Then make your plan in collaboration with NASS, taking into account your resources and limited funds available from NASS.



- Check the NASS “Help Us Promote the Census” web page ([www.agcensus.usda.gov/Partners](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Partners)) frequently for materials, opportunities, ideas, and publicity tools to promote the census.
- “Share Your Story” about how the census benefits you as a producer, your organization, or your community ([www.agcensus.usda.gov/Census\\_Story](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Census_Story)).
- Use the available logos and web buttons and banners to promote the census in your materials. Link your web page directly to the Census of Agriculture website.\*
- Invite your NASS field office director to make presentations at your annual meetings and other events and to work with your organization on ways to use census data.
- Use existing 2007 census data to show how valuable the data are. For example, use the data 1)

when you describe your organization’s mission or apply for grants, and 2) to compare the producers you serve relative to other producers in your state. See the “Find Data By” heading on the Census of Agriculture web page.

- Include articles or ads written by you or NASS in your newsletters or other communication tools.
- Encourage outside media outlets and press contacts to include census articles and/or radio advertisements.
- Identify and/or contact media outlets to assist with census promotion.
- Endorse and distribute NASS promotional materials at farm- and ranch-related events. For example, put census flyers under windshield wipers at livestock and other agricultural events.
- Post signs, posters, and window clings where they will be widely seen.
- Become familiar with the census questionnaire so you can explain it well to your members and clients.
- Promote the census at local farm group, agribusiness, and church business meetings, as well as at other special local events, including family gatherings.
- Include census-promoting taglines on your website, at all census events, and in banners and posters at businesses, churches, and community centers. Official NASS census taglines include:
  - “There’s strength in numbers.”
  - “Your voice, your future, your responsibility.”

\*NOTE: Use the 2012 Census of Agriculture logos, buttons, and banners liberally to promote the census. Do not use the NASS or USDA logo without obtaining permission through the NASS field office.

## Notes

<i>Use this space for note taking or to brainstorm additional strategies and activities to promote the census among underserved farmers and ranchers.</i>	NASS	CBO



## Collect the Data

The task of collecting census data is likely to be labor-intensive, since follow up is needed for anyone who does not respond to the initial census questionnaire. Participation in the Census of Agriculture is mandatory by law. It is important to obtain responses from all agricultural producers.

Underserved producers, in particular, may need follow up since they may face additional obstacles in attempting to respond. Potential obstacles include 1) complexity of the census form, 2) uncertainty about whether they are considered an agricultural operation, and 3) fear of reporting to a government agency. By working with their members and clients, CBOs can help farmers and ranchers overcome such obstacles and help to increase their participation in the census.

## NASS Activities

To help CBOs increase their members' and clients' participation in the agriculture census, NASS field offices can:

- Encourage CBOs to use the resources available on the "Help Us Promote the Census" web page ([www.agcensus.usda.gov/Partners](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Partners)).
- Encourage CBOs to link their websites directly to the "Respond Online" button that will be available once the census questionnaires are mailed.
- Provide NASDA-trained enumerators in many settings and at many events to assist farmers and ranchers who are willing to fill out the census questionnaire but may face language or other obstacles. By providing help in completing the form, enumerators increase the census participation rate. CBO members trained as enumerators can be particularly useful in this role.\*

## CBO Activities

CBOs can undertake a wide variety of activities to get farmers and ranchers to complete their census forms. Consider the ideas mentioned here, but also think about what kinds of activities and events will best help your members and clients complete their questionnaire, whether online or by mail, telephone, or personal interview.

- At every opportunity, encourage farmers to complete their questionnaires. Ask:
  - *Did you receive your Census of Agriculture form?*
  - *Have you returned it?*
  - *Would you like assistance filling it out?*
- Provide a link on your website to the "Respond Online" button that will be available on the census web page ([www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)) once the questionnaires are mailed. Individuals who receive the questionnaire in the mail may choose to respond online instead of by mail.
- Include NASS staff and trained NASDA enumerators at CBO events such as membership meetings or agricultural education days. Include time during which producers can receive guidance in completing their census questionnaires.\*
- Collaborate with other CBOs and share space, resources, and staff time to host or support events and activities at which NASS or NASDA staff provide census assistance.\*

\*NOTE: Only NASS staff and trained NASDA enumerators are qualified to complete the census questionnaire with the individual. CBO staff and others can encourage producers and provide stories and evidence about why producers should complete the questionnaire, but they may not get directly involved in collecting a producer's information.

## Notes

<i>Use this space for note taking or to brainstorm additional strategies and activities to help underserved farmers and ranchers complete their census forms.</i>	NASS	CBO

## 5. After the Census: Continue the Partnerships

Collecting and issuing agricultural statistics every five years should not be the only partnership activity between NASS and the CBOs. After the 2012 census, keep the partnership active during the years leading to the next census cycle.

### NASS Activities

NASS field offices should take—and make—opportunities to thank CBOs for their help, show the value of the census data to CBOs individually and collectively, and keep the relationship(s) active. For example:

- ❑ When NASS releases the 2012 Census of Agriculture findings, set up a time to present pertinent information back to partnering CBOs. Show what the data tell about the populations represented by the CBO. Show how their numbers, demographics, and economic impact may have changed from previous censuses. Develop and enhance communication tools to reach CBO clients and the general public.
- ❑ With assistance from NASS headquarters and other USDA agencies, help your CBO partners identify and locate data for potential grant opportunities for their organizations. Completing a grant application may require assistance by field office staff to “mine” key data out of the new census.
- ❑ Your CBO partner may have ongoing events, celebrations, or special meetings throughout the year. Make yourself available and be part of the program if requested. You might consider creating an educational/informational program not specifically NASS-based, but related to math or agriculture. Outreach doesn’t always have to be census or survey driven. Participating in partnering activities with CBOs fosters collaboration, furthers stewardship, and continues to build trust.
- ❑ The year after NASS releases the census data is a good time to start planning for the next census. Sit down with your CBO partner(s), use what you learned last time, and map out a new strategy. This NASS–CBO partnership is a great network of support. Find new ways to collaborate—exchange ideas and identify ways to share resources.
- ❑ Continue to develop outreach materials that convey a consistent image (brand). Repeat and reinforce the image so CBO partners and potential partners recognize and help promote the NASS mission and philosophy. Work with NASS headquarters to keep messages consistent.

- ❑ In addition to nurturing your current partnerships, work equally hard to find, develop, and nurture good relationships with new partners. Make sure they know each other and develop good working relationships in advance of the next Census of Agriculture.
- ❑ Give feedback to NASS headquarters on what you learned about reaching out to underserved farmers and ranchers so your experience and the lessons you learned can inform future agency communications activities.

### CBO Activities

One of the most important recommendations to come from the 2007 partnership experience was that NASS’s outreach to minority and other underserved populations should continue in the years between censuses. CBOs can do their part to remain active partners. For example:

- ❑ Revise your mission statement to include something like this: “Improving the quality of data provided by the United States Department of Agriculture / National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA/NASS) to more accurately reflect the role of minority / underserved farmers and ranchers.”
- ❑ Continue to promote the importance of census participation at all CBO events and meetings by displaying census banners and including census participation statements in publications, flyers, documents, and on your website.
- ❑ Help your members and clients understand the value of being counted in the census. Appendix B reports on some of the many ways USDA agencies use census data in determining programs, funding levels, and priorities. This does not include additional uses by other federal departments, state agencies, universities, companies, and private research organizations.
- ❑ After reviewing the 2012 census results, express any concerns about the data so NASS and CBOs can plan strategies to increase the level of participation by underserved producers in future censuses.

### CBOs Partnering with Other CBOs

Individual CBOs are committed to helping farmers and ranchers ensure that the country has a safe and bountiful supply of food and fiber. CBOs share the same goal, but may have different paths, with CBOs each using



# Appendix A. Partnership Implementation Plan\*

**GOAL: Increase the Participation of [identify specific underserved target populations] in the 2012 Census of Agriculture**

## KEY MESSAGES

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## TOOLS/MATERIALS [identify materials to be developed/who is lead]

**NASS      CBO**

- |          | <b>NASS</b> | <b>CBO</b> |
|----------|-------------|------------|
| 1. _____ | _____       | _____      |
| 2. _____ | _____       | _____      |
| 3. _____ | _____       | _____      |
| 4. _____ | _____       | _____      |
| 5. _____ | _____       | _____      |
| 6. _____ | _____       | _____      |
| 7. _____ | _____       | _____      |

## TOOLS/MEETINGS [identify public meetings/who organizing]

- |          | <b>NASS</b> | <b>CBO</b> |
|----------|-------------|------------|
| 1. _____ | _____       | _____      |
| 2. _____ | _____       | _____      |
| 3. _____ | _____       | _____      |
| 4. _____ | _____       | _____      |
| 5. _____ | _____       | _____      |
| 6. _____ | _____       | _____      |
| 7. _____ | _____       | _____      |

## STRATEGIES and ACTIVITIES

**Get to Know Each Other** [consult pp. 9-10 for ideas, then brainstorm and choose your own]

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**Clarify Expectations / Sign MOU** [consult pp. 11-12 for ideas, then brainstorm and choose your own]

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\*Available through the NASS field office as a Word document.



**Build the List** [consult pp. 13-14 for ideas, then brainstorm and choose your own]

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**Promote the Census** [consult pp. 15-16 for ideas, then brainstorm and choose your own]

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**Collect Data** [consult p. 17 for ideas, then brainstorm and choose your own]

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**Identify Lessons Learned** [identify what you would do the same/do differently next time]

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**Continue the Partnership** [consult pp. 18-19 for ideas, then brainstorm and choose your own]

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## Appendix B. USDA Agencies Use Agriculture Census Data

### Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

- Center for Animal Health Information and Analysis (CAHIA/CEAH)
- Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH)
- National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS/CEAH)
- National Surveillance Unit (NSU/CEAH)
- Plant Epidemiology and Risk Analysis Laboratory (PERAL)
- Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ)

### Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

#### Economic Research Service (ERS)

- Commodity Market Analysis and Outlook Program (specifically fruit and tree nuts)
- Commodity Outlook Program (Rice Outlook)
- Farm Household Well-Being Briefing Room

#### Farm Service Agency (FSA)

- Direct Loan Program
- Guaranteed Loan Program
- Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher Self-Determination Tool

#### Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program
- Agriculture Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)
- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI)
- Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning (CNMP)
- Conservation Innovation Grants
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)
- Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- EQIP Organic Initiative
- Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)
- Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
- Watershed Rehabilitation Program
- Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

In August 2010, NASS conducted a survey to determine how USDA offices and agencies use Census of Agriculture data. Twenty-four individuals from five USDA agencies responded. These self-selected responses show some of the many ways USDA uses the census data in identifying concerns, developing programs, allocating resources, and planning for the future. The detailed responses mentioned more than two dozen specific USDA programs/areas in these agencies alone that use the data for a wide range of purposes, including civil rights, conservation technical assistance, research programs, policy and program development, and rulemaking.

### Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Data produced by the Census of Agriculture benefit producers and consumers of animal products. The data provide essential insights about U.S. farmers, farm operations, production, and location. Specifically, APHIS uses census data to:

- Provide timely factual information about animal health, animal welfare, animal production, product wholesomeness, and environmental impact (NAHMS/CEAH).
- Conduct animal health surveillance through analysis, design, evaluation, integration, coordination, prioritization, and communication (NSU/CEAH).
- Investigate swine disease and scrapie outbreak, including generating relevant maps using county and state data.
- Identify, evaluate, and analyze risk and risk factors to strengthen capacity for global animal disease prevention, detection, and response (CAHIA/CEAH).
- Make risk assessments that are more objective, accurate, transparent, and defensible, helping to facilitate trade while still protecting American agricultural and natural resources (PPQ). Risk assessments are used in import regulatory policy, export market access, and support of domestic and emergency pest programs (PERAL).
- Develop disease spread models using small area estimates, primarily census county-level data (CAHIA/CEAH).
- Analyze tuberculosis and Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (commonly known as “mad cow”) disease control programs—predicting disease spread would be nearly impossible without the census data (NAHMS/CEAH).

- Evaluate the effects of rules as required by statute and executive order.
- Generate sampling results representative of a particular inference population. Without the census data the efficiency of the sample design would be significantly reduced.
- Assign sampling priorities by population ranking.
- Identify the number, size, and type of animal operations and their distribution at the county level.

### ARS Researchers and Program Managers Rely on Census Data

The census is the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the nation. With comparable data across time and geographic areas, it is a rich source of information for scientists at universities and government agencies such as USDA's Agricultural Research Service. As USDA's chief scientific in-house research agency, ARS conducts hundreds of research projects on agricultural problems and prospects. ARS scientists and program managers routinely rely on Census of Agriculture data in designing research programs and communicating information and findings through publications, presentations, articles, and the web.

## Economic Research Service

ERS relies on NASS Census of Agriculture data for information on basic farm characteristics by state, for estimates of U.S. agricultural productivity, and in preparing a wide range of reports, briefings, and analyses for USDA and Congressional policymakers. For example, ERS uses census data to:

- Develop farm-level measures of manure-nutrient production and nutrient assimilative capacity aggregated to the county and regional level for analysis and reporting purposes.
- Support the research and outlook activities of the fruit and tree nuts market analysis and outlook program.
- Estimate the value of farm business real estate assets, the total U.S. value of farm business real estate assets, and imputed rental income by state.
- Distribute regional expense estimates generated by the Agricultural Resource Management Survey

- (ARMS) for 33 states for which ARMS does not directly generate expense estimates.
- Distribute ARMS U.S. estimate of farm-related income.
- Generate expense and farm-related income estimates for Alaska.
- Estimate Hawaii's cash receipt values by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) categories. Hawaii's hired labor expense is used directly in the census year; between census years it comes from the Farm Labor Survey. Landlord data from the Agricultural Economics and Land Ownership Survey are used to 1) distribute ARMS estimates of landlord expenses by region to states within regions and 2) generate other landlord expenses by state.
- Sample and calibrate the ARMS estimates on an annual basis.
- Provide data for the Manure Management for Water Quality research project and the Manure Management for Multimedia Environmental Improvement project.
- Obtain information on population, income, education, employment, federal funds, organic agriculture, farm characteristics, farm financial indicators, top commodities, and exports, for each U.S. state.
- Describe and analyze farm size and structure, land use in farming, farm tenure, and operator characteristics.
- Select states and commodity production ranges for commodity-specific surveys and initial analyses of feasibility of surveys for some commodities.
- Develop baseline information on agricultural land use, by county.

## Farm Service Agency

FSA administers farm commodity, crop insurance, credit, environmental, conservation, and emergency assistance programs for farmers and ranchers. It uses agriculture census data to:

- Determine eligibility criteria for beginning farmer loans.
- Establish targets for increasing lending to beginning farmers, minority operators, and women operators.
- Target loan funds in the farm ownership and operating programs for applicants from underserved populations (women, African Americans, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asians, and Pacific Islanders).
- Help determine baseline numbers for outreach efforts.

- Measure agency program delivery and identify outreach needs using race, ethnicity, and gender baseline data at the county level.
- Establish potential participation in USDA programs and services using farm operation baselines at the county level.
- Allocate funds to states.

## Natural Resources Conservation Service

NASS Census of Agriculture data support NRCS goals of reducing soil erosion; increasing wildlife habitat; protecting surface water and groundwater; providing incentives for agricultural producers to implement conservation stewardship and environmental protection measures; and increasing lending to beginning farmers, minorities, and women. NRCS uses census data to:

- Determine financial and technical assistance awarded to states.
- Verify that NRCS district conservationists are familiar with the demographics of the geographic area served by the field office.
- Determine outreach recommendations and/or required actions (Civil Rights Division).
- Help determine locations requiring special emphasis, which may impact staffing.
- Design outreach to nontraditional customers by using the data as a basis for a number count or grouping by similar characteristics.
- Evaluate technical assistance needs and watershed-scale resource concerns, and establish potential focus areas for technical assistance.
- Establish easement compensation when it is not practical to contract an area-wide market survey or when adequate real estate data do not exist on pasture and ranch sales of encumbered properties.
- Develop policy on farm parcel size and dividing parcels under a conservation easement.
- Measure potential workload: the more farms and ranches, the greater the number of potential customers and thus the greater the demand for technical assistance with conservation planning and practice application.
- Represent the customer base and the Conservation Technical Assistance program, which is available to all agricultural producers across the nation.
- Identify potential conservation needs in large geographic areas when used in conjunction with other land use information.
- Describe an affected environment for watershed project planning.
- Identify special characteristics of a project area, such as minority operators.
- Calculate the agricultural benefits and costs for the agricultural portion of a watershed project.
- Describe the importance of agriculture in a watershed project planning area.
- Evaluate various implementation alternatives at a watershed level.
- Provide financial and technical assistance help eligible producers install or implement conservation practices on eligible agricultural land (EQIP).
- Provide technical assistance and up to 75 percent cost-share assistance to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat (WHIP).
- Support air quality conservation by comparing counties with significant agricultural production that have air quality issues.
- Establish easement compensation values.
- Identify change in farmland acres, number of farms, and size of farms.
- Establish geographic area rate caps for the Grassland Reserve Program.
- Calculate state staffing allocation formulas and methodologies since these must be based on a natural resource, fact-based foundation.
- Plan and implement watershed programs that prevent damage from erosion, floodwater, and sediment and that promote conservation and proper utilization of water and land.
- Verify and supplement the program participation (Title VI) information received from a state.
- Help determine baseline numbers for outreach efforts.
- Measure agency program delivery and identify outreach needs using race, ethnicity, and gender baseline data at the county level.
- Establish potential participation in USDA programs and services using farm operation baselines at the county level.

## NASS Offices

### Headquarters

Washington, D.C.  
(800) 727-9540  
NASS@nass.usda.gov

### National Operations Center

St. Louis, Missouri  
(314) 595-9500  
NOC.administration@nass.usda.gov

**Alabama** (Montgomery)  
(800) 832-4181  
NASS-AL@nass.usda.gov

**Alaska** (Palmer)  
(800) 478-6079  
NASS-AK@nass.usda.gov

**Arizona** (Phoenix)  
(800) 645-7286  
NASS-AZ@nass.usda.gov

**Arkansas** (Little Rock)  
(800) 327-2970  
NASS-AR@nass.usda.gov

**California** (Sacramento)  
(800) 851-1127  
NASS-CA@nass.usda.gov

**Colorado** (Denver)  
(800) 392-3202  
NASS-CO@nass.usda.gov

**Connecticut** \*

**Delaware** (Dover)  
(800) 282-8685\*\*  
NASS-DE@nass.usda.gov

**Florida** (Maitland)  
(800) 344-6277  
NASS-FL@nass.usda.gov

**Georgia** (Athens)  
(800) 253-4419  
NASS-GA@nass.usda.gov

**Hawaii** (Honolulu)  
(800) 804-9514  
NASS-HI@nass.usda.gov

**Idaho** (Boise)  
(800) 691-9987  
NASS-ID@nass.usda.gov

**Illinois** (Springfield)  
(800) 622-9865  
NASS-IL@nass.usda.gov

**Indiana** (West Lafayette)  
(800) 363-0469  
NASS-IN@nass.usda.gov

**Iowa** (Des Moines)  
(800) 772-0825  
NASS-IA@nass.usda.gov

**Kansas** (Topeka)  
(800) 258-4564  
NASS-KS@nass.usda.gov

**Kentucky** (Louisville)  
(800) 928-5277  
NASS-KY@nass.usda.gov

**Louisiana** (Baton Rouge)  
(800) 256-4485  
NASS-LA@nass.usda.gov

**Maine** \*

**Maryland** (Annapolis)  
(800) 675-0295  
NASS-MD@nass.usda.gov

**Massachusetts** \*

**Michigan** (East Lansing)  
(800) 453-7501  
NASS-MI@nass.usda.gov

**Minnesota** (St. Paul)  
(800) 453-7502  
NASS-MN@nass.usda.gov

**Mississippi** (Jackson)  
(800) 535-9609  
NASS-MS@nass.usda.gov

**Missouri** (Columbia)  
(800) 551-1014  
NASS-MO@nass.usda.gov

**Montana** (Helena)  
(800) 835-2612  
NASS-MT@nass.usda.gov

**Nebraska** (Lincoln)  
(800) 582-6443  
NASS-NE@nass.usda.gov

**Nevada** (Sparks)  
(775) 813-3960  
NASS-NV@nass.usda.gov

**New England** (Concord, NH)  
(800) 642-9571  
NASS-NH@nass.usda.gov

**New Hampshire** \*

**New Jersey** (Trenton)  
(800) 328-0179  
NASS-NJ@nass.usda.gov

**New Mexico** (Las Cruces)  
(800) 530-8810  
NASS-NM@nass.usda.gov

**New York** (Albany)  
(800) 821-1276  
NASS-NY@nass.usda.gov

**North Carolina** (Raleigh)  
(800) 437-8451  
NASS-NC@nass.usda.gov

**North Dakota** (Fargo)  
(800) 626-3134  
NASS-ND@nass.usda.gov

**Ohio** (Reynoldsburg)  
(800) 858-8144  
NASS-OH@nass.usda.gov



**Oklahoma** (Oklahoma City)  
(888) 525-9226  
NASS-OK@nass.usda.gov

**Oregon** (Portland)  
(800) 338-2157  
NASS-OR@nass.usda.gov

**Pennsylvania** (Harrisburg)  
(800) 498-1518  
NASS-PA@nass.usda.gov

**Puerto Rico** (Santurce)  
(787) 723-3773  
NASS-PR@nass.usda.gov

**Rhode Island** \*

**South Carolina** (Columbia)  
(800) 424-9406  
NASS-SC@nass.usda.gov

**South Dakota** (Sioux Falls)  
(800) 338-2557  
NASS-SD@nass.usda.gov

**Tennessee** (Nashville)  
(800) 626-0987  
NASS-TN@nass.usda.gov

**Texas** (Austin)  
(800) 626-3142  
NASS-TX@nass.usda.gov

**Utah** (Salt Lake City)  
(800) 747-8522  
NASS-UT@nass.usda.gov

**Vermont** \*

**Virginia** (Richmond)  
(800) 772-0670  
NASS-VA@nass.usda.gov

**Washington** (Olympia)  
(800) 435-5883  
NASS-WA@nass.usda.gov

**West Virginia** (Charleston)  
(800) 535-7088  
NASS-WV@nass.usda.gov

**Wisconsin** (Madison)  
(800) 789-9277  
NASS-WI@nass.usda.gov

**Wyoming** (Cheyenne)  
(800) 892-1660  
NASS-WY@nass.usda.gov

*\*See New England.*

*\*\*Toll-free only within State*

# NOTES

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[www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)



United States Department of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Statistics Service



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