

# Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**February 24-25, 2003**



**U.S. Department of Agriculture**  
**NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE**

**Summary**  
**Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics**  
**February 24-25, 2003**

The Camberley-Brown Hotel  
Louisville, Kentucky

**Attendees at Meeting**

**Members Present**

Walter J. Armbruster	Lucy C. Meyring
Roger M. Cryan	Jack C. Mitenbuler
Robert D. Epperson	Bobby R. Phills
Jacklyn Marie Folsom	Ross R. Racine
R. Edmund Gomez	James D. Rieck
Carol A. Gregg	Ira Silvergleit
Mark W. Jenner	Ranvir Singh
Ling-Jung (Kelvin) Koong (Chair)	Robert William Spear
Sheila K. Massey	Mark E. Whalon
	Ewen M. Wilson (Census Bureau Ex-Officio)

**Members Absent**

Phil Fulton (Ex-Officio)	Andrew W. LaVigne
John I. Gifford	Hugh A. Warren
Mark Lange	Ronald C. Wimberley
William G. Lapp	Ivan W. Wyatt

**NASS Personnel Participating:**

Ron Bosecker, Administrator  
Carol House, Committee Executive Director and Associate Administrator  
Joe Reilly, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations  
Rich Allen, Deputy Administrator for Programs and Products  
Marshall Dantzler, Director of Census and Survey Division  
George Hanuschak, Director of Research and Development Division  
Jack Nealon, Director of Information Technology Division  
Leland Brown, Kentucky State Statistician  
Kent Hoover, Branch Chief , Census Planning Branch

**Other NASS Personnel Present:**

Rod DeSmet

Dale Hawks

**Guests Present:**

Mrs. Ranvir Singh

Gary Crenshaw, Marion County Farm Service Agency (FSA) Office

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## **Day One Summary - February 24, 2003**

### **I. Introduction**

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair, Kelvin Koong on February 24, 2003 at 8:15 a.m. Committee Members and NASS staff were asked to introduce themselves. Kelvin proceeded by asking Executive Director, Carol House, to give an overview of the meeting.

Carol House briefly went over the meeting plans and what to expect. The meeting would be all day with various presentations and a discussion after each. We will also have the NASS confidentiality form for everyone to sign. Signing this form basically means that you will not divulge individual farm data. The main reason for the meeting taking place in Louisville, Kentucky is to facilitate a tour of the National Processing Center (NPC) in Jeffersonville, Indiana. The Census Bureau will host us on that tour tomorrow. This year our census reports are mailed out and returned to that facility and for the first time we are scanning those questionnaires. We are going to be able to see the whole process. We will return from the tour to discuss recommendations of the committee with adjournment at 1:00 p.m. Starting at 2:00 p.m. the hog subcommittee will have a public meeting to discuss the monthly hog estimation program.

### **II. Welcome to Kentucky**

Kelvin Koong introduced Leland Brown, host State Statistician for Kentucky, to welcome the Committee to Louisville, Kentucky. Since the city merged with Jefferson County, it is the 16<sup>th</sup> largest city in the U.S. with a population of approximately one million. Leland gave an overview of Kentucky agriculture which has about 88,000 farms and ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in U. S. with land in farms (13.6 million acres). Kentucky's cash receipts on farm commodities for 2001 totaled \$3.5 billion with some of top commodity breakdown as followed: horses - \$800 million, broilers and eggs - \$566 million, cattle and calves - \$500 million, and corn - \$283 million. Kentucky agriculture is well diversified, including tobacco, goats, aquaculture, fruits/vegetables, bison, vineyards and wineries, and horticulture.

### **III. State of NASS**

Ron Bosecker, the Administrator of NASS, made a presentation on the state of NASS and the 2002 accomplishments. NASS released two special reports in 2002. In September, an update of the *U.S. Hog Breeding Structure* report was issued. This report built on information provided in the 2001 report and included data on the changes in the makeup of the breeding herd by size of operation and the efficiency of the breeding herd in recent years. The second report, *U.S. Dairy Herd Structure*, was released in late September. This report contained a summary of the changes in the structure of the U.S. dairy herd by size of operation and geographic location. Two new environmental data products were provided in 2002 when the *Agricultural Chemical Usage, Postharvest Applications - Wheat*, and the *Agricultural Chemical Usage, 2001 Dairy Cattle and*

*Diary Facilities Summary* were published, containing information on application rates for specific chemical active ingredients and total amounts applied.

For the 2002 Farm Bill, the Market Year Average (MYA) price data was used extensively in formulating the calculations for the counter cyclical payments. The Agricultural Resource Management Surveys (ARMS), which are reimbursable projects with Economic Research Service (ERS), provided statistical analysis data for the Farm Bill. The impact of the Farm Bill had new developments in farm conservation. The Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) has asked NASS to help in measuring the effectiveness of the conservation programs that NRCS administrates. We have begun negotiations on a survey to measure this effectiveness.

Preparations have started for the 2007 Census of Agriculture. The Committee members discussed some of the items that might need to be included or excluded from the 2007 Census of Agriculture. Several of the members made comments on how important NASS statistics have been for small farmers and other agricultural groups who depend on the statistics for their livelihood.

#### **IV. Administrative Data**

Administrative data is data collected through an administrative process, often by other government agencies. NASS needs to determine how to use administrative data for publishing the best estimates possible. For example, Farm Service Agency (FSA) has a soybean acreage program in which farmers' sign-up their acreage. NASS should be able to use this data to help refine current estimates and replace some survey efforts. Current uses of administrative data are NASS' use of weighted monthly livestock prices from the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) mandatory reporting system. Another potential effort is to use AMS cotton classing data to replace the Cotton Ginnings Survey.

An example that involves data handling is the livestock slaughter program. NASS edits and summarizes data collected by Food Safety Inspectors Service (FSIS) inspectors from weekly plant submissions. NASS maintains all individual files while AMS publishes the weekly report.

NASS is currently working to make sure States regulatory lists are available in the State Statistical Office. State Statistical Offices provides processing services to help meet State Departments of Agriculture needs.

NASS will not break our confidentiality pledge even under emergency situations. NASS has pledged to help notify producers if there is a national emergency. We would do whatever we can do to get information to the farmers without disclosing personal data.

#### **V. Monthly Hogs and Pigs Report History**

Rich Allen gave a presentation outlining the monthly hogs and pigs report. It was requested by industry, after the December 1998 price collapse, with Public Law 106-78 (10-22-99). This law

required NASS to publish a Monthly Hog and Pig Inventory Report. The monthly hogs and pigs report only focuses on breeding and farrowing operations. The law stated we should keep the quarterly survey, while we work on the monthly. The industry's main concern is while trying to keep the monthly report operational, it has negatively impacted responses of the quarterly report. Last year a meeting was held in Iowa to evaluate user response to the monthly report. Meeting participants expressed concerns, but recommended that the survey should be given more time. Since the meeting a year ago, response rates have dropped and the committee decided to form a subcommittee to review the performance of the monthly hogs and pigs report. The subcommittee members would be Dr. Mark Jenner, Carol Gregg, Dr. Ewen Wilson, and Jack Mitenbuler from the ACAS. The hog industry representatives would be Shayle Shagam, Don Killingsworth, Steve Meyer, Ron Plain, Jim Robb, Mike Hoover, Joel Van Gist, and Jim Ellis. The subcommittee would report the recommendations to the ACAS, which would be forwarded to the Secretary.

## **VI. Other NASS Issues**

Carol House presented some of the other issues that NASS is currently working on. E-government is allowing the public easy access to government information and for others within the government to access other agency information. Authentication is validating a producer who wants to enter a USDA website to respond to something that is only for that producer. A farmer would be able to apply for grants and complete questionnaires online. This online access is mandated throughout the federal government. NASS is proceeding with putting surveys on the web. Currently crop weather, quarterly grain stocks, and a grape survey in Texas are being tested.

NASS is in the process of trying to integrate data between ARMS and Census. If an operation was selected for the ARMS survey then a census form was not mailed. The ARMS surveys are surveyed with a personal interview and the census form is generated from that survey. We will work on alternatives of what is the best procedure without over burdening big operators.

NASS is collaborating with Natural Resource and Conservation Service (NRCS) to help evaluate the conservation programs in the Farm Bill. They are not set up to do this evaluation independently. We are looking forward to working with NRCS because both agencies set farmland estimates. They make estimates of pasture, cropland, urban and non-urban land and there is a lot of press coverage after they release land use estimates. We are working closely with them to understand and explain the differences in our land usage numbers.

In addition, NASS is collaborating with FSA at the National level to utilize and understand FSA information that farmers currently provide on program crops. NASS has assigned a person to act as a liaison to study their data and give us a better understanding of how we can utilize the information. FSA is currently digitizing the fields into tracts with the hope of maintaining information more efficiently.

## **VII. An overview of the 2002 Census of Agriculture**

Kent Hoover gave an overview of the 2002 Census of Agriculture progress. The time line for data collection is from December 2002 until August 2003. The pre data capture will be done by NPC from January 2003 until June 2003. Data capture activity will start in January 2003 and conclude in July 2003. The time-consuming activity of processing data will begin in March 2003 and continue until publishing the release in February 2004.

The Farm Identification Survey (FIS) was a one page survey that was mailed in April 2002 and July 2002, trying to determine whether or not people are farming. It was mailed to approximately 1.16 million potential farms which resulted in 365 thousand probable farms. The FIS helped test some of the systems that would be used for checking in the 2002 Census of Agriculture. Also, the FIS helped narrow the scope of potential farm operators.

Wyoming, Montana, Oklahoma, and Kentucky are the four calling centers that were in operation to respond to questions from farm operators.

The 2002 Census of Agriculture was mailed out on December 16, 2002 with the first follow-up February 6-14, and the second follow-up March 25-31. Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) will be conducted from February until June when counties are expected to be 75 percent completed. Two NASS analysts will be staffed at NPC to help with the processing of the questionnaires. Scanning has allowed SSO and HQ to see the data sooner.

## **VIII. Census Publicity\Products: 2002 and a Look at 2007**

Rich Allen presented the goals of the 2002 Census of Agriculture. Our goal is to try to do slightly better than in 1997. For the 1997 Census of Agriculture, the response rate was 86.2 percent, the goal for 2002 Census of Agriculture response rate is 86.5 percent. Currently, we are below last census at this time, but hopefully we will be able to make the goal. The publicity role of Headquarters is to cover the national scope while the SSO's cover the regional, state, and local scope. Headquarters prepares materials for selection and customization by states. To promote the 2002 Census of Agriculture, partners tool kits were created which contained several items for publicity (i.e. bookmarks, brochures, and drop-in advertisements). Also, NASS planned to visit organizations, and trade shows. NASS supported different types of media which included both local and major interviews, airing audio and video spots, and printed new releases in organizational newsletters. Targeted low response areas and grass root organizations in certain states with a test project of public relations spots. NASS hired a public relation consulting firm to help with the specific strategies of promoting the census.

The 2002 Census of Agriculture Volume I Geographic area series will be released in February 2004. Other special studies will be the 2003 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey which will be released in December 2004. The 2004 Horticulture Census will be released December 2005. The 2005 Census of Aquaculture will be released December 2006.



The philosophy of the census of agriculture is that it asks a little bit about a lot of things. In 2007, what facts will commodity groups want to know and what type of special crop tabulation will be requested. Some assumptions will have to be made by 2007, NASS will: publish crop yields by farm size; release a report on US dairy herd structure and US broiler industry structure; offer electronic reporting; create personalized instruments with previous reported data. For data dissemination NASS will have a basic “define your own” tables capability on the web. We are now asking the question what should NASS keep, delete or add in designing the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

The committee members discussed several possible questions that might want to be asked in the 2007 Census of Agriculture. More information will be needed on Native American reservations and minority farms, agricultural tourism, speciality crops, environmental issues and economic indicators or trends. Some of these issues will become more important by 2007.

#### **IX. New Chairperson**

The election committee nominated Dr. Mark Jenner to serve as Chairperson for the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics, beginning in January 1, 2004. Dr. Jenner accepted the nomination and was approved by attending members.

#### **X. National Processing Center Administration**

The NPC administrative staff gave an overview of the facility that would be toured on Tuesday morning. NPC swore in all persons that were going on the tour as “Census Employees.”

#### **XI. Closing Remarks for the Advisory Committee**

Carol House announced that the next meeting is tentatively scheduled for early 2004 and will be held in Washington, D.C. the same week as the World Agriculture Outlook Board Forum. The meeting was adjourned.

## **XII. Committee Recommendations**

### Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that NASS develop standards and procedures, in time for the release of the 2002 Census of Agriculture, to allow for the briefing of the Commissioners of Agriculture, and/or their equivalents or designees. The briefing would be three hours prior to the release of nonmarket sensitive reports. The information presented in the briefings would be embargoed until the public release of the NASS report, but the early briefing would allow commissioners time to prepare for public questions. The committee offers the following guidelines for the procedures and requests that NASS allow the committee the opportunity to review and comment on the draft procedures.

- Briefing would be conducted by the State Statistician or other appropriate NASS representative.
- Briefing would be based on an executive summary or press release prepared from the full report.
- The commissioner should sign the standard NASS non-disclosure form. Any designee should be identified in advance.

### Recommendation 2

The 2002 Census of Agriculture used special procedures on Indian Reservations in MT, SD and ND, which left a large void in coverage of reservations in the Agriculture Census in other states. The committee recommends that the Secretary of Agriculture and NASS conduct a follow-on survey of Indian Reservations and this survey be completed prior to 2005. Further, the committee recommends that the Secretary and NASS assist and support the securing of funding to accomplish this task.

### Recommendation 3

The committee formed a subcommittee to address census gathering and data correlation for minority agriculture groups. The members of this subcommittee are Dr. Bobby Phills, Edmund Gomez, Sheila Massey, Ross Racine, and a NASS employee to be named.

### Recommendation 4

Whereas the availability of accurate information is necessary for the department to:

- Provide data for markets to function;
- Perform mandatory monitoring of agricultural programs; and

-Provide information to congress for decision making regarding food programs for the needy, financing for agriculture, food safety programs, and soil and moisture conservation.

The committee therefore recommends that the Secretary of Agriculture make every effort to maintain the strict confidentiality of all data collected under the provisions of the United States code (Title 7, Section 2276) in order to maintain the cooperation of all those providing this voluntary data.

#### Recommendation 5

In order to expand support of NASS programs at the state and local levels and to assist in preparation for the 2007 Census of Agriculture, the committee strongly recommends that all State Statisticians conduct annual focus group meetings commencing in 2003 for the purpose of strengthening program efforts at the state level and preparing state strategies for the anticipated success of the 2007 Census of Agriculture. Through this process, every effort will be made to be inclusive of all eligible farmers and ranchers in their respective states. The focus groups will include representatives from all sectors of the agricultural and academic community.

#### Recommendation 6

The Committee strongly supports the accelerated adoption of valuable Integrated Pest Management practices on agricultural working lands in the United States. In accordance, the Committee supports the formation of a partnership between NASS, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and other stakeholder organizations to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation programs imbedded in the 2002 Farm Bill. The committee recommends that the evaluation incorporate measures of IPM adoption and biological metrics to evaluate IPM effectiveness across the array of major and minor crops.

#### Recommendation 7 (Refer to Appendix II - Report of Subcommittee)

Inasmuch as the NASS Monthly Hogs and Pigs Report appears to be of minimal value to the industry and is a burden on producer respondents, and whereas the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs Report provides valuable, detailed, and state-level data, the subcommittee appointed to examine the hog survey, concerned that the monthly report could adversely affect the quality of the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs Report, hereby recommends:

- That the Monthly Hogs and Pigs Survey be discontinued as soon as possible,
- That the budget savings, thereby realized, be used to enhance and improve the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs Survey,
- That NASS work with hog producers to make the quarterly survey consistent with industry records and,
- That NASS develop electronic reporting instruments.

## Appendix I - Agenda

### New Advisory Committee Members Orientation: Sunday, February 23 at 4 pm

### Monday, February 24

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic\Activity</b>	<b>Discussion Leader</b>
8:00 a.m.	Call to Order and Introduction	Kelvin Koong, Committee Chair
8:10 a.m.	Meeting Plans	Carol House, Acting Associate Administrator and Committee Executive Director
8:30 a.m.	Welcome to Louisville, Kentucky	Lee Brown, State Statistician Kentucky SSO
8:45 a.m.	Administrator's <i>'State of NASS'</i>	R. Ronald Bosecker, Administrator
9:30 a.m.	BREAK	
9:45 a.m.	Discussion on <i>'State of NASS'</i>	Kelvin Koong
10:15 a.m.	Administrative Data	Rich Allen, Deputy Administrator for Programs and Products
10:45 a.m.	Discussion on Administrative Data	Kelvin Koong
11:15 a.m.	Advisory Subcommittee for Hogs	Steve Wiyatt, Director Statistics Division
11:30 a.m.	Discussion on Subcommittee for Hogs	Kelvin Koong
11:45 a.m.	Lunch	
12:45 p.m.	Update on Other NASS Issues	Carol House
1:15 p.m.	Discussion on Other NASS Issues	Kelvin Koong
1:45 p.m.	Overview of the 2002 Census of Agriculture	Marshall Dantzer, Director Census and Survey Division

**Monday, February 24 (Continued)**

<b><u>Time</u></b>	<b><u>Topic\Activity</u></b>	<b><u>Discussion Leader</u></b>
2:15 p.m.	Census Publicity\Product: 2002 and a Look at 2007	Rich Allen
3:00 p.m.	Break	
3:15 p.m.	Census Publicity\Product: 2002 and a Look at 2007	Kelvin Koong
3:45 p.m.	Public Questions and Comments	Kelvin Koong
4:15 p.m.	National Processing Center Administration	Judith Petty Director of NPC
4:45 p.m.	Wrap up and Logistics for Tuesday NPC Tour	Carol House
5:00 p.m.	Adjourn	
5:15 p.m.	Reception	

**Tuesday, February 25**

7:00 a.m.	Breakfast	
8:15 a.m.	Bus Leaves for NPC	
8:30 a.m.	Tour of NPC	
11:15 a.m.	Bus Leaves for The Brown	
11:30 a.m.	Committee Recommendations	Kelvin Koong
12:45 p.m.	Closing Remarks	Carol House
1:00 p.m.	ADJOURN	

## **Appendix II Report of Subcommittee on the Hogs and Pigs Estimation Program**

Mark Jenner was selected as the Subcommittee Chair.

A subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics was convened in February 2003 to review USDA's hog estimation program and determine what course of action, if any, should be taken to resolve perceived problems with the monthly hog estimation program. After detailed review, the unanimous recommendations of the subcommittee follow below.

### **Subcommittee Recommendations**

Inasmuch as the NASS Monthly Hogs and Pigs Report appears to be of minimal value to the industry and is a burden on producer respondents, and whereas the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs Report provides valuable, detailed, and state-level data, the subcommittee appointed to examine the hog survey, concerned that the monthly report could adversely affect the quality of the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs Report, hereby recommends:

- That the Monthly Hogs and Pigs Survey be discontinued as soon as possible,
- That the budget savings, thereby realized, be used to enhance and improve the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs Survey,
- That NASS work with hog producers to make the quarterly survey consistent with industry records and,
- That NASS develop electronic reporting instruments.

### **Background**

In December 1998, an unexpected large number of hogs came to market, straining slaughter capacity and causing low prices. As a result of this extreme market response, representatives within the pork industry pushed for a monthly survey. Industry analysts believed that monthly reports would aid in forecasting pig production and provide the pork industry with more knowledge and quicker realization of market conditions. This led to the passage of Public Law 106-78 on October 22, 1999. It states the following:

General. - Effective beginning not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall publish on a monthly basis the Hogs and Pigs Inventory Report.

Gestating Sows. - The Secretary shall include in a separate category of the Report the number of bred female swine that are assumed, or have been confirmed, to be pregnant during the reporting period.

Phase-Out. - Effective for a period of eight quarters after the implementation of the monthly report required under subsection (a), the Secretary shall continue to maintain and publish on a quarterly basis the Hogs and Pigs Inventory Report published on or before the date of the enactment of this Act.

The Monthly Hogs and Pigs Survey questionnaire was developed to be consistent with the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs Survey questionnaire. To maintain consistency between monthly and quarterly surveys a question was added to both surveys asking producers the number of sows and gilts that were bred the previous month. The questions and wording on the Monthly Hogs and Pigs Survey questionnaire were reviewed and agreed to by the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) and National Agricultural Statistic Service (NASS) State offices, and the questionnaire was pretested with hog producers by NASS staff in Iowa and Minnesota in mid-2000. NASS began collecting monthly hog information in October 2000. The Monthly Hogs and Pigs Survey gathers information on sow and gilt inventories, sows and gilts bred, sows and gilts farrowed, and pig crop at the U.S. level. In December 2000, NASS released the first monthly data in the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs release. In January 2001, was the first published Monthly Hogs and Pigs release, and NASS has continued to publish both monthly and quarterly releases since that time.

The response rates for the Monthly Hog Survey have been continually deteriorating due to the increased burden. This deterioration in response rate impacts the Monthly survey indication by causing a greater portion of the indication to be estimated, additionally, concern has been increasing that the monthly report has begun to adversely impact response rates to the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs Survey.

NASS met with hog industry analysts in February 2001 to discuss the negative impacts they were observing. At that time, Hogs and Pigs Report data users suggested that NASS collect the Monthly and Quarterly Hogs and Pigs Reports for another year and they expressed strong ongoing support and need for the Quarterly report. NASS has fulfilled the legislative request to collect both surveys for eight quarters. A Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics was convened with Committee members and industry analysts on February 25 and 26, 2003 to guide NASS on ways to produce the most useful information on and for the U.S. hog industry.

### **‘Lessons Learned’ Regarding the Monthly Report**

Following the extreme hog market price swings of the fall of 1998, the development of a more frequent monthly hog survey appeared to be a tool that would provide an earlier and more frequent indication of market hog supplies. Now that the Monthly Hogs and Pigs estimation program has been in place for eight quarters, the Subcommittee believes that the Monthly surveys have failed to meet expectations. Monthly Hogs and Pigs reports have failed to provide an accurate prediction of slaughter, six months in the future, with less accuracy than the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs reports. Also, it is not clear that the monthly report predicts industry expansion and/or contraction. So, the Monthly Hog and Pigs reports have not yielded the benefits anticipated by industry.

Conducting both the Monthly and Quarterly Hogs and Pigs surveys negatively impacts both NASS operations and imposes additional respondent burden. The Monthly reports divert resources away from other NASS programs. Funds were appropriated for administering the Monthly, but they are insufficient and must be supplemented out of the NASS general budget. The Subcommittee recognizes that NASS efforts to improve response rates of the Monthly has improved the discipline of collecting the Quarterly survey information.

The Monthly Hogs and Pigs survey appears to be negatively impacting the Quarterly survey by reducing response rate. It was thought that simplifying the Monthly survey would reduce the respondent burden, but it has compounded it. According to producers' representatives who met with the subcommittee, they would rather fill out a longer form, four times per year, than a shorter form, twelve times per year.

The collection of the Monthly Hogs and Pigs surveys has reduced the information quality of the Quarterly reports. The two surveys are designed to complement each other, but they actually collect different kinds of information. The Monthly report collects a smaller amount of information about the national industry, while the Quarterly report collects more information at the state and national industry levels. --Some data - are simply lost because of the frequency of the Monthly. Information like death loss is interpreted differently on the Monthly Hogs and Pigs survey than it is on the Quarterly survey. The result is --that data responses to the same question on the two surveys ---do not match up.

The Monthly Hogs and Pigs report does not provide additional information and is not improving the information base. Therefore, the Monthly Hogs and Pigs survey should be discontinued. The Quarterly Hogs and Pigs report, then, must remain the baseline for the estimation of hog numbers.

### **Rationale for Strengthening the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs Report**

The Quarterly Hogs and Pigs report is based on a more detailed survey, a larger sample size that includes state and U.S. information, a higher response rate and a longer history. As a result, the Quarterly survey is more useful to the industry. It provides more accurate numbers, and is more cost effective.

The Subcommittee felt that there were opportunities to improve the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs survey and offered the following suggestions:

- Retain the Monthly Hogs and Pigs questions that were added to the Quarterly survey in 2000.

- Emphasize the June report by expanding sample size. Since the lifecycle of a finishing hog is about six months, a strong June report would provide the most useful information about production in the key fourth quarter.

- Ask farrowing intentions for three and four quarters in the future from the date of survey. It would also be useful to understand the annual farrowing capacity of existing facilities.



-Continue to survey all sizes of farms and strengthening response rate. It was suggested that the respondent burden might be reduced if Quarterly Survey asked producers to identify the animals on the farm by age grouping instead of weight.

The Subcommittee saw other opportunities to improve the quality of report information and to lower respondent burden by continuing efforts to align surveys with the record systems used by the industry. If information asked by NASS was contained and tabulated in record keeping software that producers' use, it would be easier to complete the survey. The Subcommittee also supports continued NASS efforts to develop electronic reporting instruments.

### **Subcommittee on Hogs and Pigs Estimation Program Participants**

Representatives from the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics:

Mark Jenner, Leader  
Carol Gregg  
Jack Mitenbuler  
Dr. Ewen Wilson, Ex-Officio

Participants with Expertise in Hog Industry Statistics

Shayle Shagam – Livestock Analyst, USDA World Agricultural Outlook Board

Don Killingsworth - Premium Standard Farms

Dr. Ron Plain - Extension Economist, University of Missouri

James Robb - Director, Livestock Marketing Information Center

Joel Van Gilst - Producer, Past President of Iowa Pork Producers

Mike Hoover – Smithfield Foods

Jim Ellis - Kentucky Hog Producer

Dr. Steve Meyer – Paragon Economics, Inc., Adel, Iowa (not present, but contributed to written report)