

MINUTES AND REPORT OF COMMITTEE ISSUES

Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics

November 30 - December 1, 1999



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

Minutes and Report of Committee Issues

Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics

*November 29 - December 1, 1999
Washington, D.C.*

U.S. Department of Agriculture
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE



Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics

At the USDA, Jamie Whitten Federal Building
Washington, D.C.
November 30, 1999

At the DoubleTree Hotel
Pentagon City, Virginia
November 30 and December 1, 1999

CONTENTS

Attendants at Meeting	iii
Executive Summary	1
(with Committee issues)	
Call to Order and Meeting Plans	5
USDA Welcome	5
Administrator's Remarks	6
Member Introductions	6
1997 Census Results and Future Plans	9
NASS Survey Program	10
NASS Reimbursable Program	11
Nominations for Committee Chair	13
State-Federal Program	13
NASS Program Review	16
Future Agricultural Statistics Issues, NASS View	19
Future Agricultural Statistics Issues, Committee View	21

(Evening Speaker)

Canadian Agriculture Statistics Program 23

(Day 2)

Call to Order and Remarks 24

Information Program 24

NASS Program Changes Review 31

Agenda (Appendix 1) 35

Members of the Advisory Committee (Appendix 2) 37

List of Background Documents (Appendix 3) 41

Attendants at Meeting

Members Present

Charles E. Adams	Mary A. Pamplin
Walter J. Armbruster	Edward J. Pennick
Robert D. Epperson	Bobby R. Phills
John I. Gifford	James D. Rieck
Carol A. Gregg	Gumecindo Salas
Mark W. Jenner	Lee F. Schrader
Thomas H. Kimmell	Topper Thorpe
Ling-Jung (Kelvin) Koong	Hugh A. Warren
Mark D. Lange	Mark E. Whalon
Sheila K. Massey	Ewen M. Wilson (Ex-Officio)
Jack C. Mitenbuler	Ron C. Wimberley

Absent

Arthur R. Brown
Andrew W. LaVigne
Ross R. Racine
Ivan W. Wyatt

USDA Personnel Participating

Rich Allen, Associate Administrator and Committee Executive Director, NASS
Don Bay, Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, NASS
Ron Bosecker, Acting Deputy Administrator for Field Operations, NASS
Joe Glauber, Deputy Chief Economist
Bob Graham, South Carolina State Statistical Office, NASS
Carol House, Director of Research and Development Division, NASS
Dave Kleweno, Michigan State Statistical Office, NASS
Joe Reilly, Director of Census and Surveys Division, NASS
Jim Sands, Iowa State Statistical Office, NASS
Peggy Stringer, Montana State Statistical Office, NASS
Fred Vogel, Deputy Administrator for Programs and Products, NASS
Phil Zellers, Director of Information Technology Division, NASS

Other Persons Present

Kathleen Depukat, Environmental Protection Agency

Sheila Frace, Environmental Protection Agency

Francine Hardy, Statistics Canada

Kitty Smith, Economic Research Service

Al Jennings, USDA

Arnie Wilcox, NASS

Janice Goodwin, NASS

Lisa Jenkins-DePeiza, NASS

Marshall Dantzler, NASS

Steve Wiyatt, NASS

Debbie Norton, NASS

Esther Darnell, NASS

Joe Miller, NASS

Kent Hoover, NASS

Janet Allen, NASS

Executive Summary

Day 1

Mr. Allen welcomed the members to the first meeting of the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics and outlined the meeting plans. He stated that a major purpose of the first meeting was to allow Committee members to get acquainted with NASS staff members and one another. He spoke briefly of the Committee charter and noted that nominations for Chairperson would be held during the afternoon session. Mr. Allen asked for the Committee's help in shaping NASS program reviews.

Dr. Glauber extended to the Committee a warm welcome on behalf of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary. He reviewed some of the roles of the USDA and NASS and stated that this Committee's input is very important. Dr. Glauber announced the retirement of Mr. Bay with over 43 years of service and 8 years as the NASS Administrator. He mentioned a few of Mr. Bay's accomplishments and stated that Mr. Bay will be greatly missed.

Mr. Bay said he was pleased that, after more than 140 years, the Agency for the first time has an Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics. He reviewed a few milestones under his tenure. Mr. Bay acknowledged that NASS is very appreciative to have the help of the Committee in keeping the USDA statistics program relevant and said formation of this Committee is a major step forward for NASS.

Mr. Zellers gave the Committee a brief history of his years with NASS. He stated that there have been many issues and challenges during his tenure and technology is a major one. Mr. Zellers asked each member to introduce themselves and state why they feel it is important for them to be a member of this Committee.

Mr. Reilly reviewed the 1997 Census results and future Committee plans. He outlined issues that need to be addressed and talked about biases. Mr. Reilly also presented the goals of the Project to Re-engineer and Integrate Statistical Methods (PRISM) effort.

Mr. Allen gave an overview of the NASS Survey Program. He explained the many ongoing NASS reports. He outlined the 6 major methodology approaches that NASS uses. Mr. Allen noted the pride NASS takes in its data dissemination program.

Ms. House provided to the Committee an outline of 4 major categories where the Research Division is involved. Categories covered were large-scale surveys, specialty surveys, State cooperative services, and statistical consulting work. Ms. House explained that the best interest of agriculture is always taken into consideration when accepting or rejecting reimbursable projects.

Ms. Stringer gave a brief history of the Montana State Statistical Office. She explained the purpose of the Montana cooperative agreement, outlined some of the ongoing reports, and covered a number of the publications her office generates.

Mr. Kleweno described the cooperative agreement with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and how it has changed over the last 80 years. He covered program funding and explained the 3 rotational services provided by the Michigan State Statistical Office. He stated that the Michigan cooperative agreement is a major program with tremendous support.

Mr. Graham briefed the Committee on the NASS/NASDA (National Association of State Departments of Agriculture) agreement and how it works in the field. He explained the chain-of-command and the teamwork between NASS and NASDA. He noted the separation of roles but the importance of teamwork to keep the contract arrangement running smoothly.

Mr. Sands described to the Committee the history of the Iowa Program. He explained how NASS has partnered with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to help serve the agriculture industry. Mr. Sands outlined the services provided by the Iowa office and mentioned other cooperative efforts that have been completed.

Mr. Vogel reviewed for the Committee the commodity, economic, environmental, and demographic statistics programs at NASS. He explained pending issues with the Census content.

Mr. Bay commented on future agricultural statistics issues and mentioned several past special surveys. He thought that NASS collects too much detailed data in the Census. Mr. Bay mentioned that special surveys have increased tremendously in the last 20 years and foresees NASS conducting more and more special surveys.

Mr. Bosecker started the discussion of the Committees issues and suggestions and facilitated a brain storming session.

The Committee issues –

- * Look at the definition of agriculture in relation to the USDA and NASS mission statement. There is a need to recognize the vertical as well as horizontal relationships that exist in data.
- * There is a need for an integrated source of government data on the agriculture sector. Are there more efficient ways to collect, process, and use information that will make integration easier?
- * Is NASS investigating new technology and processing techniques? There is a need to define role of FAC (Food and Agricultural Committees in each State) in the Census of Agriculture.
- * Census form simplification is a concern -- how are commodities acknowledged and how does NASS assure coverage of key commodities?
- * There is a need for farm demographics and financial data -- cooperative effort between USDA and Department of Commerce.

- * NASS needs better coverage of small farm size groups -- is there a need for different datasets for different size operations?
- * Additional rural statistics are needed to demonstrate the effect of low prices in rural areas.
- * There is a need for easier access to data while safeguarding confidentiality. Data on the NASS website needs to be a more accessible file format for processing and analysis.
- * NASS needs to maintain its respect and integrity and let other agencies do the policing.
- * New data should be collected in a way that enhances utilization rather than for regulation.
- * NASS needs to define its role in identifying pesticide use data requirements and work to develop specifications to fulfill the needs of data users. Mandatory reporting is a possibility. Consider the impact of pesticides on agricultural migrant workers.
- * How many acres are being planted to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) and non-GMO varieties? What structural changes will GMO's cause in the agricultural sector as a result of economics?
- * More data is needed on farm labor.
- * There is interest in semi-annual estimates for crops, similar to livestock.
- * Establishing a three-person executive committee to help determine the role of the Committee in addressing the above stated issues.

Day 2

Ms. Pamplin, the newly elected chairperson, called the meeting to order and briefly explained the day's agenda.

Mr. Reilly reviewed for the Committee the data lab, special tabulations, and disclosure programs and policies. He reminded the Committee of NASS's pledge to maintain confidentiality and described the three levels of access to NASS microdata.

Ms. Pamplin made a motion to have a subcommittee monitor the EPA issue concerning a printed statement in a newsletter which tracks EPA which made it appear that EPA had access to census microdata for "regulatory" purposes. This was found to be untrue. The motion was voted upon and agreed to by all Committee members.

Ms. Pamplin asked the Committee to discuss their “homework” assignment. She asked members to look at issues raised the previous day and prioritize them. Mr. Vogel inquired if members had any burning issues. Mr. Allen added that he had organized Committee issues into six categories. Ms. Pamplin asked if the Committee members could have a brief explanation of NASS’s strategic plan and how the process works.

Dr. Wimberley recommended that the Committee thank Mr. Bay for his heroic service as a public servant and stated that “if not for Don Bay, we would not be here today.” The members unanimously agreed.

Detailed Meeting Minutes

Call to Order and Meeting Plans

Mr. Allen welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics.

Mr. Allen outlined some of the goals for the meeting. He explained that the first goal for Committee members is to get to know one another and to get better acquainted with NASS staff members and issues NASS will be facing in the next few years. The second goal is to set up a Committee organizational structure. A basic charter is in place but the Committee might want more structure such as sub-committees. Nominations will be accepted for the Chairperson position and voted on at the afternoon session. The third goal is to summarize NASS programs and procedures. Mr. Allen said that NASS is presently going through a thorough review of the estimating program and starting on preparations for the 2002 Census of Agriculture. The last goal is to have the Committee help NASS shape the direction of the program reviews.

USDA Welcome

Mr. Allen introduced Dr. Joe Glauber, the USDA Deputy Chief Economist. He explained that Dr. Glauber is involved in a wide range of policy issues facing USDA and is particularly known for his work on crop insurance and disaster policy. Dr. Glauber was an economic advisor at the Blair House agreements that led to the completion of the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations.

Dr. Glauber welcomed all Committee members on behalf of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary who are at the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle Washington. He assured the audience that this Committee has come up in conversations with the Secretary. Secretary Glickman is aware of the Committee's importance and welcomes advice the Committee will give. He touched upon the debate in Congress concerning the role of Government and that there is a hearing planned to reexamine the Farm Bill. He talked about which direction the Government should move in on farm policy. Is there a need for deregulations or should the Government have a role in stabilizing prices? The Department can depend on estimates which are often overlooked and NASS information is key. It is important to have confidence in the data and the Department cannot be perceived as biased. Reports must be collected and not biased by what takes place upstairs in the Secretary's office. There is a great emphasis on confidentiality. Those being surveyed need to be able to trust the Government. He stated that the input from this Committee is very important.

Dr. Glauber announced that Mr. Bay will retire this week after 43 years of service and with 8 years as the NASS Administrator. He mentioned that Mr. Bay brought to NASS the Census of Agriculture and other new agricultural surveys. The trust has been maintained and Mr. Bay will be greatly missed.

Administrator's Remarks

Mr. Bay remarked that it was tough to be the third person to speak since opening remarks to welcome the Committee had already been extended and the news had already been announced that he was leaving on Friday.

Mr. Bay noted that the Agency is 140+ years old and this is the first time it has had an Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics. He felt it was about time.

During his last 43 years, Mr. Bay said his early work made him passionate about what the Agency does. He stated that he may not be the right person to talk with the Committee about the future, maybe the past. He mentioned a few major milestones during his career. In the 50's, NASS did not have probability measures and data often did not agree with the 5-year Census of Agriculture data. There were accumulative errors. Major revisions needed to be made. The Area Frame survey was introduced and used to objectively measure what was present in specific segments of land. Information technology has been a real challenge. Every State Office now has a LAN connected to Headquarters. Mr. Bay said it is amazing what can be done today and the future will be even greater. There has been an increase in requests to conduct new surveys, and it keeps growing. Twenty years ago NASS became the statistical Agency for USDA and started survey work on a reimbursable basis. It is a major part of NASS's responsibility. During the Alar scare, good information was not available. NASS was asked to collect true chemical use data. We have now added the Census programs. We released the Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey data, which is a census follow-on survey that we inherited. Mr. Bay stated that NASS is very appreciative to have the Committee's help in keeping the program relevant.

Mr. Bay mentioned that he was upset to see how long it took to reconstitute this Committee. The Census Bureau wrote supporting documentation and gave NASS the slot to transfer. Janice Goodwin, Janet Allen, and Debra Kenerson, and, most recently, Arnie Wilcox have worked very hard. There were many steps involved. Over 60 people were nominated to sit on the Committee and it was difficult to get down to 25. NASS will do whatever we can to help make serving on this Advisory Committee productive. This will be a major step forward for NASS.

Member Introductions

Mr. Zellers welcomed everyone. He explained that many on the Committee may not know him because he has not been on the forefront of NASS. His Division provides service to the entire Agency. During the 1960's there was a computer center in the South Building in the sub-basement. NASS was the primary user of the center and ran the operation for USDA for awhile. The major center is now in Kansas City. Mr. Zellers is from Indiana and a graduate of Purdue University. He served in the Oregon State Office for 5 years and then came to Headquarters in 1969 to the data processing area. He noted that NASS is one of the very rich technology environments in the Department. NASS has a beneficial electronic dissemination arrangement with a Cornell University library which has worked very well for both parties. NASS has the

most popular and active home page in the Department. Mr. Zellers has worked with the Agency for 32 years and during that time there have been many issues and challenges. Technology is one of them. There is the year 2000 issue and a focus on more security. Mr. Zellers pointed out that refreshment of resources is a constant issue.

Mr. Zellers asked that each member introduce themselves and explain why it is important for them to be a part of this Committee. He asked them to mention something about themselves or aspirations on becoming Chairman.

Ewen Wilson - Ex-officio of this Committee, representing the U.S. Census Bureau. He has had a long and fruitful relationship with NASS and Don Bay and he is delighted that Don wanted him on the Committee. He looks at the census of agriculture as a parent might look at his or her offspring. He said he was afraid it would become an orphan. The Census of Agriculture has found a real home at NASS with congressional appropriations and is now flourishing and growing.

Mark Whalon - Michigan State University Land-Grant institution. He stated that “farms have problems - universities have departments.” His background is as an entomologist. Dr. Whalon is involved in pesticide use and uses. He said that it is one thing to collect data but quite another to deliver it effectively.

Charles Adams - National Aviation Association. He noted that his primary interests are ownership of a grain elevator and chemical company. He stated that he was naturally interested in agriculture from both of those standpoints.

Walter Armbruster - The Farm Foundation. He recently completed a term as President of the American Agricultural Economics Association and serves as Secretary-Treasurer for the International Agricultural Economics Association. He has concerns for good, current, and accurate data.

Robert Epperson - Raisin grower, representing SunMaid. He farms 132 acres and supports his hobby by working for the Department of Transportation. He serves on the Raisin Committee. His interests are in decision making for marketing in the U.S. and worldwide and in irrigation data.

John Gifford - Equipment Manufacturers Institute. Manufacturers are major customers of USDA data. He has worked 40 years for John Deere. E & M Institute has asked him to work in the development of statistics.

Carol Gregg - West Pennsylvania Agri-Women. She stated that she is here to ensure that producers as well as women in agriculture are represented. She works with Ag-in-the-Classroom.

Mark Jenner - American Farm Bureau Federation. He is personally a manure resources

visionary. He works with aquaculture and poultry producers and he is a strong supporter of NASS and the accuracy of agricultural data. He has concerns with confidentiality.

Tom Kimmell - The Irrigation Association. He stated that his interests are obvious. Agriculture uses about 80 percent of the water in the U.S. and we need statistics. He is happy to see that Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey data were recently released.

Kelvin Koong - Oregon State University, Associate Dean of Veterinary Medicine. He explained that he did not apply for his university position but was asked to serve. During his career in Land-Grant colleges he has worked closely with NASS State Offices.

Mark Lange - National Cotton Council of America. He pointed out that he covers cotton from field to fabric. The Council is an intensive user of agriculture data and he has a good working relationship with many people in NASS.

Sheila Massey - Farmer of Irrigated corn, wheat, barley, and red chili peppers in Arizona and New Mexico. She is constantly asked about the number of women in farming and in getting accurate statistics. Women should be recognized as partners with husbands in farming.

Jack Mitenbuler - American Crop Protection Association - Dow Agro Science Company. He feels the key issue is accurate and timely pesticide data.

Ashby Pamplin - American Nursery and Landscape Association. Her interests and concerns are with environmental regulations, resources issues, and labor issues. She stated that all NASS data are very important to the nursery business. She is a horticulturalist.

Jerry Pennick - Federation of Southern Cooperatives which is composed of 75 small farm co-ops serving the Southeastern U.S. He explained that he is here to make sure African American farmers are properly represented. Data are essential. His specific interests are in small farm reports.

Bobby Phills - Florida A&M University. He represents 1890 Land-Grant Universities and small farmers. He would like to better understand the definition of small farms and how to expand small farms information.

Jim Rieck - Farm Progress Companies. He is representing the Ag Publication Association which has 36 state farm publications. He noted that one reason he is on this Committee is to help farmers answer survey forms and fill them out. Farmers are leery of filling out forms because they feel they may be used against them. He stated that he was the "listening rod" to share with farmers that the data will help them.

Gumecinda Salas - Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. Represents 200 colleges and universities in which a large percentage of students are Hispanic but only three Land-Grant Universities. He feels it is important for students to have an increased role in program activities.

Hugh Warren - Catfish Farmers of America. Represents aquaculture and stated that he was a member of the former Committee which did recommend that aquaculture be counted on the census. He noted that “we are farmers growing fish - not fishermen growing fish.”

Topper Thorpe - National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. He explained that they collect data and do some things similar to NASS but not as broad scale as NASS. There are significant structure changes occurring. The need for data is very critical to make timely and accurate decisions. He hopes to maintain and expand the excellent working relationships with NASS. He stated that there is a tremendous concern in the cattle industry about the use and confidentiality of data.

Lee Schrader - Retired Professor at Purdue University. He represents the egg producers and mentioned that he has been known to give unsolicited advice in the past.

Ron Wimberley - Represents the Rural Sociology Society. He remarked that agriculture has a number of risks including biological, genetic, insect, weather, and social. Beneath every problem that exists in agriculture there is at least one social problem. These problems are often regional.

1997 Census Results and Future Plans

Mr. Reilly noted that the census count of farms leveled off in 1997. He said one of the issues needing to be addressed is the response rate which was only a little better in 1997 than 1992. For several censuses, the response rate had been deteriorating. Another issue in the future is trying to define income to farmers. Historically, we have measured the value of agriculture sales as a cash value. As there is more and more contracting, the value of the bird or hog is not the money the farmer is receiving. There was a proposal to change the farm definition from \$1,000 to \$10,000 in sales. This would have eliminated close to 50 percent of the farms. Another issue is reconciling census production numbers with NASS estimates and where production information should be collected. There are demographic issues. A large percentage, 17 percent of operators in the 1997 Census of Agriculture were age 70 or over. Where is the future farmer coming from?

There are also some biases. The census only collects data on the senior operator. NASS is considering gathering information on more than one operator. This will have to be looked at for the next census. There are more farms with part-time farmers and fewer full-time farmers. The structure of production agriculture is changing from family owned farms to more contractor and contractee arrangements with production grown under contract. Principally, farming as a full-time occupation is concentrated in the middle of the U.S. There is extensive female involvement in agriculture which hasn’t been documented. There must be a better count of minority and American Indian operators. These are people who never made it on our mail list. The Conservation Reserve Program and Wetland Program are now counted as farms. There is no “average” farm. We are still missing farms. What is our coverage goal?

Mr. Reilly pointed out that there are 1,094 days left before the next Census. There are five teams working on the Project to Reengineer and Integrate Statistical Methods (PRISM) effort with the

following goals: (1) The need to be ready for the 2002 Census of Agriculture. (2) Replace systems in place at the Census Bureau which were used for the 1997 Census of Agriculture but are no longer available. We will have a new infrastructure in place to conduct the next census. (3) We need to reduce response burden, increase response rates, and blend the information needed for surveys and censuses.

Statistics Canada used scanning to capture their census of agriculture data and we are looking at the same technique. A key issue is the proper use of the Internet. An administrative issue is protecting confidentiality. Everything is budget driven to produce the best results.

Responding to a question by Mr. Rieck in regards to a NASS time schedule for finalizing the 2002 report forms, accepting bids, and printing them out, Mr. Reilly said that the date will be in summer of calendar year 2002.

Ms. Pamplin commented that there is a need to communicate with commodity groups to improve the perception.

In responding to a question by Mr. Thorpe on the budget, Mr. Reilly explained that the census of agriculture funding is very cyclical. An out-year estimate for 2002 has been submitted. If the picture changes, NASS will have to address the budget issues.

In response to Dr. Whalon's question on area frames, Mr. Reilly stated that only 13 percent of farms were missed. Most were small farms which contribute very little (.4 percent) to value of production, but that the biggest concern is missing demographic data for economically disadvantaged farms.

In responding to a question from Dr. Salas on whether a sample could be selected for unique population groups, Mr. Reilly pointed out that a coverage evaluation program could be done.

NASS Survey Program

Mr. Allen referenced the 2000 Release calendar which was provided in the packet each member received.

He explained that many of the 400 NASS reports are ongoing censuses of businesses such as broiler hatcheries and catfish processors. A number of economic and crop progress reports are released but the most expensive and most complicated reports are those involving surveys of farmers.

Recent report changes were explained to the Committee members. Mr. Allen said that NASS uses several different survey methodology approaches. He outlined six major methodology approaches that NASS commonly uses. Many reports are based on a total enumeration or census of specific types of businesses. Some are conducted weekly, some monthly, and others like

Cotton Ginnings are on a seasonal basis. It is much more efficient and accurate to contact a sample of grain elevators buying from farmers and measure prices received on a probability basis than it is to survey farmers who might sell grain just once or twice a year. NASS works closely with industry groups to get current producer lists for surveys.

Mr. Allen stated that NASS supplements farmer yield opinion surveys, in some cases, with actual observations and measurements taken in selected fields or orchards. NASS uses a wide variety of data from other sources. Government Farm Program data have often been important as check data.

Mr. Allen pointed out that NASS prides itself on data dissemination. All regular statistical reports are available in hard copy and on the Internet, with many available over auto fax. Past reports are archived by Cornell University, which handles free Internet e-mail subscriptions. In addition to dissemination of reports, NASS is constantly working to populate and improve the Internet data base of published estimates.

NASS Reimbursable Program

Ms. House stated that she would like to give the Committee a flavor of what Research Division does. She outlined a list of Research activities done for other clients and how clients use research data in their publications. She noted that Don Bay mentioned four or five things. One was the growth of reimbursable surveys, which we visualize as being very important. Nearly 20 percent of NASS monies come from some type of reimbursable arrangement. She outlined four major categories: 1) Large-Scale Recurring Surveys, 2) Specialty Services, 3) State Cooperative Services, and 4) Statistical Consulting Work. She said that Research Division also helps clients work with other agencies.

Ms. House explained that a major large scale survey is the Agricultural Resource Management Study (ARMS). There are economists in other agencies at USDA that do analysis, where most of the data is collected by NASS. There is a partnership between them and NASS. What is happening with economics between censuses? Cost of production surveys are conducted, such as cattle in one year and sugar beets in another. Data are collected and turned over to economists to produce reports. Another large-scale survey is the National Animal Health Monitoring Survey (NAHMS). APHIS Veterinary Services targets certain topics in a given year such as animals in feed lots or hogs. Looking at how diseases are treated or the lack of disease helps Veterinary Service see if there are trends which would be alarming in terms of animal health. Another survey program is the Farm Injury Surveys conducted for the National Industry Occupational Safety and Health Organization.

Ms. House outlined specialty surveys examples which include the Y2K Readiness Survey and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Employee Climate Survey. FSA asked NASS to do a survey of employees on discrimination issues and NASS helped them design a survey. NASS conducted a Rail Car Availability Pre-Study to help locate tracks, cars, grain elevators, etc. Ms. House said

that the Pre-Study told the Department that our doing the survey was not a good idea. Consulting for State cooperative services takes place because each NASS field office is in fact the statistical office for their State, Ms. House explained. We provide State Departments of Agriculture and cooperating university partners with data summaries they can use.

Ms. House noted that in statistical consulting, NASS statisticians help collect, edit, summarize, and disseminate data. There is the AMS Pesticide Data Program Residue Testing of fresh fruits and vegetables and the ARS Food Consumption Survey where we do not collect data, but do consulting work. With the ARS Nutrient Data Lab, which selects products from grocery stores to determine nutrient values, we helped with sampling to keep the data statistically accurate. We helped with the FSA-RD Loan Subsidy Rate Analysis project when they were uncertain about what to do with foreclosure data. The NRCS Time and Attendance System grew out of a proposed survey on employee productivity. We explained our T&A system to them and the importance of keying how many hours an employee works on a particular project. For USDA's OMB Customer Services Survey NASS will certify that proposed surveys will be beneficial and properly conducted.

During Ms. House's presentation, Mr. Thorpe asked who determines questions on surveys. Ms. House explained that NASS tries to understand what the important issues are. She said clients usually want more questions than what NASS would like to ask. Our goal is to make the questions and length of the questionnaire reasonable.

In responding to a question from Ms. Pamplin on whether there was a study on soybean damage caused by deer, Ms. House said some States have conducted studies, but it has not been done nationally.

Mr. Thorpe asked about Y2K readiness. Ms. House responded that NASS surveyed to see if farmers with computer controlled systems on their farms were aware of potential problems and had taken actions to convert them.

When asked by Mr. Thorpe about the criteria for accepting or rejecting reimbursable projects, Ms. House responded that NASS will talk with anyone. NASS will help determine what the client needs are and will make an evaluation of whether it is something within NASS's Mission. We try to make sure it is in the best interest of all concerned.

Mr. Thorpe questioned whether these outside reimbursable projects pose any conflicts with ongoing NASS work. Ms. House said that NASS wants to meet public goals. Some work is done through trust funds. Mr. Allen added that reimbursables could create problems if not closely coordinated. There is the possible conflict of sampling operations on other surveys and reasking similar questions if we can't tie related contacts together. NASS has extra staff because reimbursables are an ongoing part of our operations. However, the level that we can support needs to be decided ahead of time. Since June is NASS's busiest time, we would probably not commit to doing any reimbursables during that time frame. Mr. Allen further explained that this is a management issue of keeping staff productive, but at the same time not neglecting any ongoing surveys because of reimbursables. When we can do reimbursables, we want to do them because it is in the best interest of agriculture.

NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEE CHAIR

Mr. Allen opened nominations for Committee Chair. A motion was made and seconded for Ms. Pamplin to be the first Chairperson and Mr. Thorpe the Chair-elect. All were in favor and the motion was approved.

Ms. Pamplin explained that she was new to the Census Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics four years ago. She said that, at that time, statistics seemed dull and dry but she has become fascinated by it and feels serving on this Committee is meaningful.

STATE-FEDERAL PROGRAM

Mr. Allen stated that a unique thing is the cooperation between NASS and agricultural statistical organizations, between NASS Headquarters and the State offices. NASS runs a Federal program and carries it out in 45 State offices. There are similarities and differences from State to State.

Mr. Allen introduced the panel of State Statisticians: Peggy Stringer, Montana; Dave Kleweno, Michigan; Bob Graham, South Carolina; and Jim Sands, Iowa.

Cooperative Agreements with State Departments of Agriculture

Ms. Stringer provided the Committee with a brief history of the Montana SSO. She explained that their purpose is to consolidate and coordinate the activities in collection, summarization, analysis, and publication of agricultural data between the Montana Department of Agriculture and our agency. There are 3 full-time State employees in her office, in addition to the Federal Staff. They publish the Agriculture Statistics Bulletin and additional reports for wheat and barley varieties, wheat utilization, cropping practices by county for wheat and barley, alfalfa seed irrigated, and non-irrigated acreage and production by district at the request of producers. Another producer-driven project that she received funding for was to collect and publish acreage, yield, and production by county for speciality crops.

She said there was a question earlier by Mr. Thorpe, regarding resources in Federal cooperative agreements. She looks to see if the data are available anywhere else or if they have been collected before. We try to make data collection efficient so two surveys are not being done at the same time and make sure there is industry support. Ms. Stringer said that each of the panelists will speak on different topics concerning State and Federal cooperation.

Michigan State Cooperative Program

Mr. Kleweno provided a brief history of his Michigan office. He outlined the cooperative agreement with the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and explained how it has changed over the last 80 years. There has also been an excellent relationship with Michigan State University and their industry support. MDA support of the cooperative agreement is 20 percent of total office funds. Part of what we provide as a service are county estimates on nine field crops and five livestock items. We had been asked to assist in developing the program on

tart cherries half of which has been funded by the MDA. Michigan has a unique rotational survey program with three major State surveys: fruit, vegetables, and Christmas tree and nursery. Publications are out on the Internet and we have a home page. Several special projects were done in 1999. We are involved with a marketing program for 15 different commodities in the State. The Michigan State University Extension Service is always reevaluating its program and NASS does survey work for them such as a special supplement to fruit and chemical use surveys. We also did some crop improvement mailings and are involved with a migrant labor survey. In short, his State cooperative work is a major program with tremendous support.

The NASS/NASDA Agreement

Mr. Graham outlined the NASDA agreement and how it works in the field. He explained that the agreement provides NASS with a skilled work force of enumerators who handle most telephone contacts and personal visits to farmers. They are NASDA employees, not NASS. The agreement is negotiated with NASDA Headquarters and signed on an annual basis. The agreement dates back to 1978 and it is very important to NASS. The chain-of-command within NASDA runs from Headquarters to the NASDA supervisor in each State. Each State has several field supervisors who are responsible for specific geographical areas. If a particular survey dictates, that area of supervision could switch. In addition to the field supervisors, there is an Office Supervisor who generally works with the telephone crew. Most calls are completed during the evening hours. Many offices now have a day-time supervisor since many telephone calls can be completed over the noon-time hours and more farms have a full-time office.

Mr. Thorpe asked if the interviewers are all NASDA employees and the response was yes. Mr. Graham explained that supervisors have the responsibility of developing these skilled enumerators in their area. If a detailed survey like ARMS requires a personal interview on chemical use, it is their responsibility to line up the people to make the contacts. The NASDA supervisors are responsible for any personnel issues. NASS's responsibility is the technical expertise. We do not cross lines. We take care of all the payroll processing in each field office. Timesheets from NASDA enumerators come to the NASS office. Chain-of-command runs from Headquarters to the State Statistician, to the Deputy State Statistician, and to the NASDA coordinators. South Carolina has the supervisor with the longest standing tenure: 42 years of service working as an enumerator and supervisor. This agreement has given us a chance to do some special things. AMS contacted NASS Headquarters needing some help on the pork export (cold storage facilities) in Charleston, South Carolina and we provide assistance through the cooperative agreement. Teamwork between NASS and NASDA employees is the most important factor in making this partnership operate smoothly.

In responding to a question by Ms. Gregg, Mr. Graham said that the NASDA funding comes from NASS. Other Federal agencies may also fund projects, in some cases.

Responding to Ms. Pamplin's question, Mr. Graham said it often takes a tremendous amount of list building for new surveys which takes a lot of time. We try to educate clients that we need as much lead time as possible.

Mr. Thorpe asked what percentage of the time a State office will spend on special projects. Mr.

Graham explained that it varies by individual States. South Carolina does not spend as much time as in Michigan. Mr. Kleweno responded that Michigan has five full-time State employees and two part-time employees.

In response to a question by Mr. Thorpe on whether State people are limited to State projects, Mr. Sands said 10 people in the Iowa office are funded by the State of Iowa, plus 20 Federal people. They assign office staff to projects based on what skills are needed, rather than whether the project is State or Federal. Most State projects are done when the offices are not busy, if the projects are of service to the agricultural industry. He always looks to see if the project can be piggybacked onto another project. There is a large data processing section in his office for the State.

Iowa Cooperative Program

Mr. Sands provided the Committee with a brief history of the Iowa Program with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS). He explained that there has been a continuous agreement in place since July 1937. This agreement was set up to serve the agriculture industry in Iowa with the information needed to prosper and grow. By combining the resources of the State and Federal data collection program, both NASS and IDALS are able to deliver a better, more complete product to the people of Iowa at a lower cost.

Mr. Sands outlined services provided during 1999. Those services include the monthly State cattle-on-feed estimates, managing the IDALS local area network out of the NASS office, county estimates, and conducting a survey of value added crops. Services provided with an agreement with Iowa State University include the Farm and Rural Life Poll Survey, Land Use Attitude Survey, Alfalfa Cropping Practices Survey, and the Bt Corn Survey. Other cooperative efforts include work with the Iowa Farm Bureau, publishing our annual bulletin, the University of Iowa Health Study, and the NRCS Conservation Tillage Practices Survey. He explained that they print and mail Market News Reports for the Poultry Division and for the Livestock and Meats Division.

In response to a question by Dr. Whalon, Mr. Sands stated that the confidentiality form tells us what laws are in place to protect the confidentiality of the growers. University staff working with NASS have to sign the same pledge as NASS employees. All individual identifiers are stripped off if a survey is done for the University.

Ms. Smith said that data sets are available widely and published reports are also available. Data bases become public property. Are firewalls in use to protect the confidentiality of individual reports? Mr. Sands replied that his office keeps all data files with identifiable information. What is made available are data tabulations or summaries. A further question was asked by Ms. Smith on how someone outside of Iowa would know about the survey. Special State surveys for the State Department of Agriculture or Land Grant cooperators are usually released and publicized by the cooperators, and not the NASS State office. However, each State office does inform all

NASS State offices of special surveys since other States may have interest in similar surveys. NASS does not have an easy way currently to inform data users of all available published special reports.

Ms. Pamplin said she was interested in the accounts that fund some of these activities and how it works. Mr. Kimmell was interested in what is happening in the State offices. Dr. Koong asked in describing your activities, is the SSO autonomous to some degree? The response was, when it involves survey work, most will involve the NASDA agreement.

Mr. Kimmell asked Mr. Graham if he is the “A Team,” is there a “Z Team?” Can you be entrepreneurial? Mr. Graham responded that he is not one of the best but that he is here.

Dr. Phills said that Congress mandated multi-State activities and asked to what extent are States working with Land-Grant Universities, does the confidence of what they do, impact it?

Mr. Graham responded that they are contracted with Clemson University for a pilot peach disaster program and growers were not happy with the disaster benefits. Work done for Clemson involved Georgia and South Carolina peach producers. Work generally does not cross state boundaries.

In responding to a question by Dr. Phills, Mr. Graham responded that yes, Clemson took the lead peach disaster program and that the data set was turned over to them. Mr. Phills further asked if there are face-to-face interviews with peach growers and the response was yes.

Mr. Allen mentioned that there was a confidentiality sheet on the back side of questionnaires. It protects us only when we use it. If you don't run it through the clearance process, you don't have clearance. It has to be authorized and it has to be on the questionnaire.

PROGRAM REVIEW

Mr. Vogel outlined the review of the statistics program, shared emerging issues, and covered things needed to coordinate the ongoing statistical program with the census. NASS needs member input on these topics. NASS publishes 400 reports a year which covers nearly every aspect of agriculture, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, etc. In the past, NASS has been one of the larger users of the census of agriculture. We review the census results to determine what the detailed estimating program should be for the next 5 years. One major use, historically, is to evaluate the content. It provides the only real county data. Four program areas in the NASS statistical program involve commodity, economic, environmental, and demographic data.

Commodity Statistics include production and supply. Commodity statistics produced build a picture of the current situation and are designed to forecast the future. We provide public data users the ability to forecast future supplies. The livestock industry reports are a point in time which give a picture of the future slaughter. Field crop reports during the growing season forecast the supply at harvest. Fruit crops statistics cover crops which are significant at the national level. Annually, demographic data are published such as size of operations.

Another area of production statistics is in aquaculture. Results of the first Census of Aquaculture will be published the first week in February. The Horticulture census is done every 10 years. We are in the process of doing the horticulture data analysis and summary and it will be published next spring.

We need to make sure we produce a consistent census with correct definitions. Census is the only place we can get a picture of an entire farm and look at the demographics at the county level.

The other part of the commodity statistics program is a measure of supply. These involve quarterly or monthly reports on grain and storage. We do a monthly cold storage report for commodities stored for 30 days or more which is a very sensitive report. We do a monthly report of livestock and poultry slaughtered the previous month, another report on manufactured dairy products, and a monthly report on eggs produced. We do a biweekly report on cotton ginnings which also came to us from the Census Bureau almost 10 years ago. Sometimes these reports cause problems. These reports are important to commodities in the marketing channel and are also used as check data for the commodity estimates.

Economic Statistics involve annual surveys measuring production expenses on farms. They provide a balance sheet of cost and net farm income. There is a quarterly report of number of farm workers by type of worker. There is an annual report on land values and cash rents. There is a monthly report series on prices received and paid by farmers. We publish annual data on grazing fees paid by ranchers. A major user of this data is the Forest Service. A new data series for NASS is water use. We finished a Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey, which gives a detailed look at the use of irrigation across the country. Economics statistics also gets into land ownership. We will conduct the Agricultural and Economics Land Ownership Survey (AELOS) in 2000. We will interview farm operators about production and economic situations and find out who their landlords are and then interview the landlords. Data collection will go into the summer.

Environmental Statistics is the third category. We are adding to the farm and ranch chemical use program every year. Corn, soybeans, and other major crops are covered annually and we are adding crops as we go. We also do these surveys for fruit and vegetable crops on an every-other-year basis.

Ms. Pamplin inquired about Christmas trees and pesticide use. Mr. Vogel reviewed what was going to be done during the year 2001. NASS is doing an annual survey on integrated pest management practices, and post harvest services. There will be a new survey in the year 2001 on horticultural chemical use practices.

Demographic Statistics is the fourth category. NASS will be doing more in this area by publishing more information by type and size of farms. Part of the census program has collected data on age, race, ethnicity, and gender.

Ms. Gregg inquired about farm income. It was clarified that the Economic Research Service (ERS) is responsible for national farm and income. Most of the ERS farm income analyses are based on NASS data.

Mr. Vogel mentioned pending issues with the census content. Land in farms definitions used on periodic surveys and on the census are not exactly the same. Public land, mostly controlled by the Federal Government, is used by ranchers to run cattle. Some land actually is rented on long-term lease. What should be included in land in farms? With land use, there are several census categories. We need to be consistent between surveys and the census.

We are seeking input and trying to do what is best for Indian operations. Is an Indian reservation one farm or many operations within one reservation or is the correct answer different from reservation to reservation?

Between now and 2002, we need to figure out ways to count the total number of farm operators and total number of farm households. Statistics Canada has done it.

Census puts multi-county operations and multi-State operations where their headquarters are. Do we need to carve up these operations? We need to learn how to do that.

A serious issue to solve involves contractor/contractee arrangements. How do we collect data about production contracts? How much of the commodity is actually available for marketing or how much is tied up?

We are considering publishing livestock data in animal units. In Colorado, there will either be an extremely high number of D's or, if we published all data, many operations are so large and so few in number you could identify many individual producers. Should an animal unit index be created in order to publish some information at the county level? There are probably more issues like this that we have not thought of yet.

Responding to a question by Mr. Thorpe on how much cooperation there is with Market News and to what extent do we use price data from the marketing service, Mr. Vogel said NASS works in cooperation with AMS to speed up slaughter data release. We collect the weekly data quickly and use a special edit to create a preliminary weekly summary that Market News publishes. NASS uses many different Market News data series in its monthly Agricultural Prices Report.

Mr. Mitenbuler inquired if the census forms will be the benchmark for land values? Do individual States study balance sheets? Ms. Smith responded that income estimates are available from ERS annually, by State, by region, and by type of farm. They are updated as information becomes available and are on the ERS website.

Dr. Wimberley stated that farmers often have part-time jobs. He would like to know more about the household; in particular, if the household has other members with part-time employment. He said that the family farmer may be full-time but someone in the family has a part-time job which should be measured in the demographics. Ms. Smith responded that the annual ARMS study

does ask information for off-farm employment. The interesting issue is how it should be tied in with the census.

Dr. Salas mentioned that the definition of family farm may mean different things to different people. It may be farmed on a part-time basis or seasonable basis. What basically is it? What are the times the family farm is in operation? Is it 12 months or seasonal? We need to define the data element. Ms. Smith pointed out that because everyone's concept differs, we provide the building blocks and data developed and use the appropriate categories provided through the data.

Mr. Allen explained that USDA focus on small farms is anything under \$250,000 in sales; 94 percent of farms are small farms. He said he will provide a small farms typology report that came out of ARMS data.

FUTURE AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS ISSUES NASS VIEW

Mr. Bay commented on the future and explained to the members that the NASS Program Review report is their homework. There will be comments tomorrow. He noted that Mr. Sands mentioned the special survey on farm policy poll in Iowa but they actually began in Missouri. A University of Missouri rural sociologists wanted to do a farm policy survey, but there was no money. A sample was selected and several thousand were mailed out. Twenty-two percent mailed them back. Seventy-eight percent did not respond. We summarized the data, put them into a report, and sent it to be published. The Rural Sociological Journal rejected it because the response rate was not good. The Missouri sociologist came back the next year and asked us to take the 22 percent, ask them to be a panel, survey the panel, and get a better response rate. Respondents from the first survey were sent a letter to serve on a panel providing farm policy. Those who said yes became the panel. That panel report was accepted for publication. The Missouri sociologist took the technique to Iowa.

How does NASS get the rest of our work done? We fund 100 permanent Federal positions for reimbursables in addition to 200 State positions, so about 300 or about 23 percent of staff are for reimbursable work. It is true it does take away from the time devoted to certain core programs. It does impact us in that way.

Mr. Vogel mentioned the AUM issue for the next census. If we are to create AUM data, we have to get the Department agencies to agree on the definition.

There are major decisions to be made about future agriculture statistical issues. I expect this Committee will provide input to NASS and the Secretary on how the program will develop. This Committee has a number of people who are part of our respondents. We have users and suppliers of data. NASS will continue to hold Data User Meetings and Mr. Vogel has been responsible for organizing things in the past. Those will be important meetings and we ask anyone able to attend to do so.

We are a State/Federal cooperative Agency. We get input from you, the data users, and State cooperators. We need as much input as we can.

The census of agriculture has mandatory reporting but NASS uses voluntary reporting for everything else. There are some cases where in the future if we don't get mandatory reporting, we may not be able to provide critical statistics. AMS had the problem with livestock prices. They got mandatory reports through new legislation. Dr. Schrader mentioned that the producers got the mandatory reporting. It was not AMS requesting the money. It was the pork producers and cattlemen who went to Congress.

Mr. Bay agreed that the industry has to go to Congress to get mandatory reporting. A 1994 budget amendment included an initial Department of Agriculture proposal to obtain mandatory reporting authority for NASS. Two particular surveys were in mind where it might be used: one was grain price information and the second was the Cold Storage report where some individual companies control a large amount of specific totals. On the first day the Senate cut out the proposal. We never wanted a mandatory report to reach down to the average farmer for sample surveys. Dairy farmers in some States have said we should have mandatory reporting for the cheese and other dairy products report with audit authority.

A lot of people are concerned about comparability. Somehow we need to bridge improved procedures with all data series so there will be comparable data. Present procedures bias the age of the farmers. The senior manager of the farm had to fill out the form. In the future, there could be multiple operators. The age of the farmer is not as old as we have been indicating but we need a bridge to interpret changes in procedures

Dr. Epperson commented on the concept of multiple operators. He suggested giving them an opportunity to have special operators listed in order, not just one. Mr. Bay explained that Canada has room for three. There is a very strong participation of both husbands and wives in farm operations. It would exclude hired workers and school children, and report only people contributing to the management of the farm.

Mr. Bay mentioned that this was his last speech. He thinks NASS collects too much detail in the census. We don't need the detailed questions on 1.9 million operations in the country. We need to find out relative size of cattle, hog, and corn farms, and get harvested acres from everyone. We can get the yield of corn separately. Farm expenditure data on the census causes the most Congressional complaints. Much of the present expenditure data must be imputed.

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) is going to add a livestock export sales program to what has been done for crops since 1972. There is also a livestock industry who wants to know more about livestock exports.

The Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) Report that NASS issued found some interesting acreage relationships but people want to look at yield models. In the future it's not just GMO but other end user products making new markets for special types of corn and soybeans. There are also organic production issues and special uses of some 120 crops. Coordinating agriculture statistics with Canada and Mexico is a special NASS priority. There is

increased movement of commodities between the States and Canada and the States and Mexico. Mr. Vogel initiated the process with Statistics Canada using the Canadian cattle inventory. This was a touchy issue since Canada sells their report and we give our report away. We would like to add additional cooperative reports for cattle on feed, hogs, and wheat. We are one big North American market. This is a challenge for the future.

Congress passed the mandatory price reporting bill which mainly affects Market News price reports. It calls for NASS to do a monthly hogs and pigs survey. On the other side of the coin, the catfish report has been reduced to twice a year. We need to know more about feed consumption since it is not like it used to be. Aquaculture is also very complicated.

In responding to a comment by Mr. Warren, Mr. Bay said NASS needs the Committee's help to estimate feed consumption. We want good, sound data. We now publish land values. More and more land seems to be close enough to big cities where there is value associated with a nonagricultural use. In California, we get reports on huge land values. Some land is extremely valuable because it is close to Sacramento.

Looking into the future, there will be more and more people coming to NASS asking us to do special surveys. The number of special surveys has increased tremendously in the last 20 years. The Census Bureau can more efficiently collect household information. The Advisory Committee can help us face the challenges of the future.

FUTURE AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS ISSUES SUGGESTIONS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr. Bosecker mentioned that it was getting late in the session and he was looking forward to this part of the program. This is where we hear from the Committee members on what their issues are. Mr. Wiyatt and Mr. Wilcox will list the Committee's issues and suggestions on flip charts.

- * Has the definition of agriculture been looked at in relation to the USDA and NASS mission statement? Is there only one set of data needs or do they change depending on vertical position in the agricultural industry? We need to recognize the vertical relationships as well as the horizontal relationships that exist in the data.
- * An integrated source of Government data on the agriculture sector is needed. Are there more efficient ways to collect, process, and use information that will make integration easier? Is new technology being used?
- * The 1997 Census of Agriculture went well with response rates high and early data release. There is room for improvement in certain areas such as the coverage in number of farms. Are we investigating new technology and processing techniques to help deal with the shortcomings? There should be a review of the future role census data will play. Can efforts be eliminated or combined to gain efficiencies? Define the role of FAC (the USDA Food and Agriculture Committees) in the census of agriculture.
- * Census form simplification is a concern. How are commodities acknowledged and how do we assure coverage of key commodities?

- * There is a pressing need for farm demographic and financial data, such as the number of people involved in farming, and identification of farm households and decision makers. Farm income is also an important indicator. There could be some benefit derived from a cooperative effort between the USDA and Commerce Department.
- * The definition of small farms needs to be looked at in relation to size and income. There needs to be better coverage of the small farm size group. Do we need different datasets for different size operations? Does the current variety of surveys provide information which allows the USDA to help small farms?
- * Current concerns with low agricultural prices affects rural areas, not just farmers. More rural statistics are needed to demonstrate the effect of low prices on small towns, small businesses, churches, etc. The connection between the economics of rural communities and the farmer is not well defined.
- * There is a need for easier access to data while safeguarding confidentiality. We need to consider new ways to meet the needs of data users. Data available on the NASS website are in PDF file format which is not easily read by software packages used for further processing and analysis.
- * There is a recent concern about the balance between data access and confidentiality. NASS has a reputation for timely and fair standards of conducting business that needs to be protected. NASS needs to maintain its respect and integrity and let other agencies be the policemen.
- * Concern about data collected by animal units and increased interest in the disposition of bi-product should remind us that new data should be collected in a way that enhances utilization rather than for regulation.
- * There has been a transfer of responsibility to the States and land grant universities for the development of pesticide use information. NASS needs to define its role in identifying pesticide use data requirements and work to develop specifications to fulfill the needs of data users. There needs to be full use pesticide reporting based on best practices and processes. The cost burden of pesticide programs must be considered. Mandatory reporting is a possibility. Collaboration with other agencies, such as Health and Human Services (HHS) may be beneficial. Be sure to consider the impact of pesticides on agricultural migrant workers.
- * There is a desire for more information on GMO's, specifically how many acres are being planted to GMO and non-GMO varieties. What structural changes will GMO's cause in the agricultural sector as a result of economics?
- * More data are needed in the area of farm labor.
- * There is interest in size group estimates for crops, similar to livestock.

- * Establish a three-person executive committee as part of this Advisory Committee to help determine the role of the Committee in addressing these issues.

(Evening)

CANADIAN AGRICULTURE STATISTICS PROGRAM

Ms. Hardy was the evenings guest speaker and gave a presentation on the Canadian Agriculture Statistics Program. The four topics she covered were Statistics Canada, Canadian Agriculture, Agriculture Division, and the Agriculture Statistics Program.

In discussing the first topic, Statistics Canada, Ms. Hardy outlined the major items. The Statistics Act was mandated and agreements were made with the provinces. A Census of Population and Census of Agriculture are conducted. They have access to tax returns but information is held in strictest of confidence. The National Statistics Council provide high-level policy guidance, Federal-Provincial Committees have specific programs, and Advisory Committees have specific programs like agriculture. The Central Statistical Agency has six major fields: 1) social, institutions, and labor statistics, 2) business and trade statistics, 3) national accounts and analytical studies, 4) communications and operations, 5) information and methodology, and (6) management services.

Ms. Harding noted the basic highlights of Canadian Agriculture. Agriculture in Canada represents about 2 percent of the gross domestic product. In 1998 Canada had a gross income of \$32 billion. Approximately 277,000 farms were reported in 1996 with 385,000 farm operators. The total farm population was nearly 851,00 persons which accounted for 3 percent of the total population. The characteristics of farm operations are broken into three categories. Sole proprietorships account for 61 percent, partnerships account for 27 percent, and corporations account for 12 percent. Corporations are further broken into two subcategories; 10 percent are family corporations and 2 percent are non-family corporations. The total number of farms is declining but farms are getting bigger.

The mandate for the Agriculture Division is to provide economic and social statistics pertaining to the characteristics and performance of the agriculture sector and its people. There are 34 regular surveys with 170 full-time staff in 1999. The census of agriculture is conducted every 5 years and has a budget of \$30 million. \$7.5 million for the annual program and \$3.3 million for the cost recovery program.

Under the Agriculture Statistics Program Canada conducts sample surveys selected from a Farm Register. There are no objective yield surveys and no more area frame samples. The data collection method consists mainly of computer assisted telephone interviewing. Response rates for major surveys run between 95 to 98 percent. Canada collects produce crops and livestock data, as does the U.S. Turnaround on large production is 4-8 weeks. The major data releases are on livestock, poultry and dairy, crop reports, grain marketing, fruit and vegetables, and greenhouse and nursery. Agriculture's financial statistics include farm income and expenditures,

tax program, and the farm financial survey. The census of agriculture is collected every 5 years with the Census of Population. The three-step data collection procedure is a door to door drop off questionnaire, mail back, and follow-up by a census representative if necessary. Special collection procedures are performed for large and complex farms. All census data is validated. Special units for the Agriculture Statistics Program are the Farm Register, multi unit and large enterprise statistics, and special analysis and geomatics applications.

(Day 2)

Call to Order and Remarks

Ms. Pamplin, the newly elected chairperson, called the meeting to order and briefly explained the planned agenda for the day. She stated that, as this Committee is reconstituted under the USDA, members have the opportunity to build valuable relationships with NASS's State Statistical Offices.

Information Program

Data Lab and Special Tabulations

Mr. Reilly began his presentation by reiterating NASS's pledge to maintain confidentiality. He stated that there has been increasing interest in, and increased use of, NASS's special tabulation and data lab services. He explained that this policy is a living, breathing document that may still incur modifications.

Mr. Reilly reminded the group that NASS has a strict policy to not disclose any data that would reveal information for an individual operation. The data are reviewed to ensure a proper level of protection, and all identifying factors are stripped off prior to review. Mr. Reilly explained that this policy addresses access to unpublished and microdata, since the published data have already been reviewed for confidentiality assurance. Unpublished data are summaries or tabulations that are prepared but not published. Microdata are the items collected for each operation.

Mr. Reilly described the access policy design as one which acknowledges differences in the various customers, provides options to all users, highlights limitations for microdata access, emphasizes the physical location where the data may be accessed (e.g., NASS Headquarters in Washington, D.C., versus a State Office), recognizes survey sponsorship, and denies regulatory Agency access to microdata.

The policy provides three levels of access to microdata: restricted, conditional, and no access. Furthermore, any access to unpublished estimates and summary data for any and all organizations are subject to NASS approval and policy.

Individuals who wish to use the services of the data lab must submit an official, detailed proposal detailing why they want data access, who they wish to have access, and what the results will be used for. The organization that the individual represents and the proposal are researched and carefully reviewed by the Associate Administrator before the proposal is approved or denied.

The policy designated eight types of organizations, categorized by their mission, data use, and relationship to NASS and the public. The policy also identifies the most common data requestors, recognizes cooperative agreements and sponsorship, and allows for interpretation by the Associate Administrator.

Mr. Reilly explained that an organization(s) sponsoring a survey is involved in pre-survey design and instrument development. The organization is identified on the pre-survey letter and survey instrument. The sponsoring organizer almost always provides either direct or indirect survey funding. NASS has an obligation to inform the respondent that the data might be provided back to the sponsor. The census, however, has no “sponsorship,” so NASS does not have to provide data access to any other organization.

Mr. Thorpe asked if this meant that the sponsor could have access to individual data collected by a survey but that the respondent would be informed. Mr. Reilly confirmed this. Ms. House added that the levels of sponsorship and the type of organization involved, however, could make a particular case different.

Mr. Kimmell asked if the proposal submitted by an organization would reveal any “back-end” sponsors. For example if individuals or organizations were trying to gather the information by “going through” the process under the auspices of a higher-level sponsor. Mr. Reilly answered that the approval review process is designed to uncover this scenario and any others that may compromise confidentiality or the access policy in its intended purpose. Mr. Reilly added that there are security and other checks involved during the approval process, including verifications of what the data will be used for, which all feeds into the decision by the Associate Administrator as to whether or not a proposal will be approved. Only specific individuals within a sponsoring organization will be authorized to receive data and they must certify to NASS confidentiality restrictions. They can not further release the data.

Ms. Pamplin mentioned that the SSO’s have stated that special requests are often “piggybacked” onto existing surveys, and she asked whether, when this is the case, the sponsor only gets those particular pieces of the information collected. Mr. Reilly said that she was correct—NASS filters out only those items. [Clarification: It is more correct to state that a sponsor would get only the data items necessary to complete their analysis. A sponsor adding a target pest question to a chemical use survey would need some additional data items on crops grown and chemicals applied to interpret their target pest information. However, they would not receive the entire survey data set and would not get names, addresses, or any other identifying information.]

Mr. Reilly described “Level 1” organizations as those with conditional microdata access. If they have sponsorship, they may be approved for off-site use of the data. If no sponsorship, they may be approved for on-site use only.

Examples of “Level 1” organizations include selected USDA agencies, public agencies, and Federal statistical agencies. Examples of full sponsorship include the ERS for the Agricultural Resource Management Study; in this case, the sponsor, ERS, would have access to the full range of microdata from this survey.

Mr. Thorpe asked whether, if a “Level 1” organization uses the data lab to look at the microdata (individual operation data), there are any steps taken prior to their use of the lab to prevent people from being able to identify obvious operations in a county (e.g., large operations). Mr. Reilly answered that NASS will thoroughly define up front what data they need (e.g., clean water studies may only want animal unit counts), then we would allow them access to only those items. If the sponsor knew of a particularly large hog operation in a county and that operation was in the sample, then they would see it. But, those data are not allowed to leave the lab unless they are grouped so that confidentiality is not violated. Mr. Thorpe asked whether the sponsor could actually look at that county. Mr. Reilly stated that they could, in that instance, see the data but could not take them out. Mr. Thorpe stated that if they saw them, they would know the totals whether they were taken out of the lab or not. Dr. Whalon stated that the sponsor is held under the same confidentiality law and penalties as NASS. Ms. Pamplin added that the sponsor would have already filled out the approval form to describe what the data were being used for. Mr. Reilly added that it would be hard for NASS to do all of the work first to prevent against this situation every time. [Clarification: Most individuals in the data lab are not “looking” at data. They are performing data tabulations to calculate relationships within different size groups of geographic areas.]

Mr. Kimmell asked if the process was designed this way to save NASS the time for research. Mr. Reilly answered that there were several reasons, including (1) resources, (2) avoid having the sponsor do their own survey and add to respondent burden, and (3) the researchers have not yet formulated exactly what items are needed for their project, so they must do different data runs to determine their specific needs.

Mr. Kimmell asked whether this policy represents a change or simply a restatement of the policy. Mr. Reilly replied that this is an integration of what the census did before into the current NASS structure, and that NASS is trying to define the purposes in light of changing needs and abilities.

Mr. Allen added an example to Mr. Thorpe’s point. For example, an ERS researcher may look at thousands of records, run them for an item, and do tabulations to see if the information is meaningful. They do not have time nor interest to look at each record to see unique operations and their individual information. They would be required to write a research proposal with specifics in their application for access, and we may have additional questions or guidelines before approval would be granted.

Dr. Jenner stated that it appears the difference between access for a sponsor and nonsponsor is on-site versus off-site access. Mr. Reilly stated that this was essentially true. Dr. Jenner stated that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Agricultural Research Service have regulatory authority, and that such access would not be in the respondents' best interest; such an agreement would only work with ethical people. Mr. Reilly agreed, but added a reminder that the individual proposal must show the use and, if it appeared in any way to be for regulatory purposes, then the Associate Administrator would not approve it. Each request, given as a written proposal, is subject to the same confidentiality laws and penalties.

Dr. Koong asked about the level or type of entity that initiates the requests; (i.e., a university Dean, Professor, Government agency, individual, etc.). Mr. Reilly responded that anyone and any organization may make the request, but that it is the *purpose* of the research that is equally examined; a graduate thesis, for example, would not be approved, but research that is in the best interest of the public and agriculture would be favorably reviewed.

Dr. Wimberley voiced his support of the lab, stating that it is a good thing and that there is a need to know this detailed information. He explained that this great resource—the census of agriculture data—would be unusable without the lab. Dr. Wimberley asked the Committee to remember that they were discussing “Level 1” access—others are more restricted. Level 1 includes public institutions related to agriculture. In the university, if Dr. Wimberley is using official, sensitive data, a human subjects review committee must review it and make sure only aggregate—not individual—data are released. Dr. Wimberley commented on the excellent usability of the prior “public use sample” data provided from the census of agriculture in the past. He remarked that the “public use sample” data were in categories, and suggested that NASS prepare and release the same format of “public use files” from the 1997 Census of Agriculture.

Mr. Thorpe inquired whether there was a fee for NASS creating special tabulations when access to microdata is denied. Mr. Reilly said that there would be a fee.

Ms. Pamplin reminded the Committee that NASS is not trying to make money through the fees for the data lab and special tabulations, but rather simply recoup the costs.

Ms. Pamplin asked whether, when a “sponsor” is another Government agency, they must have an appropriation to pay for the survey in some way; Mr. Reilly confirmed this. Ms. House stated that, with the information provided through direct access and special tabulations, NASS's intent is to make those tabulations available to the public so that everyone has equal access and nobody has a special advantage. Mr. Reilly added that, when someone requests a special tabulation, the data go through the publication review process and become “publishable” data.

Ms. House explained that it is important for some data users to have access instead of NASS doing the work because certain users, such as the Economic Research Service and universities, conduct sophisticated modeling activities in areas where NASS statisticians do not have expertise. Mr. Kimmell asked if those groups can give NASS a “test” exercise to determine if NASS can do the work for them. Mr. Reilly stated that NASS is in the process of re-evaluating the policy, so NASS would appreciate this and all other input.

Dr. Koong asked whether organizations or individuals have access, because he is concerned of the spectrum of people at organizations that do not have the same value system and ethics, and data security could be at stake. Mr. Reilly stated that he made a good point. Individuals within an organization are approved; the organization is not approved for uncontrolled use. Dr. Whalon added that the policy does not show a radical change, so he agrees with it; plus, in the public discourse, making real data available is better than inferences they would make from only published tables.

Ms. Pamplin stated that they must weigh the risk versus the benefit. The policy cannot absolutely protect against nefarious people, but the risk is small. She asked whether there were other concerns.

Dr. Jenner asked if there was a process in the policy to show respondents who has access to the data or who obtains special tabulations. Mr. Reilly said there was not such a process in place, but that was something to consider as part of the approval process. Ms. Pamplin clarified that, on sponsored surveys, respondents are told. Mr. Reilly affirmed this, but explained that unsponsored requests or special tabulations arriving after the survey are not told to the respondent. Dr. Jenner added that what is legitimate to some may not be legitimate to all, and that a lot of folks who do not have access make inferences that violate proper statistical rules. Beyond confidentiality, we need to place an emphasis on how the data are presented. Mr. Reilly agreed and stated that, before the data are released, we would like to have the data lab or special tabulation customer submit how the data will be quoted and used so that NASS can review their interpretation of the data.

Ms. Pamplin asked that, with the confidentiality review that is in place, before the finished product was “taken away” from the data lab NASS would make sure the table was correct. Mr. Reilly responded with this example: the Farm and Ranch Irrigation table shows acres of irrigated land by State. If someone forgot these acres did not include horticulture, they may misquote the facts because of the nuances in the data.

Ms. Pamplin asked what NASS needs from the Committee. Mr. Reilly explained that NASS does not expect a “blanket approval” for the policy. NASS wanted to explain the policy as it now stands, educate the Committee on where the policy is directed, and ask what, if any, are the concerns or strong objections before further progress or finalization is made regarding the policy.

Ms. Pamplin stated that she heard two issues: (1) the “individual versus organization” access viewpoint, and (2) the public notice/availability of who or what organizations requested what data. Dr. Whalon made a motion that the Committee should appoint a subcommittee to review the two issues more in detail. The motion was seconded and carried. Dr. Salas asked if the subcommittee could make recommendations at the next Committee meeting for approval. Ms. Pamplin agreed with Dr. Salas. The subcommittee was formed with Dr. Whalon (Chair), Mr. Thorpe, Dr. Wimberley, Dr. Jenner, and Mr. Armbruster.

Confidentiality and Disclosures

Dr. Jenner inquired about the parameters used and screening to prevent identification of individual data. Ms. Pamplin stated that the subcommittee could address this issue. Mr. Reilly added that a working group should review and prepare guidelines regarding disclosures. Dr. Jenner stated that he needed the information within the following 2 weeks for a policymaking process at the American Farm Bureau Federation. In response, Mr. Reilly gave a brief overview of the current disclosure process:

1. First, “primary disclosure” occurs when a single or few operations so dominate a data cell that individual information could be inferred or calculated without suppression, then.
2. Secondly, “complimentary disclosure” occurs when a cell is suppressed because a related cell is suppressed and, without the complimentary disclosure, calculations could be made to determine the primary disclosure value.

Dr. Jenner stated that the recent water quality data situation has given the American Farm Bureau Federation a deep concern about what is being released and, without firm assurance and explanations of how the data are protected, they will back off from supporting NASS surveys. Mr. Reilly stated that NASS will review all data tables before they are released. Dr. Wimberley said that he is very aware of the protection of census and NASS data from 20 years of experience, and it is perfect. There has not been any case of breakage in confidentiality. The American Farm Bureau Federation has no cause to worry, and it is premature to say there is a problem. There never has been such a problem, and nobody wants any such problem.

Mr. Gifford asked if there was a cut off time when the policy does not apply, or when the data is no longer confidential. Mr. Reilly responded that no public release of census of agriculture data is ever made. Even research access to survey data depends on the program; each program has a prescribed time period before the data are available such as not until end-of-year reports are published. Mr. Allen stated that NASS has never made their data sets public. Census data sets can be linked back, but survey questionnaires for NASS are destroyed after the next survey in the series is conducted.

Dr. Wilson stated that he sees the policy as holding firm to what has been in place at the Census Bureau for years. The data are only used for statistical purposes, and there are criminal penalties. The census has a strict policy and the Center for Economic Analysis is a partner.

Mr. Bay addressed the group, stating that this subject is not being brought up by accident. The EPA wanted a special tabulation of AUMs (animal units) to show livestock concentrations on operations for their work on the Clean Water Act. NASS had no resources to do the intense data queries and modeling, so they hired a private contractor to come into the data lab and do the research. The other choice was for EPA to collect their own data. A newsletter monitoring EPA printed a statement that made it appear that EPA had access to the data for regulatory purposes. Although it was untrue, American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) leaders saw this and it

established the “perception” that NASS gave census records to EPA. In fact, neither the Cattlemen, EPA, AFBF, or Pork Producers wanted EPA to do their own survey to get their own data set. NASS looked for a way to provide necessary information but avoid a perception in any way of giving out confidential census data. NASS, therefore, agreed to have NASS personnel do a special tabulation, aggregating data to four or five regions, keeping identification of individual farms which would have over a certain number of AUMs suppressed. NASS is concerned that AFBF is in a position to affect response rates and funding of they attacked NASS. NASS wanted to avoid having EPA or one of its cooperators do their own survey, because over surveying takes taxpayer’s money, is burdensome on farmers, and is poor Government.

Ms. Goodwin added that the EPA people responsible for these analyses are not the regulatory arm. Furthermore, at this point, *nothing* has been given to EPA.

Ms. Pamplin led a motion and vote to have a subcommittee monitor this issue, and all agreed.

Mr. Vogel stated that confidentiality keeps NASS from releasing data prematurely, and there are penalties of imprisonment. NASS employees are not allowed to deal with stock exchanges on covered commodities. The fine for breaking that rule is 10 years imprisonment or \$10,000. The penalty for issuing a false report is 5 years in jail or \$5,000. For individual confidentiality, there are two safeguards in place: (a) Title 7, section 2276 of the U.S. Code (from the 1985 Farm Bill) provides for \$10,000 plus 1 year in jail for knowingly allowing individual data to go public, and (b) the data provided are immune from court or judicial process. If a farmer wants his or her own reported data for their own use, NASS could provide them to the particular farmer, but only to them.

Dr. Jenner asked if the Committee would be notified when they are seeing data that are protected during a Committee meeting. Mr. Vogel answered, “Yes.” Dr. Wimberley asked for verification that there would be no great “pouring out” of individual data, and Mr. Vogel responded, “Absolutely not,” but that the Advisory Committee would be more likely than anyone else to see unpublished data. Dr. Wimberley stated that he wanted warning whenever that happened, and Mr. Vogel responded that he could appreciate that.

Ms. Frace of EPA addressed the EPA issue by clarifying the intent of use. The program establishes technology requirements to minimize pollution. EPA wants to assess the economic impacts of regulations when making policy, and they are under court order to look at these requirements with an industry trade association to determine how to portray the industry as a whole while covering all differences. The objective is not to target individual operations. They need NASS data to assess, on a national and regional basis, what would be the economic impact of the different options. For example, if regulations are set to cover operations having over 1,000 animal units, are there a large number of operations maintaining just under 1,000 units to “get out” of the regulations, or are there large areas where EPA should look to better assess implications of what these requirements do? Using NASS data prevents EPA from needing to go to each facility themselves. It is better to base information on data rather than assumptions of what is out there. As a caveat, if any information would endanger disclosure, EPA is willing to further aggregate the data to ensure protection.

Dr. Jenner stated that there was a second option: why not farm the data collection/analysis out to a land-grant university for objective work? Ms. Frace stated that they needed to assess whether current regulations are sufficient and proper, or whether they need to shift the technology to be more environmentally responsible while not causing economic digression of the facilities. The NASS data were sufficient for this modeling and research. Dr. Jenner responded that he felt more options for data collection could have been considered.

Ms. Pamplin asked if the EPA employees are actually looking at microdata. Ms. Frace replied that they are not, because their level of access is “level 3,” which is only for data available for public dissemination. Ms. Pamplin wanted to verify that EPA does not look, or want to look, at the data, and that the one section of EPA that looks at the data is not the regulatory section. Ms. Frace stated that the section reviewing the final, aggregate, published/public data is not the enforcement arm of EPA, but does have input into policy at the national level.

Dr. Whalon stated that he understood that EPA has a regulatory obligation where, if information comes to them that may show infringement, they must report it. Ms. Frace stated that if EPA did their own survey, they would get the data and would indeed be required to report violations, but they also have their own confidentiality laws as well.

NASS Program Changes Review

Ms. Pamplin asked the Committee to discuss their “homework” assignment.

Mr. Vogel stated that the Committee could use census results to gauge if NASS is collecting the right items. He asked if there were any burning issues.

Ms. Pamplin stated that she noticed that NASS received only half of the appropriations requested for the nursery and greenhouse chemical use survey, and that she understood the chemical use survey was conducted every other year. She asked about the timing. NASS requested additional funding for fiscal year 2000 to expand the number of commodities in the current chemical use program and to initiate chemical use data collection for the horticulture, greenhouse, and nursery industries. The requested funding was cut in half. NASS still plans to collect horticulture, greenhouse, and nursery data next fiscal year, but we are scaling back data collection of other desired commodities.

The focus of the chemical use survey will alternate from year to year between field crops and vegetables; and horticulture, greenhouse, nursery crops, and fruit. Field crops and vegetables will be the focus in 2000 since the horticultural census was just conducted. Horticulture, greenhouse, nursery, and fruit data will be collected in 2001.

Dr. Whalon said that he had a significant “shopping list” of questions, and that all Advisory Committee members would not want to look at them all; perhaps it was better for a subcommittee to do this. Mr. Vogel stated that all issues presented the previous day were on pages 37-38 of the handout.

Ms. Pamplin asked about the timing of the recommendations. Mr. Vogel responded that they will be working on the content for the next 6 months, and plan to have the content decisions out by the spring. Mr. Vogel added that this is just a “heads up” so that anyone can pick up the phone and call Mr. Reilly or Mr. Vogel with things to put on the list for consideration, etc.

Mr. Gifford asked whether the Committee members would have time to review the content issues and add items before the next meeting. Mr. Reilly responded that NASS would have the content package prepared and mailed out to members within the next week.

Dr. Jenner stated that we need to track manure because it is a large product and it is now documentable.

Ms. Pamplin added that USDA is being criticized for its handling of Indian issues. Mr. Vogel stated that the issue is on the list given to members, and that it is very important to determine a good methodology for counting them. Ms. Pamplin stated that perhaps the Committee needs a person from the NASS working group to address the members at the next meeting. Mr. Allen responded that Mr. Racine, who could not be at this Committee meeting, is with the Intertribal Agricultural Council and is very interested in this issue. Dr. Salas requested that someone present a report at the next meeting on how they are dealing with the issue.

Ms. Pamplin asked the members to look at the issues raised the previous day and determine how to prioritize them, and to gather comments. Dr. Salas suggested that NASS staff review them prior to the next meeting. Mr. Allen added that he had organized the issues into six categories:

- (1) Items NASS has in their program review/discussion,
- (2) Items requiring work with other agencies,
- (3) Advisory Committee issues,
- (4) Data issues,
- (5) Environmental issues, and
- (6) Big issues (e.g., rural statistics).

Mr. Allen stated these could be better defined before the next meeting and he will provide an analysis of each item.

Ms. Pamplin asked about NASS’s role relative to rural statistics and sociological issues. Mr. Vogel responded that the mission statement says we have responsibility for statistics on rural America, but that we need a decision on the definition of “rural America.” He added that NASS needs to know what the Committee needs regarding rural statistics. Ms. Pamplin asked if there are resources allocated for this. Mr. Vogel stated that very few resources are allocated for this issue because funds are appropriated by data type, and there are no funds appropriated for rural statistics. Mr. Allen confirmed that and added that no household information is included on the current surveys. The surveys are directed for specific production data.

Mr. Bay said that NASS has been looking at this issue, but they do not have the infrastructure (list, etc.) to measure this. NASS needs to look at the possibilities of working with the U.S. Census Bureau to provide tabulations for this area. The American Community Survey from the Census Bureau will help provide rural America data, but we need to ask the Bureau about it. It would be very expensive and a duplication of effort for NASS to collect non-farm data. This Committee could go on record to support oversampling of rural areas and provide tabulations.

Dr. Wimberley encouraged NASS to continue to work with the Census Bureau to get this information. Within agriculture, data users still need to get minimal characteristics on households.

Dr. Schrader asked if any of these data are covered in ARMS. Mr. Allen replied that ARMS is the closest on-going vehicle, especially if NASS begins enumerating multiple operators. Dr. Wimberley added that there is still a need for household data that ARMS cannot provide.

Mr. Vogel stated that there are lots of items to add to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, but that, conversely, something has to come off. NASS is looking at the possibility of taking off irrigation and crop yields from the census and making those calculations based on other NASS data using census acreage counts. Ms. Pamplin asked about the notion of comparability. Mr. Allen replied that this was a trade-off in 1997. The goal was to be as comparable as possible. The goal for 2002 is to make it as relevant as possible, with better instructions up front.

Ms. House stated that representatives of the data suppliers need to help spread the message of the “what” and “why” of data being collected. Data supplier representatives need to help provide benefits and a message of what will convince respondents to respond.

Mr. Thorpe asked about the criteria routinely used to determine what to add to the surveys, and the cost benefit. Mr. Vogel responded that NASS tries to take the issues, determine the widespread need, and decide whether the question fits in with other surveys, etc. It is very subjective. The census difficulty is adding something and then determining what to take off.

Mr. Gifford asked if a Canadian questionnaire is included in the content package. Mr. Allen said it would be, at least for the package to the Advisory Committee members.

Mr. Bay stated that NASS would have a proposal ready in April, and that is when NASS really needs a strong review.

The group discussed briefly the next meeting date. Dr. Whalon said he needs e-mail address and other contact information for key contacts in various areas. Mr. Armbruster stated that some questions would be more meaningful if the Committee could review the NASS mission statement, strategic plan, etc. Ms. Pamplin asked if the Committee could have a brief explanation of the strategic plan, how the process works, and how it feeds into the budget process.

Dr. Salas said that the Committee, if possible, could plan ahead to carry surveys most important to the Committee to the Secretary. This will make our priorities known at the Department's Administrative level. We need to think several years ahead since USDA is probably working on the 2001 budget right now.

Dr. Jenner stated that part of the current problems surrounding the data use issue involves the fact that not all Federal statistical agencies have the same high level of statistical integrity as NASS and probably some other Federal agencies. It would be beneficial if NASS and other statistical agencies could be watchdogs for those statistical agencies that don't have a statistical mandate and the same level of integrity. This would solve a lot of our trust problems.

As the meeting came to a close, adjourning shortly after noon, Dr. Wimberley recommended that the Committee congratulate members on their new positions within NASS, and that the Committee thank Don Bay for his heroic service as a public servant. As Dr. Wimberley stated, "If not for Don Bay, we would not be here today." The members unanimously agreed.

We hereby certify that the above minutes represent an accurate record of the proceedings of the meeting held by the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics on November 30 and December 1, 1999.

Mary Ashby Pamplin
Chair

Rich Allen
Executive Director

Appendix 1. Agenda

AGENDA ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE STATISTICS NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

Day 1

Tuesday, November 30, 1999

Morning session 8:00-11:30 a.m., Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building,
Room 104-A. Afternoon Session 1:00-4:30 p.m., DoubleTree Hotel.

Time	Topic	Discussion Leader
8:00 a.m.	Call to Order and Meeting Plans	Rich Allen, Associate Administrator and Committee Executive Director
8:15 a.m.	Deputy Chief Economist's Comments	Joe Glauber, Deputy Chief Economist
8:30 a.m.	Administrator's Remarks	Don Bay, Administrator
8:45 a.m.	Member Introductions	Phil Zellers, Director of Information Technology Division
9:30 a.m.	BREAK	
10:00 a.m.	1997 Census Results and Future Plans	Joe Reilly, Director of Census and Survey Division
10:30 a.m.	NASS Survey Program	Rich Allen
11:00 p.m.	NASS Reimbursable Program	Carol House, Director of Research and Development Division
11:30 a.m.	LUNCH - Secretary's Dining Room	
1:00 p.m.	Nominations for Committee Chair	Rich Allen
1:15 p.m.	State-Federal Program	State Statisticians
1:45 p.m.	NASS Program Review	Fred Vogel, Deputy Administrator for Programs and Products
2:45 p.m.	BREAK	
3:15 p.m.	Future Agricultural Statistics Issues NASS View	Don Bay
3:45 p.m.	Future Agricultural Statistics Issues Suggestions from Committee Members	Ron Bosecker, Acting Deputy Administrator for Field Operations
4:15 p.m.	Comments from Chairperson Nominees	
4:30 p.m.	ADJOURN	

AGENDA
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE STATISTICS
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

Day 1 (continued) Tuesday, November 30, 1999

DoubleTree Hotel

Time Activity

5:30 p.m. Reception (Cash Bar)
 6:00 p.m. Dinner (Collect Votes)
 7:00 p.m. Guest Speaker - Francine Hardy
 7:45 p.m. Committee Chair election and announcement

Day 2 Wednesday, December 1, 1999

DoubleTree Hotel

Time	Topic	Discussion Leader
8:00 a.m.	Call to Order and Remarks	Chairperson
8:15 p.m.	Information Program (Data Lab, Special Tabs, Disclosure)	Joe Reilly
9:00 a.m.	Proposals for Committee Activities	Chairperson
9:30 a.m.	BREAK	
10:00 a.m.	Public Questions and Comments	Chairperson
10:30 a.m.	Committee Discussions and Plans For Future Meetings	Chairperson
11:30 a.m.	ADJOURN	

Appendix 2. Members of the Advisory Committee on Agricultural Statistics

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE STATISTICS MEMBERSHIP LISTING

Representative

Current Affiliations

<p>Mr. Charles E. Adams Chief Executive Officer Senath Aviation and Adams Fertilizer, Inc. Senath, Missouri</p>	<p>National Agricultural Aviation Association</p>
<p>Dr. Walter J. Armbruster President Farm Foundation Oak Brook, Illinois</p>	<p>American Agricultural Economics Association International Association of Agricultural Economists</p>
<p>Mr. Arthur R. Brown, Jr. Secretary of Agriculture New Jersey Department of Agriculture Trenton, New Jersey</p>	<p>National Association of State Departments of Agriculture New Jersey Agricultural Society</p>
<p>Dr. Robert D. Epperson Senior Environmental Planner Bureau of Reclamation Area Office South Central California Area Office Fresno, California</p>	<p>California Farm Bureau Raisin Administrative Committee Sun Maid Raisin Growers Cooperative Sun Diamond Growers Cooperative</p>
<p>Mr. John I. Gifford Consultant Equipment Manufacturers Institute Rock Island, Illinois</p>	
<p>Ms. Carol A. Gregg Consultant Grove City, Pennsylvania</p>	<p>American Agri-Women Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Pennsylvania Grange</p>
<p>Dr. Mark W. Jenner Economist/Commodity Policy Specialist American Farm Bureau Federation Park Ridge, Illinois</p>	<p>State Farm Bureaus and Puerto Rico Farm Bureau National Aquaculture Industry Forum AFBF Aquaculture Advisory Committee AFBF Poultry Advisory Committee National Poultry Waste Management Symposium</p>

RepresentativeCurrent Affiliations**Mr. Thomas H. Kimmell**

Executive Director
The Irrigation Association
Fairfax, Virginia

Dr. Ling-Jung (Kelvin) Koong

Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine
Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon

Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Farm Bureau

Dr. Mark D. Lange

Director of Economic Services
National Cotton Council of America
Memphis, Tennessee

American Agricultural Economics Association

Mr. Andrew W. LaVigne

Executive Vice President/CEO
Florida Citrus Mutual
Lakeland, Florida

Florida Agricultural Council
Florida Secretary of Agriculture's Ag Advisory Board

Ms. Sheila K. Massey

Self-employed Farmer
Animas, New Mexico

Women Involved in Farm Economics (WIFE)
Immediate Past President (1/1/2000)

Mr. Jack C. Mitenbuler

Manager, Marketing Research
Dow AgroSciences
Indianapolis, Indiana

American Crop Protection Association
National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy

Ms. Mary Ashby Pamplin

Director of Horticultural Research
American Nursery & Landscape
Association
Washington, DC

Horticultural Research Institute
National Society of Fund Raising Executives
American Society of Horticultural Science
International Plant Propagator's Society
Nursery & Landscape Association Executives

Mr. Edward J. Pennick

Director, Land Assistance Fund
Federation of Souther Cooperatives/
Land Assistance Fund
East Point, Georgia

RepresentativeCurrent Affiliations**Dr. Bobby R. Phills**

Dean and Director, Land-Grant Programs
 Florida A&M University
 College of Engineering Sciences,
 Technology and Agriculture
 Tallahassee, Florida

Association of Research Directors
 Florida Farm Foundation

Mr. Ross R. Racine

Director of Programs
 Intertribal Agriculture Council
 Billings, Montana

Mr. James D. Rieck

Publishing Research Director
 Farm Progress Companies
 Carol Stream, Illinois

Agriculture Publishers Association

Dr. Gumecindo Salas

Vice President of Governmental
 Relations
 Hispanic Association of Colleges
 and Universities
 Washington, DC

Dr. Lee F. Schrader

Economist
 West Lafayette, Indiana

Illinois Farm Bureau
 American Agricultural Economics Association

Mr. Topper Thorpe

Executive Vice President
 Cattle-Fax
 Greenwood Village, Colorado

National Cattlemen's Beef Association

Mr. Hugh A. Warren

Executive Vice President
 Catfish Farmers of America
 Indianola, Mississippi

National Fisheries Institute's National Aquaculture Council
 National Association of State Aquaculture Coordinators
 National Aquaculture Association
 U.S. Trout Farmers Association
 American Tilapia Association

Representative**Dr. Mark E. Whalon**

Interim Director
Center for Integrated Plant Systems
College of Agriculture and Natural
Resources
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

Dr. Ewen M. Wilson (Ex-Officio Member)

Chief, Company Statistics Division
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC

Dr. Ronald C. Wimberley

William Neal Reynolds Professor
of Sociology
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, North Carolina

Mr. Ivan W. Wyatt

President
Kansas Farmers Union
McPherson, Kansas

Current Affiliations

International Apple Institute
Michigan Farm Bureau
Michigan Integrated Pest Management Alliance
Cherry Marketing Institute
Various commodity organizations including apple,
asparagus, cherry, Christmas trees, corn, dairy, nursery and
landscape, potato.

Rural Sociology Society
Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists
Southern Rural Sociological Association

National Farmers Union

Appendix 3. List of Background Documents

“Opening Remarks.” Rich Allen. November 1999.

“Administrator’s Remarks.” Don Bay. November 1999.

“Introductions.” Phil Zellers. November 1999.

“1997 Census Results and Future Plans.” Joe Reilly. November 1999.

“NASS Survey Program.” Rich Allen. November 1999.

“NASS Reimbursable Program.” Carol House. November 1999.

“State-Federal Program.” Peggy Stringer, Dave Kleweno, Bob Graham, Jim Sands.
November 1999.

“NASS Program Review.” Fred Vogel. November 1999.

“Future Agricultural Statistics Issues - NASS View.” Don Bay. November 1999.

“Canadian Agriculture Statistics Program.” Francine Hardy. July 1999.

“Information Program.” Joe Reilly. November 1999.