

Research, Education, and Economics; or the Administrator of NASS may request. The Committee will meet at least annually. All meetings are open to the public. Committee members are reimbursed for official travel expenses only.

**Description of Duties:** The duties of the Committee are solely advisory in nature. The Committee makes recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture regarding the agricultural statistics program of NASS, and such other matters as it may deem advisable, or which the Secretary of Agriculture; the Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics; or the Administrator of NASS may request. Agency or Official to Whom the Committee Reports: The Committee reports to the Secretary of Agriculture through the Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics.

**Committee Membership:** The Secretary of Agriculture will appoint the membership of the Committee. Furthermore, members will serve for two-year terms, and may serve no more than three consecutive terms for a total of six consecutive years. Membership will consist of 22 individuals with diverse capabilities distinguished by their broad range of knowledge and interest in, though not limited to, agricultural economics, rural sociology, farm policy analysis, and agricultural education. Members will also be drawn from Educational and Research Organizations; Farm Service and Marketing Organizations; State Government Agricultural Agencies; and Farm, Ranch and Agriculture Producers. A representative from the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, and a representative from the Economic Research Service, USDA, shall serve as ex-officio members of the Committee.

This Committee will be fairly balanced in its membership in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed. Steps will be taken to encourage fresh points of view, such as establishing staggered membership terms and limiting the number of renewed memberships.

Equal opportunity practices in accordance with USDA policies will be followed in all appointments to the Committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the Committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by the Department, membership shall include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the American

people, including underserved communities.

The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, marital status, familial or parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, genetic information, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs).

**Ethics Statement:** To maintain the highest levels of honesty, integrity and ethical conduct, no Committee or Subcommittee member shall participate in any "specific party matters" (*i.e.*, matters are narrowly focused and typically involve specific transactions between identified parties) such as a lease, license, permit, contract, claim, grant, agreement, or related litigation with the Department in which the member has a direct or indirect financial interest. This includes the requirement for Committee or Subcommittee members to immediately disclose to the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) any specific party matter in which the member's immediate family, relatives, business partners or employer would be directly seeking to financially benefit from the Committee's recommendations.

All members will receive ethics training to identify and avoid any actions that would cause the public to question the integrity of the Committee's advice and recommendations. Members who are appointed as "Representatives" are not subject to Federal ethics laws because such appointment allows them to represent the point(s) of view of a particular group, business sector or segment of the public.

Members appointed as "Special Government Employees" (SGEs) are considered intermittent Federal employees and are subject to Federal ethics laws. SGEs are appointed due to their personal knowledge, academic scholarship, background or expertise. No SGE may participate in any activity in which the member has a prohibited financial interest. Appointees who are SGEs are required to complete and submit a Confidential Financial Disclosure Report (OGE-450 form) and, upon request, USDA will assist SGEs in preparing these financial reports. To ensure the highest level of compliance with applicable ethical standards USDA will provide ethics training to SGEs on an annual basis. The provisions of these paragraphs are not meant to

exhaustively cover all Federal ethics laws and do not affect any other statutory or regulatory obligations to which advisory committee members are subject.

**Recordkeeping:** The records of this Committee, formally and informally established subcommittees, or other subgroups of the committee, shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule (GRS) 6.2 or other approved agency records disposition schedule. These records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552. Information about this Committee is available online at: USDA—National Agricultural Statistics Service—About NASS—Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics

Dated: August 21, 2024.

*Cikena Reid, Committee Management Officer, USDA.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### National Agricultural Statistics Service

#### Notice of Intent To Request Revision and Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection

**AGENCY:** National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the intention of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to request revision and extension of a currently approved information collection, the Generic Clearance for Survey Research Studies. There are minimal changes to burden hours and number of contacts to accommodate the proposed testing for the upcoming three-year period.

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by November 12, 2024 to be assured of consideration.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments, identified by docket number 0535-0248, by any of the following methods:

- *Email:* [ombofficer@nass.usda.gov](mailto:ombofficer@nass.usda.gov). Include docket number above in the subject line of the message.

- *E-fax:* (855) 838-6382.

- *Mail:* Mail any paper, disk, or CD-ROM submissions to: Richard Hopper, NASS Clearance Officer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 5336 South Building, 1400 Independence

Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250–2024.

- *Hand Delivery/Courier:* Hand deliver to: Richard Hopper, NASS Clearance Officer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 5336 South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250–2024.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Joseph J. Prusacki, Acting Associate Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, (202) 720–2707. Copies of this information collection and related instructions can be obtained without charge from Richard Hopper, NASS–OMB Clearance Officer, at (202) 720–2206 or at [ombofficer@nass.usda.gov](mailto:ombofficer@nass.usda.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** *Title:* Generic Clearance to Conduct Survey Research Studies.

*OMB Control Number:* 0535–0248.

*Type of Request:* To revise and extend a currently approved information collection for a period of three years.

*Abstract:* The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for a generic clearance that will allow NASS to rigorously develop, test, and evaluate its survey instruments and methodologies. The primary objectives of the National Agricultural Statistics Service are to prepare and issue State and national estimates of crop production, livestock production, economic statistics, and environmental statistics related to agriculture and to conduct the Census of Agriculture. This request is part of an on-going initiative to improve NASS surveys, as recommended by both its own guidelines and those of OMB.

In the last decade, rigorously researched techniques have been increasingly instituted by NASS and other Federal agencies and are now routinely used to improve the quality and timeliness of survey data and analyses, while simultaneously reducing respondents' cognitive workload and burden. The purpose of this generic clearance is to allow NASS to continue to adopt and use these rigorously researched techniques to improve its current data collections efforts. These tests will also be used to aid in the development of new surveys.

NASS envisions using a variety of survey improvement techniques, as appropriate to the individual project under investigation. These include focus groups, cognitive and usability laboratory and field techniques, exploratory interviews, behavior coding, respondent debriefing, pilot surveys, and split-panel tests. After obtaining participants' permission, NASS plans to audio-record some cognitive interviews and usability interviews, in order to allow for more complete and accurate summaries of these qualitative interviews. This is a standard procedure for cognitive interviews and usability interviews at many other survey organizations, including Federal agencies. The consent form would be used for audio recording some cognitive interviews and usability interviews for research purposes. For these types of interviews, there will be no collection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) or any identifying information about the operator or operation.

In addition to the testing techniques listed above NASS will be including parallel testing with this renewal request. NASS is investigating methodologies using additional sources of farm operators (including web scraping). These methodologies will be tested against the NASS's current multi-frame methodology.

Following standard OMB requirements NASS will submit a change request to OMB individually for each survey improvement project it undertakes under this generic clearance and provide OMB with a copy of the questionnaire (if one is used), and all other materials describing the project.

*Authority:* These data will be collected under the authority of 7 U.S.C. 2204(a). Individually identifiable data collected under this authority are governed by Section 1770 of the Food Security Act of 1985, 7 U.S.C. 2276, which requires USDA to afford strict confidentiality to non-aggregated data provided by respondents. This Notice is submitted in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104–13) and Office of Management and Budget regulations at 5 CFR part 1320. Participation in all surveys and studies conducted under this approval will be voluntary.

All NASS employees and NASS contractors must also fully comply with

all provisions of the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA) of 2018, title III of Public Law 115–435, codified in 44 U.S.C. ch. 35. CIPSEA supports NASS's pledge of confidentiality to all respondents and facilitates the agency's efforts to reduce burden by supporting statistical activities of collaborative agencies through designation of NASS agents, subject to the limitations and penalties described in CIPSEA. NASS uses the information only for statistical purposes and publishes only tabulated total data.

*Estimate of Burden:* Public reporting burden for these collections of information is estimated to average from 15 minutes to 1.5 hours per respondent, dependent upon the survey and the technique used to test for that particular survey. The overall average is estimated to be 0.60 hours per response.

*Respondents:* Farmers, ranchers, farm managers, farm contractors, agribusinesses, and households.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 25,000.

*Frequency of Responses:* On occasion.

*Estimated Total Annual Burden:* 15,000 hours.

*Comments:* Comments are invited on: (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, technological or other forms of information technology collection methods.

All responses to this notice will become a matter of public record and be summarized in the request for OMB approval.

Signed at Washington, DC, August 6, 2024.

**Joseph J. Prusacki,**

*Acting Associate Administrator.*

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