



Press Release

National
Agricultural
Statistics
Service

In Cooperation with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry

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On: 2007 Census of Agriculture

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EVERYONE COUNTS IN 2007 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Have a couple of acres and a few head of livestock? Have two thousand acres under cultivation? Minority? Non-minority? Male? Female? Old? Young? Everyone counts in the 2007 Census of Agriculture, and the National Agricultural Statistics Service's (NASS) Louisiana Field Office is determined to count them all.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service is the USDA agency charged with the responsibility of collecting and disseminating statistical information on the nation's agriculture. Conducted every five years, the Census is the only source of uniform, comprehensive data for every parish and county in the nation. Additionally, it contains demographic information about the farmers, ranchers and other producers of agricultural commodities.

Nearly 47,000 Census of Agriculture Report Forms arrived in Louisiana mailboxes in early January. By mid-February, just over 40 percent of the forms had been completed and returned. "Many of the forms that haven't been returned belong to people who probably don't realize why they got them," according to Nathan Crisp, Director of the Louisiana Field Office. Crisp stressed that NASS knows that many of the people who received a census form don't consider themselves farmers. "A lot of people in the state just have a few head of livestock or poultry," he said. Data from the 2002 Census of Agriculture showed that nationwide about 85 percent of the agricultural operations had less than \$50,000 in sales; over 55 percent had less than \$10,000 in sales. "In Louisiana, the percentages are even higher. No matter how small the sales, it's still agricultural production, and we want to count it," Crisp added.

Even those who didn't have any agricultural production should complete and return their Census of Agriculture Report Forms to NASS. Census response is required by law. Those who've lost or thrown away their form need not worry; a second copy will be arriving soon.

NASS has received thousands of calls from people nationwide who've received Census forms. "Some have questions," Crisp said. "Others want to let us know they are minority or women farmers and the USDA doesn't do anything for them, so they don't see why they should report. But that's one of the main reasons they should report," he added. Census data are used to inform many business and political decisions. Census data are often used in determining the allocation of federal dollars to the states for various programs, including some disaster payments. If these data don't include the small or minority operations, people who should benefit from these programs may lose out.

Crisp encourages everyone who received a Census form to complete and return it as soon as possible. He stressed that the confidentiality of Census reports is protected by federal law. Census reports cannot be used for purposes of taxation, investigation or regulation. "Anyone who has agricultural production and didn't get a form or who has questions about completing the form can call our toll-free number, 888.424.7828," Crisp added.