

What is 'Ag Statistics' All About? - Continued

Annual Statistics Program - About 400 national reports are issued by NASS every year through the *Agricultural Statistics Board*. These national reports are complemented by about 125 state reports. Each report is released on a fixed schedule according to an annual calendar of release dates. Strict security measures are maintained to ensure that no one gains premature access to the information. The reports provide broad coverage of agriculture, including more than 165 crop and livestock items.

The annual cycle of crop reports begins with projections of the acreage that farmers intend to plant, and continues with reports of acreage planted, acreage intended for harvest, probable yields, and potential production. Final reports of acreage harvested, actual yields, and production are made at the end of the crop production season.

Livestock inventory numbers are published annually or semiannually. Details on hog production, cattle on feed, and the production of eggs, milk, and meat are issued in monthly and quarterly reports. Reports on breeding, farrowings, chick and poult placements, and calf and lamb crops provide indications of prospective market supplies. Measurements of manufactured dairy products and the cold storage holdings of agricultural commodities are also published regularly.

NASS also collects and publishes statistics on a variety of additional subjects pertaining to agriculture as part of the Annual Statistics Program. These include number and sizes of farms, farm labor and wage rates, prices received and paid by farmers, grain stocks, greenhouse & nursery production, fruits & vegetables, fertilizer & pesticide usage, mushrooms, mink, trout, plus many other commodities grown or raised in specialized areas of the country, as well as weekly weather and crop bulletins.

Census of Agriculture - The national Census of Agriculture is conducted every 5 years. In some ways it resembles the population census with which most Americans are familiar, because the Census of Agriculture attempts to produce a complete quantification of all agricultural items and activities nationwide, just as the population census attempts to count and collect data about every man, woman, and child.

For more than 150 years, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, conducted the Census of Agriculture. However, the 1997 Appropriations Act transferred the responsibility from the Bureau of the Census to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). The 1997 Census of Agriculture was the first census conducted by USDA and NASS.

The census of agriculture is the leading source of statistics about the Nation's agricultural production and an important source of consistent, comparable data at the county, State, and national levels. Census statistics are used by Congress to develop and change farm programs, study historical trends, assess current conditions, and plan for the future. Many national and State programs use census data to design and allocate funding for extension service projects, agricultural research, soil conservation programs, and land-grant colleges and universities. Private industry uses census statistics to provide a more effective production and distribution system for the agricultural community.

In keeping with the provisions of Title 7 of the United States Code, no data are published that would disclose the operations of an individual farm. However, the number of farms reporting an item is not considered a release of confidential information and is provided even though other information may be withheld. This allows farm counts to be published by zip code.

The Census of Agriculture is published in various forms including: national, state & county level data; state & county rankings; agricultural atlas; zip code tabulations; and congressional district tabulations & rankings. Special studies that are also part of the census program include the Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey, the Census of Horticultural Specialities and the Census of Aquaculture.