

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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'TIS THE SEASON TO BE COUNTED
U.S. Farmers Give the Gift that Keeps Giving By Participating in 2007 Census

Nashville, Tennessee – The end of December is typically marked by crowds of people returning holiday gifts that don't fit or won't work. This year, however, farmers across the country and in Tennessee can give the gift of being a voice for their industry and community – one that will keep on giving even after the holiday season.

By filling out the 2007 Census of Agriculture, farmers are investing in the future of rural America. Their responses will provide law makers, government organizations, such as the Farm Service Agency and Extension Service, town planners and individual farmers with valuable information used to plan for services, facilities and other investments to benefit the industry and local communities.

Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the Census covers virtually every aspect of U.S. agriculture, providing a complete count of the nation's farms and ranches and the people who operate them.

"The holiday season is a time of giving and receiving, but perhaps some of the best gifts are food, clothing and shelter provided to us with help from our U.S. farmers," said Debra Kenerson, Director of the NASS Tennessee Field Office. "As many of us gather around the dinner table with good food and good friends, these essentials for everyday living often are taken for granted. By participating in the 2007 Census of Agriculture, farmers can ensure the vitality of the agriculture industry by providing a strong and unified voice about their needs and concerns."

The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures and other topics across the country and in Tennessee, right down to the county level. NASS will mail out Census forms on December 28, 2007, to collect data for the 2007 calendar year. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2008. Producers can return their forms by mail or, for the first time, they have the convenient option of filling out the Census online.

"Participating in the Census of Agriculture is one gift Tennessee producers can give themselves and their local communities this holiday season" added Kenerson. "It's a valuable investment into the future and well-being of agriculture and to the local communities here in Tennessee."

For more information about the Census, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov or call toll-free (888) 4AG-STAT or (888) 424-7828. The Census is your voice, your future, and your responsibility.

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