



NEWS RELEASE



United States Department of Agriculture
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
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CENSUS GIVES FARMERS A VOICE IN THEIR FUTURE **2007 Census of Agriculture Coming Soon**

America's farmers and ranchers will soon have the opportunity to make their voices heard and help shape the future of agriculture for years to come. That opportunity will come to their mailboxes in the form of the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the Census is a complete count of the nation's farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures and other topics. It provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the nation.

"The Census of Agriculture provides information that is not available anywhere else – information that benefits agricultural producers and their communities in myriad ways," said Herman Ellison, Director of the Virginia Field Office of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

"For instance, policy-makers factor Census data into decisions concerning agricultural and rural programs. Community planners use Census to target needed services to rural residents. Companies rely on Census data when determining where to locate their operations. And farmers themselves can use Census data to help make critical decisions about their businesses," he explained.

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 via a secure web site.

"We're committed to making this Census the best count ever. It's about the future of agriculture and rural communities in our state," Ellison said. "Regardless of how large or small their operation is or what kinds of products they produce, Virginia farmers and ranchers will help themselves and their communities by filling out the Census of Agriculture and returning it promptly," he added.

"We want farmers and ranchers to know: the Census of Agriculture is their voice, their future and their responsibility."

For more information about the 2007 Census of Agriculture, please contact the NASS Virginia Field Office at (800) 772-0670 or visit www.agcensus.usda.gov online.

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