



USDA Fall Data Users' Meeting
October 17 & 18, 2023
Question and Answer Summary

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Question & Answer Summary

The following is a summary of questions and answers from the Data Users' Meeting. Material is organized based on the order they were answered in both the Open Forum and breakout sessions. Any unanswered questions were reviewed, and the appropriate agency has provided a written response.

Note: Questions and answers were lightly edited for readability.

Open Forum: Question and Answer Summary

Question: Karen Braun

Are there any plans to revisit or recalibrate the calculation of U.S. corn trend yield ahead of the 2024/25 season? National corn yield has landed below USDA's initial trend for five consecutive years now.

Answer: Mark Jekanowski

No. No recalibration efforts under way. Keep in mind, these trend yields are always based on expectations of normal weather, and weather conditions change over the course of the year.

Answer: Mike Jewison

We've had lengthy discussions about this topic in particular. I would invite you to look at some of the transcripts, in particular the last few sessions, in terms of my public comments. And my views on the trend line yield. And obviously it's always all available data. And we take it year in, year out and evaluate all of it.

Question: Juan Quintero

In terms of production for other countries, such as Canada, in one moment do production numbers are aligned between WASDE and Stat Can Reports?

Answer: Mark Jekanowski

First of all, it is complicated. For every country in every situation, the World Board is always doing its own analyses. We're not under any strict requirements to adopt forecast or estimates from foreign entities. Oftentimes they do align, but sometimes they won't if our own forecasts or analytical efforts suggest otherwise.

Answer: Joanna Hitchner

As for Canada and Canola specifically, throughout the season, we take into account Canada's forecast for the crop and eventually take the final crop estimate after the season is complete. During the season we have our own yield analysis by province, as well as we take into account crop under-estimation by in-country estimates that have occurred over the past several seasons.

Question: Mark Feight

We are looking for the NASS survey field crops acreage data by state prior to 2018. The file qs.crops_20230919.txt has all the data 2018 and beyond. Data before 2018 only includes the March and Final data. We are updating our database with the monthly PSD dataset at: PSD Online (usda.gov). Is the pre-2018 data available?

Answer: Lance Honig

This question has to do with the in-season estimates that we put out. Prior to 2018, we don't have that populated yet. That's one of those projects that's on the back burner. As we get to it, we'll try to get more years out there. But it's a very manual process for it, that's why it's not out there by state just yet. Hopefully we'll get to that in the not-too-distant future but currently it is not available out there.

Question: Unknown

EIA Form EIA-819 "Monthly Report of Biofuels, Fuels from Non-Biogenic Wastes, Fuel Oxygenates, Isooctane, and Isooctene". In the 'US Feedstocks consumed for production of biofuels' report:

- a. Currently, only SBO is use is reported by biodiesel and RD plants. When will EIA breakdown canola use by plant type?
- b. What 'other feedstock' is reported in the 'Waste oils, fats and greases' section?
- c. What 'other feedstock' is reported under 'Recycled feeds and wastes' section?

Answer: Julie Harris

So, the first question was regarding the canola oil splitting out the feed stocks between the biodiesel producers and the renewable diesel producers. You will remember that we have to check for disclosure issues before we publish that data, and we actually went back and looked, and we are able to split the canola. We also reviewed the corn oil and will be able to split that too. So, in the publication that's going to be released on October 31st with data for August, we will actually go ahead, and those two feed stocks will be published by plant type. That will be August data, then next summer when we do our annual revisions, we'll review the earlier months in 2023 and disclose that data too, if we can. For the other question that was also talking about feed stock, we have various other categories. We always put an "other" category so that we can capture any feed stocks that we may not have enumerated separately, but the industry is evolving so sometimes new things come up that we haven't put on the form. It's not even on the form, what it is. They just type it in to "other". So, it's basically anything that we haven't separately identified in the table, is what's in "other".

Question: Unknown

Renewable Diesel doesn't have a specific HS code currently. Trade flows (imports and exports) are increasing and becoming a steady flow to monitor for the industry and for understanding biofuels. Will Census consider adding a HS code for Renewable Diesel?

Answer: Joe DeCampo

The process for getting a new HS code or Schedule B code is actually a very formal process. There is a committee -- Census is on it, but also US ITC, and Customs and Border Protection. Somebody would have to submit a specific request, not only laying out why they think there should be a new number, but also where that number should be. So, I guess renewable fuels would be probably in chapter 27. You would have to lay out what the new 10-digit would be

and why you think it should be there. One of the other things is, you can't just create a new number, you also have to define it, and create statistical notes. One hang up I could see is defining the word "renewable". That would have to be something that ITC and Customs can both agree upon, and to make sure that Customs can tell whether something is renewable or not. So, things are in the works, but there just isn't a number yet.

Answer: Joe Parsons

Has there been any HS code submission?

Answer: Julie Harris

We actually had asked for it. I don't want to be too hopeful, but it looks like maybe we're making some progress. But yes, that request has been made.

Question: Marvin Miller

You did not mention either the Floriculture Crops Summary not the Census of Horticultural Specialties as another follow-up study of the Census of Agriculture. I just wanted to make sure these are both on your radar.

Answer: Tony Dorn

They're definitely on our radar and in our same survey cycle that we've always had. The census of horticulture, the reference period for that will be 2024, the data collection will be in 2025, along with the other census follow-on [surveys] -- the TOTAL survey, the land ownership survey. Those will be the two follow-ons in that year. And of course, the floriculture and crop summary. That will pick up next year, on the same annual cycle that it has all along.

Answer: Joe Parsons

Lance, we did a few tweaks to the floriculture survey. I don't think we have it in our current notes, because it happened a little while back, but they were pretty important. Do you want to speak to that?

Answer: Lance Honig

We did expand reporting on the annual floriculture here, starting last year. So that was expanded. More specifically, just to provide a little bit more detail on how the Census of Horticulture and annual floriculture pair up in that reference year; we actually use the Census of Hort as the data collection instrument for the annual floriculture report. So, we'll actually see a little bit different release timeframe in 2025, when that data is actually collected referencing 2024. So, you'll see like we did last time, synchronize the publication of the Census of Hort and the annual floriculture publication. So, it will probably come out late in the year as opposed to the springtime.

Question: Rob Johansson

Does NASS survey harvest acres separately for sugar production vs seed cane? If not, how might NASS treat harvested acres for sugar production differently from seed cane?

Answer: Lance Honig

We do actually ask it separately. So that's how we delineate between the two estimates. As is, we actually collect it separately.

Answer: Joe Parsons

Do we publish separately?

Answer: Lance Honig

We do.

Question: Mark Feight

Upon release of the WASDE at noon, the access to the datasets at: <https://apps.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/app/index.html#/app/downloads> is delayed 5-20 minutes. Is access to the data via API more timely? Are there plans to improve the access timeliness via the downloads?

Answer: Paul Trupo

Access via the API is no more expedient than access through downloading the report. So, you're not losing any competitive advantage there. And we are looking at plans to investigate technology and policy changes that will be required to speed up the release of the report. Our IT folks are looking at this, working on it and hopefully we'll have something to report soon.

Question: Ken Lovett

Could a contact list of data-related staff at FSA be posted on the FSA website. Whenever I have questions about their data and data-collection processes, the only way to reach out is through the Communications Office. Having content-related contacts available would be quite helpful.

Answer: Tim Gravlin

It's not clear exactly to me if you're talking about the public dashboards that we were showing yesterday for dairy Margin Coverage and Emergency Relief Program, or if you're just talking data in general. But I think that's a great idea. I think that's something that we can do on the dashboard. We're to start putting an icon on there that you can email for specific content related questions to those dashboards and the data that appears on those dashboards. Otherwise, your suggestion on a general contact list for data is something that we can do. So, thank you for bringing that up.

Question: Joe Parsons

I know a lot of folks on this call would be very interested in 578 data as it gets posted. Do you have a point of contact for that or plans for that?

Answer: Tim Gravlin

For the acreage reporting data. Absolutely. So, I can post where we post that data, and do it in that way. Obviously, we have a specialist on crop acreage reporting. I don't know if I want to give her email on this call here today.

Post-meeting follow-up: Tim Gravlin

[Crop Acreage Data \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov)

We are working with our IT teams to update the page with better contact information.

Question: Sam Bartz

I have a couple of questions about the 2024 Census of Aquaculture and coding. First, is the Census of Aquaculture only done every 5 years and is there increased interest in changing this to annually? Second, considering increased interest in aquaculture data both domestically and internationally in relation to trade, production, and in sciences and regulatory action, I was wondering if unique HS coding for aquaculture products is being researched and considered for easier data analysis. Again, thank you all for your time and presentations.

Answer: Travis Averill

On the frequency of the report for the Census of Aquaculture, it's a follow-on process from our Census of Agriculture. That's how the sample is drawn for the Census of Aquaculture, so that's a five-year process. Annually, we do the trout and catfish programs at NASS so that those programs are on an annual basis. The cost and the burden behind doing a Census of Aquaculture would be pretty complex. There is interest expressed from aquaculture folks, but the response burden is a little too much on them, so that's the part there. More domestic and international in relationships to trade -- that's always been increasing with consumption on aquaculture products. As far as coding, I'm not familiar with that part to elaborate on that.

Question: Hussain Jiwani

Yesterday, I heard that some of the data for last 5 years is going to be revised in Quick Stats. Would we be able to view both the revised and unrevised data? If so, how?

Answer: Lance Honig

The short answer would be no. Earlier we talked about some of the in-season estimates and how we track those in Quick Stats. But when we talk about revisions, we're talking about literally revising a specific estimate that was previously published. Currently, in Quick Stats, we don't maintain each of those iterations. Now with that said, nationally, we do publish track records publications each spring. And in those, you would see the national tracking of each of

those revised numbers as well. So, not in Quick Stats currently, but nationally that data does exist in the track records publications.

Answer: Joe Parsons

Also in some of the modernization work, do you want to make any reference to that, Lance?

Answer: Lance Honig

That's a whole topic in and of itself, but as we move through new ways of displaying the data, these are some of the things that we'll consider in developing those products and see what we can do to meet the needs.

Question: Benjamin Diamond

For USDA FAS Crop Explorer, there are currently no NDVI products for potatoes in Canada. Could this be added?

Answer: Paul Trupo

We generally monitor and cover the tradeable commodities. So, users can go directly to the NASA GIMMS site and generate their own user specific charts. Potatoes is not a crop that we're required to cover and include in the Crop Explorer, because most vegetable crops have small fields that would be difficult for NDVI geospatial applications. Or they would be difficult for NDVI to monitor reliably around the world. In some cases, our geospatial tools GADAS and GIAM geospatial applications could be used, but not as comprehensively with all the variables that are covered by Crop Explorer. So, we do what we can.

Post-meeting follow-up: Curt Reynolds, FAS/GMA/IPAD

Potatoes are a tuber (or root) crop and utilizing satellite imagery to monitor tuber or root crops is not practical.

Question: Nathan Arentsen

The Nebraska Legislature considered last Fall, and is likely to consider again this Spring, a bill in which the State of Nebraska would rely upon annual USDA data regarding producer costs and commodity acreage, yield, and market prices for various commodities in order to create a multi-year rolling average of such data. Under the bill in the Nebraska Legislature, the State of Nebraska would use this data in order to calculate each agricultural producer's property taxes due every tax year.

Can USDA assure those of us in Nebraska that USDA's annual survey data regarding those agricultural inputs, sales prices, revenues, crop acreages, and any other necessary agricultural producer data, will be consistent each year for the benefit of the State of Nebraska's rolling average? Can USDA also assure us that any revisions of that data in later years will have a minimal impact on that rolling average?

Answer: Lance Honig

In terms of assuring that the revisions won't have much impact, we can't. I mean we can't do that because we have no idea in advance what revisions will be made. If we knew that, there wouldn't be any revisions because we would actually set those estimates the first time. So we're, all these revisions are always going to be driven by the latest available data that we have. And so, once we see that, we're going to revise what we think is the most accurate number based on that information. In terms of assuring that the products are going to stay consistent year to year. Generally, you know, our programs do stay pretty consistent, but as we talked about in our session yesterday afternoon, we do review our program at least every five years. And if there is a significant shift in any of the commodities, there could be a shift in our programs moving forward too. So, I probably stop short of saying yes, we can assure it's going to be consistent in terms of what's available, depending on what you're looking at. We would always have to consider disclosure as one of the factors in the equation as well. But with that said, it tends to be very consistent year to year. But can't quite assure it.

Answer: Joe Parsons

In terms of thinking about revisions of that data, and I don't know how timely they're trying to use it, if they're starting with final, our data at the end of season. They probably could do some assessment in their own right whether it was fit for use based on looking at track records. And we could help them with that. So, the real question is, how do you define a minimal impact? You can look back at our track record and how much we've revised after a certain point on key agricultural items. One thing I would add here too is that, it could be pretty unlikely we stop estimating corn in Nebraska, right? But what we might do with peas or lentils or potato crop or popcorn, those are probably subject to what our budget looks like. But, a lot of corn and soybeans in Nebraska.

Answer: Lance Honig

Exactly. It would depend on exactly what is all being factored in. And just a slight caution on that. The track records are only available nationally. And so specifically for Nebraska, it would take a little more digging to track that backwards. But we could certainly help with that. And at least you could get a taste of what's happened in the past. And then you can decide how good of indicator that is in the future. Usually pretty good.

Answer: Joe Parsons

One other thing I'll throw in, I don't know to the extent that they're using NASS data for agricultural inputs. If they're using farm cost and rural data, this is all subject to cooperation as well. Especially for very involved surveys like the ARMS survey, it's a challenge to get cooperation. We do the very best that we can but at a state level data for ARMS data are certainly less precise than national data.

Answer: Tony Dorn

It just depends how aggregate or refined the data that's being used for this purpose. For instance, if you look at the overall prices we made and prices paid and prices received indexes that we publish. Those are usually a lot more stable than some of the smaller indexes. So if there is certain components to this legislation or anything, obviously those are a little more subject to wider revisions, wider changes because they're smaller and have smaller measurements. So it just depends upon that and everything else, you know, that we would have as far as how much we would buy. So, like Lance said, ideally we don't want any revisions, we would like to publish the best right out of the gate, but things change, so we get additional data. The other things that happens that cause revisions to happen that we have additional data and want to have the last final most accurate numbers. So that's going to be consistent from what's happened in the past. No prediction of the future but it could give a general idea of how much revisions there would be.

Answer: Joe Parsons

We have a great state director, Nick Streff, in our Nebraska regional field office. And Nick would be a great point of contact. He would be happy to be a part of any discussion. Take a little deeper dive into precision or the data that folks might be looking at in the legislature and have some discussion of fitness for use.

Question: Rob Johansson

Can monthly NASS sugarcane mill surveys be consolidated by company (i.e., lower reporting burden)?

Answer: Lance Honig

We would be happy to talk more about that. Honestly, I thought we were, had those pretty much consolidated by company, but if there is any additional work we need to do in that area, reach out. I'll be happy to work with you to see what we can do.

Answer: Joe Parsons

Similarly, we've done a fair bit of that work in really large grain handling facilities, other larger entities to consolidate reporting and make sure that we're making it easy for them and also ensuring the best data we can possibly collect.

Question: Nathan Watermeier

What updates can you provide on CroplandCROS - <https://croplandcros.scinet.usda.gov/>
Currently it is not displaying data. When will this app service be running?

Post-meeting follow-up: Rick Mueller, NASS

Thanks for the information. We will notify the contractors to get CroplandCROS back to operations ASAP. It is expected that NASS will update CroplandCROS with the 2023 CDL during the first week of February 2024.

Question: Nathan Watermeier

Have any of the agencies considered packaging and making data available through other known platforms such as the Snowflake marketplace?

Answer: Kelly Maguire

I'm not familiar with Snowflake marketplace in particular, but we do try to make as much as our data available through the agriculture data commons. So that's a good source for USDA data. I know agencies are working on implementing new publish access requirements that will hopefully make access a little easier and more straightforward for folks.

Answer: Joe Parsons

A lot of agencies also use data.gov to document the data they have available. NASS does not.

Question: Kristi Jones

Could EIA please give an update on whether they are going to start asking RD producers their feedstock inventory levels on their monthly survey?

Answer: Julie Harris

We know that those of interest and our survey forms are on a three-year cycle. We actually went through a clearance. So we just started the beginning of the three year process. So in 2026, will be the next time we can make changes to survey forms and you know, so we know that that is of interest and we have to get EIA management. And then OMB to agree to these sorts of changes. So that's a process. Whether we'll be able to do it or not, I really can't say right now, but we understand it's of importance.

Answer:

HS codes were discussed earlier by Joe DeCampo.

Question: Sandor Garcia Prieto

I represent a sugar cane processor. We are required to report on a monthly basis on estimated production for the current fiscal year. After we are finished processing (normally in January) we are still required to report an estimate which at that point is the same data. Could consideration be given to drop the required reporting after final production for a year has been finalized?

Answer: Lance Honig

I would be happy to discuss that further. Currently we have process that we use on some surveys, where we'll actually ask is harvest complete and given a yes, that gives us an indication that we don't need to repeat in future months. So definitely something we can talk about and look into.

Question: Austin Schroeder

Has there been any thought to moving the Cattle on Feed reports from the 3:00 pm time slot to 12 noon, similar to the Crop Production reports?

Answer: Travis Averill

We have done that and unfortunately the industry has not appreciated the release of cattle on feed at noon. And they have requested NASS to keep the cattle release at 3 p.m. during the holiday timeframe, where we have done a noontime, it has not been received well. So the cattlemen's association and others have requested NASS keep the report to a 3 PM Eastern Time.

Answer: Joe Parsons

Reiterating, we've had discussions about 12 noon and 3 PM, at least by the general consensus is, stay at 3 PM for livestock reports both for cattle and cattle on feed and for hogs and pigs.

Question: Benjamin Diamond

For the quick stats bulk download files on <https://www.nass.usda.gov/datasets/> could the data in `qs.crops_20231018.txt.gz` be divided into separate crops (e.g. corn, soybeans, wheat, cotton, sorghum) and/or separate years?

Answer: Lance Honig

Well technically, it could be. But that's a manual process we're doing right now. So obviously the goal is to keep it very simple. Probably a better way to approach this would be again to refer back to the modernization efforts that are under way. We're looking to, hopefully make it easier to access information, not only specifically, but in bulk type formats. And so we'll definitely make sure this is on our list of things that we consider as we continue to work through our new dissemination processes.

Question: Vince Breneman

When will the 2022 ag census microdata be available in the Data Lab?

Answer: Joe Parsons

Data Lab handles requests for privileged access to work with record level data. So, for qualified researchers, we will establish a process where they can go in and examine things on the census microdata. Our first order of business is publishing the Census of Agriculture in early 2024 and

when we do that in early 2024 and, given continual funding, that we'll release before the Agricultural Outlook Forum. The date is the February 13. It's on the Agricultural Statistics Board calendar as well. But then we have a whole series of releases right after that. And our staff need to be focused on getting those publications out. We have tabulations for congressional districts, tabulations on race, ethnicity, and gender for example. And many others. And as soon as those are completed, that's when we'll move the census micro data out and we'll make available additional special tabulations and allow folks to get in and start using the 2022 Census of Agriculture data. Basically, we have to make sure that we can get our own data out the door and then we can really work with researchers on newer datasets.

Answer: Tony Dorn

I know everyone is working and we'll work as hard as we can to get out as soon as we can for data users.

Question: Chris Eggerman

With NASS planning to review planted acreage for corn, soybeans and other crops in August next year, would it be possible for FSA to release certified acreage data before the NASS August Crop Production report to help us anticipate what adjustments NASS might make? I understand the FSA data for spring-planted crops may not be complete enough to be useful before August 1, but having August 1 data a few days before the NASS report would be very helpful.

Answer: Lance Honig

Back when we, back when this first started becoming available, publicly on the website there was a lot of conversation between NASS and FSA as to what the appropriate timeframe would be. And the conclusion we came to collectively was that it was probably best for NASS to get the estimates out there before some of the supporting data were available out there. We certainly could renew that conversation, but I don't know that anything has really changed. I think there is some risks associated with, in a sense, putting out partial data, which is in a way what we would be doing as USDA putting out an input to one component of the forecast that we're publishing for the complete crop. So, it's, I can see some advantage on one side, but I can see a lot of advantage the other way as well. So, those would be my comments. Just know that that was very strategic when it was stood up several years ago.

Answer: Tim Gravlin

I agree. We would be happy to talk with you guys further on that, but I think that was done for a reason. And I'm not sure that there is a new reason to change it, but we would be happy to talk about that.

Answer: Joe Parsons

I do want to highlight we've looked at this for a while and we've actually moved up corn and soybeans. It used to be for the October report, we moved it to September. FSA has gotten better and better, I think. There may be a year that this isn't possible but they've gotten better

and better about processing faster. And we feel pretty good about what we can see just before the August crop report. And so, I think that will help data users to incorporate that in August, it's good for everybody if we can. So that's what we're going to attempt to do.

Answer: Lance Honig

This might be a good point to just reiterate that in adding this review for corn and soybeans, a few of the other crops in August. Please note in there that we also said we're leaving the September window there for now. And so we do plan to consider updates in August and September for several of the crops, including corn and soybeans. And so that is intentional. A, because we're moving up pretty quickly here, and B, as Joe just mentioned, some years when the crop, when planting is delayed, that has an impact on reporting progress as well. And so, that is intentional right now. There will be two opportunities for those crops in August and September. And if we decide to make any changes to that moving forward, we'll be very clear about that again.

Question: Brad Fuller

Still a little perplexed with the starting national corn yield coming out in May at 181.5 bu./acre which is almost 5 bu./acre greater than anything we have ever seen. Again, with expansion of corn acreage occurring in the western corn-belt, which are not big yielding states like the 3 I states and weather that seems more extreme, this seems like a bit of a stretch to begin the marketing year. In addition, this very early information, which will be adjusted as we move deeper into the marketing year tends to cast a negative price implication across this commodity using such a monster yield to begin our year.

Answer: Mark Jekanowski

I would say not sure what else I can say at this point. Point taken. These estimates are always based on the best information available at the time. And this has been a topic of discussion in Omaha and many other data users meetings and not sure there is a lot more that we can say right now.

Answer: Mike Jewison

It's a valid question and I like the debate and I'm certainly always open to ideas. I invite you to send those to me. But I would also just point out the corn yield in the US, the national yield is not stationary. The mean is not constant over time. So if you look back the last 40 plus years of data, more often than not, the yield is record. Probably 70 percent of the time is the number I have in my head, that may be incorrect. So then you come along like the year like 2004, 2014 and you surface the prior record by whatever, five percent on average 2014. Just keep that in mind, we're trying to have a starting point. And sometimes the weather, you could have a stretch of bad years. You think that weather is an unbiased coin, it's not that's not how it works.

Question: Pete Eckes

We have mandatory beef and pork reporting when will we also have mandatory poultry reporting?

Answer: Mike Sheats

If that's going to happen, it would have to follow the same legislative route and I've not heard any talk out there of anybody initiating anything like that. So, that would be what we would expect. You would have to go, normally from if industry groups to the legislators and then down to us. (Poultry). That's not something we would initiate in the AMS.

Follow-up: Pete Eckes

I understand that but with the increased scrutiny in price reporting - that move to mandatory makes a lot of sense to me.

Written Answer: Mike Sheats

Would have to be initiated outside of USDA AMS

Question: Lincoln Herrington

Can you walk through your process for estimating ethanol in early crop year WASDEs?

Answer: Mike Jewison

Obviously, it's based on several assumptions I think I have outlined this before, but I'll go through it again. Any particular assumptions for gasoline consumption in the US as well as a few on trade and putting that together, looking at what we would mean for corn and the sort. I would also note that we rely heavily on what EIA reports for low gas forecast, lower gas consumption forecast.

Question: Jessica Spreitzer

Is there an update/specifics on the timeline for NASS modernization in regards to moving away from Quick Stats?

Answer: Tony Dorn

We talked about modernization in the earlier presentation. We shared what was there. I think we gave a hint of what was coming up too. Looking at the rest of this year, we're trying to finish up the livestock economics and crops. That's really what we're working on. We're working through those and everything before we go on to poultry and census products and fruit and vegetables. Those are coming up later too. This year we are finishing up. We have so many releases and once we get into the details you can see how much data we have, there is a lot of interest to the data. So, it's a lot to make sure we get it incorporated into the new system in the best way possible. We're working through our major groups of economics and livestock and crops for the rest of the year. I could go through the details and everything, but those

schedules kind of change depending on needs and everything that's where we're at for the rest of the year and we're going to keep progressing as fast as we can on those.

Answer: Joe Parsons

I think fair to say you're going to see a number of things in that new format and also one of the things we're pushing on is the ability for better search capability, for ad hoc searches. Those are not terribly far away, and we'll certainly be communicating those on our website.

Question: Alan Brugler

There are several soybean crush plants coming online, including at least 2 this fall and several in 2024. How does WAOB/WASDE handle projected crush from those plants (also meal and oil production)?

Answer: Joanna Hitchner

So, we are aware of the plants that are coming online and keep track through reports whether they are still coming online, and whether they are on time. But then on the other side, we've looked at demand and we see how much demand there is for oil and meal coming out of those plants. So, yes, we're looking at overall capacity, and also looking at utilization based off of what we expect the demand to be.

Question: Marvin Miller

Can you briefly comment about any interaction the data agencies have as a result of the pending Farm Bill and whether its delay might impact anything?

Answer: Tim Gravlin

I think it does have an impact. The lack of a Farm Bill will have an impact on Farm Service Agency and some of our programs, abilities to operate when that expires. Interaction between different data agencies, it has increased recently, not related specifically to the farm bill which is the question. And the emergency relief programs, we have been working closely with RMA and sucking in crop insurance data and SBIs in order to prepopulate applications and things like that. I would say between agencies and FSA, the data sharing is trending upwards. It's increasing. Specifically for Farm Service Agency as we move to the department EDAPT platform, a more modern data platform. We are hoping that is able to increase, we're able to leverage data sets across agencies. Certainly, the pending farm bill is troubling for us.

Answer: Kelly Maguire

ERS does not administer programs, rather we're doing analysis to inform programs. So, I don't think we anticipate that there will be any delays in release of our products as a result of Farm Bill delays.

Answer: Joe Parsons

I would offer from NASS perspective is that, and I'm not a Farm Bill expert, but a number of farm bill program provisions change, and different NASS data become very much more important if there is no farm bill. So, that would not be directly impacting NASS, but it would certainly change how some folks maybe look or use some NASS data. We also have relationships with many other USDA agencies. Some of those relationships that complete certain surveys, or support certain survey activity, is funded through farm bill provisions. And so, we'll cross that bridge when we get to it, but some of those could be affected in terms of the funding stream and could make a difference. Obviously more broadly if there is a lack of funding in terms of an appropriation or something like for all agencies, we'll follow shutdown procedures and all that sort of stuff. It's a little different discussion. If we can collect the data, we'll be able to produce reports and so you can look back to how we dealt with that a couple years ago when there was a shutdown, just more broadly.

Answer: Mike Sheats

The only thing I am familiar in the last farm bill we had the organic data initiative which gave us money to expand organic data reporting. That's been in several farm bills. We have not heard whether or not that will be in this one, fully expect it to be. And then the other thing was the establishment of the carcass training centers which has been ongoing to help promote the work we do with the CME. That had no money associated with it, so unless somebody moves to remove that, that still stands. So other than that, haven't heard anything. When it comes to livestock reporting and that, I believe one of the senators talked about that that would not be in the farm bill itself, that they would look at that separately. So otherwise, we have not heard anything.

Question: Benjamin Diamond

Could crop progress statistics be added for other countries in the FAS Crop Explorer?

Answer: Ron Frantz

Crop Explorer as it exists today does not include any crop progress statistics. Those are maintained by Minister of Agriculture (MoA) departments by respective countries. However, Crop Explorer is used to monitor crop conditions, such as NDVI, those are the greenness values of the crop, precipitation data and other agro climatological sources of data you can find there. Very easy to search by either commodity or by country in Crop Explorer. We've done a lot of work through our contractors to help improve that website and have launched what we call commodity explorer so you can actually search by commodity.

Question: Karen Braun

Has there been an improvement over the last year or so on quality and availability of grain and oilseed data out of Ukraine? How about Russia?

Answer: Paul Trupo

We published 26 GAIN reports out of Ukraine, since the war began. We have a handful of Ukrainian local staff working and reporting, using their contacts. The production data coming out of Russia primarily uses geospatial tools and satellite imagery. So, whether it has improved or not, I can't say.

Answer: Mark Simone

Improvements? Kind of an interesting phrase given that the war has been going on. I'd characterize it more as challenging, with regard to grain data in particular. Russia, the export data starting at the beginning of 2022, there is no longer available from the Russian government. Used alternative sources, but there are limitations in regards, especially regard to over land trade. For Ukraine, the Black Sea Grain Initiative, that actually improved the latency and granularity in the data. But as you may know, the Black Sea Grain Initiative is no longer around. So here we are. There are challenges. And that happens when you have this kind of a war right now.

Question: Karen Braun

Is there any increased intelligence on Chinese corn stocks? USDA shows that they have been largely consistent for the past few years, but Chinese corn prices and China's recent participation in global trade could suggest otherwise.

Answer: Paul Trupo

We all know how challenging it is to get any data out of China and it may be more challenging nowadays than any time in the past.

Answer: Mike Jewison

In a perfect world this would be an item that would be publicly reported but, unfortunately, it's not.

Question: Benjamin Diamond

Could crop area, yield and acres by province/state be added to the FAS Crop Explorer?

Answer: Ron Frantz

No, FAS PSD Online Crop Explorer is really just meant for crop condition analysis. Our official statistics are maintained in USDA's PS&D online database and those are at the state or country level, not at the provincial level. So, it's not something we could add to Crop Explorer at this time. There are, there is a lot of provincial level data that our analysts utilize, but it's not something that we publish.

Question: Jerry Gidel

The impact of the last summer's wet wheat harvest hasn't been really revealed in China.

Answer: Mark Simone

We did reduce China's wheat production to account for that. We also increased the feed use in recognition of the degradation of the wheat quality for milling purposes, more feed. There was, China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) provided a mid-year production estimate. That's what we based our last reduction on. Will there be another one forthcoming? China's NBS does another final update for the 2022/23 crop year I believe in mid-December. We'll see that and take that into account.

Question: Jessica Spreitzer

How long can avid quick stats users expect to still be able to use the system after all products are transitioned to the new format?

Answer: Joe Parsons

Quick stats will be available for some period of time. We will be very careful in that transition. We know a lot of folks are dependent upon it. And we will be both training, to the to-be state and working with data users. No need to start worrying about those queries just yet. And we'll make sure and bring folks along when we're at that point. We realize that we got to get everything sort of transferred over before we would do very much with quick stats.

Question: Ryan Nielsen

The October WASDE had raised soy oil's biofuel draw by 300m lbs to a record 12.8b (nearly 50% of domestic BO use). As the industry grows, can we expect to see the biodiesel/renewable diesel production in the weekly petroleum status report? or a similar weekly/monthly report? furthermore, the biodiesel graphics on EIA's website show BO represents 68% of the feedstocks used for biodiesel, but it is dated 2021, can we get that breakdown on a monthly (or regular) schedule?

Answer: Julie Harris

Right now, we don't have any intention of putting it on the weekly. And again, that goes to our whole three-year cycle. So, no, not right now, but that can be taken under advisement.

Post-meeting follow-up: Julie Harris

No, due to disclosure issues, we do not intend to reveal the total feedstocks consumed. If we reveal the total, then we have to withhold more of the individual products so that the withheld data can't be calculated from the total.

Written Question & Answer Summary

Question: Ken Lovett

As reports are discontinued and migrated to the API, we have been frustrated by reports (and associated SLUG_IDs) being discontinued before they are available in via the API. In some cases reports are incorporated/combined with other reports and then eventually migrated to the API with a gap in coverage - or we have to research where the data now resides. When will all the AMS reports be migrated to the API, or do you have a) a release schedule and b) a report migration map for the SLUG_IDs?

Written Answer: Michael Sheats

Notifications are placed on the static reports prior to migrating to the new database (MARS/MMN). These notifications identify where the new report can be found as well as the updated Slug ID. These old static reports are available online for a few weeks then removed.

Majority of our larger reports will, but some of our more unique niche reports (Local Regional) may remain static and available through our file repository but will not be accessed by an API.

Follow-up: Ken Lovett

Do you have a url to the "static reports" or do you mean that you post a notification at the bottom of the report? Is there a comprehensive document or source that shows what has been migrated to the API?

Written Answer: Michael Sheats

Typically we do have a link to the new report on the old static report because all the new links are the same with exception of the unique slug ID at the end

https://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/ams_2155.pdf

We do have a master report file of migrated reports located on MMN (<https://mymarketnews.ams.usda.gov/general-resources>) located under Livestock Poultry and Grain Market News sub-segment. It was last updated in April this year but will be updated as changes occur so please check back.

Question: Karen Braun

What are USDA's working assumptions about the Black Sea Grain Initiative? Is USDA assuming this deal is still active when forming Ukraine grain export forecasts?

Written Answer: WAOB

The Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI) was not renewed in mid-July so we no longer assume the BSGI for the Ukraine wheat and corn export forecasts.

Breakout 1A: Focus on the 2022 Census of Agriculture

Question: Julie Broadway

At some point would NASS be willing to tell us who they get their lists from by specific livestock? We would like to know who they get lists from for horses.

Answer: Tony Dorn

We do collect just anything we can get a list from. We're trying to measure any farm. A definition of a farm normally starts with a \$1000 in sales. A small farm is as big as a large farm [for farm counts] -- one of the important measures that we have in the Census of Agriculture. We are looking lists of all sizes and types of farms. There are many lists that we get at state level, regional level, local levels, things like that. We get a such a wide variety of lists and multiple sources that we don't have specific sources of those lists that we track throughout the year; because once a farm is on our list frame, we might get another list, things like that. So, it's just a large volume and how our processes go. We don't have tracking as far as which specific sources are related to which ones. It also relates to our disclosure information. We don't disclose any individual information as far as something that might track to where other people could be getting their information from, or where they might be located, what they might be producing. So, there is not anything necessarily that we track, so we don't have a source for that type of information where the original farms are identified with.

Answer: Donald Buysse

One of the things that works for us, in particular with horses, is – that for a lot of states, we have entered into external project agreement to do an equine survey. When that happens in a particular state, we will obviously take exhaustive measures to gather additional lists. I would always encourage folks, if they have a list that can be provided to us, we will take it in. We have pretty sophisticated programming. We might already have the individual on our list. But we take all lists and if they're done in electronic format, we can run them through our programs to identify those records that we don't have any indication of having an operator or producer or operation, then they will get an agricultural screener. Then they can tell us about their horse population, provided the horses are on their farm.

Question: Darcy Schultz

Do you have a screenshot of what the prototype story maps will look like?

Answer: Tony Dorn

I was looking under ESRI, the GIS company. Unfortunately, we don't have a screenshot. It would have been a great idea looking back. Maybe we can do that in the future, to bring a demo about what a story map is. Describing it is more interactive, between video and a presentation. It is interactive, so kind of lively, moving from one story to the next. It is interesting to tell a story over time, in this case demographics would change in different states and counties and

things like that over time. It's really neat interactively, not so describing it verbally. It'd be much better to see it. So that's something I'll take back, and maybe we can incorporate that into future data users too. If you google "ESRI Story Map" you can get an idea about what it is.

Question: Roberto Sanchez

Are those special census studies open for public comment via the federal register? If that is the case, is there an option to submit a new special study's topic?

Answer: Donald Buysse

We don't do a Federal Register posting to announce our schedule for the Special Studies. We do try to make those available publicly upon request. The answer is no on the Federal Register. When we go out to do a particular special study, we do a federal register notice to announce that survey is coming. I am thinking that is not the intent of the question. In terms of submitting a new one, I believe there is a place online that we do gather that information, if you have a suggestion. I don't know the link right off the top of my head. We probably can provide that information or do a search in our NASS area for input. We can certainly try to get that link to you. In the past, there have been some submissions to that. We do take in those submissions and of course we will determine how best to go about it. In terms of our Census of Agriculture program funding, for those special studies that we have, the funding that we get from year to year is aligned with those programs. If we were to do a new study, it would have to be accompanying appropriation dollars into the Census of Agriculture program. The other avenue is to do an external project agreement or reimbursable surveys, particularly if there is a particular data need for a more local geographic region looking into a specific practice or a specific commodity.

Written Answer:

Census Program Input:

https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/Census_Program_Input_Form/index.php

Question: Emily Stearns

What are you doing to reduce survey fatigue?

Answer: Donald Buysse

This is a good question. One we don't have a stock answer for right now. It has been coming up fairly regularly, so I'll start it and I'll turn it over to Tony and Jeff if they have anything to add. A couple ways we do this is we try to coordinate surveys. In our sampling procedures, we try to take it into account. Before a farmer is included in a survey, we try to take best practices to reduce the burden, but the reality is some farmers land in a lot of surveys. This fatigue is a real thing. On the other side of that, there has been no reduction in the amount of data being requested or information that the public would like to be made available. So, somewhere in the middle we hope to find a good balance. We recognize that for addressing an issue, the first thing to do is to recognize that there is a problem, and then look at steps to minimize that. I

don't have any specifics for that today, but USDA NASS is aware of this issue. We are taking measures to try to address it.

Answer: Tony Dorn

We are looking at any types of administrative data we could use to supplement the survey data that we have. The best data is really the data from the farmer. They know about their operation best. We're looking for any types of information -- different crop sessions using satellite data, other data sources where we can enhance and replace any questions that would be redundant with any information that we could get. We're really exploring that area. We're doing everything we can to reduce that survey fatigue. As Donald says, people want more and more detailed data at a detailed level too. It is a tough balance that we really have to keep in mind. Our source data is the farmer, so we have to be the guardians to minimize the burden on them anyway we can. That is always on our minds. How we can minimize the burden on farmers on farmers, because we want to do what is best for them and for agriculture. We have to do that safeguard and have that balance ourselves. Administrative data is one way, and we are looking at any type of data we can use to help reduce that.

Question: Michael Partyka

Are the county estimates the same as 2017 or have you added or removed any measures?

Answer: Donald Buysse

From the 2022 census, much of the data matches what was collected in 2017. There can be comparisons made between the two data points. I can't off the top of my head think of any items that we removed. In terms of what we added, Tony, maybe you know of those very few items that we've added. We did add an item on precision agriculture to measure the number of farms using it.

Answer: Tony Dorn

Hemp and some local food practices maybe streamlined. So, there are some minor changes. Even though there might be methodology that we have improved or changed, the comparison is still the same. We are publishing the same thing. There's not a break in the data series at all. It's the same comparisons. Like Donald said, we changed very few things. Hemp was an addition, but for the most part it is very comparable and is meant to be comparable between the data series to keep that going.

Question: Emily Featherston

Are there types of non-agriculture sources that feed the NACS lists? For example, are there sources that could/do lead to non-producers receiving a survey? If so, can you give an example?

Answer: Donald Buysse

This is an unfortunate circumstance or scenario that plays out because of our gathering of lists. We try to get lists that are agriculture related, yes absolutely. We do often times get lists that

have additional names who will get a survey that should not have. As an example, there was a question about horses, so an equine list might be a good example where somebody on the equine list that we gather is simply a fan of horses, or they joined a trade organization. They are involved in some horse sales or products associated with horses, and because they're involved in some sort of horse sales or products associated with horses their name would land on the list. If we do not have them already on our list of farms, then we would send them a National Agricultural Classification Survey (NACS). At that time, they should easily screen out if they do not have any ag activity. Once the individual is screened out, they should not be troubled, unless they happen to find their way onto another list source that we gather. So, it's something that we take measures to try to eliminate, but there are occasions where this happens.

Answer: Jeff Bailey

Sometimes, we think someone is an operator, that turns out to be a landlord. They may be a producer, but if they don't have the equivalent of \$1000 of sales, they wouldn't be qualified as a farm. There are lots of reasons that may happen that they may not be a farm in the end. One of the things that we constantly stress in our correspondence and in our public relations or even press releases, is that if you receive a NASS questionnaire or Census of Agriculture questionnaire and are not a farmer, do not have any activity, the best way to really stop troubling the individual is to respond appropriately saying that you do not farm or do not have any ag activity. It is a quick way for us to update our records and to stop from getting any more correspondence.

Question: Roberto Sanchez

Is there any info/study, etc available to the public about overlapping between USDA and other federal statistical data collection efforts?

Answer: Jeff Bailey

Donald mentioned the OMB (Office of Management and Budget) survey process, approval process for surveys. Basically, one of the questions they ask us when we request to do a survey is, is there another source of data? So, it needs to be unique. So, generally there is not overlap between surveys. There are some discussions about the NAICS we cover versus the NAICS other agencies cover. There is a separation there. We cover certain NAIC industries that sometimes become difficult to distinguish. We shouldn't be covering the same thing, generally speaking.

Answer: Tony Dorn

Like you said, we're trying to minimize burden on farmers, so we're all glad the OMB is doing that as a check to make sure we don't overlap and burden farmers unnecessarily.

Answer: Donald Buysse

We do try to stay in our lane in terms of conducting surveys associated with farm operations and other organizations like the Department of Commerce survey other industries. The Census Bureau, they're dealing with establishment surveys as well, but those would be retail,

manufacturing, etc. There should be clear divides between the populations that the federal statistical agencies survey.

Question: Emily Stearns

What's the best way to contact with further questions regarding the NASS census and data collection process after the webinar?

Answer: Donald Buysse

If you have specific questions about the data collection process, myself or someone in my staff would likely end up handling that question. If you don't have our contact information, we can provide that and we can do our best to answer any specific questions you might have, whether census related or surveys.

Written Answer:

Census programs: donald.buysse@usda.gov and other NASS surveys: suzanne.avilla@usda.gov

Question: Rebecca Ransom

Can you tell me a little bit about how you collect aquaculture data and the Census of Aquaculture? It seems that some of the aquaculture data is withheld, leading to more data gaps for other agencies looking for aquaculture data.

Answer: Donald Buysse

Let me start by saying how we collect the aquaculture data. We do a Census of Aquaculture. That is a follow on or one of the special studies to the Census of Agriculture. The Census of Agriculture has a section on aquaculture – it becomes a sort of screener, so anybody that responds that they have any sort of aquaculture production, regardless of the amount, is then eligible for the Census of Aquaculture. At which time, we would follow up and get a more detailed look at the operation and its aquaculture production. In terms of withholding data, we take our confidentiality very seriously. We have very rigorous disclosure programming, both for the Census of Agriculture and for aquaculture. I will lean on Jeff for the final say on this, but the disclosure program that we run is deliberate to make sure that we're not disclosing any individual operator's data. Those data gaps that may exist from them are absolutely important for us to maintain our confidentiality pledge.

Answer: Tony Dorn

Aquaculture presents a special challenge when it comes to disclosure, because there are so many specialized commodity items -- from crawfish, trout, salmon, oysters, so there is a whole bunch of different disclosure items within aquaculture where we can't reveal producers. It does present more challenges, because there are so many different concentrated producers. That has been a little bit extra for aquaculture, since the commodities are so varied and specialized and regional and all that. We make sure the confidentiality is withheld, but it is more of a challenge in aquaculture.

Question: Herbert Sizek

It was mentioned that the return rate/sampling rate is variable among different size producers. Is the variance reported for each farm size or by what is produced? If not the case, is this being considered?

Answer: Jeff Bailey

Returns rates are variable by size, so we do get different return rates. So, the non-response weight could be different by size. The Table Appendix A does cover the coverage adjustments, by size I believe. Certainly, all the statistics and Quick Stats has the coefficient of variation for every item, so the variability overall is published for every item and we have a lot of items by size and by acreage size and by what is produced. For each item, you can look and see what the variability actually is.

Question: Karen Sowers

Not a census question per se but is there a min/max quantity for acreage of commodities to be removed from and added back into the annual NASS surveys?

Answer: Donald Buysse

I think that becomes a sampling question. The samples that we draw for the NASS surveys are going to be based on a lot of information reported from previous surveys. The census is included in that -- obviously, the most copious amounts of returns and information provided back to our list. Then, the sampling tries to take into account the various strata or various groups of records represented on our frame. To that point, there may not be a minimum. But I think the smaller, the less acreage they have, or the amount of the commodity, the less likely they would be sampled.

Answer: Jeff Bailey

You said that exactly right, the smaller they are, the less probability to be in the sample. I'm not sure what the question is getting at. Tony might want to speak to it. We do a 5-year revision, but also do an annual program review that determines what states are in the program or not, after we complete this census. So, we might move states in and out of the programs for different commodities so that we get the right states in the program.

Answer: Tony Dorn

That may be a little bit more of the angle on the question too, touching on like the program review a little bit, because after the census we go through and in addition to a sampling, we go through acreages of certain commodities. We might include or exclude states, just because of the change and level of production of those commodities. We go through a program review. There will be an ASB notice out there as far as the timing and what we're doing for that from the results, if that is where that question is really coming from.

Breakout 1B: The Use of Weather Information in Producing the WASDE

Question: Mark Feight

Can you talk about the decision to lower corn yield in July 2023?

Answer: Mark Brusberg

No. I had no input into that decision. Our colleagues at NASS might be able to answer that because they're the ones doing the surveys and getting the information from the ground.

Written Answer: Brad Rippey

Directly from the July WASDE front page, regarding the WAOB decision to lower U.S. corn yield in July: "According to data from the National Centers for Environmental Information, harvested-area-weighted June precipitation data for the major Corn Belt states represented an extreme downward deviation from average. However, timely rainfall and cooler than normal temperatures for some of the driest parts of the Corn Belt during early July is expected to moderate the impact of June weather.

Question: Brad Fuller

How is moisture shaping up for Mato Grosso now and moving forward?

Answer: Mark Brusberg

Right now, Mato Grosso is holding their own. They had planted 40 percent of their soybeans as of a few days ago. They've been getting spotty showers. They'd like to see more consistent rain and they'd like to see it cooler. The moisture right now is low but it is early in the rainy season. They want more rain now to ensure uniform germination of the soybeans. It is a good sign that they're planting early. They're not planting as fast as they did last year but they're ahead of the 5-year average.

Question: Benjamin Diamond

Any concerns about the India Rabi crop due to the weakening monsoon?

Answer: Mark Brusberg

There had been some initial concern about the rice crop but then they received additional rainfall. The monsoon has pulled out. It remains to be seen what the irrigation situation is for them. They rely a lot on tube wells, so fuel availability is also a driver. We had expected a lot worse with the El Nino over south and southeast Asia and we didn't see it. If there's a second year of El Nino maybe we'll have more to talk about.

Breakout 2A: NASS Historical Revisions and Estimating Program Review

Question: Todd Preszler

How are weekly crop conditions and/or weather models used in the monthly Crop Production reports?

Answer: Lance Honig

Crop condition and progress information is mostly not considered as we set our production forecast on a monthly basis. We do however have some models that bring some of that information into the process but, it is a minor, minor component. Mostly, those monthly crop production forecasts that we publish are based mainly on the survey data we collect from the farmers or objective yield. We also supplement that with satellite information and, as I mentioned, there is a small component of some of this information that goes into some of our models.

Question: Benjamin Diamond

Does NASS remove data from the previous years being reviewed if individual farm operations are disclosed?

Answer: Lance Honig

Typically speaking, even though we may make some revisions to the estimates we publish in previous years, we typically do not see changes in the disclosure. And so, I'm not going to say absolutely 100 percent never, but generally speaking from a crop perspective, no. We typically do not make changes to the disclosures of the previous years as we make revisions.

Answer: Travis Averill

The same is true in livestock branch. Those years are going backwards, we are not changing disclosure policies and processes.

Question: Omar Youssouf

Does the USDA have any ongoing projects that aim to reduce response burden on surveys using alternative data collection methods such as satellite imagery, admin data and or modelling techniques?

Answer: Lance Honig

The answer here is yes, yes, and yes. We are constantly looking at ways we can incorporate all types of information. First, because the more information we can bring into the process the better the process will be. Second, we are very concerned about the burden that surveys put on our farmers, so anything that we can do to help reduce that burden which would include the opportunity to use some other data sources is definitely something that we are putting a lot of

effort into.

Answer: Travis Averill

In livestock, if there is additional data we are not currently using to offset the burden a key example we highlight here is our milk production program, years ago, that used to be a program where we surveyed the producer and that was reduce to a quarterly process where we are able to use administrative data on a monthly basis for production in yield per cow. That has helped us and a process we have implemented and where we can do it in the future is always open for discussion as more data becomes available for us to implement and reduce that burden for our producers.

Answer: Tony Dorn

Definitely, if you look at our methodology and quality measures reports, you can see what the methodology is and get a detailed look at on our website as how we collect the data, do the analysis, and incorporate the administrative data in modeling and in everything we do and of course the nature of economics and that type of data it is a little bit harder to get information outside of the farmers' knowledge. We are looking at doing everything we can to minimize the burden.

Written Answer:

Methodology and Quality Measures:

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Methodology_and_Data_Quality/index.php

Question: Benjamin Diamond

For data near the US border, is data solicited from Mexico and Canada?

Answer: Lance Honig

For crops, I would say no to that. We survey our producers here in the U.S. That's the focus of what we are doing, which is to capture production agriculture here in the U.S. from our U.S. producers. Now, is it possible we make contact with somebody on the other side of the border? That is possible but, generally speaking, we are looking for U.S. production from U.S. operations.

Answer: Travis Averill

For livestock, we are looking at import and export data for live animals going in and out of the U.S. or coming from Canada. If you look at a quarterly hogs and pigs report, you will see a key influence on the production of hogs in the U.S. does get factored in from the Canadian import of feeder pigs along with breeding sows and market hogs coming across the Canadian border. The opposite for cattle. You have the cattle that will come into the U.S. from Mexico along with Canada, but typically Mexican cattle have a little higher influence on our cattle on feed supply. That's a factor we get that data from AMS, other foreign ag services, and other federal agencies that collect the data itself. We incorporate that data into our data analysis.

Question: Karen Braun

Can you clarify the change to acreage reviews planned for 2024? Corn/soy planted (and harvested?) area will be subject to revision in both August and September 2024, correct?

Answer: Lance Honig

Yes, that is correct. As you know until a couple of years ago, we did the planted acreage for those crops in October. The FSA data became available much sooner and we moved that to September. Based on what we are seeing with the data, we believe we can provide some meaningful updates in August. We will do that and keep that September period available as well, just in case of a late reporting year and things of that nature. We want to make sure we are able to update that as best as possible. Obviously if the planted acreage changes we need to make changes to harvested as well.

Question: Benjamin Diamond

Please explain the differences in methodology between the census and survey.

Answer: Lance Honig

Right off the top, the census is a complete enumeration. Now that doesn't mean we get a response from every single operator in the U.S., but you are starting from an approach of trying to capture information from everyone. Where on the survey side, the premise is you are going to do sample surveys. We don't have the resources to try to contact every producer as I mentioned constantly. And so, that right there kind of tells you where the differences start because you are starting from a different pool. There is a lot more adjustments that we need to make to the data that we gather on the survey side and so what the census brings is that bigger picture look. We are able to capture a lot more information not only in going to all of the producers but we capture everything about those producers. It is a 16-page small font questionnaire capturing information, where as on the survey side, what that brings to the table is much more frequency. Instead of only getting a picture every five years some things you get weekly, monthly, quarterly and you are getting much more frequent timely information but not quite as in depth or elaborate.

Answer: Tony Dorn

Definitely, with the census it is a complete enumeration. We do have adjustments you can see. We have a longer appendix if you are interested in reading about our adjustments for recovery and nonresponse. With the census, responses are really important for not just for responding in the census but it impacts the samples and everything for the next five years as far as making sure we identify as complete of a list as possible and eligible for other surveys as well. So the census is a baseline for everything and then the methodology of course is surveys are sampled. A lot of times we have our list and we talked about we build our lists during the years and can find more producers that you might not know about or might be new coming into that commodity. But the census is definitely the most important area. Everybody has a chance to respond. It is important we have those responses because that's our most efficient way of

samples and we can get the most coverage with the fewest number of reports and will give us the best information about an industry. That is creating an efficient sample, frequency and other things associated with that. The methodology is kind of similar in a way but very different as far as efficiency after the census to survey the best we can to get the survey.

Answer: Travis Averill

We have 31 methodology and quality measures reports out there so you can see the variation in the survey techniques and processes implemented with the sample sizes. It is the transparency that we are trying to provide for our data users to see what is there and how the methods are from one survey to another. There is some variation, but that information is there to see.

Written Answer:

Methodology and Quality Measures:

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Methodology_and_Data_Quality/index.php

Census Methodology:

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_US/usappxa.pdf

Question: Benjamin Diamond

Do NASS and RMA collaborate when producing estimates for production and acreage?

Answer: Lance Honig

I wouldn't necessarily say collaborate, but NASS utilized data from RMA in our process. We certainly work together in that way. I just don't want to use the term collaborate simply because NASS is responsible for actually setting and publishing those estimates. So part of the confidentiality is that no one, including others at USDA, gets to see behind the scenes. They get access to those estimates at the same time as everyone else does. But yes, we're definitely utilizing information from RMA as well as FSA and other USDA partners across the various programs that we have.

Question: Brad Fuller

Last year, U.S. harvested corn acreage was reduced a large 1.6 million acres in the January (final). Any way this data could be available earlier, (November)?

Answer: Lance Honig

I absolutely would love that. Obviously, we're talking about primarily harvested acreage here, where a lot of the challenges come in. We do have some pre-fixed planted acres reviews that we're able to do this past year or this year in September. Next year we're going to actually be able to move that up as early as August. But we don't necessarily have that same source of measure of harvest area during the growing season. So we're largely relying on the survey information that we get in June, which obviously is before some of the weather situations might

come in that either increase or decrease abandonment. And so that's an area that I would love to be able to improve on. But right now we don't really have a data source for that any sooner than those January estimates. And so that's an item that's on my bucket list for program review this fall. Is there something we could do to possibly capture some of that earlier, so we'll see.

Question: Marvin Miller

I know in the past for some of the non-Census surveys, NASS, perhaps through the state offices, would rely on local Extension staff to fill in missing respondent information, at least in certain states. Does this still occur? And is this ever part of the process for the Census of Agriculture? Finally, are there other local experts used for either Census or non-Census surveys to try to identify possible respondents or their likely output volumes? I am thinking co-ops, farm dealers, etc. might be sources.

Answer: Tony Dorn

We as far as a list building, we build the list just based on any type of data source we can get. We can't share data or list the names with anybody. But we're kind of the sponge. We try to get any list source of knowing producers and things like that that we can in one hundred and fifty. That would be a way. We look at the local State Departments of Ag and the different association groups to build those lists. I think the question might be about missing respondent information. I'm not exactly sure. But that means sometimes, if we had field enumeration on June area, if there's certain information that a neighbor might know, like maybe there was a field enumerator who had just basic information if there was a non-response. But I don't think that was very widespread because we get the best information, of course, from the producer. And you know if somebody else further away from that producer or the producer's family on the farm, it would be questionable if that data would be quality enough to collect that way, so I don't think that was very widespread. Maybe once in a while when there's absolutely no other way that might have happened. But that isn't a normal thing that would be done. Also, with field enumeration, the cost of data collection has gone up quite a bit, so there's less of that just because of the cost. We're trying to be efficient with resources too.

Question: Helen Golimowski

Does the census and survey data match for the years/crops that overlap?

Answer: Lance Honig

We do typically go through a process to ensure that they're not what I would call significantly different or implying different things. Generally speaking, from a crop perspective. I usually tell people if you're interested in something like corn yield or production, I would focus on the annual program because you're going to get that consistent accuracy year in and year out, whereas the census is only for every five years. If you want to know about corn producers, the census is your tool and so it's just understanding those differences and determining what's going to fit your data needs the best.

Answer: Travis Averill

It's near possible in the process of census versus a survey. The key is: are they in a range? And that's one of the things goes back to the five-year revisions that we're looking at in the process of completing the final estimates to is where we have to true them up, or make some adjustments at a state level, to be closer, and those values that we might have some differences, but it's not a complete one for one. The numbers are so. There are some differences there, because of the process of methodologies, different across censuses and surveys. Then there are some surveys we have within livestock, chicken and eggs, and hogs and pigs, their reference dates are a little different than the end of December. As a key is that December thirty first is the point of emphasis where a lot of livestock estimates are either the first of a given month, and so there might be some variation there when hogs is a quarterly and that's December first, so it's a thirty-day difference. So just a couple of examples of where there might be some variabilities in the differences between the survey versus and Census of Ag.

Question: Benjamin Diamond

Has the accuracy of NASS estimates improved over time? Have any validations been conducted with the census data showing better agreement over time?

Answer: Lance Honig

As far as the better agreement aspect of things again, they're never going to match exactly. If you want to talk about the agreement improving over time, I'd say the biggest improvement probably happened back in 1997 when we took over the census here at NASS. We've made a concerted effort since the time we've had the census to really bring the two programs as much in alignment as we can in terms of how we ask questions and aligning things that way. So we have made some efforts to bring them into alignment. I would say again that it, as you look at comparisons between census and surveys, where things match we're in pretty good alignment. Probably as good of alignment as you're going to get with two separate methodologies. The accuracy of NASS estimates improved over time. Well, we would like to think so. That's certainly what we strive for is to always improve on everything we do. But I know there's been some independent studies that have been done that suggest that. Certainly. We're holding our own, if not improving in terms of accuracy.

Question: Marvin Miller

I would think the Census provides a unique opportunity to talk about the whole farm enterprise, specifically the multiple commodity/specialty crops/livestock that a farm might be producing. Is there anywhere in the Census where we can see how many farms might be producing grains and livestock or other multiple crop/livestock areas that a single enterprise might be producing?

Answer: Tony Dorn

The census products there's just so many different data tables and cross tabs that exist to get the census out. So doing another multiple commodity cross tab would just be probably an enormous task and trying to run disclosure on that all at the same time. Then we're trying to get

the census out as quickly as possible, so everybody can see the results we do have available. We have some special tabulations, if there's something specific that would be available to consider through our data lab. But those would be very specific. For more wider range, if people want to do research, we do have data lab opportunities where people can do research and get to the census data in a data lab secure environment. That ensures confidentiality and disclosure are run on the data before and after any kind of research would be done, so that we maintain that. But there are opportunities to look at a lot of those types of things, for instance, if you're trying to count the number of farms that might have multiple or certain commodity mixes, that would be something that would be like an ideal project for the data lab. Or if there's something more limited, maybe a special tab, if it's not too large in scop. The special tabulations can take quite a bit of time, and we don't have dedicated staff or resources for that. It's a service that we provide. So we do the best we can getting those out. But if you're looking for a far-reaching kind of research for one project, probably entrance into the data lab and looking into that might be more suitable, and probably get you what you need to. So there's a couple of ways to get at that. But it would be to add more tables to the census with the main release product.

Written Answer:

Special Tabulations and Restricted Data:

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Data_and_Statistics/Special_Tabulations/index.php

Answer: Travis Averill

In the Census of Ag, we have the North American Industrial Classification System that has tables at a US and state level. And so if you want to look under, if it's cattle feedlots, beef cattle or dairy, hogs, and then you can see the number of farms in those States by if it's crops, corn, soybean, and their value of sales. That's also a part without doing a special tabulation. If that meets the data that you're trying to gather without having to go to that extra step. But that's a potential option. It might not give the whole spectrum, but it's a way to view the data in that view too.

Question: Benjamin Diamond

Are there any improvements planned for Quick Stats?

Answer: Tony Dorn

We have a modernization project. I think we mentioned this, too, in the past couple of data users, but for quick stats are really moving into the cloud as well as our Pdfs are moving into the cloud so, taking both of those and working on eventually replacing it with a new system. That's a cloud-based release system. And we do have some products that we're running in parallel. We're not replacing and stopping quick stats or pdf releases yet, but we're running in parallel until we get more up and running until we get a complete history there. The new system includes the Cloud base is going to be linked to our web page where data users can get to tables, queries, and to get to the data quickly. That's where we used to end the story data all in one spot that's in a tiny data format. So it's more easily understandable right off the bat. It has API functionality and has some interactive graphics to go along with it. It should be a lot easier.

Well, it's existing right now in production with a few other data items and the complete list was on my other slide. That's the direction we're going with quick stats. I can look up the link put it in the chat, too. But definitely that's planned, and it's in progress.

Written Answer:

<https://data.nass.usda.gov/field-crops/>

Breakout 2B: AMS Data Visualizations

Question: Emily Stearns

As AMS tracks markets approved for equine, are you able to add equine to the list for visualization? I understand data is likely limited.

Answer: Levi Geyer

Currently we do not provide any market information on equine. We're mainly focused on edible based commodities for the US. I know equine is consumed in other regions across the world, but these (reported commodities by AMS) are more consumed commodities that are mainstream in the agricultural sector. So, unfortunately, we do not have any market information on equine. The data is limited. We don't collect any substantial data other than what we're seeing as far as movement across the border. We do track some of that as it moves in and out of the United States. As far as the destinations (other than where it crossed the border), we are unsure we know what is coming into and out of the US. So, we don't have sufficient information to incorporate it into this dashboard. If the data was readily available, then yes. With tableau, we can pull in multiple datasets so long as we can match them up with the hierarchy of data we're currently using. We're able to import data into these visualizations, but that data has to exist. Unfortunately, we don't have equine data available to us.

Question: Vince Breneman

What day is the Livestock Auction data updated?

Answer: Michael Jeter

Currently, we're doing this on a manual refresh and it's done first thing Monday morning around 6:30 ET/7:30 CT. We're working through a pilot project to automate the data refresh process and hopefully we get it down to a daily refresh.

Breakout 3A: ERS Feed Grains Database: A comprehensive look at this valuable resource

Question: Chris Eggerman

Can the website be changed to allow multiple attributes to be selected before it narrows down the options? When I try to select each of the different data series included in corn FSI usage (fuel alcohol, beverage alcohol, cereal, etc), it's very difficult to select more than 1 or 2 of them before it removes the others from the list.

Answer: Molly Burress

This is great feedback. We are always available to help users troubleshoot. So, please feel free to reach out if you would like to screenshare or if you have other recommendations. My understanding is if users hold down the control button, the user should be able to quickly select multiple attributes as long as that attribute applies to the commodity or data type that is selected under "Group". If this is still functional and not clear, we will recommend adding instructions to the app or the Documentation for clarity.

Answer: Angelica Williams

One suggestion is to just download all the information and then make a selection. But, we're continuing to improve. We're always looking at ways to improve our product. We appreciate all the feedback and suggestions. We'll take them into consideration.

Question: Lincoln Herrington

Does yield data always align with what's on quick stats?

Answer: Angelica Williams

For yields, it should. As I mentioned the main data sources are NASS and we also pull information from WASDE.

Answer: Kelly Maguire

The data should align because we're pulling from the same data sources. If you're finding that they're not in alignment, reach out directly to Angelica and we can try to troubleshoot what might be going on.

Answer: Angelica Williams

Yes, we want to match across all agencies.

Question: Simla Tokgoz

For transport data of feed grains, are you relying on AMS data? If so, any plans to consider

Freight Analysis Framework of Bureau of Transportation Statistics?

Any plans to expand transport data for spatial disaggregation, rather than total transport data for U.S., such as publishing transport volumes from location A to B?

Answer: Angelica Williams

That's a great question. I think it's worth considering and we'll be happy to discuss it with our team. And of course, feel free to reach out. It's something we haven't looked into yet but we are continuing to improve our products and we always appreciate suggestions.

Question: Katelyn McCulloch

Is there a resource for how the current GCAU and RCAUs are calculated and is the methodology revisited?

Answer: Angelica Williams

Yes. There are a few papers. Feel free to reach out and I will share that information with you. Some of these papers are a bit dated, but about revising it, it's in discussions. Thank you very much for bringing it up. We will look into adding additional resources to our Documentation regarding GCAU and RCAU calculations.

Resources:

Allen, George and Margaret Devers, [National and State Livestock-Feed Relationships](#), USDA, Economic Research Service, Statistical Bulletin. 1970

Baker, Allen, Feed Yearbook: [Estimating Feed Use: Background and Issues](#), FDS-1998, Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, April 1998.

Capehart Tom. [Feed Outlook: Special Article Animal Unit Calculations – First Projections for the 2013/14 Crop Year](#), FDS-13e-SA, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, May 13, 2013.

Question: Jerry Gidel

There's a 2-day lag for feed grain outlook report?

Answer: Angelica Williams

Yes. We update the database on the first business day after WASDE report. So, you will be able to access that information the next business day after the WASDE report comes out. And yes, there is a two-day lag for the feed outlook tables as well, the compressed version of the larger feed grains tables. That allows two days for analysts to work on pulling together our charts and analysis. The report includes a wide description and two days is when we are able to have it ready at this time.

Answer: Molly Burress

That's been the convention the Feed Grains Outlook has for publication timing for quite some time. There is quite a bit of analysis and writing and editing that goes on. So, I don't foresee that we would change that timeline, but that would be an issue that we would discuss with the World Board.

Answer: Angelica Williams

As an analyst, I can tell you it's just the time. We have to pull together information to put it together, write the report, create the charts. We're striving to do the best we can, but even two days is sometimes tough.

Answer: Molly Burress

We have multiple levels of review at ERS that have to approve those products, and also have the World Board that must approve what goes out in that report.

Breakout 3B: Understanding Publicly Available Data from USDA-Risk Management Agency

Question: Benjamin Diamond

What is the difference between Commodity Year and Reinsurance Year?

Answer: Ben Marcy

It depends by crop. Sometimes they can be the same. Sometimes they can be different. So an example of that might be a crop that is planted in the fall and is planted in a different calendar year than the next year when it would be harvested. I'm thinking of wheat planted in the fall. That is going to be harvested in the crop year, next year 2024. That is also the same reinsurance year for that. We have other crops that have different reinsurance year and crop year. It's a crop-by-crop basis as to what they are.

Answer: Xuan Pham

Florida citrus would be an example. Reinsurance year doesn't match up with crop year. If you have questions like that, reach out to us. We are happy to look at the data to help with that. There is a link on the website to explain what an insurance cycle is.

Written Answer:

<https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/About-RMA/History-of-RMA/How-the-Program-Works>

<https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/Topics/Insurance-Cycle>

Question: Benjamin Diamond

Would it be possible to add customization to the Historical Reports like the Report Generator for SOB?

Answer: Michael Hibbs

I'm not sure if it's possible or not. It's a simple one-click report and this is the first time anyone has ever shown that sort of interest. If there is interest, please email us and let us know so someone can look into it.

Question: Cole Henderson

Is there any way to get historical RMA reports in excel or other format that is not a pdf?

Answer: Michael Hibbs

Currently, the only ability is to print to PDF. These are non-customizable reports rather than one-click reports. If there is interest, we would want you to email us and let us know so

someone can look into it.

Question: Benjamin Diamond

I get a message with the generated RMA SOB Weekly Report: ** Aggregated policy and unit counts may be overstated due the possibility that multiple coverage levels can exist on an individual underlying policy. For accurate aggregate policy and unit counts, please refer to the SOB prepared reports available at <https://www.rma.usda.gov/Information-Tools/Summary-of-Business>. **. Why are the unit counts handled differently between the two reports?

Answer: Michael Hibbs

The policy count at the coverage level percent view, when generating a report, has the message that the counts may be overstated because a policy can have more than one coverage level, whereas the SOB prepared reports are counted at a level higher than the coverage level, and does not include coverage level percent. Therefore, the prepared reports counts are more accurate with what we consider a policy when we are counting policies.

Question: Roberto Sanchez

Do we have data in the PRISM database for Hawaii and US territories? or do you have it in a different database?

Answer: James Hipple

We don't have Hawaii in there, but we just signed an agreement for the development of similar data set with Oregon State University for Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the agricultural areas in Alaska. Areas where crop insurance is offered. Those are under development. That's going to be a year and a half or so before the data are completed in a similar fashion in the current prism data set, and they will be available through the PRISM Public Portal when complete.

Question: Ford Ramsey

Are more detailed definitions of causes of loss provided anywhere on the website? Have there been changes in the causes of loss allowed and thus changes in causes of loss that could be found in the data in different years?

Answer: Ben Marcy

We have listings and definitions on causes of loss on the website. We also have a listing on what companies can submit in for cause of loss. Different policies cover different things. Those are things that change over time. You can see that it's varied in the website as a listing of the ICE tables that have that. That's something we can share for this year, where to find it and where to go back and see those. My guess is that they have changed but not a lot depending on what we are covering out there.

Answer: Xuan Pham

They do change. There is a new cause of loss tropical storm option. That's something I have found when looking at the data recently. Feel free to reach out to us. We are happy to get someone who knows the answer to address them.

Question: Marvin Miller

Can you please provide one or two quick examples of how you might use the Prism data?

Answer: James Hipple

A quick example of the way compliance uses PRISM -- we have tool sets available for the compliance investigators and loss adjustors to aid in the documentation of weather-related causes of loss aside tied to a loss claim. PRISM provides a common data set and tool set to assist the loss adjustor in ensuring that the loss is appropriately adjusted, it provides the compliance investigator those same tools and same data set to ensure the AIP is effective in their job. A second example might be for looking at impacts of widespread drought or excess prescription. We can use the prism data set along with other policy information and look at effects within a given year on the program.

Question: Marc Rosenbohm

I have been looking for two specific data series related to crop insurance. Can you tell me where I might find 1) the A&O costs for every year, and 2) the underwriting gain/loss total for every year?

Answer: Xuan Pham

I know we do publish cost data, but I don't know where on the website it is. Mark, I'll put my e-mail into the chat. Please reach out and we'll see if we can get information for you if it's something we can share.

Written Answer:

Underwriting gain/loss total is available here: [Reinsurance Reports | RMA \(usda.gov\)](#)

A&O costs are available here: [Crop Year Government Cost of Federal Crop Insurance Program \(usda.gov\)](#)

General information about program budget is available here: [Program Budget | RMA \(usda.gov\)](#).

Question: Jeff Koenig

Is the sole data for the PRISM product satellite and radar?

Answer: James Hipple

PRISM doesn't use satellite and radar at all. The weather data sources the observation or the

ground networks across the U.S. for weather stations like various mesonets and other ground station networks. The radar data used in it is from the stations used predominantly in the Eastern portion of the U.S. from NEXRAD and is used to assist in generating the PRISM grids.

Question: Jeff Koenig

How is PRISM data is used inside RMA?

Written Answer: Jim Hipple

Like the above answer, an example of the way compliance uses PRISM, we have tool sets based upon the PRISM datasets available for the compliance investigators aiding them in reviewing policy weather related causes of loss tied to a loss claim. It provides documentation to aid the investigator in determining that the loss is appropriately adjusted. A second example might be for looking at impacts of widespread drought or excess prescription. We use the PRISM data along with other policy information and look at effects within a given year on the program, we can also look back historically and compare events (like the drought in 2012 vs 2022).