



USDA Spring Data Users' Meeting
April 16, 2024
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 it was answered in the Open Forum. There was not time to answer all questions, but 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: Hussain Jiwani

Is it possible for NASS to provide county level data for just the major crops like corn, soybean & wheat?

Answer: Troy Joshua

Because of the budget cuts, we have determined not to publish any data at the county level. Prior to NASS actually making that difficult decision, we did a deep dive internally. We lowered our travel budgets. We also reduced the follow-on interaction with producers to encourage our respondent to respond to us. Not only that, we shifted some of our data collection from face-to-face or in-person to virtual. And we have seen some of the dynamic progression from our sister agencies of what they are doing and how they are disseminating their data. But NASS is delaying/stopping some of the modernization processes so we can remain relevant, still provide the data. To answer the question, we have made a difficult decision not to publish any county estimates through this current 2024 production year.

Question: Willis Kidd

Why on livestock do all the other states get lumped into Other States, but on crops some states don't get estimated, but the Other States is an interim thing for a handful of states not all other states?

Answer: Travis Averill

On the livestock side, historically at NASS we've always done a 50-state estimate for livestock. In this transition as we are moving what states are being published versus the non-published states, we are keeping the US total, not a 24 or 33 state total, so we don't distort the data series over time. For livestock, we did not want to change the US total from being a 50-state total to whatever the number of published states are. We are keeping the data series intact, just the number of states being published might differ from what we have been doing historically for the various commodities of livestock.

Answer: Nick Streff

On the crops side, just like when we did the program review this time around, we try to maintain a certain level of coverage when we look at the states. In livestock we've had 50 states [published]. In crops we don't have many that are like that. When we can cut the crops out, we are still covering most the production -- either 85% or 90% of the production is still covered in most cases. In 2019 the program changes were much more significant. That is why our principal crop acres really shifted and we included that slide over time. Also at that time, some of the program reductions were also budget related. We needed to reduce the number of states and programs to reduce data collection costs.

Answer: Lance Honig

In crops there are two factors. (1) there are many more crops and (2) more frequency of surveys and reports associated with some of these crops. So, the cost would be almost astronomical for minimal gains to expand up to 50 states across all the different commodities that we estimate on the crop side. So quite frankly, it would not be practical or feasible.

Question: Bevan Everett

Going back to the county yields. Will there about district data produced? I know you said no county yields for 2024. Is it just 2024 or is it going forward -- nothing?

Answer: Troy Joshua

It is based upon budget. So, we will reevaluate this for the 2025 fiscal year. In respect to district, if we can get a full cost recovery -- if someone is willing to fund it, we will consider it, yes.

Follow-up: Bevan Everett

I, many others in my company and some of the guys in here know, deep dives into regional supply is a major factor in making origination and storage plans, facility and feasibility plans. Just all types of things during the year. It brings efficiency to the market. By losing that data, which I understand it is a budgetary thing, it is blinding the industry in grain quite a bit -- so much so that you might have read that the NGFA is trying to take this up as an issue. It is an extremely important report, and I was wondering if the budget is being moved around to maybe other efforts, maybe to more pet projects of the administration for something? Because it's an extremely important bit of data, I would like to have it back.

Answer: Lance Honig

We would love to do everything. If the budget supported it, we are in the business of ag stats and we would love to cover everything that we can. We certainly didn't shift any money around due to any pressures or initiatives from above, sideways or anywhere else. We received our appropriated level, albeit halfway through the year. As a result of that, we had to make some judgments in order to be solvent.

Follow-up: Bevan Everett

Is there a way that we can maybe get RMA data to replace?

Answer: Xuan Pham

We currently do provide information on our RMA Reporting Information System. You can find it on the website, just go to rma.usda.gov, click on the Tools menu and then RMA Reporting Information System. You can download there.

Answer: Post-meeting follow-up from Xuan Pham

RMA does provide aggregate yield information for the administration of area plans in the Federal Crop Insurance Program. These aggregate yields are based on producers participating in the crop insurance program and can be found by through the Tools menu and then RMA Reporting Information System on our website.

Here is the direct link: <https://webapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/RIRS/AreaPlanHistoricalYields.aspx>

Question: Sharon Pailer

Are there any plans to add animal welfare related questions either in ARMS Phase II or III, the Census, or other NASS surveys? There is substantial and increasing demand for information about farm management practices related to animal welfare (such as confinement/outdoor access) and there aren't other good data sources for this kind of information.

Answer: Bryan Combs

To the present, I don't think we have had many conversations about that specific topic. We do have an opportunity for people to submit and respond to content, recommendations through federal register notices. You can keep an eye on those as they come out and are published in the federal register. I'll also ask Kelly if she wants to weigh in on that, since we do partner with ERS on that project.

Answer: Kelly Maguire

We recently released a report on state policies for animal welfare practices ([here](#)). This report will likely be a good source of information.

Answer: Travis Averill

USDA APHIS NAHMS will do some additional livestock studies. That is a potential option to explore the welfare questions for producers in the US. If it is dairy cattle, poultry, hogs, sheep and goats, they will do those on an annual basis -- one commodity typically on the annual basis. I don't know if that is in the long-term plan for data items out there, but that is another source to explore.

Question: Max Fisher

I hate to keep beating a dead horse on the county estimates data. We found out over the last week that near every ag business, like grain and feed, that uses that data to create little mini S&Ds around all their facilities across the United States. It is used for exporters to determine their draw area, what sales they can put on the books in order to be able to export. For processors, millers, you name it -- to be able to decide what grain they need to bring from outside of the local draw area to keep the facilities operational. It is a major dataset that you were providing, and it was excellent data and very important. Anyway, just within all the local supply chains, any way that the USDA, and I get that NASS has budgets constraints and for this

year it may have to come from another area. These are conversations that we definitely would like to have with the USDA.

On the RMA data, I have a question as to when that yield data would be available. Like on the FSA acreage piece, if we were to combine the two agencies in order to put something together as a stopgap for this year. If I remember correctly, acreage data comes out throughout the growing season. But the RMA yield data – I'm wondering when does it come out. Anyway, how does that compare to when the RMA data would come out on the production side to be able to put something together for this one?

Answer: Lance Honig

To follow back up on your comments about the NASS county data. We will certainly consider our FY 2025 budget next year, hearing all the feedback and understanding the importance of these products. We will see what we can do based on where we stand at that point.

Answer: Xuan Pham

I have put into the chat the link to our reporting system, but our county yield information typically is available starting between mid to late May. Because we are administering multiple area plans, they can differ. It just depends on how early we can get access to the data. So, I would say mid to late May at the earliest every year. Information releases will continue into June and July.

Link: <https://webapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/RIRS/AreaPlanHistoricalYields.aspx>

Answer: Lance Honig

Correct, for the previous season.

Answer: Xuan Pham

Yes, previous season.

Answer: Lance Honig

So, the following May would be the earliest that you would see that.

Question: Chris Eggerman

Revisions to corn production and stocks estimates following the release of the Census of Ag included very small revisions (10 million bushels or less) to quarterly stocks for the 2021 and 2022 crop years, but large revisions (as much as 500 million bushels) to quarterly stocks in the 2018, 2019 and 2020 marketing years that significantly decreased the feed & residual use estimates for the first quarter of those three years while increasing the feed & residual use estimates for the last three quarters of those years. If the Census of Ag collected data for the 2022 crop year only, why were there such large revisions in stocks for 2018-2020 if the Census data did not lead to significant changes for 2021 or 2022 stocks?

Answer: Lance Honig

Basically, the revisions that we made to the earlier years for grain stocks had nothing to do with the census of ag. If you recall back, beginning with the 2021 marketing season, you'll remember that we made some changes to some of our procedures and how that impacted some of the stocks levels compared to how we did things previously. These five-year revisions that we do following the census -- that was the first opportunity that we had to reach back to the earlier years and make the adjustments. We wanted to establish a longer history using the current methodology that we had been using starting with the 2021 crop season. So, effectively the changes that we made in 2021 moving forward we just applied those same procedures to those earlier years at our first available opportunity. Now you have that full five-year span in there where the estimates were set on an even plane in terms of procedure. So, it had nothing to do with the Census of Agriculture data.

Question: Ted Siefried

Going back to the county data, am I to understand that you are still collecting it but just not publishing it?

Answer: Troy Joshua

That is not correct.

Follow-up: Ted Siefried

So, you are not collecting the county data, got it. Secondly, RMA data is great, but historically off the top of my head, I believe there is a sizable discrepancy from what your county yields were and what RMA were. So, how would we account for that?

Answer: Lance Honig

Data collected using different methodologies will oftentimes have some differences. Obviously, we're talking about completely different methodologies between the data that RMA would collect as part of their operational duties administering crop insurance programs from a NASS perspective where we're collecting data from farmers about various crop seasons. So, inherently, I would expect you will see some differences in those data. It is not necessarily mean that they are statistically different. Someone would have to do analysis to confirm or deny that, I suppose. But I would expect there would be some inherent differences because of where the data comes from.

Just to clarify, when I say NASS is not collecting the county-level data, we had to collect additional information beyond what it takes to set viable state and national estimates. It takes more data to support estimates down to the sub-state or county level, so those additional survey efforts will not be happening. That is a big part of what reduced the cost that we saved by not publishing the county level estimates. Just to clarify, not doing county-level estimates doesn't have any impacts on the quality of the state and national estimates, because it is a separate

collection effort any way. The procedures are the same, but it is a different set of producers, additional set of producers we were going to after the state and national levels were set.

Question: Rudy Arredondo

The Latino Farmers & Ranchers International (LFRI) leadership are scheduled to be at the Western Governors Association meeting in Phoenix, AZ, April 23-24 and Food Summit 2024 x Texas Hispanic Farmer and Rancher Conference in McAllen, Texas. Will USDA staff plan to be in attendance with this material and/or presentation?

Answer: Lance Honig

USDA may very well have some presence at the meetings. It won't be the same presentations or material. Although, if there is interest, I am sure anyone in attendance may choose to overlap some of that.

Answer: Troy Joshua

Please send us an invitation, so that we have individuals out there in almost every state representing us. Send us an invitation so that we make sure that we are represented, because we want to attend those types of meetings to make sure that information that we have that we can provide gets shared. So, send us an invitation by email or however you prefer to contact us.

Answer: Mark Jekanowski

Whenever we can be invited, invite the USDA folks. If budget permits and whatnot, we are usually glad to attend.

Question: Bevan Everett

We have the expansion of the renewable diesel thing going on pretty big. It kind of sucked up all the bean oil recently, though the industry has a bit of a failure to launch completely. But we are not really seeing any data collection on it. Last time I heard in the last data user's meeting, we just missed the five-year deadline for collection on that data. Is that true? Of course, it will be something that will be pulling stocks out of the industry and we will not know how much or where it is going -- it will just show up as disappearance. Are we looking at putting out any renewable diesel reports? I know we have biodiesel numbers, but not renewable diesel.

Answer: Julie Harris

We do publish renewable diesel production data on our website and we have been for a couple of years -- in addition to biodiesel.

Clarification: Bevan Everett

Is that strictly under an EMTS? Just under the rins, not actually gallons.

Answer: Julie Harris

It's gallons. We go to renewable diesel plants and ask them for production and inventory and shipments. We publish that with the other petroleum monthly data.

Answer: Joe DeCampo

Part of the problem is we don't have any export data. We don't have a schedule B number for renewable diesel. Part of that problem is some of the other agencies are having trouble writing that language in the statistical notes to make sure that everybody understands the definition of renewable. No timeline on availability. Not July 1.

Question: Collin Watters

Will AMS include non-GMO prices as well as organic?

Answer: Michael Sheats

At this point we are focusing on organic. What we find a lot of times is organic lends itself to the non-GMO, so we don't see strictly products that their only attribute is non-GMO enough to get a regular market on that specifically. Initially, it will be more of the organic. As we find that we can get more information on various commodities, we would consider it. That sort of work is done under our volunteer reporting -- that takes cooperation from the industries reporting that. Certainly, we are always looking for opportunities to expand in that area.

Question: Jerry Gidel

One quick clarification on this whole situation about the county scenario is in the 2024 crop year. We have 2023 crop yields. They are available now and that's going to impact us the rest of the season. Then starting the next February when we initially got these data, it would be impacting the 2024 season. At this point, hopefully we will have a budget, ag budget completely. Now, we've got a temporary one, but to get this reorganized so it is back on schedule, is that hopefully going to happen? I know we are dealing with a Congress that doesn't have a lot of connection in the community. Is that the real issue that we have here, is the fact that we are delayed for a year and maybe more?

Answer: Lance Honig

You are correct. From a crop perspective, it starts with the 2024 crop season. You are right with the exception of cotton and rice that is still coming for the 2023 season, and those will still happen. That is because the data collection efforts have already been completed for those. So, the earliest we can really effect is the work that we are starting now or very soon that would support those efforts for the next crop season. There is still a window where we might be able to get something done before the 2024 crop season kicks in, FY 2025 budget related, but that window is shrinking.

Answer: Troy Joshua

That is correct because it doesn't just happen overnight. We are preparing for the county estimates for crop year 2024. When we don't get the funding for this, it places us in a situation where our staff is scrambling to get something done. I'm not saying it won't be great and fantastic, but we are still preparing for the 2024 crop year. That is what we are doing right now, getting our questionnaires and methodologies in order. When we are told we cannot do that, we stop meeting and having those conversations. That is what is happening right now. We realize that because we have conversations with industry folks who tell us how they use this county estimates data, and how they are taking this information and use it around their facilities. This is the difficult situation that we were placed in. When we received this budget allocation of \$187.5 million, that was appropriated by Congress, then eventually it is trickled down. That is what happened, and that is not taking into consideration the 5.2% pay increase. In 2023 our budget was \$211.1 million. So, that is a decrease. We had a Census bump in 2023, but it wasn't that big. Throughout the process, it places us in a difficult situation. We would love to get our budget in October, but when we get it in March, it put all of us around this table in a very difficult situation. We have to make decisions that are very uncomfortable. We met on a continuous basis, because we stopped doing some of our programs to make sure that we are progressive, our innovation projects. We look internally before we start publishing data. We want to publish data because it makes us relevant. We don't want to publish something that gets placed on a shelf and nobody uses. We have heard from the industry folks many times, basically almost an hour after we put that notice out, saying, why are you doing this, you are putting us in an uncomfortable situation. Unfortunately, we were in an uncomfortable situation when we had to make that decision.

Question: Karl Skold

Please consider breaking into a smaller file the ZIP file of US meat, livestock, and poultry trade. The ZIP file would be much easier to use.

Answer: Kelly Maguire

That is noted. Thank you for that comment and we will take that into consideration.

Answer: Molly Burress

We have discussed how to best post the livestock international file. It is a very big file that is created for end users who are usually pulling it into python or some other statistical package. There are some workarounds. And we can show you how to open that file. There are also smaller Excel files for other users and that may interest you. It is the same data.

Question: Josh Katt

On the oil crop yearbooks. For feedgrains you update once a month and for oil crops it is once a year. Will that change possibly in the future or have you thought about changing in the future?

Answer: Molly Burress

When they put out the monthly [Outlook](#) report, there is a smaller file of data and those might be of interest to you. As far as the yearbook, that is a file that we don't have any intention of currently producing more often. But, you can reach out to the author if there are specific data points that you are interested in. Maria Bukowski or Bryn Swearingen would be the best contacts for that information.

Question: David Widmar

With ARC and PLC promoted as a risk management program/tool for producers, is it possible to provide the county-level data (specifically yields) before payments are made so producers can plan/budget/anticipate potential payments?

Answer: Tim Gravlin

Last month we posted the county yields in base acre for 2024. We do have a public website where we post that to. We posted an update for 2023 crop year yields back in January. I think what I'm trying to say is we are posting those yields on-line, however I just want to remind you or bring to your attention the ARC PLC program. It pays in arrears, so the October payment run we just had paid on crop year 2022. So, it is the yield data for 2024 or 2023 going to help you plan to plant something or change your decisions on planting? I'm not sure if that is going to work like maybe you were thinking it was going to work.

ARC/PLC Benchmark Yields are posted here: https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/arcplc_program/arcplc-program-data/index

Answer: Post-meeting follow-up from Tim Gravlin

Thank You for your question David and your interest in the ARC/PLC program. Unfortunately, we don't have the various factors that we would need in a completed form to ensure accurate projections until just prior to the payment run. The FSA website does have price forecasts for PLC updated monthly that hew to USDA's WASDE projections if farmers wish to do their own forecasting. However, we do not have county-level yield forecasts.

Last month we posted the county yields in base acres for 2024. We posted an update for 2023 crop year yields back in January.

Question: Brian Carroll

I wanted to talk about the renewable diesel and the reason for the build out. Good question and really good answer, there are good resources and better resources that we used to have and still some deficits. One of the deficits that I see could potentially be met by changing or improving the existing NASS fats and oils report. Though it is thankfully taken over after a few years after Census dropped that. Long history here, you know in a nutshell one of the things that we noticed is yellow grease has gone to being suppressed in the production and stocks categories. An idea potentially to address that could be to have a total fats and oils and suppressing some

other minor oil so that we are not flying completely blind to these very important categories. Would be interested to hear what is driving that and how it could be mitigated. The other idea that I would throw in here on fats and oils is expanding the number of respondents to be more representative of the modern make up of the industry. So any comments around current scope and ability to expand the report to other respondents.

Answer: Troy Joshua

We've had many conversations centered around fats and oils report. That is an interesting conversation on combining it and then I would love to continue the conversation during our breaks. It is a conversation that we would love to engage more in. Because we see some of the concerns that we have when we're publishing that data and some the challenges associated with it as well. When we publish the data we want to make sure that it is defensible and it is a true reflection of what is actually being produced.

Answer: Nick Streff

Just a few weeks ago we had a meeting and we were particularly talking about the yellow grease area and it comes down to getting industry support to get regular reports from everyone every month to get consistent enough. We've reached out to help us promote participation in the survey so we hope to start to publish it more regularly or at least that was the goal behind those talks.

Question: Willis Kidd

Is all of that data available in quick stats? Because I was having difficulty getting some of those fat categories pulled up in quick stats, but I will admit that I may have been looking in the wrong area. Yellow grease, I could not find that as a commodity.

Answer: Troy Joshua

If we are publishing it, it should be available on quick stats, but we will make sure that we verify.

Answer: Post-meeting follow-up from Troy Joshua

The yellow grease data are available on Quick Stats.

Question: Chris Eggerman

Can you comment on which provinces in Brazil are believed to have larger area and/or yields for soybeans and corn than CONAB is estimating?

Answer: Joanna Hitchner

We have several years of higher crops than CONAB going back. We reconcile our crops using ABIOVE crush data and official exports. Looking at last year, for example, the crop of 162 million tons we had to raise several million tons this past fall because we were seeing record crush and exports. So to cover the crop we had to evaluate the area and yield for last year's crop and

several prior year's crops. Where that area is, we can only speculate where it could be with the expansion of the northern ports, but we don't actually know where the area expansion is.

Answer: Mike Jewison

The only thing that I would add to that is given second crop corn acres and how they usually follow soybean acres the same logic might be true for corn areas as it does for soybeans.

Question: Bevan Everett

I understand that there is a spread between the two. But there was a consistency of a few metric tons now we are looking at 11.25 metric ton difference between Brazil's total crops and then now we are looking at 5.29 metric tons so it is multiple of two or three times the number. And that would be greater than the entire carry out in the United States and it is a material amount. It is either one the greatest misses by CONAB. They mentioned about smaller acres in their last note, well USDA mentioned more acres. So we even got two different government agencies saying things are going in a completely different direction.

Answer: Joanna Hitchner

On soybeans, when we were reconciling crops after the final use data, we had to raise the crops on both area and on yield. So for several years we had higher trends yields and we have a higher area, more than 500,000 hectares or 1.5 million acres higher than CONAB. That is a part of the reason why our crop is so much bigger this year. The year over year change is similar to theirs but we are coming off a higher base both on area and on yield. And our area and yields can be found for anybody that is looking for it on FAS's website, so you can see the differences between what we are showing and what other sources are showing.

Answer: Mike Jewison

On the corn side I would say obviously given the constraints in the balance sheet there is a little more subjectivity there. You have use categories outside of exports which are estimated, but it is not like crush and exports for beans you have most of the administrative data accounted for minus some stocks. For corn there is a little more variability and subjectivity. The current crop this year, remember we are just going into it is peaks of freeness season and it is natural to have difference expectations in the crops. We look at CONAB and it is a big difference in exports, so your point is well taken on implications on the corn side. Time will bear out how that changes. I don't see this as a we're right they're wrong type of discussion, but we are talking about Brazil and it is not nearly as robust in terms of data sources as you have with NASS in the US. And the same would also hold true for Argentina as well.

Question: Dan Robinson

Regarding the pivot from static data to interactive dashboards, how long is that entire rollout expected to take place for? And will the static data still be regularly updated and available via the APIs, or is that also being phased out?

Answer: Michael Sheats

No the static data will continue. That is the basis of what we do. We collect that data. The data visualizations will be a different way to see the data and the APIs will still be as they are. More data will be available as it gets into the data engine and you will have a problem with more data moving forward; we are not cutting back on anything. So the static data will continue, it is just a different way to present the data.

Question: Joel Mayo

You mentioned earlier a lot of your static/PDF reports will be moved to visualizations. Will the data driving these visualizations first be moved and made available via your API?

Answer: Michael Sheats

It will be concurrent. Obviously as the information is into the data engine it will be available in all formats API and eventually in the data visualizations. It has to get into the data engine before it can go anywhere.

Question: Joel Mayo

Your had a V2 API that had the endpoint discontinued. Will all new data be accessible via the 1.2 API, or is there a new API in development as well?

Answer: Michael Sheats

I started 40 years ago before there were computers so I will try and figure out this talk about API's. I am told by the experts that we'll support all API versions that are out there. I think we are currently on 3.1 if it means anything to the questioner, and we will continue to support all versions for the time being.

Question: Karen Braun

I want to go back to the Brazil discussion because obviously you can look at the corn and soybean balance sheets between USDA and CONAB and you can see that the production estimates are different, the export estimates are different, and the ending stock estimates are different. So it makes sense when you look at the bigger picture - not just production. And when you look at the year-on-year assumptions of yield and production, they do somewhat line up with what CONAB is saying, but I think it could really help if you could clarify how USDA does or does not use intelligence gathered by CONAB. I know in some countries USDA will adopt certain estimates of those agencies and other countries they don't. It would be helpful to know, do you adopt anything that they say? Is there any overlap and how do you, you know, kind of reconcile those differences?

Answer: Mike Jewison

So, I think I've said before it is always all available sources. Now, of course, they are one of the primary sources that we would look at because they do a complete estimate of production for all

of Brazil. You can have various ones from other countries, but those are just for those individual states. So the reason why and always the history has been that we viewed them as being the best, relative, for all of Brazil. Of course, you understand that when reconciling, more for beans than for corn, the prior year's crop with the data, the usage in particular sometimes it doesn't fit together or work. By that point most people that are in the market, if you are trading and looking at it, it is not really something that a lot of people pay attention to for having to make adjustments to back the crops. Some do, but many do not. So that is our prior, if you think about it, so knowing the track record and knowing where we've been over time relative to them, this is probably again more of a bean thing than a corn thing. It certainly informs how we would judge where we want to be and how we are forecasting going forward. Does that make sense? There is always an element what we do. There will always be an element of subjectivity in what we do relative to say NASS.

Question: Haili Zhao

When will the Food Availability Per capita be updated? Last update was April 14, 2023.

Answer: Molly Burress

If we do have an upcoming date that is scheduled, that will be available on the product page even if it's not available on the calendar. I did check and Food Availability doesn't have any release date right now. But, the author information is there. If you look at our [data product quality page](#), that review is posted because we recently reviewed that product and they noted that they're working on improved machine readability, documentation and new file formats for that.

Question: Ted Seifried

Going back to the Brazilian production number and in particular more soybeans. For the fact that you have had to go back and raise previous years in retrospect does it mean that in your minds you should have had a higher beginning number for this year coming in? Is that sort of explaining the reluctance to lower it any further than it has been?

Answer: Joanna Hitchner

Yes we should have had a higher starting point. After realizing that the back year was 162 we would not have started at 163. You sort of reevaluate and there must have been more area or a higher yield so coming into the out year we had to think about what is the offshoot from the back year when thinking about the declines in yield and certain parts of the country and where area has expanded.

Question: Juan Quintero

Does RMA web page have an API to retrieve data?

Answer: Xuan Pham

No we currently do not have an API.

Answer: Post meeting follow-up from Xuan Pham

RMA has a plethora of Federal crop insurance business and associated cause of loss data files available. Here is the link: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/Information-Tools/Summary-of-Business>

Question: Kathy Myers

Is it possible to get more granular data summarized in the quarterly Grain Stocks reports?

Answer: Troy Joshua

More granular data. Wow, at this particular time having this information at the national and state level, I think, is actually very good. So unfortunately we would not be able to provide this information at a more granular level.

Question: Willis Kidd

The program crop that we talk about the least at these things is probably cotton and it is getting to be where late in the season one of the most volatile is the residual in recent years. I was wondering if there are thoughts about how we can track exports and baled and the domestic usage is very well tracked and yet there is a large residual and if there is effort under way to try and reduce this residual component?

Answer: Mark Jekanowski

Good question and that will be one the first tasks for the new cotton chair. Unfortunately, we don't have a cotton chair here to answer that. I know they've struggled with tracking exports which is complicated because of differences in the export sales versus census trade data. For a product that is pretty basic you'd think you should be able to count every bale, but there is still a lot of uncertainty and judgment in the balance sheet. And unfortunately, I don't have our cotton expert online to address that directly. But like I said, we'll have a new cotton chair hired soon, hopefully within the next couple of months, and that is something that he or she can dig into.

Question: Mark Richards

It seems that everyone is working on data modernization, but there also seem to be concerns about data availability and budget. Are the data modernization efforts also currently constrained by budget? I'm trying to think about what kinds of timelines to expect these modernization efforts to be on. And if these modernizations may lower the cost of data production.

Answer: Patrick Packnett

Yes, budgets and reduced appropriations are affecting everyone, including FAS. In terms of data modernization, we are modernizing the export sales reporting system and that is not the type of modernization that I think most people are referring to here, but yes, it is modernizing a system to make it more efficient for the exporters and for our staff internally. We have APIs that we've had for years, they are there and available and we'll keep those maintained. We've got, our PS &D and GATS systems that have been around for a long time and they need modernization, but

we don't have the resources to attempt those right now. In terms of efforts to do visualizations and things like that, we're just trying to do what we can with the existing staff. But we don't have resources to take on major modernization efforts at this time.

Answer: Mark Jekanowski

For the World Board keep in mind, like I said in my introduction, we really only produce one set of data and that is what goes into the WASDE. We put that information online and make it as accessible as possible and we rely on coordinating agencies such as FAS to put out the PS&D as part of ICEC process and we rely on ERS to put out the detailed feed grain and other databases. And beyond just putting out the WASDE there is not a lot more that we are trying to do in terms of data modernization We rely on our sister agencies and coordinating agencies to handle that advanced data delivery aspect.

Answer: Troy Joshua

The budget has basically slowed and even stopped some of your modernization projects. NASS started collecting our data online probably about 15 or so years ago. That is 15 or so years ago we should continue modernizing our processes. So we have farmers who would love for us to provide their information online. We also have farmers that would love to provide us information still if we are mailing out the questionnaire. So we have to meet our respondents where they are. So we have to continue defining ways and opportunities for us to provide us information in the best way for them to provide us information. So we need to continue modernizing but because of our budget situation we have been slowed down because of it. Not only that, but let's think about how we are analyzing our data. How we can bringing it into the 21st century and how to analyze and process it more efficiently. Then we need to think about how at the disseminate the information and how we are providing that number of acres of corn, we want to make sure that whatever the data point is, we want to place it in a situation that it just comes offer of the page. Where people can relate to that information. So has it basically impacted us, yes because we have slowed and basically stopped some of the processes because of the budget constraints. We want to make sure that we continue to provide relevant data and that is key for all of us. We want to provide the relevant data so we are not in the situation where we're talking about more commodities that we have to cut because of the budget constraints. But in answer to the question is yes. And it is impacting throughout the entire process for NASS.

Answer: Kelly Maguire

For ERS, just to give you a sense of perspective, our FY24 budget appropriations was reduced by \$2 million this year, and you heard mentioned earlier there was a salary increase. Together this reduced the ERS budget by 5%. We continue to look at our data products that we put out and how to modernize them. We have made investments over the last couple of years and we are about to roll them out understanding what we learned and how we can scale those efforts agency wide. That will take resources, but we hope that we will gain some efficiencies and staff time with the modernization. Things that take several days may perhaps be produced in a few

hours and then you can save time to allocate to other spaces. We are also evaluating and making sure that we have the right expertise on staff to do these things. We have a lot of subject matter experts and we are looking at making sure as we are evaluating the pilot projects that we have the right expertise on staff to take it to an enterprise level.

Answer: Joe DeCampo

Unfortunately, I'm not actually a part of the staff that would handle the dissemination on these parts of advances. But we have the API and we have added an advance report that provide an estimation about a week or two before the actual report is published. And we recently put out the advance economic indicator report. It is kind of a visualization and a way to put information about international trades, wholesale and retail sales in 1 place so that you can see how the pieces fit together.

Answer: Tim Gravlin

We are constrained by budget on the data modernization, and we are increasing our efficiencies and I think what you saw in our presentation today that we are hosting these visualizations online in a way that you can get to them publicly. Any of those visualizations that we looked at today whether it is dairy margin coverage program or emergency relief program or any of the dashboards, if you look toward the bottom, there is a down arrow you can download that data that makes up that dashboard. So that is one the way that is we are able to deliver data in the new technologies. That may be helpful for you to consume that data. That is what we are looking to do across the board as we launch new programs is to provide more data and this is afforded to us through the data modernization efforts so that you can get to the data easier.

Answer: Michael Sheats

We can commiserate with the panelists. Fiscal, budget constraints. We were fortunate enough to have some visionaries in AMS and a few years ago we started to invest in a standardized data collection and retention and that was the front end and thankfully that is nearing completion with the remaining commodities to follow soon. Once that is completed the step into the data visualization and the other means of sending out the data that is not the amount of money and funding that is needed for that is not as much for us. Thankfully we have some good capable people in house with good expertise that have a curiosity and affinity for these things and they have taken to designing a lot of our data visualizations. And they built the cattle contract library and they did it within a month of getting the directive from congress. And nine months in that point until it went out and they are developing additional data visualizations. AMS has the benefit of having good inhouse expertise and I don't know that we could do that depending on outside contracting. So we put our money in the data engine and we are use our inhouse expertise to move forward with the data visualization. The hardest part is largely behind us.

Question: Dale Durcholz

I'm curious in regard to Brazil and I don't want to run this into ground, but this goes back to something that I remember that was told to me a lot of years ago about a firm that was bought,

land worth and they were coming up with acreage data that was really very good for the US. Are you using any remote sensing data just to look at area of crop down in Brazil?

Answer: Mike Jewison

We're certainly using it as a part of the monthly process as you are probably aware. But in terms of specifically at a more microlevel, no. At least as far as area goes. Certainly as a part of the yield component in that analysis it goes into it, but in terms of an aggregate area for a state.

Follow-up: Dale Durchholz

I just remember and this goes back probably 10 or 15 years ago and they were questionable on yield but their area numbers were very spot on for the US. Really very, very good. When you are looking at this dilemma the thing that has always puzzled me is we look at Brazil back through the 1970s and we have production data for Russia, it was always how many metric tons nobody bothered to look at area and yield and separate them and here we are today looking at Brazil and even Argentina we are looking at the production number not down at area and yield or not emphasizing it enough. I think you have to really separate those two components to come up with a good accurate product and that may be one thing that is done. Just a question.

Question: Dale Durchholz

I have really gotten interested in the last year looking at the renewable diesel industry and trying to understand it. Sorry folks, I think it is somewhat is that. The one thing that I find that is really lacking everywhere is any attention, any focus on projecting available feed stocks. Everybody looks at where we are at today and the potential demand come interest the RFS or RBOs and do we have the feed stocks to even meet that? To meet the number I think for renewable diesel by 2030 we needed to add like 7 and a half million acres of soybeans. We don't have the acres, so where do we get that and why are people not really putting an emphasis on really forecasting the feed stocks. I'm going on just a few years. I did notice that down in the university of Missouri put out a set of numbers and they looked at a bit of feed stock component for renewable diesel. Do we need to put more effort to make people understand what is going on in that industry? We have not even touched on SAF?

Answer: Joanna Hitchner

That is a great question and something that we are always trying to get our hands around is the total feedstock pie, whether it is in the United States or outside of the United States. Within the United States we can have a pretty good handle of the supply of veg oils and outside of the United States like in Canada we can have a pretty good idea of canola supply. When it comes to imported feed stocks like tallow and imported feed stocks from other countries we don't have as good of a grasp on that. There are other organizations doing studies to find out how much of these oils are used outside of the United States. One thing that we tried to track is the trade of it and how much has diverted to the United States and how much more of it can be diverted to the United States. In terms of projecting in particular soybean oil for biofuel, we have forecasts for biofuel production in the United States that is tethered to policy as well as the change from the

blenders credit to the producers' credit, which will have less of an incentive to use veg oil feedstocks as opposed to cooking oils and tallow. So having a handle on that is important to know. It is something that certainly we will have to look into more. A lot of other analysts outside of USDA have been surprised about how much has come whether it is tallow or used cooking oil into the United States.

Question: Jerry Gidel

Just a quick follow-up just to understand, I understand how soybean oil and cooking oil can easily move into an energy source and I look at tall low and yellow greases and things of that nature. That is where this supposed conflict is outside from China and other places. How is it suspended? To me, one is solid and one is liquid and maybe nobody here knows exactly how it will be suspended. You have to make sure that what you are putting into the engines now is exactly what they need. You don't want to mess with that. I know the world has a lot of extra greases from Asia and everywhere else but I don't know how much extra we have in the US.

Answer: Joanna Hitchner

One thing that I would like to say is lot of these facilities have pretreatment facilities built on to them. So they are treating the feedstock that is coming in to make sure that they can come into the facilities and not hurt the process. A lot of the facilities will start off with veg oils just to get the process moving and then they'll work in more of those lower CI feed stocks in the process later on as they use the pretreatment facilities.

Question: Tanner Beymer

Regarding the cancelled July Cattle report, has the process for collecting and aggregating that data not already started? It seems the work to prepare that report would already be underway. If so, can that really represent a significant cost savings for the Service?

Answer: Troy Joshua

That process has not already started and that is why we discontinued that survey. If it already would have started it would have been continued. Just like many of the other surveys it has not started which gave us the opportunity to actually discontinue that July cattle report.

Question: Bevan Everett

Recently there was a report put out that 4 million acres went into some sort of program funded by the Inflation Reduction Act. Like a majority of those acres and I think it was carbon related or what not. At the same time we've seen like with the March acreage report and it seemed like it was a CRP carbon related item. Has this affected the principle acres for this year, this new program or do you have an opinion on kind of why we saw a loss of principle acres? Because we had like 90 million foreign acres and I know profitability was not great for corn this year. Wondering if the investment in other programs have been siphoning off principle acres?

Answer: Nick Streff

For other programs, they could be. NASS wouldn't know that part. We are talking to the producers how much corn and soybeans you will plant. We're not asking a separate piece of your other acres and what they are doing? Our acres have varied and prior to 2018 or 2017 they were pretty static and over the last years if you think of the weather events that we've had they have jumped around a lot more. From March to final, the acres they go down for weather events, but they rarely go up a lot. That is what history is telling us.

Follow-up: Bevan Everett

It seems like you have 12 million swings from time to time. I think we peaked at 2012 is what you could call the acre pool. Seemed like we had the most acres at that time and then it is 35 million less 12 years later. It seemed like we have a lot of volatility.

Answer: Tim Gravlin

I think that is a fair question, and I don't have a direct answer for you. I don't have any data to support it one way or the other at this time.

Answer: Troy Joshua

I will say 2012, we had a major drought situation at that time. Because I remember the 2012 census of agriculture and the prices that resulted as a result of that. We did have a severe drought in 2012.

Question: Jacqueline Holland

Are there any plans for USDA-ERS to re-establish publishing fertilizer production, supply, and usage data similar to the Fertilizer Use and Price report last updated in Oct. 2019?

Answer: Molly Burress

We did a recent review of that product. So, if you go to the ERS [data quality page](#) you can see the review posted online there. The authors are going back and they are updating the documentation to make sure the users can actually use the data that we put out. And they are updating it for machine readability and accessibility. I don't see a date listed on that page either. But when they have a secure date that they know that they can meet, the dates are then posted on-line. You can also reach out to Roberto Mosheim to see if he has more information.

Question: Amy Smith

Any thoughts about capturing pricing related to prop 12 or question 3 pork cuts. It's currently imbedded in a weekly specialty report and not clear if it's prop 12 related or organic or any other niche pork item. We have cage free egg pricing, will pork evolve as well?

Answer: Michael Sheats

We are tracking prop 12 pork data through the livestock mandatory reporting system and we are tracking that and the packers are identifying that product. The problem at this point is that we have not reached the gravity to support that. For now, while we are reviewing at what point we can break that out, that is an internal discussion going on and we are tracking the data in the interim. We've made that data available within the department for the office of chief economist and some other purposes for studying that potential impact in the marketplace. So not yet there, but we're working on it. One of our concerns is to the extent that animal confinement legislation becomes the rule of the day. There have been other things on some of those reports that they were new, they were different and then they eventually just became commonplace and breaking them out made no more sense. We're certainly looking at it.

Question: Ashley Hembrough

Will CroplandCROS be updated?

Answer: Post-meeting follow-up from Lance Honig

CroplandCROS will continue to be updated each year.

Question: Michaela White

Is there still a plan to add a fertilizer economist to USDA staff to improve the availability of information relating to fertilizer price and usage data?

Answer: Kelly Maguire

We do have subject matter experts on staff. I'm not aware of plans to expand beyond our current expertise unless the person asking the question is aware of something I'm not aware of. But we do currently at ERS have subject matter experts in the fertilizer space.

Question: Austin Schroeder

The Cold Storage report has several of the meat stocks broken down by region. However, pork is not one of them, at least that I can find. Is there any way to find that data?

Answer: Travis Averill

Unfortunately, due to disclosure and confidentiality we are unable to publish it at this level so you just have a US component.

Question: Jerry Gidel

Where do you sense and how do you feel about the agency right now and how you are producing the things that you want to produce after this upheaval over the last five or 6 years?

Answer: Kelly Maguire

ERS is in a great space right now. I would say in terms of productivity metrics, we have rebounded, and we are producing at or above where we were in pre-relocation which was 2019. For those of you that may not recall, in terms of the staffing numbers, we are about at 285 full time equivalent staff which is a little lower than where we were just prior to the relocation. We have the headquarters facilities in downtown Kansas City. The footprint is a little smaller than anticipated because of the pandemic and the implementation of remote duty stations. We have staff in about 30 states. We are more of a distributed workforce which has benefits and challenges for sure. The agency is in a really good space from my vantage point.

Question: Peyton Ferrier

Declining response rates for the Ag Census have been a concern for several years. Is this still a concern and has the 10-year U.S. Census seen similar concerns with response rates?

Answer: Joe DeCampo

I'm not sure.

Answer: Troy Joshua

It is a concern. Because we have seen a decrease in the response rates and that is an environment that we would love to have more data. Especially publishing at the county level. So, we're putting some processes in place to try and increase our response rate throughout the US. So that's why we are trying to be progressive instead of reacting to the situation. So, it is a concern, but we are trying to change it.

Question: Mark Feight

Is there a breakout for crop acreage used for cover crops?

Answer: Nick Streff

There is not a NASS official estimate on cover crop acres. USDA FSA does publish planted acres that notes use such as cover crops. The data can be found on the FSA website.

Answer: Lance Honig

I suspect that the question ties in with, obviously we report acres by crop, but not whether it is planted for the purposes of a cover crop or other uses. That is what Nick was saying we don't identify the planted acres by what they are for.

Answer: Tim Gravlin

I would encourage the person that asked that question go to a Google browser and type USDA FSA Crop Acreage Reports and the last was in August, and the next one will come up in July and into August. And it breaks it down by crop type and intended use. So, there is a crop, cover crop, there is cereals and other grasses, and it depends on what they meant by that question and

what exactly they are getting at. I do think if they are asking in terms of FSA, that is at the county level, and it does have cover crops and intended uses and that may be what they are looking for.

Link: <https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/ag-hub/ag-topics/crop-production/tools/arc-plc-payment-calculator>

Answer: Kelly Maguire

Today's [Chart of Note is on cover crops](#) across the United States. It will point you to the research that we've recently done on cover crop trends and that may help the person who is asking just dig down a little bit on the information. I was able to pull it up on my app while I was sitting here.

Question: Rob Murphy

On the weekly "Actual Slaughter Under Federal Inspection" report, hog carcass weights are reported as whole numbers. Would it be possible to report those to one decimal place? The increased granularity would be very helpful to users.

Answer: Michael Sheats

All things are possible, and we get that information from our partners over at NASS and we can work with NASS to see whether or not that is even possible to provide that. And if that is, we can look at adding that to the report. It shouldn't require too much major modification should we be able to do it, we will certainly look at it.

Question: Bill Lapp

Which agency, NASS or EIA, is going to step up and be a statistical hero by starting to collect soy oil stocks at biodiesel/renewable diesel plants?

Answer: Julie Harris

We are aware that there is interest and I know you guys have heard my explanation about forms clearance. 2026 is the next opportunity to make changes to the survey form. And if anyone is interested in said changes, if they email EIAinfopetroleum@EIA.gov, we will get it on the record that there is interest from industry that will help bolster our argument.

Question: Mark Feight

What does it mean to not have county field crop data. Will county data be available for crop insurance products?

Answer: Xuan Pham

Our crop insurance programs use crop insurance data-- not NASS data-- for crop insurance program. We get that question a lot, and we just want to make people aware your crop insurance products are fine. We have the data to be able to continue operating the Federal Crop Insurance Program.

Question: Lane Akre

Are there concerns over data quality over crop production as NASS eliminates county data? Will that lead to additional, large revisions in production estimates in the future?

Answer: Lance Honig

The additional data was not feeding into the state and national numbers. So, the answer would be no. There are no concerns over data quality there.

Question: Michael Harris

Will NASS Leadership, FSA, ERS, Rural Development etc. help share the "good news" of USDA Equity Report Implementation during our new National Juneteenth Holiday both in Washington DC and at our California State Capitol on Juneteenth, June 19, 2024?

Answer: Kelly Maguire

I assume they are referring to the Equity Commission Report. We're really proud of that report and taking the recommendations seriously. But I don't have specific information on ERS participating in those events.

Question: Brian Carroll

Are there any circumstances in which a grain that was required to be inspected before export, soybeans, corn, wheat, would not be inspected if loading on to a seagoing vessel or even a train for that matter? So here is why I ask. One of the things that I have occasionally found over the course of time. Is that grain inspections will be less than the amount reported by US census for export. And you know, sometimes that noise comes from Mexico and Canada, but other times it comes from other trading partners. Let's say for example, US soybeans being shipped out of the US Gulf to China, for example. And I'm trying to think if there is a circumstance in which a cargo of soybeans being shipped to China would not be federally inspected under FGIS? Is there any reason to think that grain inspections would be under stated?

Answer: Joe DeCampo

So, they could board a train and go to Canada and then go on the train so if it was crossing the US border it wouldn't be inspected.

Clarification: Brian Carroll

And it would be counted as an export to China?

Answer: Joe DeCampo

Should be.

Question: Daniel O'Brien

Were the data product cuts announced by USDA NASS brought before public groups for review or before congressional representatives' review, advisement, and consent before being decided

upon by NASS administrators? If not, then these decisions violate the responsibility of NASS to be publicly accountable for its work in serving the public. This move has provoked a strong negative response from U.S. agriculture constituents whom NASS is tasked with serving.

Answer: Troy Joshua

When we made a decision within NASS to make modifications to the programs, discontinuing those items that we have already listed. We shared that information basically with the public at that time. So, we didn't have a conversation with congress. Okay? So that was internally within NASS. So, we were looking at our budget and we were making those difficult decisions and what we can basically make modifications to. And what data points also support those projects as well. Sometimes we have conversations with why didn't you cut something else? Some of those things are basically only one data point. When we made those decisions, it was internal within NASS.

Answer: Lance Honig

Just a couple of points that I will tag on to that. We try to keep in constant communication with various industries across agriculture and we try to use forums like this to try to gain understanding as to what is important, while we are here together, I think this is a good opportunity for us to remind you to help keep us informed on an ongoing basis about what is important. What you need, what you are relying on how you use things of that nature and we do try and keep those communications alive. When it comes down to the final decisions that have to be made. Trying to do that in an "open forum" type setting in my opinion would probably be a disaster for a couple of reasons. One, I think somebody described it as basically the hunger games approach. Right? Because we could take a room like this, and somebody is going to say don't you cut this and somebody else will say don't you cut that. You will be competing and that is not a good scenario and maybe even more important than that, is so many of these reports and data series are highly market sensitive and if we had a discussion in an open forum about what we possibly might be cutting I think that might be market mayhem and I don't think that is us representing folks in a good way causing market volatility because at that point it would be very much like rumors. Big picture, we try to keep people engaged and try to know what is important, but when it comes to decision time we have to isolate and make sure we insulate from what is happening outside at the time.

Answer: Troy Joshua

Like I mentioned before, my staff and I as well as with Lance, we sit down with the industry and they share with us what information that they value. On a regular basis. So that communication is really what we need. Because people constantly ask us, you know, who uses your data? And the value of your data. Sometimes we don't know exactly who uses the information, we provide that information to the public at the same time. At 12:00 not 12:05 or 12:10. So at 12:00 we provide that information to everybody. That is what we are trying to do because at the end we want to make sure that we are listening to the data users so that we can remain relevant and I understand I've had many of these conversations and I understand this situation.

Question: Ted Seifried

Just out of curiosity, how much money can we save by getting rid of the December WASDE report?

Answer: Mark Jekanowski

None would be saved because people are still going to get paid and we are here to do the work. So we can't fire everybody just for December and then hire them back in January.

Question: Marvin Martin

I don't think Congress has put to bed the Farm Bill just yet. And I don't know whether there is anything that we, as constituents of our congressional delegations, might comment to them. I know that is different from appropriations, but is there anything in the dream world that would help if we still had an opportunity to add to the Farm Bill?

Answer: Troy Joshua

We appreciate the support.

Question: Julie Ingwersen

I had a follow-up about the cuts of the cattle report. You said you were communicating with the industry, but I feel like the announcement was sort of a big surprise to the industry. And I have had wondering if you could go into that.

Answer: Troy Joshua

We have conversations with them and what they value. That is prior to even this conversation. So, we are always engaging. They come in and visit us. So, we did not have a conversation with the industry basically informing them prior to our announcement that we were discontinuing the July cattle report or any of the other programs.

Answer: Lance Honig

Just a general comment that effectively we try to maintain relationships with the industries I think is all we were trying to communicate.

Question: Rudy Arredondo

How does USDA plan to reach out to ethnic communities since 70 percent of Hispanic operated farms, 66 percent of American Indian or Alaska Native-owned farms and 62 percent of Black-owned farms have internet access?

Answer: Troy Joshua

We reach out to the community-based organizations, and we have conversations as well as meeting with the individuals. We gather those individuals together to talk about supporting our programs. Encouraging their constituents and stake holders to respond to our surveys, after that

we are going to have a virtual community-based organization meeting sharing the results of how they can leverage this rich data set like I mentioned before we have over 6 million data points in that publication. How can they leverage that? How can they utilize it to benefit and reach their stakeholders? That is what we are planning on doing. Not only that we realize this is a partnership. This is a relationship. So, we don't reach out to just those individuals during that particular time. We want to make sure that they know that they have a partner throughout the year not just when we are collecting data. Because of our relationship that we have, and we have our partners in those state offices reaching out to them and making sure that they are going out to their meetings. Attending a meeting with them on a regular basis. We want to make sure that this relationship that we have as a part within NASS that it is something that we value, and we want to make sure that we continue it because it is something that we want to collect and capture it correctly not just in the census of agriculture, but all of our surveys. That is what we do, we have this relationship that is continuous on a continuous basis.

Written Question & Answer Summary

Question: Ken Eriksen

Despite losing the county crops and livestock data, did you say that county data will be available and released with the Census of Agriculture?

Answer: Bryan Combs

County level data from the 2022 Census of Agriculture was released on February 13, 2024. Data is available through [Quick Stats](#) or the NASS Census of Agriculture [website](#). Data will also be available at the county level in future Censuses of Agriculture.

Question: Natalie Houston

Will the county estimates of livestock in 2024 not be published? or not be estimated?

Answer: Travis Averill

NASS will publish livestock and poultry county estimates in 2024 as the data is for 2023 production.

Question: Yuanlong Wang

For the discontinued NASS county level estimates for small grain and row crop, is this just for crop year 2024 or it will be discontinued for the foreseeable future?

Answer: Nick Streff

Small grain a row crop county estimates are cancelled for the 2024 production year. As mentioned in the meeting, this decision could be reevaluated for the 2025 crop if budget allows.

Question: Bill Nelson

Please elaborate more on the decision to eliminate county crop estimates next year. Was there any attempt to reach out to users to determine their needs? We have been making use of the annual county crops data since the 1980s. From our perspective, this will be a major loss.

Answer: Nick Streff

NASS realizes that crop county estimates are utilized by many groups. However, NASS received our budget in March and some tough choices had to be made. As Lance noted in the meeting. NASS did not talk with industry before making these decisions as it would have been chaotic. The feedback received at the meeting will be used for future decisions.

Question: Joe Zhu

Could you explain the decision to reduce the frequency of cattle reports as a budget-saving measure? What specific financial constraints prompted this change?

Answer: Lance Honig

In March 2024 NASS received its appropriated level of funding for FY 2024 (Oct 23 – Sep 24). The reduced level combined with increasing operating costs & mandated pay increases resulted in a significant shortfall. With a significant portion of the fiscal year already complete, and a number of major remaining projects already underway, NASS had limited options for cost avoidance needed to meet budgetary levels.

Question: Krista Swanson

The April 9 announcement related to the discontinuation of some NASS data collection and reports used the wording "county estimates" - does this mean that final county numbers will continue to be published and just estimates will be discontinued? Or does this mean all county level data for crops and livestock will no longer be available?

Answer: Nick Streff

All county estimate data for crops and livestock will no longer be published beginning with the 2024 production year. As the question noted, county estimate data will no longer be available.

Question: Karl Skold

Please continue the July cattle report and the county-level data. The cattle sector is faced with many challenges and the NASS data is useful to understand the industry.

Answer: Lance Honig

NASS certainly recognizes how important these reports are to many individuals across the various agricultural sectors. Our preference would be to continue to publish these, and all other reports but we had to make some hard decisions to ensure that we stay within our appropriated budget for fiscal year 2024. Your input is noted and will be considered as we evaluate our programs moving forward.

Question: Ed Maltby

What timeline can you provide for the expansion of organic dairy information to make it comparable to conventional data on a monthly or 6-month basis?

Answer: AMS Dairy Program

Dairy Market News is working toward increasing organic reporting options through various resources, such as farmers markets and agreements with extension services and state departments of agriculture. We cannot provide a timeline as there are many factors that go into publication, such as confidentiality.

Question: Alice Roach

Is an API available for all price data reported by USDA AMS? We're pulling specialty crop prices from the Market News Data Download and Custom Average Pricing tool. I'm trying to determine whether an API is available to keep the data we download from these services current.

Answer: Michael Sheats

As commodity market reports are added to our Market Analysis and Reporting System (MARS), the data they contain will be made available through API's. Much of our specialty crop data is currently being added to MARS with a target date for completion of the end of this year. As that occurs, the data will become available in API's. Stay tuned.

Question: Collin Watters

NASS county level data have been critical to lifecycle analyses and modeling, particularly in certain soil carbon estimates. As carbon intensity becomes more important in farming and food/ag processing, we will need more granular data like this. Has NASS fully considered the far-reaching implications of discontinuing county level estimates?

Answer: Nick Streff

The feedback received today has been very helpful in showing the importance of these data sets.

Question: Arvinder Pannu

What are traps that governments need to stay wary of when creating policies and frameworks around Data? Are there any lessons from other sectors?

Answer: Lance Honig

Managing data has become a very complex process with many factors to consider – including security, access, definition, etc. At USDA we have a data governance body to help ensure that all necessary factors are considered and handled appropriately.

Question: Tyler Cozzens

Comment and Suggestion: The Livestock Marketing Information Center (LMIC) would like to thank USDA and its respective agencies for the invaluable work they do for the U.S. agricultural industry. The latest announcement from USDA NASS to cancel or limit reports is disappointing. Moving forward, LMIC would strongly encourage USDA NASS to consider a more strategic, targeted, and productive approach to the five-year program review. This review process would better proactively involve industry professionals to examine which USDA products are most valuable to the U.S. agricultural industry as a whole and ensure a better outcome for all.

Answer: Lance Honig

NASS certainly recognizes how important these reports are to many individuals across the various agricultural sectors. Our preference would be to continue to publish these, and all other

reports but we had to make some hard decisions to ensure that we stay within our appropriated budget for fiscal year 2024. Your input is noted and will be considered as we evaluate our programs moving forward.

Question: David Miller

Has NASS published a "prospective list" of which states will be covered in the various livestock reports for which covered states are being reduced.

Answer: Travis Averill

NASS released an ASB Notice on April 4, 2024, with the website provide the details of the program changes. Here is the link with the details by survey. [Statistical Program Review and Changes - Understanding Agricultural Statistics - Education and Outreach | USDA/NASS](#)

Question: Marcos Araujo

About the Inflation Reduction Act Data: How do the areas of major crops, such as corn and soybeans, area affected by Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)?

Meaning: the change in area contracted of those programs comes from areas originally of major crops or not?

Answer: Tim Gravlin

I think that is a fair question, the programs you mentioned are NRCS programs I don't have any data to support it one way or the other at this time.

Question: Jennifer Boyer

Is there going to be a new NRI Summary Report released again?

The last one was released in 2020 with 2017 data, and the LUCID program online only shows through then as well. Was this study terminated, or is the data available elsewhere within the USDA?

Answer: Patrick Flanagan, NRCS

The only NRI data currently available comes from the 2017 database. The next database release will be the 2022 NRI scheduled to be released by September 2025. Currently, the NRI produces formal releases once every five years. The Summary report is released with each formal NRI database release.

Question: Emily Featherston

Re: Modernization — what steps are being taken to ensure data integrity (preventing loss, duplication, etc.) especially when data is being migrated across systems or where multiple sources are being combined? Are any established federal data standards being used or mirrored?

Answer: Lance Honig

NASS is taking extreme care to ensure that data migrated from existing to new platforms is verified as both present and accurately identified in the new structure. Although development is currently on hold due to budget constraints, once restarted new public facing data access systems will run in parallel with the existing systems for a significant amount of time to ensure a seamless transition for data users.

Question: Paul Marchand

Speaking of decimals, why does the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs report also publish annual percent changes to the whole number? It's easy enough to construct, but it's misleading for the headlines to read 'category x is 1% higher or lower than year ago' when the actual construction may reveal the change is 0.6 which is closer to 0.5 than the full 1%.

Answer: Travis Averill

Paper copy reports for Hogs and Pigs percentages have been programmed to be published as a whole number. NASS Quick Stats does not provide the percent changes.

Question: Marc Rosenbohm

How much did discontinuing the County estimates save? Said another way, what is the cost of the County estimates alone?

Answer: Lance Honig

The total annual cost for the NASS county estimates program is approximately \$7 million.