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NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

United States Department of Agriculture • Washington, DC 20250

Ag Statistics Hotline: (800) 727-9540 • www.nass.usda.gov



Contact: Rick Mueller, 703-877-8000x111, or Alex Minchenkov, 202-690-8121

USDA Delivers Satellite-based Vegetative Crop Condition Information Service

WASHINGTON, March 6, 2013 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) announces the launch of a new state-of-the-art, satellite-based U.S. crop condition vegetation assessment and monitoring service named *VegScape*

<http://nassgeodata.gmu.edu/VegScape/>. Like the popular *CropScape* geospatial product, *VegScape* delivers interactive vegetation indices so that web users can explore, visualize, query, and disseminate current vegetative cover maps and data without the need for specialized expertise, software, or high end computers.

The agricultural community, policy makers, researchers and other interested parties now have a tool for policy decisions, scientific inquiry, and educational efforts. New satellite-based data are loaded on a weekly basis during the growing season. One can compare year-to-year change for 12 years, compare conditions at a given time to mean, median and ratio vegetative cover over the 12 year span, and can overlay a crop mask to help identify crop land versus non-crop land, among many functions. When viewing the maps in most cases the deeper the green color the stronger the plant vigor while yellow/brown indicates poorer conditions.

Vegetation indices, such as the NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index), and mean, median, and ratio comparisons to prior years have proven useful for assessing crop condition and identifying the land area impacted by floods, drought, major weather anomalies, and vulnerabilities of early/late season crops. Additionally, the National Aeronautics Space Administration's MODIS satellite that NASS uses for this project provides imaging at 250 meter (15 acres) per pixel resolution and 12 years of data history. The high quality spatial information and daily satellite overpasses deliver detailed timely crop specific condition information. Additionally, the data can be directly exported to Google Earth for mashups or delivered to other applications via web services.

In addition to the new *VegScape* product, NASS released the 2012 Cropland Data Layer (CDL) on January 31, 2013 via NASS' *CropScape* geospatial portal <http://nassgeodata.gmu.edu/CropScape>. The newly released 2012 CDL product depicts agricultural land cover over the continental United States at 30 meters resolution.

Both *CropScape* and *VegScape* support the ethos of data democracy by providing free and open access to digital geospatial data layers using open geospatial standards, thereby supporting transparent and collaborative government initiatives. NASS developed both services in cooperation with the Center for Spatial Information Science and Systems, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA. The research and development of *VegScape* and *CropScape* and the NASS partnership with George Mason University reflect NASS' commitment to improve U.S. agricultural production, sustainability, and food security. This successful collaboration results in web applications that benefit the needs of the U.S. agricultural industry, society, and the economy.

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