



NEWS RELEASE



NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
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NASS Research, Survey, and Technology Advancements in 2017 Serve U.S. Agriculture *Census of Agriculture is Updated for New Agricultural Trends and Ease of Responding*

WASHINGTON – Dec. 21, 2017 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) has advanced a number of programs in 2017 to serve U.S. agriculture with customer- and data-driven improvements. Among these enhancements are changes to the every-five-year census of agriculture, which officially launched at the end of November and is due in February 2018. For this census, NASS introduced an improved online questionnaire and included new questions to document changes and emerging trends in agriculture.

“America’s 3 million farmers, ranchers and others involved in agriculture should receive their 2017 Census of Agriculture questionnaire in the coming days, if they haven’t already,” said NASS Administrator Hubert Hamer. “We ask that everyone respond promptly to represent themselves, their communities, and their industries, and to do so online, if possible. NASS heard customer feedback and worked hard to produce a user-friendly online questionnaire that saves time for producers and improves data quality.”

Those responding to the census of agriculture can now use mobile and desktop devices and readily access frequently asked questions. The form automatically calculates totals and skips sections that do not pertain to an operation. New census questions are a result of public requests. These include a new question about military veteran status, expanded questions about food marketing practices, and questions about on-farm decision-making to help better capture the roles and contributions of beginning farmers, women farmers, and others involved in running a farm enterprise. Responses are due in February 2018.

The census of agriculture is a complete count of all U.S. farms, ranches, and those who operate them. Conducted since 1840, it is the only source of uniform, comprehensive, and impartial agriculture data for every state and county in the country. Farmers and ranchers, trade associations, government, extension educators, researchers, and many others rely on census of agriculture data when making decisions that shape American agriculture – from creating and funding farm programs to boosting services for communities and the industry. The census of agriculture is a producer's voice, future, and opportunity.

Geospatial Data for Rapid Disaster Response

Another 2017 accomplishment for NASS in service to U.S. agriculture was rapid disaster response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. For the first time, NASS used a satellite with cloud penetrating capability from the European Space Agency to provide geospatial assessments of impacted areas. This allowed the capture of real-time storm inundation over crop and pasture lands and the subsequent flood assessments. As a result, NASS was able to derive and provide a number of geospatial decision support products to help with response. These products included crop and pasture land inundated areas and percentages of impacted crops, estimates of precipitation totals, Cropland Data Layer (CDL) maps, and wind swaths or surface winds overlaid onto crop

areas identified from the CDL product. Access to and use of the satellite technology will allow NASS to provide rapid response to help with future extreme weather events.

New and Streamlined Honey Bee Information

NASS published new data on the economics of beekeeping in its annual Honey report in March 2017. New data included prices for queens, expenditures, and estimates on pollination and other incomes. Additionally, NASS has combined the annual Colony Loss and the Bee and Honey Small Operations Production, Disposition, and Income surveys into one survey to streamline data collection and reduce the burden on respondents. The name of the new survey is Bee and Honey Production and Loss Inquiry. Other honey bee surveys – the Bee and Honey Production, Disposition, and Income as well as the quarterly Colony Loss – remain the same.

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NASS is the federal statistical agency responsible for producing official data about U.S. agriculture and is committed to providing timely, accurate and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture

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