



NEWS RELEASE



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Census of Agriculture Data Collection Tops NASS 2018 Accomplishments, Provides Advancements in Technology and Enhanced Customer Service

WASHINGTON, DC – Dec. 21, 2018 – In completing the [Census of Agriculture](#) data collection that is required every five years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) implemented customer-focused improvements in 2018 and plans to release the new Census of Agriculture data in February 2019 with a session at USDA's Ag Outlook Forum in Arlington, VA immediately following release.

“Over the course of the past year, NASS conducted the single largest federal agricultural data collection program in the United States with an improved online questionnaire and asked new questions to document changes and emerging trends in American farming,” said NASS Administrator Hubert Hamer. “These efforts, along with the partnership of hundreds of farm organizations across the country and participation by hundreds of thousands of producers who completed the Census of Agriculture, provide public data to tell the changing story of agriculture since 1840.”

The improved online questionnaire factored into NASS receiving 445,000 responses online, a 57.2 percent increase from the 283,000 received in 2012. The [overall national response rate](#) from more than 3 million known and potential farms and ranches across the United States was 71.8 percent, down from the 74.5 percent in the 2012 Census of Agriculture.

The soon to be released Census of Agriculture results will include first-time information on military service, food marketing practices, and on-farm decision-making. These additions will help to better capture the roles and contributions of beginning farmers, women farmers, and others involved in running a farm enterprise. Those seeking Census of Agriculture data will find an improved website experience with a consistent look and feel across one NASS website. Website visitors will experience improved searching and responsive design, along with a new, pilot interactive data visualization.

In addition to the Census of Agriculture data collection, other NASS accomplishments include:

Development of an Improved Online Survey Questionnaire

Building on the success of the online Census of Agriculture questionnaire, NASS has applied the system to nearly 50 percent of its surveys with the remainder coming online as they are conducted. The [user-friendly questionnaire](#) is accessible on most devices, calculates totals automatically, and skips questions that do not apply to the operation. In addition to being more convenient for respondents, it makes data collection and analysis more efficient for USDA. In support of these efforts and in response to farmer feedback, NASS has begun testing e-mail and text messaging to provide survey results and alert producers to upcoming surveys.

NASS Data Visualization

NASS created a valuable [interactive data visualization](#) that makes finding and understanding commonly sought data points more accessible to data users. This innovation won the [Association of Public Data Users' best visualization in the federal government category](#). It is also informing a more comprehensive visualization currently under development for the 2017 Census of Agriculture data release.

Remote Sensing for Disaster Assessments

NASS used a satellite with cloud penetrating capability from the European Space Agency to provide geospatial assessments of areas impacted by Hurricane Florence. This allowed the capture of real-time storm inundation over crop and pasture lands and the subsequent flood assessments. [Geospatial decision support products](#) were derived and provided for rapid response to assess flooded areas and identify potential crop losses caused by the hurricane. Throughout 2018, NASS also collaborated with the U.S. Geological Survey, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the California Department of Water Resources, providing information for monthly geospatial decision products related to the ongoing California drought.

International Technical Assistance and Training

[As a recognized world leader in agricultural statistics](#), NASS provided technical assistance and training to improve agricultural statistics programs and access to data in Armenia, Georgia, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Tanzania. These partnerships allow U.S. analysts to better understand the world supply and demand situation. Improved analysis supports trade and more efficient marketing of U.S. agricultural products.

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USDA 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.