



United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service



California Farm News

Cooperating with the California Department of Food and Agriculture

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USDA TO PUBLISH COUNTY-LEVEL DATA ON LAND RENTAL RATES

SACRAMENTO, September 30, 2008 -- As directed by the new Farm Bill, USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will begin collecting and publishing county-level data regarding the cash rental rates producers pay for cropland and pastureland.

"The Farm Service Agency (FSA) and other USDA agencies rely on cash rent data to administer commodity, credit, conservation, disaster and loan programs," explained Vic Tolomeo, Director, USDA-NASS, California Field Office. "Up until 2008, NASS only published this information at the national and state levels. But now there is great interest in the county-level data, which will be of particular use in FSA's administration of the Conservation Reserve Program, thus allowing their programs to adequately reflect the prevailing rental rates in each community."

Tolomeo explained that the demand for county-level cash rent information will require a greatly expanded data collection effort on the part of NASS. "We will be reaching out to producers in several ways," he said. "Questions will be included in four of our regular surveys: the biannual Cattle Survey, the biannual Sheep and Goats Survey, the quarterly Crops/Stocks Survey, and the annual Acreage and Production Survey. We have mailed a separate cash rents survey to those producers not covered by one of these surveys."

NASS representatives will contact producers by phone or in person to collect cash rent data. Respondents also have the option of completing the survey online. Regardless of the reporting method, federal law (Title 7, U.S. Code) protects the confidentiality of all responses. NASS publishes only aggregate-level data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified.

The NASS target date for release of cash rent data is April 2009. Visit the NASS web site at www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/ to see all NASS reports, as well as a comprehensive collection of other data on U.S. agriculture. Reports and additional information can also be obtained by calling the NASS Hotline at 1-800-727-9540.

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