



USDA To Study Crop Production Practices

A sample of winter wheat and fruit growers across Michigan will soon be contacted by the USDA, NASS, Great Lakes Region to participate in a set of surveys focusing on nutrient and fertilizer use, pesticide applications, and pest management practices.

Conducted annually in the fall, Phase II of the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS II) is USDA's primary source of information on production practices for select field crops. This year ARMS focuses on winter wheat production. Additionally, NASS will be administering the Fruit Chemical Use Survey (FCUS), a study conducted every two years focusing on farm operators' use of chemicals on selected fruit crops.

NASS will conduct personal interviews with approximately 8,000 winter wheat and fruit producers nationwide, including nearly 900 in Michigan. They will be asked to provide information on their fertilizer, nutrient and pesticide applications, as well as detailed questions regarding pest management and spray practices for apples, blueberries, tart cherries, peaches, and winter wheat.

"Participation in these surveys is vital to all agricultural industry stakeholders," said Marlo Johnson, Director of the Great Lakes Regional Field Office. "Responses from fruit growers to the FCUS will help ensure that nutrients and chemicals critical to fruit production remain available on the market, while the results of the ARMS will help agricultural leaders and decision-makers better understand how producers cope with risk, adapt to policy changes, and make decisions about chemical use, new technologies, and other aspects of farming. While these surveys can be lengthy and complex, trained and experienced enumerators can work with respondents to make the process go smoothly and relatively quickly."

As an added incentive for respondents to complete these surveys, Johnson noted the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) has agreed to provide two pesticide applicator certification credits to those growers who complete either the ARMS Phase II or the FCUS.

The importance of these surveys cannot be understated, according to Johnson. "All sectors of the agriculture industry – producers, buyers, suppliers, policy makers, and others – rely on fruit chemical use data to make sound business decisions," she said. "Meanwhile, virtually every federal farm program and policy is based on ARMS data – conservation programs, price support programs, risk management programs, pesticide approval and exemption programs, research programs – you name it. All of them rely on information generated through this survey. That's why it's so important that farmers take the time to participate and ensure that we have the most accurate and up-to-date information, straight from the source."

Johnson assures survey participants that the confidentiality of their responses is protected by law. "NASS strictly safeguards the privacy of all respondents and publishes only aggregated state and national data, ensuring that no individual producer or operation can be identified," she said.

For more information about ARMS, FCUS, and other surveys conducted by NASS, contact the Great Lakes Regional Office at 1-800-453-7501 or visit the NASS web site at: www.nass.usda.gov.

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