



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
In Cooperation with West Virginia Department of Agriculture
West Virginia Field Office
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TWO NASS SURVEYS SET COUNTY ESTIMATES

Charleston, West Virginia – NASS conducts more than 400 surveys each year, but two of our largest and most impactful surveys are the annual **Row Crops County Agricultural Production Survey (CAPS)** and **December Agricultural Survey**, of which the results are combined to set our county average yields.

“NASS sets a goal of an 80 percent response rate for all surveys, but the more responses we receive, the better, and more accurate our data will be,” said Charmaine Wilson, West Virginia State Statistician. “This is particularly important for these two surveys, because if we don’t receive enough reports, we can’t publish county estimates.”

The **Row Crops CAPS** surveys about 3,000 farmers in West Virginia to determine their acres cut, yield per acre, and total production of hay. This survey is conducted from November through early January.

The **December Agricultural Survey** asks an additional 600 West Virginia farmers how many acres of crops they planted, how many acres they harvested, and their yield per acre for corn, soybeans, and hay. Data are collected from mid-November through mid-December.

NASS’s county estimates data are used with other USDA agencies’ estimate calculations to set standards for insurance and risk protection programs many farmers rely on to protect their operations. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) relies on county-level estimates for Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC), County Loan Rates, and its disaster program calculations. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) uses NASS data for administering the Area Risk Protection Insurance Plan, and establishment of transitional yields.

When drought, excessive rain and flooding impact crop production, or even in a year with good yields, these data are crucial to the agriculture industry.

Countless farmers have asked how sampling is selected and conducted. Operations are randomly chosen for the surveys with selection to account for all counties and commodities. Producers are only selected for one of the surveys calculating county estimates during this survey period. A specific question we’ll get is why aren’t all farmers queried? The short answer is that we don’t have enough dollars to survey every farmer, and still get a representative response, so we draw a representative subset of the total. Additionally, with more than 400 surveys a year, how many farmers are going to be excited to see another survey in the mailbox or another enumerator pulling up to their house? We try to be judicious of our farmers’ time and the taxpayers’ money.

Once we have all the reported data, it's reviewed for reasonableness and verifications are made, if necessary. Summaries combine farm data to allocate previously released state production and acreage totals to counties. Average yield equals county production divided by county harvested acres.

NASS offers a four-pronged approach for farmers to respond to surveys: Mail-in, respond over the phone, face-to-face interviews, and reply online. Follow-up phone calls begin if we have not received a response in the mail or online. If you receive a call to answer a survey and aren't able to access your records or it's not a good time, we encourage you to make an appointment for a convenient time to respond.

If you have any questions or concerns, we are always available to help. Our West Virginia State Statistician Charmaine Wilson can be reached at (304) 357-5126 or by email at Charmaine.Wilson@usda.gov.

We want to provide the most accurate, reliable data, and that's why we encourage you to make your voices heard. We need your responses to better serve you and your operations. Please respond and be counted!