

Survey Announcement - For Immediate Release
******* Long Version*******

2002 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE BEGINS TO COUNT THE NATION'S FARMS

Farm operators across America are about to participate in the Nation's largest, most detailed statistical portrait of U.S. agriculture – the 2002 Census of Agriculture. Conducted by the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the census will provide a comprehensive portrait of agriculture at the county, State, and national levels.

Census of agriculture report forms will be mailed to farm operators in mid-December to collect data for the 2002 calendar year. Operators must complete and return their forms by February 3, 2003.

Data provided by individual farmers is held strictly confidential by law (Title 7, U.S. Code). Statistical results are aggregated and published only in geographical summaries to prevent identification of individual farms.

New questions will collect information on multiple operators per farm, production contracts, certified organic acreage, grain storage capacity, computer and Internet use, and new commodities such as bison, deer, elk, llamas, emus, and ostriches. Other questions will be similar to those asked in previous censuses and will focus on key information such as acreage and land use, operator characteristics, crop and livestock production, and agricultural product sales.

Twenty-five percent of operators will also be asked about production expenses, fertilizers and chemicals, machinery and equipment, market value of land and buildings, and income from farm-related sources.

How do census of agriculture results help farmers?

- S **Farm organizations, Congress, and State and local governments** have the facts needed to plan programs that help farmers get the most for their investments.
- S **Farm machinery manufacturers, grain elevators, slaughter and cold storage, and other agribusinesses** more effectively target their locations to where they are most needed by using county and State statistics, resulting in economic benefit for farm operators.

- S **Seed and fertilizer producers** compare yields and other information to help operators do the most effective job.
- S **Irrigation specialists, water resource developers, and irrigation equipment manufacturers** convert census knowledge into practical advice for farm operators.
- S **State and national lawmakers** use census facts to determine where to allocate funds that will benefit agriculture producers.
- S **Farm broadcasters and agricultural editors** convey census results to their audiences and use the data to help focus their stories on important areas of agriculture.
- S **Researchers and legislators** use county-level data to define problem areas and help farmers recover from outbreaks of disease and pests.

A farm, for census purposes, is any place from which at least \$1,000 worth of agricultural products were produced and sold or could have been sold during the census year. Because a key strength of the census is providing detailed facts about small farms, every response counts – whether from a large or very small operation. By responding completely and accurately, farmers and ranchers can make the 2002 Census of Agriculture an effective tool to help chart the future of their industry.

If you do not receive a census form in the mail by late December, contact the New England Agricultural Statistics Service at 1-800-642-9571 so that your farming operation can be included. **You Make It Known - Agriculture Counts!**