

# Advisory Committee On Agriculture Statistics

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Annual Meeting, November 8-9, 2016



**U.S. Department of Agriculture**  
National Agricultural Statistics Service

# Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics (ACAS)

November 8-9, 2016

United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

## Members Present

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Shawn Boyd                                     | Larry L. Janssen  |
| Kellie Bray                                    | Carl Mattson, Committee Chair                               |
| Jose Candelaria                                | Roger Mix   |
| Jennifer Dennis                                | Juli Obudzinski   |
| Zachary Ducheneaux                             | Jean Opsomer  |
| Carole Engle                                   | Brian Schilling   |
| John Foltz                                     | Chukou Thao   |
| Doug Goehring                                  | Louise Waterman   |
| Ron Jarmin, (Census Bureau <i>ex-officio</i> ) | Mary Bohman, (Economic Research Service <i>ex-officio</i> ) |

## Members Absent

|              |                  |
|--------------|------------------|
| Kim Brackett | Lawrence Sanchez |
| Emmett Redd  | Robert Yonkers   |

## Advisory Committee Officers

Renee Picanso, Executive Director  
Bryan Combs, Designated Federal Officer

**United States Department of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Statistics Service**

**NASS Senior Executive Service Attendees**

Huber Hamer, Administrator  
Renee Picanso, Associate Administrator  
Kevin Barnes, Director, Western Field Offices  
Joe Parsons, Director, Methodology Division  
Jay Johnson, Director, Eastern Field Offices  
Joseph Prusacki, Director, National Operations Division  
Barbara Rater, Director, Census and Survey Division  
Linda Young, Director, Research and Development Division  
Dan Kerestes, Acting Director, Statistics Division  
Renato Chan, Acting Director, Information Technology Division

**Speakers**

Hubert Hamer, NASS Administrator  
Renee Picanso, Associate Administrator  
Dr. Catherine Woteki, Under Secretary for Research, Education & Economics  
Barbara Rater, Director, Census and Survey Division  
Linda Young, Director, Research and Development Division  
Joe Parsons, Director, Methodology Division  
Gerald Tillman, Chief, Survey Administration Branch  
Sue King, Staff Director, Public Affairs Office  
Elvera Gleaton, Senior Project Manager, Office of the Administrator

**Scribes**

Stephen Habets  
Miste Salmon

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# MEETING SUMMARY

## 1. Introduction

The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics (ACAS) annual meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Carl Mattson on Tuesday, November 8, 2016, at 8:06 a.m. Present were 16 of the 20 ACAS members, two Committee *ex-officio* representatives, and ten Senior Executive Service staff members from the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Committee members, NASS staff, and meeting guests were asked to introduce themselves, after which Mr. Mattson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Renee Picanso, who serves as the Advisory Committee Executive Director, welcomed the ACAS members to the USDA facilities, then discussed the Committee's purpose and duties and thanked the members who participated in the previous Advisory Committee meeting in November 2015.

Bryan Combs, Designated Federal Officer, reviewed the contents of attendees' packets, which included a Confidentiality Certification form (ADM-004), a current list of ACAS members, and presentation materials for the meeting.

Mrs. Picanso reviewed the Committee's function and responsibilities and reminded members that the duties are solely advisory. The Committee represents the views and needs of both users and suppliers of agriculture statistics; its charge is to advise the Secretary on the conduct of the periodic census of agriculture, other surveys, and the types of information to obtain from survey respondents. The Committee also makes recommendations regarding the content of agricultural reports. Mrs. Picanso discussed the mission of NASS, which is to provide timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture.

NASS is responsible for administering USDA's statistical estimating program and the every-five-year Census of Agriculture, coordinating federal and state agricultural statistics needs, and conducting statistical research, including research for other federal agencies, state agencies, private organizations, and other countries. NASS does not:

- Set policy
- Regulate activities
- Permit influence
- Disclose individual records or
- Favor any group above others

## 2. 2015 Recommendations: Review and Update

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Mrs. Picanso reviewed the Advisory Committee's recommendations from the November 2015 meeting and NASS's response to each (Appendix B).

### 3. Research, Education, and Economics Mission Area Remarks

Dr. Catherine Woteki, Under Secretary for Research, Education & Economics (REE) addressed the committee and noted the importance of the committee's recommendations in shaping the role that NASS takes in US Agriculture. Dr. Woteki discussed the mission of REE and how the REE agencies play a vital role in anticipating future problems and developing a knowledge base to address needs. Dr. Woteki notes that in the last several years budget stringencies spurred changes and NASS has implemented a lot of business efficiencies. She also noted that it will reach a point where we cannot do more with less and this is where the voice of this committee will become very important in prioritizing projects.

### 4. State of NASS

Hubert Hamer, NASS Administrator, welcomed and thanked everyone for taking time out of their busy schedules to help NASS chart its future. He stressed the importance of the Advisory Committee in this endeavor.

Mr. Hamer provided an update on the Agency's budget and the outlook for future budget planning. Mr. Hamer noted that the Advisory Committee can help NASS define what its base programs should be. This would provide guidance for NASS in determining which programs to suspend - in the event of funding changes in agricultural estimates programs. Mr. Hamer also informed the committee of several transitions in the NASS organizations which included: Joe Parsons, moving into the Director of the Methodology Division and serving as the Chair of the Agricultural Statistics Board, and that NASS would be conducting a job search for the open Statistics Division and Information Technology Division Director positions. The committee was also presented with the NASS priorities including data quality, adapting to changing demographics, employee engagement, utilizing new technology, improving communication and improving the interface for data collection by electronic means.

Mr. Hamer also noted the challenges NASS has been facing with response rates and the outreach efforts in partnering with commodity organizations to help stress the importance of statistical information to producers.

**Discussion:** In response to questions from Advisory Committee members related to additional data publications from the TOTAL survey it was noted that NASS has published all the information it can from the survey but ERS is still conducting research and plans on releasing additional information.

### 5. 2017 Census of Agriculture and Census Programs

Barbara Rater, Director, Census and Survey Division, provided an overview of Census programs and products. Mrs. Rater detailed the recent Census of Agriculture Content Test and the upcoming National Agricultural Classification Survey which helps to prepare NASS for the 2017 Census of Agriculture. In addition, Mrs. Rater covered the currently scheduled Census program activities for the next few years. The planned 2017 Census of Agriculture data

products were also shared with the committee. These included the U.S. and State, Volume 1, Congressional District profiles, Zip Code tabulations, Watersheds, Race, Ethnicity, and Gender profiles, and Typology.

**Discussion:** The committee had several questions and an active discussion on responding to the Census through electronic means. The committee was interested in how to make it easier and less burdensome to report electronically, how producers would be notified of survey eligibility, and how NASS would communicate the benefits of online reporting to data providers. Mrs. Rater noted to the committee members that many of the questions are areas that NASS is exploring the best course of action for and encouraged the members to make suggestions. Several committee members agreed that sending a letter informing producers that a web form is available and asking them to sign up via the web to receive their Census form electronically would be a good option. Committee members also noted that we should also consider diversity as some producers may prefer a paper form or need assistance from their CBO in completing the Census. Data security was another topic the committee felt NASS need to address to respondents to ensure their information would remain secure.

## 6. County Estimates and Farm Structure Panel update

Linda Young, Director, Research and Development Division, provided an overview of work being done with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) expert panel on the NASS county estimates program. Dr. Young explained the increased focus on the NASS county estimates by FSA and RMA as a result of the 2014 Farm Bill requirements in the administration of farm programs. The committee was provided an overview of the multiple programs leading to NASS county-level crop estimates and the questions/issues the NAS panel has been asked to help NASS address, including approaches to model-based estimates, additional data sources, and alternative publication standards.

Joe Parsons, Director, Methodology Division, provided the committee an update on the work of the joint venture between the Economic Research Service (ERS) and NASS working with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to explore ways to improve data collection for complex farming operations. Mr. Parsons explained that this NAS panel would be similar to the panel that Dr. Young described that would be looking into the county estimates program. The focus of this expert panel would be identifying best practices for account for multi-unit operations, identifying and collection information about value-added economic activities, and examining the concept of farm operator under various business structures.

**Discussion:** The Committee discussed using modeling for the purpose of county estimates and how Georeferencing could improve on the accuracy of modeled data. Dr. Young explained that currently NASS doesn't have the ability to gather data at that level of detail and also discussed the challenges of using other measures available such as zip code data. The major problem with using this data is that as farms have become larger the mailing address of the operation may not correlate to the production area. The Committee also discussed farm structure, noting that this is not just an issue that impacts large farms but several farm in the \$250,000 to 1 million sales size group and that it is a very complicated issue. The committee thought that web-based reporting may be a good tool for exploring farm structure.

## 7. Response Rate Research Team

Gerald Tillman, Chief, Survey Administration Branch, provided an overview of the NASS Response Rate Research Team. Mr. Tillman covered the goals and objective of the team and the early outcomes from feedback received from internal surveys of NASS staff. The current challenges and plans moving forward were also presented to the committee.

**Discussion:** Committee members discussed and asked several questions related to NASS's work with other statistical agencies where it was noted that NASS works with the University of Michigan, the Tripartite committee and the 13 principal statistical agencies to share information on how each collects data. The committee noted that many in the farm population do not know where the data comes from and that working with the National Association of County Agricultural Agents could help get some of the information out to the producers. State Ag Leadership Programs were another area that members felt could be explored. Using an omnibus survey was also of interest to the committee. Along with providing a reward to the producer such as providing the respondent with a benchmark of his operation against other operations and other producers of his commodity.

## 8. Big Data Overview

Linda Young, Director, Research and Development Division, presented the current NASS Big Data activates. Dr. Young outlined the use of web scraping, administrative data and remotely sensed data in urban agriculture, organics, horticulture, and local foods. These are all emerging sectors of agriculture that tend to be smaller, more diverse, more, transient and more dispersed than more traditional farms in rural areas. Dr. Young also noted to the committee that a recent JASON review of NASS remote sensing program was complimentary of the current efforts and provided recommendations for the future. Given the cost associated with many of the Big Data projects it is important that priorities be set given the limited resources of the Agency.

**Discussion:** The committee applauded NASS work in the area and was interested in any work that NASS done to forge partnerships with experts in the private sector such as Google. Dr. Young noted the difficulties with creating public/private agreement due to the laws and regulations surrounding NASS data products. The committee also discussed that this a current struggle that producers are having with equipment manufactures and the collection of data.

## 9. Communications Plan

Sue King, Staff Director, Public Affairs Office, presented the updated communications plan. Ms. King presented the four strategies of Strengthen the NASS Identity, Strengthen Customer Relationships, Improve the Data Collection Experience, and Improve Data Product Presentations and Accessibility. Website modernization was also covered along with the key findings and draft Census of Agriculture visuals were shared with the committee members.

**Discussion:** The committee shared very positive comments surrounding the website



improvements and increased use of infographics. The committee provided some suggestions of utilizing partners to promote NASS data and possible creating a tabulation of how data is used each year. Using YouTube was another area that the committee suggested could be useful to reach respondents that might not be as familiar with NASS.

## **10. Public Comment Period**

The Chairman Mattson noted and read into the record that one public comment was included in the meeting materials. One individual requested to address the committee at the meeting. Mr. Sam Willet representing the National Corn Growers Association expressed appreciation to the NASS management team and communications team for work done with the corn, soybean and wheat commodity associations in improving response rates. He was pleased to see survey instruments in review and encouraged the reviews to continue. Mr. Willet expressed the need for NASS to make use of alternative data sources where available. He also explained that he is emphasizing to his membership that they are responsible for an accurate payment system and responsible for reporting what the production experience is on the ground.

One additional comment was received during the open comment period following the meeting. All written comments are included in the Appendix of this volume.

## **11. Census Web Tool**

Elvera Gleaton, Senior Project Manager, Office of the Administrator, presented the committee with a side by side comparison of the previous Census EDR form along with the updated web-based smart questionnaire. Ms. Gleaton also informed the committee that the new web form had received a 508 Compliant rating of AA and with a few minor updates would be rated at AA. The committee was provided with a brief walk through of the updated look and functions of the new web form and provided iPads to get a hands on experience using the form.

**Discussion:** Committee members displayed widespread interest and were encourage with the possibilities available in the new web form. The committee members had a few questions concerning testing of different age groups along with some more specific questions related to content on the form and the navigation options on the web form. Several member of the committee requested to share the link with producers in their networks for additional feedback, NASS encouraged them to do so and provide any feedback to NASS.

## **12. Agricultural Resource Management Survey and Chemical Use Program Overview**

Gerald Tillman, Chief, Survey Administration Branch, presented the committee with an overview of the Agricultural Resource Management Survey program and the Chemical Use program. Both of these programs recently went through external audits and had specific recommendations that NASS wanted to gather feedback from the Advisory Committee on an ongoing basis. Mr. Tillman updated the committee on recent changes to each phase of the ARMS program.

**Discussion:** Committee members noted that using DLG mapping would be an improvement to the ARMS II survey however the lat./long. points need to be captured because soil types might vary across the field.

### **13. Discussion and Drafting of Recommendations**

The Advisory Committee spent much of Wednesday, November 9, developing the committee's recommendations. The ten recommendations passed by the Committee are shown in the following section, along with NASS responses. Committee elections were held where Ms. Kellie Bray was elected as the committee Chair and Dr. Brian Schilling was elected as the committee Vice Chair.

### **14. Closing Remarks**

After the Committee discussed and passed its recommendations, Mrs. Picanso and Mr. Hamer thanked the members for volunteering their time to attend the meeting. Mr. Mattson, as Committee Chair, called the meeting officially adjourned at 12:45 p.m. on Wednesday, November 9, 2016.

## ACAS 2016 RECOMMENDATIONS and NASS RESPONSE

**Recommendation No. 1:** The committee recommends that NASS Continue exploring the use of “big data” to improve and supplement their surveys, including web scraping, remote sensing and administrative data. In addition, we recommend that NASS investigate cooperating with outside big data providers (Google, ClimateCorp, John Deere, Case IH, Google, Grocery Manufacturers Association, National Restaurant Association, etc).

**Background:** The availability and uses of big data have greatly expanded in recent years. NASS is using several big data sources, but needs to continue to explore big data options and set priorities within the agency’s resources. NASS has been a leader in the use of remote sensing data, and its program was complimented in the recent USDA report. However, more opportunities in remote sensing and other areas exist. NASS has used web scraping, administrative data, and remotely sensed data in urban agriculture, organics, horticulture, and local foods. These emerging sectors of agriculture tend to be comprised of operations that are smaller, more diverse, and more transient than the more traditional farms that tend to be in rural areas.

**NASS Response:** NASS is establishing a data team with the purpose of identifying new and innovative ways to use alternative data sources that will lead to reduced respondent burden, increased efficiencies, and higher quality estimates. This team will investigate big data sources to determine their availability, feasibility, and value.

**Recommendation No. 2:** The committee recommends that NASS Continue developing “smart” web forms to collect data along with customizing them for their target users.

### **Will update after meeting on 2-21**

**Recommendation No. 3:** The committee recommends that NASS consider exploring alternatives to the full 5-year agricultural census, including a model with an abbreviated form from census years and an extended form every year to a random sample of respondents (similar to the decennial Census and American Community Survey).

**Background:** NASS conducts the Census of Agriculture every five years, in years ending in 2 and 7. The 2012 Census of Agriculture form consisted of 24 pages. Although the 2017 Census of Agriculture form will be 24 pages long, a short version of 16 pages will be sent to some farmers and ranchers. Given that the forms are sent to about three million people, the Census is a large burden on the agricultural community.

**NASS Response:** Through its Response Rate Review Team (RRRT), NASS is exploring numerous options to reduce respondent burden. A shortened Census of Agriculture form would greatly reduce burden. The challenge is to ensure that NASS is able to provide the same, or more, quality estimates using an alternative approach. In particular, one of the most valued products from the Census is the county-level profiles. Because farms are sparser than people, it is not immediately evident that these profiles could be provided with an alternative approach. That said, NASS does plan to begin exploring alternatives to the full 5-year agricultural census.

**Recommendation No. 4:** The committee recommends that NASS pilot a benchmark data set which would only be available to survey respondents on a survey of NASS’s choice.

**Background:** NASS has over 100 years’ experience collecting agricultural statistics, hence we have very large, complex data sets at our disposal. Modern big data analytics tools present an opportunity for NASS to examine ways to use these data sets and develop tools that will provide our survey respondents “value added” for responding to our surveys, such as creating dashboards on data that can provide direct benefits to respondents. Some of the challenges of using big data to providing respondents data sets include data capture, visualization and information privacy.

**NASS Response:** USDA (REE Mission Area) has formed a team to examine opportunities with an infrastructure bill. NASS has a representative on this that can work with other USDA agencies to find ways to use big data to help NASS better harness our data sets and identify opportunities to provide producers data products.

**Recommendation No. 5:** The committee recommends that NASS consider utilizing a professional speaker to represent NASS at meetings and conventions around the U.S. This would be someone who is very engaging and utilizes cool and informative NASS statistics to tell the story and encourage people to report and utilize a variety of approaches to publicize NASS and the importance of the data.

**Background:** NASS has and seeks many opportunities to speak with stakeholders, producers and policy makers throughout the year and across the United States. These opportunities range from small, local ag-related meetings to very large, national ag-conferences. NASS has many people who can and do routinely speak to these groups as part of their job. Representing NASS at these events and communicating benefits of responding to surveys and of using NASS data is part of the job for many. Not everyone is a natural public speaker nor do they necessarily have public speaking/presentation training.

**NASS Response:** Hiring a professional speaker to present on behalf of NASS is not realistic given budgets and content expertise needed. One way to improve presentations would be to hire a public speaking coach to give staff most likely to be speaking to groups training in public speaking and presentation best practices. Related training could be part of individual professional development plans for all staff.

**Recommendation No. 6:** The committee recommends that NASS working through the County Estimates Panel take additional steps to increase the number of county-level published estimates for production of specific agricultural commodities and cash rental rates, including modeling or revisiting publication standards.

**Background:** In the Agricultural Act of 2014, FSA was charged with administering the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC-CO), which provides revenue loss coverage at the county level. NASS’s estimates of yield, acreage and production are to be used to set the ARC-CO guarantee level, if they are available.

NASS was directed through the 2008 Farm Bill to collect cash rents data for use by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in program administration. The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Section 2110, states, “The Secretary (acting through the National Agricultural Statistics Service) shall conduct an annual survey of per acre estimates of county average market dry land and irrigated cash

rental rates for cropland and pastureland in all counties or equivalent subdivisions within each state that have 20,000 acres or more of cropland and pastureland.” In the Agricultural Act of 2014, the frequency with which the survey is to be conducted was changed to “not less frequently than every other year.”

NASS publishes only estimates that meet its publication standards, which has led to estimates not be published for numerous counties in support of each of these programs.

**NASS Response:** At the request of NASS, the National Academy of Sciences and Engineering’s Committee on National Statistics has convened a panel to review the statistical methodology underlying both the county-level cash rents estimates and the county-level estimates of acreage, yield, and production. The review includes the publication standards and the potential use of modeled estimates in combination with survey estimates and alternative data sources, such as remotely-sensed data. The last meeting of the panel is to be held in 2017, and it is anticipated that the consensus report will be provided to NASS in 2018. NASS plans to explore all of the panel’s recommendations in its continuing efforts to produce as many reliable county-level estimates as possible.

**Recommendation No. 7:** The committee recommends that NASS work with the National Association of County Agricultural Agents and similar groups to (1) inform and educate personnel about the nature and importance of NASS data collection efforts and (2) have personnel encourage producer participation.

**Background:** The NASS structure consists of a full-time outreach position in each State (the New England States and Maryland/Delaware are combined and covered by one person each). This position is primarily responsible for maintaining external relations with the State Department of Agriculture, our data users, providers, and state-wide partners. This includes the Extension service and County Agricultural Agents. As part of this outreach, the individual participates in and presents at many conferences each year. These include producer and industry meetings.

**NASS Response:** In an effort to improve response and as a result of this suggestion, the State Statisticians who encumber these outreach positions have been charged to ensure their efforts reach beyond the State level contacts. Specifically, during 2017 it has been made a performance priority to ensure outreach extends to the County level. NASS will also ensure attendance at the National Association of County Agricultural Agents (NACAA) annual meeting in Salt Lake City, UT from July 9-13, 2017.

**Recommendation No. 8:** The committee recommends that NASS continue its organic data collection activities including the organic producer survey. Additionally, the committee recommends that NASS and RMA continue to work together to ensure that data collected by NASS is able to be fully utilized by RMA in order to develop additional organic price elections for organic producers as required by the 2014 Farm Bill.

**Background:** NASS completed four [Organic Producer Surveys](#) between 2001-2017 (two surveys in partnership with RMA), providing important information on the size of the organic market, farm gate prices, and production practices. This information is key to creating appropriate risk management and disaster assistance programs. NASS also completed a census of organic certifiers to estimate the number of certified organic acres, livestock head, and other data on the size of the US organic sector.

NASS and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) collaborated to collect data on economic losses to organic producers due to the presence of genetically engineered material, the first nationally-available data source on the issue.

**NASS Response:** The 2016 Certified Organic Survey is part of NASS's Organic Program and is funded by the USDA's Risk Management Agency. The primary purpose of the survey is to collect acreage, production, and sales data for a variety of certified organic crop and livestock commodities at the commodity level. Participation in the survey is voluntary and release of the results is expected for September 2017. If funding allows, the 2019 Organic Survey will be conducted as a follow-on survey to the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

**Recommendation No. 9:** The committee recommends that NASS expand coverage and sampling for diverse sectors of agriculture (including small, urban, local food, beginning farmers, veterans, socially disadvantaged) in future NASS data collection activities such as Census and ARMS, in addition to continuing the Local Foods Marketing Survey in future years to allow for trend data.

**Background:** NASS is examining the practice of web scraping or web crawling techniques to identify non-traditional agricultural farms to improve coverage of our list sampling frames. Web scraping is an automated process for harvesting large amounts of data from websites

**NASS Response:** In 2016, NASS partnered with a private company to develop software, integrate data sources, and produce recommendations that will help USDA improve awareness and accountability of the local food market and urban farms. The effort will evaluate and implement new technologies to harvest open source information to identify urban farms, farming entity providers to farmers markets, roadside stands, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives and restaurants that in turn directly sells to consumers in local markets.

**Recommendation No. 10:** The committee recommends that NASS continue collecting data on the costs of Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) compliance and continue to work with ERS to share these findings with producers and other stakeholders.

**Background:** In 2015, NASS partnered with ERS to conduct the Produce Post-Harvest Microbial Food Safety Practices Survey (PPHMFSPS). The purpose of the PPHMFSPS was to assess the levels of food safety awareness, sanitation, and post-harvest practices used by various agribusinesses; including canners, chippers, dehydrators, fresh cut processors, packers, juicers, peelers, picklers, etc. Research from this survey will examine the effects of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) across fresh produce supply chains.

**NASS Response:** By 2018, FSMA guidance documents will be complete and regulations will have been implemented for firms across size categories. Produce growers, buyers, and consumers will be operating under the new risk-based food safety system established by FDA. To fully track the implications of the new system and answer policy-relevant food safety questions, ERS, in partnership with NASS, is in discussions to conduct follow-up surveys on produce food safety practice with initial efforts beginning in Fiscal Year 2018 if funding becomes available.

## **APPENDICES**

- A. Agenda: 2016 ACAS Meeting
- B. 2015 Recommendations and NASS Response
- C. White Paper: ARMS and Chemical Use Program Recommendations
- D. White Paper: NASS Sampling Frames and Data Quality
- E. Public Comments

**Appendix A**

**Tuesday, November 8, 2016  
USDA Whitten Building 107-A**

| <b>Time</b> | <b>Agenda Item</b>                                      | <b>Presenter</b>          | <b>Page</b> |
|-------------|---|---------------------------|-------------|
| 8:00 am     | Call to Order and Welcome                               | Carl Mattson              |             |
| 8:05 am     | Introductions   | Renee Picanso             |             |
| 8:15 am     | Meeting Overview and ACAS Committee Overview            | Renee Picanso             | 13          |
| 8:30 am     | 2015 Recommendations Review and Report, Discussion      | Renee Picanso             | 21          |
| 9:00 am     | Research, Education, and Economics Mission Area Remarks | Dr. Woteki                | 29          |
| 9:30 am     | 'State of NASS' Address                                 | Hubert Hamer              | 33          |
| 10:00 am    | BREAK   |                           |             |
| 10:15 am    | 2017 Census of Agriculture/Census Programs              | Barbara Rater             | 43          |
| 10:45 am    | Discussion  |                           |             |
| 11:00 am    | County Estimates and Farm Structure Panel update*       | Linda Young & Joe Parsons | 53          |
| 11:45 am    | Discussion  |                           |             |
| 12:00 am    | Lunch   |                           |             |
| 1:00 pm     | Response Rate Research Team                             | Gerald Tillman            | 71          |
| 1:30 pm     | Discussion  |                           |             |
| 2:00 pm     | Big Data Overview                                       | Linda Young               | 83          |
| 2:30 pm     | Discussion  |                           |             |
| 2:45 pm     | BREAK   |                           |             |
| 3:00 pm     | Communications Plan                                     | Sue King                  | 111         |
| 3:30 pm     | Discussion  |                           |             |
| 3:45 pm     | Public Comments   |                           | 131         |
| 4:45 pm     | Day 1 Wrap-up   | Committee                 |             |



## Wednesday, November 9, 2016

### USDA South Building 3109

| Time     | Agenda Item   | Presenter      | Page |
|----------|---|----------------|------|
| 8:00 am  | Recap and Review of Previous Day                                    | Renee Picanso  |      |
| 8:15 am  | Census Web Tool*  | Vera Gleaton   | 135  |
| 8:30 am  | Discussion  |                |      |
| 8:45 am  | ARMS and Chemical Use Program Overviews                             | Gerald Tillman | 143  |
| 9:00 am  | Drafting Recommendations  | Committee      |      |
| 10:00 am | BREAK   |                |      |
| 10:15 am | Presentation of Recommendations and Committee Chairperson Elections | Carl Mattson   |      |
| 11:00 am | Lockup  | Committee      |      |
| 12:15 pm | Wrap Up   | Renee Picanso  |      |
| 12:30 pm | Adjourn   |                |      |

\* - Issue and Options Papers provide to ACAS members ahead of meeting.

## Appendix B

# 2015 Recommendations and NASS Responses

**Recommendation No. 1.** The committee recommends that NASS promote the value of producer response and potential unintended consequences of not reporting by utilizing producer testimonials including the value to producers for reporting. “Be relevant, report!”

**Background:** The primary goal of the NASS Communications plan is to increase the perceived value of NASS and its products. Under this umbrella goal, strategies involve stronger focus on the customer (respondents in this case) and being able to answer the what’s-in-it-for-me question to increase response rates. Historically we’ve been challenge by using producer testimonials due to our commitment to respondent confidentiality. We are primarily working with industry influencers and using anonymous producer testimonials.

**NASS Response:** We are working to expand this effort by collecting more testimonials, cataloging direct uses of NASS data and benefits to producers by survey and topic area, and incorporating all of these into promotional materials and campaigns. The Public Affairs Office recently launched some new testimonial videos and continue to expand with new video testimonials from a broader variety of farming organizations in which [representatives of agricultural organizations](#) explain how they use NASS data, why they use NASS data, and why farmers and ranchers should respond to NASS surveys. We launched the videos via a successful social media campaign, made them available to field offices and all NASS staff to use, for example by embedding them in presentations. They will be used in on going promotions. These testimonials expand on some we gathered during the 2012 census promotions in which producers themselves and others in the ag industry [shared their stories](#) about using NASS data. Finally, we have begun cataloging specific uses of NASS data and direct benefits to producers to use and make available in similar ways.

**Recommendation No. 2.** The committee encourages NASS to investigate the ability to provide benchmark and historical data to respondents as an incentive to encourage participation.

**Background:** NASS has recently done several things to provide information back to respondents as an incentive to encourage participation.

1. For the Agricultural Resource Management Survey for Poultry a highlights document was sent to all sampled records. Respondents were sent a “thank you” version of the accompanying letter and nonrespondents were sent a “results” letter.
2. Presurvey letters have been including impact statements and enhanced infographics.
3. Nearly all surveys provide links to the survey results and ask if they would like to have a summary mailed to them at a later date as shown in box below?

**SURVEY RESULTS:** To receive the complete results of this survey on the release date, go to <http://www.nass.usda.gov/results>

Would you rather have a brief summary mailed to you at a later date?

YES  NO

**NASS Response:** NASS has pursued various methods over time to give our data respondent's survey results. In November 2014, NASS released a new communications plan that promotes, improves, and expands the agency data products which will encourage survey participation.

NASS has been collecting and maintaining emails for some time, but we will evaluate how we can more effectively use email to provide reporters with the results in a more tailored, appealing and timely manner. Email usage does have challenges with privacy and maintenance. Emails to reporters could include the highlights, popular infographics, links to data and to QuickStats. Emailing of results may be especially applicable to respondents who complete questionnaires on the internet.

Infographics have been a useful product for users to distribute through social media and email. Research was recently completed on infographics to assess their usability, usefulness, desirability, value and credibility. Applying this research will improve the infographics and provide an effective product to provide farmers and ranchers. Additionally, the use of infographics could be expanded to include more survey results which would be provided back to respondents.

**Recommendation No. 3.** The committee recommends that NASS explore the possibility of a task force, including members from NASS, ERS, FSA, RMA, maybe other interested USDA agencies, with the goal to develop a "dashboard" of useful information and data that a producer only has access to when they provide their data to NASS.

**Background:** Producer participation in Census and Surveys over the last few years has been declining. Giving back to the respondents is one way in which NASS may be able to increase producer participation. This is not a new concept and has been tried over the years with little success. Advancements in technology along with producer's greater use of mobile devices may lead to more successful implementation of this type of endeavor.

**NASS Response:** As a data provider, NASS is always looking for new and innovative ways to share agricultural data with our customers. NASS is organizing a team of representatives from USDA Agencies to provide input into a centralized dashboard of data. NASS is currently working with data visualization specialists to provide to implement interactive statistical graphics on our external websites to help improve the interpretability and applicability of the data we produce. NASS may work with this specialist to help create a dashboard of useful information.

**Recommendation No. 4.** The committee recommends that NASS explore adding a question on the respondents primary language and explore ways to communicate available options for reporting in those languages.

**Background:** NASS has historically not been able to offer reporting in multiple languages due to significant cost and lack of resources to create questionnaires in various languages. NASS has partnered with several community-based organizations (CBOs) many of whom assist with outreach and are available to help non English speaking respondents complete NASS Census and Survey forms.

**NASS Response:** NASS is keenly aware of the changing landscape in agriculture. These changes impact not only what is being produced and how it is being produced but also extends to who is

producing it. Over time, as NASS has learned more about our Nation's farmers, we recognize that we need to be more attentive to any language barrier that may be prohibitive to getting a response from everyone. The special emphasis on socially disadvantaged farms within many USDA agencies and programs makes it all the more critical to be responsive to the needs of those farmers that supply the basic data needed to help shape key policy decisions. NASS will continue to look for ways to span any language barriers in its data collection efforts. NASS will continue to utilize its own staff along with NASDA enumerators to avail themselves to respondents in need of assistance with surveys. Additionally, NASS is working with many Community-Based Organizations to leverage opportunities to assist with addressing language barriers to reporting. NASS believes offering personal assistance is a key element to the future success of data collection among these traditionally under-represented farmers.

**Recommendation No. 5.** The committee recommends that NASS work with Census Bureau to ensure that on farm value added production is captured and linked with NASS data.

**Background:** Over the last several years value added products have become more common and increasingly important to many farm households well-being. There is concern that the value of these items is not being captured either in the farm or other sector accounts.

**NASS Response:** ERS is using NASS data to the fullest extent possible to produce value added income data. ARMS III is the main data source, and a complete listing of data sources for value added components can be found on the ERS website at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/farm-income-and-wealth-statistics/general-documentation.aspx> and also: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/farm-income-and-wealth-statistics/documentation-for-the-farm-sector-financial-ratios.aspx> Additionally, on March 15, 2016, ERS will participate in a Video Teleconference with NASS Regional Field Offices (RFOs) and will include a discussion of the value added tables that ERS publishes. This will provide NASS RFOs with more background insight into the ERS value added published data.

**Recommendation No. 6.** The committee recommends that NASS examine the linkage between farm program participation and census and survey participation rates. The analysis should include a statistical profile of farms that participate in farm programs as compared to those that do not.

**Background:** For the 2007 and 2012 Census of Agriculture, NASS obtained from the Farm Service Agency (FSA) a list of farm operations that received federal farm program payments during the respective census reference year. This data set included enough information so that the farm program recipients could be linked to the census mail list.

**NASS Response:** The complete 2012 Census of Agriculture Census Mail List can be divided into 4 groups:

1. Linked to FSA programs, responded to the census
2. Linked to FSA programs, did not respond to the census
3. Not linked to FSA programs, responded to the census
4. Not linked to FSA programs, did not respond to the census

A profile of each groups characteristics will be created that would include mean, median and quartile values for the following continuous variables, total land in farms (K46), rented land in farms (K44), federal farm programs payments received (K684) and total value of agricultural products sold (TVP). The process for examining records and their survey participation rates is more complex, as the FSA records were linked to the census mail list. Consultation with the sampling and list frame group will be necessary to define the process of profiling. However it is possible to examine this information for a few major crop and livestock surveys.

**Recommendation No. 7.** The committee recommends that ARMS remain a voluntary survey at this time.

**Background:** In 2008, the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) of the National Research Council released the findings and recommendations of an independent review of USDA's Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS). The CNSTAT report contained over 30 recommendations related to various aspects of the ARMS program. Many of the recommendation have been addressed and several of the recommendations are in progress or ongoing activities such as two of the recommendation for the solicitation of feedback from stakeholders. CNSTAT stated in Recommendation 6.5 that, the research and development program should analyze whether there are differences in ARMS unit and item nonresponse rates between census and non-census years, with an eye toward deciding whether making ARMS mandatory would improve data quality.

**NASS Response:** At this time NASS has no plans of seeking approval to make the ARMS mandatory and it will continue to be a voluntary survey for the foreseeable future.

**Recommendation No. 8.** The committee recommends that NASS continue to work with groups such as C-FARE to create customizable dissemination tools.

**Background:** NASS has traditionally placed more emphasis on the methodology and process of collecting, analyzing and publishing sound statistical estimates than on creating innovative data products. When faced with limited resources, creating advanced dissemination products and tools is often seen as being less critical than its mission focus of providing accurate, timely and unbiased information.

**NASS Response:** NASS welcomes input from both internal and external user groups. In fact, this is a requirement of the White House's Digital Government Initiative. This initiative, along with the Open Government Policy requires NASS to report to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on our progress ensuring customer-centric principles are followed to ensure we continually improve service delivery. All our statistical data should be open and freely available through an Application Programming Interface (API) for internal and external developers to utilize. NASS developers are already leveraging our Quick Stats API to build new interfaces to our data, including a new visualization application. Our APIs were also highlighted in a recent USDA/Microsoft Innovation Challenge where developers competed to develop innovative applications using NASS data.

**Recommendation No. 9.** The committee recommends that NASS work with AGREE to address their recommendations on conservation practices and potential question wording along with including and testing where appropriate.

**Background:** NASS has asked various conservation practice questions on the Census of Agriculture, the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS), and the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP). NASS consults with NRCS to assist us with defining specific conservation practices and developing respondent instructional materials.

**NASS Response:** Following the 2015 Advisory Committee meeting, NASS has held meetings with both AGREE and NRCS to better define conservation practices. Questionnaires include/exclude statements along with respondent instructions and the report form guide will be updated for the 2017 Census of Agriculture. These updates will also be made to ARMS and CEAP questionnaires. NASS will continue to work with AGREE and NRCS to improve the collection of data related to conservation practices.

**Recommendation No. 10.** The advisory committee recommends that NASS be prepared to provide the full data collection cost for Urban Agriculture to policy makers. In addition, we recommend that additional resources be provided for this effort and that it not replace current data collection on production agriculture.

**Background:** Historically NASS's quantification of urban agriculture has been imprecise. Agriculture in urban areas tends to be widely dispersed, transient, and small scale, making it difficult to identify these operations. In an effort to improve its ability to enumerate urban agriculture, NASS collaborated with the Multi-Agency Collaboration Environment (MACE) to conduct a pilot study in Baltimore. MACE used a big data approach to build a list of urban agriculture operations. This was followed with a field survey to verify whether or not the identified areas had agriculture. About 50% of the identified areas had agriculture. The costs of national implementation for the Census of Agriculture were explored.

**NASS Response:**

Although funding for national implementation of the new approach for enumerating urban agriculture is not in the President's FY2017 budget, NASS is conducting another pilot study to identify small operations (not only urban) in the state of Washington. These would include horticulture, organics, local foods, small livestock, and urban farms, all of which are difficult to enumerate. If successful, efforts will be made to identify partners to help fund the approach for incorporation in the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

## Appendix C

### County Estimates Panel

#### Topic

County-level agricultural estimates of crop acreage, production, and yield published by NASS play a pivotal role in the administration of farm subsidy, crop insurance, and agricultural support programs. The Congressional Budget Office projects that the cost of administering the programs in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill) will total \$489 billion from 2014 to 2018. Outlays for crop insurance, conservation, and commodity programs will account for nearly one-fifth of these expenditures. Two USDA agencies play critical roles in the administration of these programs: the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Risk Management Agency (RMA). Both FSA and RMA rely on NASS county estimates as important thresholds or benchmarks as they disburse funds through their respective agricultural programs.

NASS has multiple programs leading to county-level crop estimates. A supplemental sample is taken with the September and December Agricultural Surveys so that county estimates of yield and acreage for small grains and row crops can be published. The Cropland Data Layer (CDL) can also be used to provide estimates of yield and acreage, but the quality of these estimates tends to be less than that from the surveys. The Crops Stocks survey collects information on acres planted and harvested as well as production and stocks, thus providing a third source of county-level information. Acreage data are obtained from the Farm Service Agency (FSA), and the Risk Management Agency (RMA) can provide historic information on yield. Finally, dealers, such as John Deere and Monsanto, are automatically collecting field-level information, resulting in massive data sets.

A County Estimates Panel under the auspices of the Committee on National Statistics of the National Academies of Sciences (NAS), Engineering, and Medicine has been commissioned to review, assess, and make recommendations for the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) on methods for estimating county-level crop acreage, yield, and production that provide precise estimates with valid measures of uncertainty and permit those estimates to be published for the maximum number of counties.

Specifically, the Panel will:

- Review existing information about the county estimates of acreage, yield, production, and cash rents, and how the information is collected, reported, and used.
- Explore methods for combining the information from diverse sources to produce more precise county-level estimates with valid measures of uncertainty. Issues to consider include the methods used to integrate the information, the assumptions underpinning each approach, the robustness of the estimates to a failure of one or more assumptions, and other technical issues.

- Provide insights into the use of model-based estimates, in combination with survey-based estimates or as separate estimates.
- Review the current publication standards.
- Consider alternative publication standards for survey-based estimates as well as model-based estimates with the aim of publishing as many county-level estimates as possible.
- Produce a final report with findings and recommendations at the conclusion of the study.

## **Current Work**

The Panel's work began with a teleconference on July 7, 2015. In-person panel meetings have been held November 12-13, 2015; May 12-13, 2016; and October 6, 2016. At least one more meeting will be held in 2017. Final panel recommendations will be presented to NASS in 2018. NASS, FSA, RMA, and outside researchers have made presentations on county estimates so that panel members understand the uses of the data, current methods used to produce county estimates, alternative approaches to providing county estimates, and publication standards. The panel will then provide a final written report with consensus recommendations and conduct one or more briefings with NASS staff.

## **Questions/Issues**

The Panel should address the topics and questions below:

- Approaches to using model-based estimates of county-level crop acreage, yield, and production. The type of specific questions/issues being discussed are as follows:
  - The current survey approach does not lead to publishable estimates for numerous counties, either due to lack of data or complementary suppression to ensure confidentiality. Can this be improved?
  - Model-based estimates are an alternative to the survey estimates. However, sometimes the modeled estimates are not reasonable for a particular county. What can/should be done in these cases?
  - For some counties, could modeled estimates be used when the survey estimates do not meet publication standards? How could modeled and survey estimates be separately developed so that the county-level estimates continued to sum to the state-level estimates and those summed to the national estimates?



- What additional data sources, if any, could lead to improved county estimates?
  
- County-level estimates may not be published for two reasons: (1) insufficient data to meet the publication standards and (2) complementary suppression to ensure the confidentiality of an individual farmer's information. Are the publication standards appropriate? The type of specific questions that that may be discussed include:
  - Currently NASS requires thirty positive reports in a county or at least 25% coverage of the crop in that county. Are these the appropriate standards?
  - What should be the publication standards for models?
  - For modeled estimates, what should be considered with respect to confidentiality?
  - If survey and modeled estimates are both published, what should the publication standards be?

### **Request for ACAS Members**

In addition to the topics and questions above, do members of the ACAS have additional topics or comments we should pass to the Panel for their consideration as they discuss County Estimates?

## **Appendix D**

### **Farm Structure Panel**

#### **Topic**

Although the vast majority of today's farms continue to be run by a single operator or by spousal partners, the large farms that produce a substantial percentage of the nation's food tend to have more complex business structures. NASS is seeking: (1) to explore ways to improve data collection and information reporting for these complex farm business structures. (2) to develop approaches to improving response rates and data quality from larger farm operations in particular; and (3) to consider the implications of more complex farm operator arrangements on the measurement of farm household income and related characteristics. This topic of *Farm Structure* has come up at previous ACAS meetings.

A Farm Structure Panel under the auspices of the National Academies of Sciences (NAS), Engineering, and Medicine has been commissioned to review, assess, and make recommendations for the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and the Economic Research Service (ERS) on effective methods for collecting data and reporting information about U.S. agriculture under increasingly complex farm structure.

Specifically, the Panel will:

- Review existing information about the structure of U.S. farms, and how the information is collected, reported, and used.
- Seek to identify best practices for accounting for multi-unit operations and operations that are vertically integrated, both on the farm register and in data collection and estimation, while ensuring sufficient coverage and reliable estimates in the face of increased firm concentration.
- Seek to identify best practices for identifying and collecting information about ancillary or “value-added” economic activities may be associated with a farm (such as agri-tourism, making and selling wine, jellies or cheese, etc.).
- Examine the concept of the “farm operator” under different business structures (particularly the practice of attempting to identify one primary operator of a farm household,) and the effects of a change in concept on the subsequent estimates of farm household finances and existing data series.
- Produce a final report with findings and recommendations at the conclusion of the study.

#### **Current Work**

The Panel's work will take place between now and the summer of 2018. The first meeting of the Farm Structure Panel was held October 31 – November 1, 2016. NASS and ERS prepared presentations on a number of topics to allow the panel members to learn about the agencies and the issues.

After the first meeting, CNSTAT and the panel will:

- Conduct relevant literature reviews and prepare bibliographies.
- Conduct workshops on the key issues and challenges in the statement of task.
- Hold up to 6 additional panel meetings.
- Provide a final written report.

- Conduct one or more briefings with NASS and ERS staff.

## Questions/Issues

NASS and ERS are hoping the Panel addresses the topics and questions below:

- Accounting for increasing complexity of farm organization through data collection and reporting, and the implications of this complexity for measuring key farm financial indicators. The type of specific questions that may be discussed:
  - Current surveys focus on farms as establishments. Should we aim to survey and measure data from farm firms?
  - Our current approach to data collection on value-added activities is focused on obtaining the most appropriate measure of gross farm income. Should we be gathering information on value-added activities separate from farm activities for other purposes, e.g., to gain a better understanding of how farm and non-farm activities are linked in a single business?
  - How might we approach gathering this type of data on value-added activities while being sensitive to the opportunity costs of additional questions?
- Accounting for increased concentration and complexity of farming firms and production through new survey procedures. The type of specific questions that that may be discussed:
  - Should different methods be used to contact large operations and elicit responses from them than smaller operations? If so, what are the implications for managing the suite of relevant NASS farm, crop and livestock surveys?
  - Are there additional ways to reduce respondent burden for larger operations beyond current NASS efforts, thereby increasing response rates and improving the quality of information obtained?
  - Should NASS consider changes in the definition of a “farm” that better reflect the organizational structure of large and complex business operations, and allow a more accurate measure of farm financial statistics?
- Addressing the implications of more complex farming operations on estimates of farm household financial indicators. The type of specific questions that that may be discussed:
  - Is the universe of principal farm operator households currently used the most appropriate one for representing complex farm operator arrangements?

- Are alternative concepts and measures feasible within the existing statistical program?
- Do we use the appropriate concepts for household income and wealth?
- ERS farm classifications of sales and operator type control for the heterogeneity of the farm population to some degree. Would other classifications for reporting farm household income and wealth provide a richer or more accurate picture of this population? Given the wide array of statistical measures of central tendency and distribution, are there more appropriate measures for reporting farm household income and wealth and communicating trends more effectively?

### **Request for ACAS Members**

In addition to the topics and questions above, do members of the ACAS have additional topics or comments we should pass to the Panel for their consideration as they discuss Farm Structure?

## Public Comments



November 16, 2016

RE: Importance of Agricultural Chemical Use Program Data

Dear Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics members,

As Director of the North Central Integrated Pest Management Center, I am writing on behalf of the four Regional IPM Centers to encourage USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to continue to the Agricultural Chemical Use Program. The data derived from the ACU Program are critical to the evaluation of pesticide usage in conjunction with pest management practices.

In 2001, in response to the General Accountability Office's report on Integrated Pest Management efforts representatives from USDA Office of Pest Management Policy engaged with NASS staff to include pest management tactic questions in ACU surveys. These data combined with pesticide usage patterns is the only source for this information and we are just reaching the point of having sufficient data from these efforts to evaluate the role of integrated pest management in crop production decisions.

The importance for the ACU Program to IPM Programs is articulated in the 2010 Government Accountability Office's report on Agricultural Chemicals. The following information was obtained by the GAO and included in the final report.

"As part of this program, USGS uses ACU data to measure the success of integrated pest management implementation efforts. Agencies within USDA including the Economic Research Service, Office of Pest Management Policy, Farm Service Agency, Agricultural Marketing Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) also use ACU data. For instance, NRCS uses the data to quantify the environmental benefits and effects of conservation practices used by conservation program participants to control the runoff of agricultural chemicals." (page 7, GAO 2010)

"Public interest organizations use ACU data for a number of purposes, including measuring the impact of genetically engineered crops on pesticide use." (page 8, GAO 2010)

"Academic researchers use ACU data for a multitude of purposes, including measuring agricultural pesticide and fertilizer use to assess the environmental impact of biofuels made with agricultural products, assessing the impact of integrated pest management, and monitoring the transition to organic and sustainable agriculture." (page 8, GAO 2010)

“ACU data are also used to assess agriculture’s contribution to climate change since, according to EPA, the nitrogen in fertilizer can form nitrous oxide, a potent greenhouse gas.” (page 8, GAO 2010)

“The Director of the North Central Integrated Pest Management Center located at the University of Illinois commented that, without ACU data, it is difficult to evaluate whether targeted pest management practices—such as scouting to detect pests, weather monitoring, and analysis of soil and plant tissue—are reducing or altering pesticide use.” (page 17, GAO 2010)

“Moreover, several ACU data users said that agricultural chemical sales data are not an adequate substitute for application data. For example, the Director of the North Central Integrated Pest Management Center said that sales data are not sufficient to gauge the impact of pest management practices because sales and application may not be equivalent. When soybean rust was identified in the United States in 2004, for instance, she said that farmers proactively purchased fungicides to defend against this outbreak, although they did not necessarily apply the fungicides.” (page 35, GAO 2010)

“In the 20 years since its inception, NASS’s ACU program has supported many federal and state government efforts, including monitoring water pollution under the Clean Water Act and measuring the success of integrated pest management efforts. As Congress debates greenhouse gas regulation, reliable data on pesticide and fertilizer usage could also provide critical information on agriculture’s role in climate change.” (page 37, GAO 2010)

Our food production system is facing major challenges ranging from climate change to pesticide resistance. These data surveys play a vital role in the evaluation of pesticide usage and integrated pest management implementation. In order to strategically address crop production challenges and evaluate program impact, it is critical that NASS continue to support the ACU Program.

Sincerely,



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**From:** Jean Public <jeanpublic1@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, October 22, 2016 1:25 PM  
**To:** HQ OA - NASS; VICEPRESIDENT@WHITEHOUSE.GOV; INFO@TAXPAYER.NET;  
MEDIA@CAGW.ORG  
**Cc:** INFO@NJTAXES.ORG; INFONJ@AFPHQ.ORG; LETTERS@NYTIMES.COM  
**Subject:** Re:PUBLIC comment ON FEDERAL REGISTER BELOW

THE BUDGET OF NASS SHOULD BE CUT BY 50%. THE GENERAL TAXPAYERS OF AMERICA PAY FOR ALL OF THIS INFORMATION THAT IS PRIMARILY APPLICATION TO THE AGRIBUSINESS INDUSTRY. MOST OF THE REPORTS PREPARED ARE NOT NECESSARY FOR AGRIBUSINESS AND SHOULD NOT BE A FUNCTION OF BEING PAID FOR BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC. THEY SHOULD BE PAID FOR BY THOSE IN AGRIB USINESS WHO WANT THIS PLETHORA OF REPORTS. THIS BUDGET DESPERATELY NEEDS CUTTING BY 50%. I NOTICE YOU HAVE A TWO DAY MEETING AND HAVE BANKERS HOURS ON TUESDAY TOO., YOU CANT EVEN GIVE A FULL DAYS WORK ON TUESDAY. TYPICAL FEDERAL TANKING FOR THE PUBLIC, WHILE THE PUBLIC PAYS TAXES BY WORKING 2 AND 3 JOBS TO STAY ALIVE AND PAY YOUR TAX THAT YOU SO BLITHELY SPEND. ITS AGGRAVATING. WE ASK THAT THE BUDGET BE CUT. CUT OUT ALL THOSE STATISTICS THAT NOBODY NEEDS. THIS COMMENT IS FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD. PLEASE RECEIPT. JEAN PUBLEE JEANPUBLIC1@YAHOO.COM