

Inside the Census of Agriculture Blog Series

About this blog series

Join USDA's [National Agricultural Statistics Service \(NASS\)](#) for a closer look at the research and methods used in the Census of Agriculture in a new blog series, Data Matters. You will get a behind-the-scenes look at the science behind the collection of agricultural data.

This blog was [originally posted](#) on the USDA website under Media.



Today's farmer depends on quality data to grow. NASS knows many ag producers conduct business on the go. The fast, secure, online questionnaire will meet producers wherever they are located.

Photo credit: Shutterstock

Preparing for the 2022 Census of Agriculture

By Adam Cline, Supervisory Statistician, NASS Census & Survey Division in Research and Science

Preparation for a large survey does not happen overnight, in a few weeks, or even a year. When it comes to USDA's flagship data collection effort, the [Census of Agriculture](#), this is especially true. USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) started preparing for the 2022 Census of Agriculture in 2018, when NASS was collecting data for the 2017 Ag Census. NASS's census, research, and methodology divisions immediately began evaluating content, design, and delivery of the census questionnaire and associated materials for possible improvement. This is the regular cycle of the vital, once-every-five-year Census of Agriculture.

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Over the last two months, 36,000 producers received the 2022 Census of Agriculture Content Test. This sample of producers represents many U.S. agriculture segments. When using a sample to represent a population in statistics, every response matters. Respondents in this Content Test represent not only their own operations, but the operations of hundreds of farmers and ranchers like them.

There are several tests running concurrently through spring, addressing specific producer requests, technological trends, and more. At the request of U.S. farmers and ranchers, NASS is testing the inclusion of previously reported NASS data in the online questionnaire. The test will ensure continued accuracy and security before going live in the census or other NASS surveys. If the test is successful, the inclusion of the data could save producers even more time when responding online.

The mode, or way, NASS collects data is being tested as well. This Content Test includes a completely new mailer – the shortest NASS has ever developed with just a handful of screening questions. It will literally take those who receive it a minute or two to complete. The mailer will help determine if operations meet the definition of a farm, which will increase the accuracy of our sample list for future surveys and ensure a complete count for the upcoming census. Depending on test results, NASS may adopt the new mailer for future use to increase efficiency for producers.

There are several other tests being conducted, including the testing of commodity questions that may be included in the 2022 Census of Agriculture for the first time, such as hemp. NASS will consider all data collection test results for incorporation into the upcoming census. In accordance with federal law, NASS keeps all responses confidential and uses them for statistical purposes only. If you or someone you know needs assistance completing the Content Test survey, call 888-424-7828. Completing the Content Test is your voice, your opportunity to make a difference for all U.S. producers responding to future NASS surveys and censuses.

KEY DATES

2022 Census of Agriculture

[Sign Up To Be Counted](#) March 2021 – June 2022

Data Collection Begins December 19, 2022

Surveys Due February 2023

Data Release February 22, 2024