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3410-20

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### National Agricultural Statistics Service

#### Notice of Intent to Request Revision and Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection.

**AGENCY:** National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the intention of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to request revision and extension of a currently approved information collection, the Generic Clearance for Survey Research Studies. Burden hours and number of contacts will be increased to accommodate the proposed testing for the upcoming three year period.

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*] to be assured of consideration.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments, identified by docket number 0535-0248, by any of the following methods:

- E-mail: [ombofficer@nass.usda.gov](mailto:ombofficer@nass.usda.gov). Include docket number above in the subject line of the message.
- E-fax: (855) 838-6382.
- Mail: Mail any paper, disk, or CD-ROM submissions to: David Hancock, NASS Clearance Officer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 5336 South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C.

20250-2024.

- Hand Delivery/Courier: Hand deliver to: David Hancock, NASS Clearance Officer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 5336 South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-2024.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kevin L. Barnes, Associate Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, (202)720-2707. Copies of this information collection and related instructions can be obtained without charge from David Hancock, NASS - OMB Clearance Officer, at (202)690-2388 or at [ombofficer@nass.usda.gov](mailto:ombofficer@nass.usda.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

Title: Generic Clearance to Conduct Survey Research Studies.

OMB Control Number: 0535 - 0248.

Type of Request: To revise and extend a currently approved information collection for a period of three years.

Abstract: The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for a generic clearance that will allow NASS to rigorously develop, test, and evaluate its survey instruments and methodologies. The primary objectives of the National Agricultural Statistics Service are to prepare and issue State and national estimates of crop production, livestock production, economic statistics, and environmental statistics related to agriculture and to conduct the Census of Agriculture. This request is part of an on-going initiative to improve NASS surveys, as recommended by both its own guidelines and those of OMB.

In the last decade, state-of-the art techniques have been increasingly instituted by NASS and other Federal agencies and are now routinely used to improve the quality and timeliness of survey data and analyses, while simultaneously reducing respondents' cognitive workload and burden. The purpose of this generic clearance is to allow NASS to continue to adopt and use these state-of-the-art techniques to improve its current data collections efforts. These tests will also be used to aid in the development of new surveys.

NASS envisions using a variety of survey improvement techniques, as appropriate to the individual project under investigation. These include focus groups, cognitive and usability laboratory and field techniques, exploratory interviews, behavior coding, respondent debriefing, pilot surveys, and split-panel tests. After obtaining participants' permission, NASS plans to audio-record some cognitive interviews and usability interviews, in order to allow for more complete and accurate summaries of these qualitative interviews. This is a standard procedure for cognitive interviews and usability interviews at many other survey organizations, including Federal agencies. The consent form would be used for audio recording some cognitive interviews and usability interviews for research purposes. For these types of interviews, there will be no collection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) or any identifying information about the operator or operation.

In addition to the testing techniques listed above NASS will be including parallel testing with this renewal request. NASS is investigating methodologies using additional sources of farm operators (including web scraping). These methodologies will be tested against the NASS's current multi-frame methodology.

Following standard OMB requirements NASS will submit a change request to OMB individually for each survey improvement project it undertakes under this generic clearance and provide OMB with a copy of the questionnaire (if one is used), and all other materials describing the project.

**Authority:** These data will be collected under the authority of 7 U.S.C. 2204(a). Individually identifiable data collected under this authority are governed by Section 1770 of the Food Security Act of 1985, 7 U.S.C. 2276, which requires USDA to afford strict confidentiality to non-aggregated data provided by respondents. This Notice is submitted in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget regulations at 5 CFR part 1320. Participation in all surveys and studies conducted under this approval will be voluntary.

NASS also complies with OMB Implementation Guidance, "Implementation Guidance for Title V of the E-Government Act, Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (CIPSEA)," *Federal Register*, Vol. 72, No. 115, June 15, 2007, p. 33362.

**Estimate of Burden:** Public reporting burden for these collections of information is estimated to average from 15 minutes to 1.5 hours per respondent, dependant upon the survey and the technique used to test for that particular survey. The overall average is estimated to be 0.45 hours per response.

**Respondents:** Farmers, ranchers, farm managers, farm contractors, agri-businesses, and households.

**Estimated Number of Respondents:** 50,000.

**Frequency of Responses:** On occasion.

**Estimated Total Annual Burden:** 22,000 hours.

**Comments:** Comments are invited on: (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, technological or other forms of information technology collection methods.

All responses to this notice will become a matter of public record and be summarized in the request for OMB approval.

Signed at Washington, D.C., November 1, 2018.

**Kevin L. Barnes,**  
*Associate Administrator.*

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