

AMERICA'S FARMERS & RANCHERS: The 2017 Agriculture Census Needs Your Input!



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To ensure an accurate representation of the agriculture industry in this country, the United States Department of Agriculture's **National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)** has extended the [2017 Census of Agriculture](#) response deadline through spring. This survey is directed to all farmers and ranchers across the United States.

The Census of Agriculture, conducted every five years and sent to every farm and ranch in the country, is the only source of uniform, comprehensive, and impartial agriculture data down to the county level. For example, data from the 2012 survey showed that small farms make up eighty-eight percent (88%) of all U.S. farms; a farm is defined by USDA as a place where \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were raised and sold, or normally would have been sold during a year - 2017 in this case.

Lawmakers use census numbers to shape farm policies and programs. Information gathered from the census also is used to target services to rural residents. Additionally, companies and cooperatives use the facts and figures compiled by the survey to determine the locations of facilities that serve agriculture producers.

This year's Census of Agriculture aims to show an even more detailed account of the industry. NASS has extensively revised the online census questionnaire to make it more convenient for producers. **Producers will see a new question about military veteran status**, expanded questions about food marketing practices and questions about on-farm decision-making to better capture the roles and contributions of new farmers, women farmers, and others involved in running the business.

Farmers and ranchers can either **mail in** their completed census form or take advantage of new technology and time-saving features by **responding online** at <http://www.agcounts.usda.gov> . The online system calculates totals for the producer and skips sections that do not pertain to the operation.

Census data are relied on when elected officials and agency administrators make important decisions about farm policy, disaster relief, loan programs, research, technology development, infrastructure improvements, and more. Trade associations, extension educators, agribusinesses, even farmers and ranchers themselves have used census data in support of American agriculture.

Data from the 2017 edition of the census will be available in February 2019. All data collected through the Census of Agriculture are available online at www.agcensus.usda.gov and www.nass.usda.gov.

What will the 2017 Census of Agriculture reveal about changes over the last five years? The better the data, the more accurate the reports; the more accurate the reports, the more informed decisions will be. Now is the time to ensure an accurate representation of the industry — not just for the future of individual farm and ranch operations, but for surrounding communities as well.

Any producer who has a question about the form or who did not receive a questionnaire should contact the Census of Agriculture helpline at (888) 424-7828. **All farmers and ranchers are urged to respond to your Census of Agriculture today!**