



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USDA TO MEASURE THE ECONOMIC STATE OF U.S. AGRICULTURE

Des Moines, Iowa – Farmers will soon have the opportunity to set the record straight about the issues that affect them – and to help ensure that policies and programs are based on accurate, real-world data. This is the goal of the annual Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS), conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

ARMS is USDA’s primary source of information on production practices, resource use and economic well-being of America’s farm operations and farm households.

“Just about every federal policy and program that affects U.S. farmers and farm families is based on information from ARMS,” said Greg Thessen, director of the NASS Iowa Field Office. “This information is used not just by USDA and Congress, but also by farm groups, agribusinesses, universities and others who make the decisions that shape the future of Iowa agriculture.”

Between February 1 and March 31, NASS field offices will contact 37,000 farmers nationwide by mail or phone to complete the survey. Producers will be asked to provide data on their operating expenditures, production costs and household characteristics.

“All farm operators rely on quality information and sound government policies in order to run a successful business. That’s why participation in ARMS is so important,” Thessen explained. “Producer participation in ARMS ensures that decisions affecting farmers, their families, their businesses and their communities are based on the facts, straight from the source.”

As with all NASS surveys, information provided by respondents is confidential by law. NASS safeguards the confidentiality of all responses, ensuring that no individual producer or operation can be identified. All NASS reports are available online at: www.nass.usda.gov.

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Agricultural Resource Management Survey

United States Department of Agriculture

National Agricultural Statistics Service

The Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS), conducted by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), is USDA's primary source of information on the production practices, resource use and economic well-being of America's farm operations and farm households. The survey targets selected commodities on a rotating basis to collect data on costs of production. This year, NASS will collect information on operating expenditures and production costs from beef cow/calf operations and tobacco producers. Additionally, for the first time, USDA will explore the production of crops for bioenergy by collecting data on land management and marketing channels for corn and soybean operations.

HOW ARE THE DATA COLLECTED?

NASS will collect data on the economic well-being of approximately 37,000 farms in the 48 contiguous states beginning in late December and continuing through the end of April. Producers will have the option of responding via one of the following data collection methods:

- Mail – Participants fill out and mail back the questionnaire that was mailed to them.
- Internet – Secure, online reporting is the timeliest, most cost-effective method.
- Personal interviews – An interview with an enumerator may be conducted to assist with data collection.

The information collected about specific commodities varies somewhat from state to state. But all participating producers will be asked to provide data on their farm operating costs, capital improvements, assets and debts for agricultural production, as well as farm-related income, government payments, off-farm income and operator and household characteristics for the previous year. The producers of corn and soybeans selected for the bioenergy portion of the survey will be asked to provide information on land management, co-products and marketing channels for the past three years.

HOW IS THE INFORMATION USED?

The information from ARMS is used not just by USDA, but also by Congress, farm groups, agribusinesses and others who make the decisions that shape the future of U.S. agriculture. In fact, just about every federal policy and program that affects U.S. farmers and farm families is based on ARMS data. For example:

- When considering federal disaster assistance for producers, policymakers rely on ARMS as a source of baseline data.
- USDA's Office of Energy Policy and New Uses relies on ARMS data to estimate farmers' annual expenses for gasoline, diesel, natural gas, propane and other fuels.
- ARMS provides annual cost-of-production estimates required by Congress for more than 15 commodities covered under farm-support legislation.
- ARMS data underpin USDA's estimates of net farm income and demonstrate agriculture's contribution to the gross domestic product.

The information provided by survey respondents is confidential by law. NASS safeguards the privacy of all responses and publishes data only in aggregate form, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified.

NASS will publish the farm economic data in the annual *Farm Production Expenditures* report, to be released August 6, 2009. All reports are available through the NASS web site: www.nass.usda.gov. For more information on NASS surveys and reports, call the NASS Agricultural Statistics Hotline at (800) 727-9540.