



Key Accomplishments

FY 2000

The mission of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is to provide timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture.

To achieve this, NASS administers the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) program of collecting and publishing current national, State, and county agricultural statistics. In addition to the annual statistics program, NASS began conducting the census of agriculture, previously conducted by the Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce, in fiscal year (FY) 1997. The census of agriculture, conducted every 5 years, provides comprehensive, local-level data on agricultural commodities across America.

NASS's statistical data are essential to the public and private sectors for making effective policy, production, and marketing decisions on agricultural commodities.

Below are listed activities completed in FY 2000, plus those major reports which led to FY 2001 results.

Goal 1: To promote an agricultural food and fiber system that is productive and highly competitive in the global economy.

New Agricultural Statistics. The 2001 Agricultural Statistics Board Calendar lists all report release dates. More 2001 Monthly Crop Production reports will be released on the tenth of the month rather than the eleventh, and fewer reports will be released on Fridays. New report highlights include:

- ! In 2000, NASS published the first U.S. statistics on the percent of acres planted with genetically modified herbicide resistant, insect resistant, and stacked gene seed varieties for corn, soybeans, and cotton. These estimates were also published for each of the 11 major corn producing States, 14 major soybean producing States, and 7 major cotton producing States. New data for 2001 were included in the 2001 *March Prospective Plantings* and *June Acreage* reports.
- ! NASS conducted its first Nursery Production Survey in the 17 major producing States in the spring of 2001. Nursery and floriculture chemical use data were also collected for the first time in six States.
- ! A new Monthly Hog Survey collects information on the size of the breeding herd, sows and gilts mated the prior month, sows farrowed, pigs per litter, and pig crop. Publication began in December 2000, and will continue on the last Friday of each month.
- ! The December *Hogs and Pigs* report and the January *Cattle* report now have additional breakouts for larger size operations at the U.S. level for statistics on number of operations and size of herd.

- ! The July *Cattle* report now includes information for the 11 largest cattle States in addition to the United States. The published information includes total inventory of cattle and calves, all cows, beef cows, milk cows, and calf crop.
- ! A question on the number of beef and milk replacement heifers expected to calve during the year was added to the January *Cattle* Survey and the estimate published for the United States in the January 2001 *Cattle* report. Also, information on feeder cattle grazing on small grains on January 1 in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas was published in the January 2001 *Cattle* report. Finally, as part of the January 2001 *Cattle* Survey, additional questions were asked concerning losses of cattle to predators, which NASS published in the *Cattle Predator Loss* report in spring 2001.
- ! County estimates will now be available each year for total cattle, beef cows, and milk cows for all States accounting for one percent or more of the Nation's total for these classes.
- ! The February *Milk Production* report now provides the percent of U.S. production by size of operations.
- ! The monthly *Canadian Cattle on Feed* and quarterly *Canadian Hog* reports are now available on the NASS Web site.
- ! Detailed information for chicken and turkey parts will be added to the monthly *Cold Storage* report in 2001. Currently, these data are only published as "other chicken" and "other turkey."
- ! A biweekly Milkfat or Cream Survey began on May 3, 2001, to provide statistics on the price per hundredweight of heavy cream (40 percent butterfat) and volume purchased.

Internet. Customer demand for accessible and timely information on the Internet—NASS's primary data dissemination channel—continued to grow in 2000. "Today's Reports" is the most frequently visited site on the NASS homepage. The two most popular national reports are *Crop Production* (2,512 subscribers, an increase of nearly 30 percent from 1999) and *Crop Progress* (2,066 subscribers, up 21 percent from 1999).

A redesign of the census of agriculture homepage put new reports online and made census information easier to find. Publications added to the Web site include the *1998 Censuses of Agriculture in Puerto Rico, Guam, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands*; the *1998 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey*; the *1998 Censuses of Horticulture and Aquaculture* (the first census of the aquaculture industry); the *1999 Census of Agriculture in American Samoa*; tabulations from the *1997 Census of Agriculture* by ZIP code and congressional district; and a "Quick Facts" slide show on Hispanic operators.

E-mail subscriptions continue to increase as, in contrast, the number of paper subscriptions decrease. In September 2000, there were 75,633 national-level reports e-mailed to subscribers. The Mann Library at Cornell University archives national-level reports and provides the e-mail subscription service for NASS, ERS, and the World Agricultural Outlook Board under a cooperative agreement.

NASS updated and populated additional data sets in the online database, which contains published crops, livestock, and price information. The online database allows customers to create customized tabulations at the U.S., State, and county level. As the popularity of the database grows, NASS receives many compliments on this timely, customer-driven service.

Also, NASS modified all crop weather reports for placement on the "weather.com" Web site which leads to more access and awareness of USDA products.

Public Relations. NASS centralized marketing and public relations activities to streamline processes and conserve resources by eliminating duplicate efforts from the State Statistical Offices (SSOs). The main focus has been to increase communication of survey benefits through the media, in writing, and in person.

NASS prepares communications packages for the SSOs to use when promoting surveys to producers and associations. These packages include electronic presentations, talking points, brochures, public service advertisements, media releases, suggested interview questions for reporters, pre-survey letters, and other tools to communicate the purpose and, most importantly, benefits of agricultural surveys. These products are disseminated electronically to all SSOs.

Top 100 Project. To increase the quality of statistical data, NASS began targeting respondent relations with the top 100 producers in various commodities. This strategy was applied to the new Monthly Hog Survey. The goal is to establish a firm rapport and maintain cooperation with the leading producers.

Permanent Puerto Rico Staff. In August 2000, NASS staff began permanent operations in Puerto Rico. For over a year, NASS worked closely with the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture (PRDA) and the Puerto Rico Planning Board to establish a cooperative agreement to support agricultural statistics in Puerto Rico. Staff members are now working to plan the next census of agriculture in Puerto Rico and support the enhancement of statistical programs with the PRDA.

Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics. In April 2000, the Committee made recommendations on the census of agriculture content and procedures, Indian reservation coverage, NASS confidentiality and data use principles, and the use of mandatory business reporting. The Committee membership includes diverse representation from commodity organizations, academia, farm organizations, farm policy analysts, agricultural economists, rural sociologists, state agriculture representatives, and agricultural-related business and marketing experts.

Response Research. With a steady increase in demand for agricultural information and a steady decline in the number of farm operators, NASS is developing a detailed Respondent Burden Tracking and Management System to identify, track, analyze, understand, and ultimately better manage and minimize respondent burden.

To gather data on producer opinions and awareness of NASS and the SSOs, questions were added to the

September 2000 Quarterly Agricultural Survey in four States: Alabama, Indiana, Nebraska, and Oregon. This research will help shape future public relations and outreach campaigns to enhance response and increase awareness in the farm and ranch community of the benefits of these surveys and the usefulness and accessibility of agricultural statistics.

Data Editing Improvements. Development on an automated edit and imputation system, the Agricultural Generalized Imputation Edit System (AGGIES), continued in FY 2000 with a new focus on its potential to edit the 2002 Census of Agriculture. AGGIES offers potential improvements to editing and imputation for the Agency's sample survey and census programs. This fully automated approach minimizes extensive manual data review and the functions are performed objectively allowing for consistency in the editing process. It can be applied to any survey, thereby conserving resources through the development and maintenance of a single system. This common approach to editing and imputation will provide high quality, consistent results across all Agency programs.

Questionnaire Improvements. NASS provided questionnaire pre-testing classes to statisticians in the Agency to foster development of questionnaires that are easily understood and completed by respondents, while providing the data required to support NASS's statistics program. This training aided in the Agency's sample survey and census programs, especially in refining the Nursery and Greenhouse Survey and 2002 Census of Agriculture questionnaires.

Quick Facts Series. New brochures in the *Quick Facts* series include topics such as Hispanic farms, irrigation, aquaculture, horticulture, and Puerto Rico agriculture. These products are popular with the general audience because of their visual appeal, interest, and brevity.

Special State Surveys. In cooperation with State Departments of Agriculture, Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, and industry groups, NASS conducted 111 special surveys in FY 2000 covering such varied issues as customer service, farm safety and health, pesticide use, county estimates, nursery/horticulture, farm finance, and specialty crops. These surveys augment NASS's core statistical program, enable the Agency to be responsive to local or emergency data needs and eliminate wasteful duplication of effort.

FY 2000 Special Surveys, by Survey Type	Number of Surveys
Seeds, Field Crop, Vegetables	18
Fruits and Nuts	20
County Estimates	7
Cropping Practices, Pesticide Use	3
Livestock, Poultry	7
Safety, Health, Disability	3
Nursery and Floriculture	3
Farm Finance, Land Values	4
Miscellaneous	46
TOTAL	111

Data Lab Consultation. The Data Lab provides customized tabulations of data from over 130 surveys and the census of agriculture to meet customers' special data needs. In FY 2000, NASS's Data Lab served a number of agencies including: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Congressional Budget Office (CBO), General Accounting Office (GAO), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), USDA Office of Outreach, USDA Office of Civil Rights, and the Office of Risk Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis.

Consulting on Loan Subsidy Estimates. NASS completed statistical consulting services for the budget divisions of Rural Development (RD) and FSA, leading to improvements to the cash flow model for direct loans and statistically defensible inputs to the models.

Goal 2: To promote a safe food system and a secure agricultural production system.

Agricultural Practices Statistics. The first Fruit and Vegetable Agricultural Practices Survey was conducted in the 14 major producing States, which account for 80-85 percent of the Nation's fresh fruit and vegetable production. This survey is critical to establish a baseline of grower and packer food handling practices related to fresh fruit and vegetable production. Survey results were published in June 2001. A follow-up survey is planned for late 2001.

Chemical Use Statistics. Twelve vegetable crops and seven States were added to the 2000 Vegetable Chemical Use Survey to address foods identified as important to the diets of infants and children by the Food Quality Protection Act. Also, a Post-Harvest Chemical Use Survey for peanuts in 13 States and rice in 6 States was completed in 2000, similar to previous surveys for oats, soybeans, corn, wheat, apples, and potatoes.

Swine and Swine Facility Chemical Use Study data was collected and released in December 2000.

Swine Health and Practices Survey. NASS conducted a National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) Swine Survey under contract for APHIS to study health and management practices in the swine industry. NASS collected general health management information from swine producers in 17 States. NASS provided sample selection, questionnaire development, data collection, data keying, and editing services. APHIS veterinarians completed follow-up interviews with consenting respondents to collect biological samples from those operations.

Sheep Loss Surveys. NASS conducted two surveys under contract for APHIS to study sheep death loss. The Wildlife Damage Survey focused on sheep loss to predators in 49 States, and the NAHMS Sheep Survey collected data on death loss by causes other than predators. NASS provided sample selection, questionnaire development, data collection, data keying, editing, and summarization services. NASS published a report on predator losses for APHIS.

International Assistance. NASS provided technical assistance and training to improve agricultural statistics in 10 countries. Short-term assignments supported work in China, Ecuador, Ethiopia,

Kazakhstan, Mexico, Nicaragua, South Africa, Russia, Ukraine, and Venezuela. In addition, NASS's International Programs Office also coordinated and/or conducted training programs in the United States for 140 visitors representing 23 countries.

Goal 3: To provide a healthy population through improved nutrition.

ARS - Nutrient Data Laboratory. NASS provided continued statistical consultation to ARS's Nutrient Data Laboratory by designing and implementing national level plans for sampling commodity foods and fresh produce for the laboratory's National Food and Nutrient Analysis Program. NASS developed sample designs and data collection procedures for within-store sampling of fresh produce, and provided consultation and training on aggregating nutrient data from different sources in conjunction with the laboratory's Architecture and Integration Management Nutrient Data Bank System. NASS also began developing a sample design of Native American tribes for traditional Native American foods.

Goal 4: To foster an agricultural system that protects natural resources and the environment.

Land Categorization Satellite Maps. Data from the Landsat satellite were categorized into crop types for two new States: Indiana and Iowa. This project was possible through resource sharing and partnerships between the Illinois State government, Iowa State University, Purdue University, Illinois and Indiana Federal and State offices, and NASS's Research and Development Division. The project supports improved county-level acreage estimates from NASS and a new geographic information systems (GIS) cropland data layer. These GIS data are on CD-ROM for public distribution. GIS data users often combine the cropland data layer with other data layers, such as soils, weather contours, transportation and road networks, watershed boundaries, and more to help address specific issues such as water quality, location of new plants, etc. Other States in the program are Arkansas, Illinois, Mississippi, North Dakota, and New Mexico.

Goal 5: To increase the capacity of communities, families, and individuals to enhance their economic well-being and quality of life.

Expanded Census Reports on Horticulture, Irrigation, Aquaculture, and Land Ownership. Three census of agriculture follow-on studies were released in FY 2000:

! The first ever *1998 Census of Aquaculture* was released on February 1. This special census responded to the intense need for accurate measurements of the aquaculture sector, which grew from \$45 million in value of products sold in 1974 to more than \$978 million in 1998. This census covered catfish, trout, and tropical fish, and producers also listed any other food-type fish or aquaculture products sold from their operations.

- ! The *1998 Census of Horticultural Specialties* was released on March 31, providing the first detailed picture of this industry in a decade.
- ! The *1998 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey* was released on November 8, 1999, at the International Irrigation Expo in Orlando, FL. It supplements basic irrigation data collected from all operators during the census of agriculture.

Results from the fourth and final follow-on study, the *1999 Agricultural Economic and Land Ownership Survey* (AELOS), released in August 2001, provided the first in-depth look at land ownership since 1987. All data from the census and follow-on studies are provided on the NASS homepage at www.usda.gov/nass/ under "Census of Agriculture."

Congressional District Tabulations. NASS released data from the 1997 Census of Agriculture by congressional district on the NASS homepage. These statistics cover operator and farm characteristics, selected livestock inventories, and selected crops harvested.

Optical Character Recognition on 2002 Census Content Test. NASS created an optical character recognition (OCR) report form for the 2002 Census of Agriculture Content Test. NASS worked with the Bureau of the Census' National Processing Center to refine the forms for the 2002 Content Test. Criteria for creating this type of form had no precedent in previous designs. This technology offers NASS the potential to significantly reduce resources needed to capture data during the 2002 Census of Agriculture.

PRISM/Census Planning. During the past year, NASS concentrated efforts on the Project to Reengineer and Integrate Statistical Methods (PRISM), which is designed to streamline and improve the quality of census and survey processes. Staff identified and began developing 15 major component parts for a coordinated, more efficient system.

Expanded Statistics on Injuries and Women. NASS is planning a Minority Childhood Injury and Occupational Health Survey in 2001 in cooperation with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to collect data on childhood injuries occurring on farms operated by minorities.

In cooperation with Penn State University, NASS is conducting a Women on U.S. Farms study in 2001 to expand the knowledge about participation of women in U.S. agriculture. Highlights of this study will be published jointly by NASS and Penn State University.

Goal 6: Fully utilize the capabilities of a diverse workforce and available resources to provide top quality agricultural statistics and service.

Recruiting and Hiring. NASS continued to make great strides in recruiting and hiring a diverse group of new employees in the four major job series: GS-1529, GS-1530, GS-1531, and GS-0334. Of the 60 new employees hired in FY 2000, 70 percent were women and minorities. Most new employees are recruited by State Statisticians through local universities, with emphasis on recruiting qualified students from the 1890 Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Training. NASS spent 3.4 percent of its budget on training activities in FY 2000 to develop and maintain a technically competent and skilled staff which is critical for efficiently managing its resources and providing top quality agricultural statistics and service. In FY 2000, orientation and basic training was completed for most new employees, as well as ongoing supervisory, management, statistical, and computer training for both inexperienced and experienced employees.

NASS Climate Survey. NASS chartered an Organizational Climate Survey Evaluation Team to develop recommendations to improve NASS's working environment based on a 1999 Organizational Climate Survey of NASS employees conducted independently by the University of Maryland. The team formed a list of core values (trust, respect, unbiasedness, service, and teamwork) and recommendations to embrace our diverse workforce and emphasize improved agricultural statistics and service. The final report was distributed to all NASS employees in March 2000.

Customer Service. In partnership with the Federal Consulting Group and the University of Michigan, NASS conducted its first American Customer Satisfaction Survey to evaluate the quality of current service and identify areas for improvement. NASS's score was 72, comparable with the private sector score of 72.1 and 3.3 points higher than the 1999 Federal Government index of 68.6. These scores are based on the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). A sample of data users was selected from NASS report subscribers and patrons of the NASS Customer Service Center.

Customer service highlights for 2000, include:

- ! The NASS toll-free hotline at Headquarters recorded over 6,000 calls (1,000 more than the previous year) for information. The main e-mail box for NASS customer service received over 2,600 inquiries (double the number in 1999).
- ! NASS continued strong public outreach efforts by attending, presenting, or exhibiting at over 30 national and hundreds of regional and State conferences and seminars. These conferences covered producer organizations, trade organizations, and professional associations.
- ! The NASS Open Forum for Data Users is held annually in Chicago, IL. Panel participants from several data-providing agencies provide updates on pending changes in various statistical and informational programs and seek comments and input from data users. The 2000 Forum attracted approximately 60 attendees, and included panelists from NASS, the Agricultural Marketing Service, the Economic Research Service, the Foreign Agricultural Service, the World Agricultural Outlook Board, the Foreign Trade Division of the Census Bureau, and the National Weather Service.

Want more information?

Visit our Web site at www.usda.gov/nass/

Or call the NASS Hotline at 1-800-727-9540