

Census Gives Farmers A Voice In Their Future

By USDA-NASS

"I encourage every farmer and rancher in Mississippi to stand up and be counted in the 2007 Census of Agriculture. The Census gives you a voice in shaping your future. By participating in it, you provide vital information needed by national and local leaders to make decisions about economic development, funding availability, farm policy and other key issues that affect Mississippi's rural communities. Your 2007 census form should arrive by mail in early January



2008. Please complete and return it by February 4, 2008. This is your chance to help ensure a better future for you and your community. The Census of Agriculture is your voice, your future, and your responsibility."

-Lester Spell, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce-

Mississippi's farmers and ranchers will soon have the opportunity to make their voices heard and help shape the future of agriculture for years to come.

That opportunity will come to their mailboxes in the form of the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Census is a complete count of the nation's farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, and other topics. It provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the nation.

"The Census of Agriculture provides information that is not available anywhere else - information that benefits agricultural producers and their communities in myriad ways," said Thomas Gregory, Director of the Mississippi Field Office of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

"For instance, policy-makers factor Census data into decisions concerning agricultural and rural programs. Community planners use Census data to target needed services to rural residents. Companies rely on Census data when determining where to locate their operations. And farmers themselves can use Census data to help make critical decisions about their businesses," he explained.

NASS will mail out Census forms on December 28, 2007, to collect data for the 2007 calendar year. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2008. Producers can

return their forms by mail or, for the first time, they have the convenient option of filling out the Census online at a secure web site.

"We're committed to making this Census the best count ever. It's about the future of agriculture and rural communities in our state," Gregory said. "Regardless of how large or small their operation is or what kind of products they produce, Mississippi farmers and ranchers will help themselves and their communities by filling out the Census of Agriculture and returning it promptly," he added.



CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE
YOUR VOICE. YOUR FUTURE. YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.

2007

For more information about the 2007 Census of Agriculture, please contact the NASS Mississippi Field Office at (601) 965-4575 or visit www.agcensus.usda.gov online.

Frequently Asked Questions About The Census of Agriculture

What is the Census of Agriculture?

The Census of Agriculture, taken every five years, is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, and many other areas. For America's farmers and ranchers,

the Census of Agriculture is their voice, their future, and their responsibility.

Who uses Census of Agriculture data?

Census data is used by all those who serve farmers and rural communities - federal, state and local governments, agribusinesses, trade associations, and many others. For instance, companies and cooperatives use the information to determine the locations of facilities that will serve agricultural producers. Community planners use the information to target needed services to rural residents. USDA uses the information to ensure that local service centers are staffed at appropriate levels. Legislators use the information when shaping farm policies and programs. And, of course, farmers and ranchers can use Census data to help make informed decisions about the future of their own operations.

How is the Census conducted?

Report forms for the 2007 Census of Agriculture will be mailed to farm and ranch operators on December 28, 2007, to collect data for the 2007 calendar year. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2008. Producers can return their forms by mail or,

for the first time, they have the option of filling out the Census online via a secure web site.

Must I respond to the Census?

Yes. United States law (Title 7, U.S. Code) requires all those who receive a Census report form to respond even if they did not operate a farm or ranch in 2007.

What if I only have a small operation or do not participate in government farm programs?

The Census of Agriculture is the responsibility of every farmer and rancher, regardless of the size or type of operation. For Census purposes, a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the Census year.

Where can I find Census of Agriculture data?

Census of Agriculture data is available through the NASS field office in your state, as well as many depository libraries, universities and state government offices. It is also available online at www.nass.usda.gov or www.agcensus.usda.gov. For additional information on the Census of Agriculture or any NASS survey, call the Agricultural Statistics Hotline at (800) 727-9540.

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YOUR COMPLIMENTARY
2008 CALENDAR!!!**

**Have a Merry Christmas from
Commissioner Lester Spell
and the employees of the
Mississippi Department of
Agriculture and Commerce!**

