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# Why Corn and Grain Producers Should Respond to National Agricultural Statistics Service Surveys

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As a statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts hundreds of surveys each year. These questionnaires ask farmers, ranchers and others in the agricultural industry about topics such as agricultural production and inventories, the prices farmers pay and receive, farm labor and wages, farm income and finances, kinds and amounts of chemicals used, among many others. NASS data on agricultural prices, crop acreage and production, grain stocks, and cattle and swine production are among the Principal Federal Economic Indicators. Every five years, NASS also conducts the Census of Agriculture, a complete count of farms, ranches, and agricultural production in the country. The results of these surveys provide many benefits to farmers and ranchers.

- Farmers, ranchers, policymakers, community planners, agribusinesses, researchers, USDA, and other federal and state government agencies use aggregated NASS data from farmers and ranchers for planning, market assessment, decision making, research, and many other purposes.
- High-quality statistical information is essential for the smooth operation of federal farm programs, as well as in planning and administering federal and state programs in areas such as consumer protection, conservation and environmental quality, trade, education, and recreation.
- NASS information contributes to a stable economic climate and reduces the uncertainties and risks in producing, marketing, and distributing commodities. Objective, timely, and equally available to all users, NASS data help level the playing field.



## Here are just a few of the ways USDA uses NASS data to serve farmers and ranchers directly.

NASS provides the Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency with important statistics that they then use to serve farmers and ranchers. As always, individual responses to NASS surveys are kept confidential. Data are provided in aggregate form so that no individual operation or operator can be identified.

## Farm Programs Depend on Farmer-Reported NASS State and County Data

- **County Loan Rates for Wheat, Feed Grains and Oilseeds**—NASS production data by county are used to ensure that the weighted average loan rates across all counties equal the national average loan rate specified in the Farm Bill.
- **Regional Loan Rates for Pulses**—NASS production data provide regional weights to ensure that the loan rates across all regions average to the national average specified in the Farm Bill.
- **Loan Repayment Rates**—NASS price data are used to estimate loan repayment rates for peanuts and rice.
- **Program Parameters for ARC and PLC (2014 programs)**—NASS season average prices, plus county-level acreage and production data, are used to establish the Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) revenue guarantees and payment rates. For the Price Loss Coverage (PLC), season average prices are also used to determine payment rates.

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- **Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)**—NASS price data are used, where available, to place a value on producer yield losses and hence have a key role in determining individual producer payments.
- **Livestock Disaster Assistance Programs**—NASS price data by animal type are used to value losses under the livestock disaster programs and thus have a key role in determining individual producer payment amounts.
- **Dairy Programs**—In the 2014 Farm Bill, under the new Margin Protection Program, NASS data on average feed costs, which are derived from the published prices received report, and actual dairy production margins are used to determine individual producer-level payments. In addition, farm size breakouts are used to determine program costs.
- **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**—The NASS cash rents survey is used as a benchmark for counties to evaluate as a first step in determining CRP rental payments for contracts entered into in a given time period.
- **County Committee Elections**—Census of Agriculture data on race, ethnicity, and gender are used to identify counties where certain groups are under-represented on county committees and where member appointments are recommended to the Secretary.
- **Beginning Farmer Ownership Loan Eligibility**—The Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (CONACT) limits beginning farmer ownership loans to applicants who own land not in excess of 30 percent of the average size farm in the county. Average farm size data from the Census of Agriculture are used.
- **Guaranteed Loan Limit Adjustments**—The CONACT ties the maximum guaranteed loan limit to the NASS Prices Paid by Farmers index. The limit is adjusted annually based upon the index.
- **Production Loss Calculations**—The CONACT specifies that the 12-month seasonal average prices for commodities be used in calculating crop production losses for emergency loan eligibility and maximum loan amounts. NASS is the source for the 12-month seasonal weighted prices.
- **Funding Targets and Allocations**—The CONACT specifies funding targets for socially disadvantaged applicants; some targets are based on the proportion of minority farm operators to total farm operators. Data from the Census of Agriculture are used. Similar data are also used as part of the formulas in allocating all loan funds to states. The number of farm operators, number of tenant operators, and farm income statistics are used in these allocation formulas.
- **Farm Business Planning**—In loan repayment determinations, when an applicant lacks production history or records, NASS data for county or state average yields/production is one source that may be used in projecting future production rates. This is especially important when the proposal involves an enterprise not typical for a particular location or area. Price data may be used as well if local or regional pricing data are not readily available.
- **Farm Appraisals**—Farm real estate appraisers may use state- or county-level NASS data as a part of their analysis in determining the value of farm land and facilities.





## Risk Management Programs Depend on Farmer-Reported NASS Data

Weather and growing conditions, disease and pest outbreaks, and consumer purchasing power are among the many factors that can put agricultural production, marketing, and consumption at risk. Up-to-date agriculture statistics on acreage, yield, production, crop conditions and price information help farmers make informed decisions in response to uncertain market conditions, and help government agencies manage the conservation, crop insurance, emergency assistance, revenue support, and other programs that help mitigate the risks farmers face. Statisticians, working with researchers, develop the scientific and economic models and data needed to determine control strategies and interventions to prevent foodborne contamination from pathogens, toxins, and chemicals.

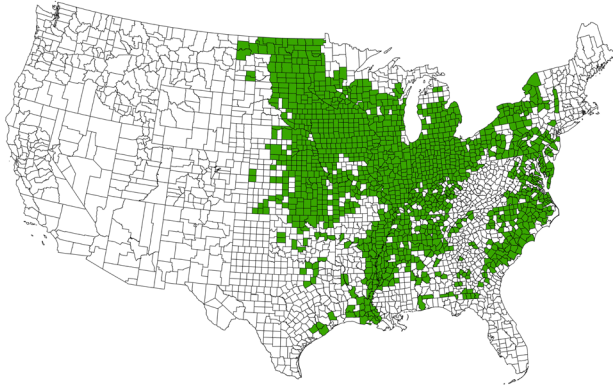
The Risk Management Agency uses NASS data to provide federal crop insurance to America's farmers and ranchers. These data are used to establish yields and to aid in the establishment of price elections for various crops.

- **Area Risk Protection Insurance (ARPI) Plan.** NASS county estimates data are the primary source of yield data for ARPI, a program that provides protection against widespread loss of revenue or widespread loss of yield in a county. RMA uses NASS county estimates to establish premium rates and expected yields as well as to determine whether a payment (indemnity) is due.

- **Actual Revenue History (ARH) Pilot Program.** For crops covered under the ARH pilot program, the policy specifically references the use of NASS prices from the Noncitrus Fruits and Nuts report. Under certain conditions, prices from this report are used to determine whether a payment (indemnity) is due. Although RMA is able to use price data reported by ARH program participants, the Noncitrus Fruits and Nuts report is the preferred source since it is transparent and publicly available.
- **Establishment of Transitional Yields.** RMA uses yield data reported by crop insurance program participants to calculate transitional yields. However, in areas with limited participation or for new programs, NASS data are used to guide transitional yield calculations.
- **Establishment of Price Elections on Non-Program Crops.** RMA uses NASS reports to set price elections. Price data, such as that found in either the Noncitrus Fruits and Nuts report or Vegetable Summary are essential for many crops. Other reports (stock reports for potato, rice, peas) are used to gain a better understanding of crop markets and guide determination of price elections.

## Soybeans 2017

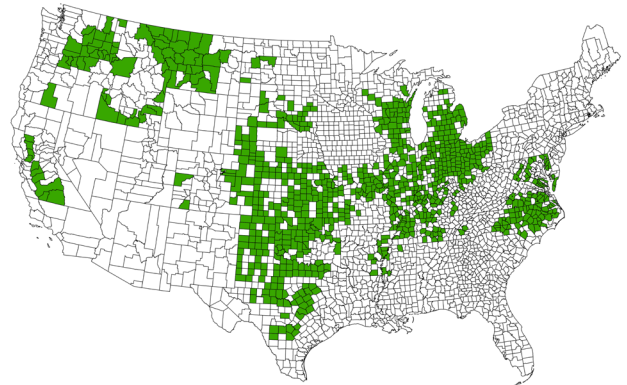
Counties with Published Yield per Harvested Acre



U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service

## Winter Wheat 2017

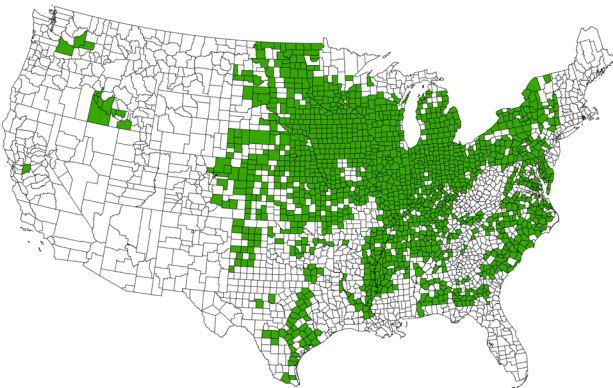
Counties with Published Yield per Harvested Acre



U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service

## Corn for Grain 2017

Counties with Published Yield per Harvested Acre



U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service

**Green**—The green color in these maps shows counties with USDA NASS-published yield-per-harvested-acre data.

**White**—The white color shows counties with no published yield-per-harvested-acre data.

There are three primary reasons for a lack of published data:

- areas not included in the NASS county estimating program for a particular state
- no production
- exclusion to maintain confidentiality/nondisclosure of individual identifying information.

When enough producers do not respond to surveys, NASS is not able to publish data. Without data, agencies such as USDA's Risk Management Agency or Farm Service Agency do not have information on which to base the programs that serve those same producers. Producers lose out when there is no data to determine accurate rates for loans, disaster payments, crop insurance price elections and more.

### Confidentiality

NASS is required by law (Title 7, U.S. Code, and CIPSEA, Public Law 107-347) to keep every survey respondent's information confidential. This includes names, addresses, personal identifiers, and reported data. Only authorized persons working for or on behalf of NASS can access individual data records and only for approved official purposes. Anyone who discloses the information is subject to a fine, a jail term, or both. In addition, data is published in aggregate form only and individual information is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act. For more on how we protect your confidentiality, please visit: [www.nass.usda.gov/confidentiality](http://www.nass.usda.gov/confidentiality).



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