

Census Of Agriculture Forms To Be Mailed End Of December

PINE BLUFF, ARK.

Along with holiday mail, Arkansas residents will receive their 2012 Census of Agriculture forms around the end of December. Conducted every five years, the census is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. It looks at land use, ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures.

Completed forms are due by Feb. 4, 2013. Producers can return them by mail or fill out the census online via a secure website at www.ag-census.usda.gov. Individual responses will be kept confidential. The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) uses the information only for statistical purposes and publishes data only in tabulated totals. The report cannot be used for taxation, investigation or regulation.

Census data can be a valuable tool to help farmers and ranchers make informed decisions about the future of their operations. The information is used by all those who serve farmers and rural communities, including government agencies, community planners, agribusinesses, lenders, trade associations and many others.

"The true value of the Census of Agriculture is in the information it provides," says Becky

Cross, director the NASS Arkansas Field Office. "The Census charts trends in agriculture over time and provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive data for every county in the nation."

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.

Dr. Henry English, director of the Small Farm Program at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, urges farmers, especially small and minority farmers, to fill out and return census forms to NASS. "This information will help keep important programs and bring new ones to the area and to the state," he says.

"Census information helps in planning and justifying many programs aimed at small farmers," says Dr. English. "One factor used by organizations and agencies in justifying programs is the number of minority farmers in an area or state. Without the census data, some of the programs could be in jeopardy," says English. Δ



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