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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Economic Research Service

#### Notice of Intent To Seek Approval To Collect Information

**AGENCY:** Economic Research Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. No. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), this notice announces the Economic Research Service's (ERS) intention to request approval for a new information collection, the Application for Agriculture Market Information Survey, 1999, to analyze the market for economic information on agricultural commodities. The data will be used to assess how customers of agricultural economic information use and value information from a variety of government and private information sources. From this assessment, the ERS hopes to determine the most effective future role for USDA and ERS in economic information markets.

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by March 19, 1999, to be assured of consideration.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS:** Contact John Dunmore, Deputy Director for Program Management, Market and Trade Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1800 M Street NW, Room N5124, Washington, D.C. 20036-5831, 202-694-5200.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

*Title:* Application for Agriculture Market Information Survey, 1999.

*Type of Request:* Approval to collect information on the uses, types, and sources of economic information on agricultural markets.

*Abstract:* Title 7, Section 1622 of the United States Code authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to collect and disseminate marketing information for the purpose of anticipating and meeting consumer requirements. Such requirements include economic and marketing information on a variety of agriculture markets including those for commodities, farm inputs, and financial services. There are signs, however, that consumer demands for such information may be changing. These signs include the changing structure of commodity markets, the declining importance of commodity programs, rapidly evolving technology for information delivery, and the globalization of U.S. agriculture. To better identify the changes in these information needs, the ERS developed the Agricultural Market Information Project. The goals of this project are to analyze the current market for agricultural economic information and to determine the most effective role that the USDA and ERS should play in such information markets. By providing the marketing and economic information that agricultural decision-makers need, the USDA and ERS hope to better ensure that the U.S. food and agriculture sector effectively adapts to changing market structures, domestic policy reforms, and international trade conditions. Phase I of the Agricultural Market Information Project, to understand the use of and need for economic information within USDA, is largely complete. The ERS is now ready to enter Phase II of the project, a study of the market for economic information for users outside USDA. The ERS proposes the design and distribution of a survey instrument to collect information from consumers of economic information on commodity markets. The ERS has contracted with a private research firm with extensive experience in survey design and implementation, Mathematica Policy Research Inc., to design and conduct the survey. The survey will ask respondents how they use economic information, the types of information that they use, specific sources of information (USDA as well as other government and non-government sources), and how they value such information. Surveys will be mailed to members of several producer associations. Nonrespondents may be followed up by telephone interviews. Any information linking survey

responses to individuals will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone.

*Estimates of burden:* Public reporting burden for this data collection is estimated to average 20 minutes per response.

*Respondents:* A sample of members from agricultural producer associations.

*Estimated number of respondents:* 1,120.

*Estimated Total Annual Burden on respondents:* 373 hours.

Copies of the information to be collected can be obtained from John Dunmore, Deputy Director for Program Management, Market and Trade Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1800 M Street NW, Room N5124, Washington, D.C. 20036-5831, 202-694-5200.

*Comments:* Comments are invited on (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Department, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, such as through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to John Dunmore, Deputy Director for Program Management, Market and Trade Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1800 M Street NW, Room N5124, Washington, D.C. 20036-5831, 202-694-5204. All responses to this notice will be considered and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: January 6, 1999.

**Katherine Smith,**

*Director, Market and Trade Economics Division.*

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