

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**National Agricultural Statistics Service****Notice of Intent To Request Revision and Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection**

AGENCY: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the intention of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to request revision and extension of a currently approved information collection, the Generic Clearance for Survey Research Studies. Burden hours and number of contacts will be increased to accommodate the proposed testing for the upcoming three year period.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by January 14, 2019 to be assured of consideration.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments, identified by docket number 0535–0248, by any of the following methods:

- *Email:* ombofficer@nass.usda.gov.

Include docket number above in the subject line of the message.

- *E-fax:* (855) 838–6382.

- *Mail:* Mail any paper, disk, or CD-ROM submissions to: David Hancock, NASS Clearance Officer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 5336 South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250–2024.

- *Hand Delivery/Courier:* Hand deliver to: David Hancock, NASS Clearance Officer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 5336 South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250–2024.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kevin L. Barnes, Associate Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, (202) 720–2707. Copies of this information collection and related instructions can be obtained without charge from David Hancock, NASS—OMB Clearance Officer, at (202) 690–2388 or at ombofficer@nass.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Generic Clearance to Conduct Survey Research Studies.

OMB Control Number: 0535–0248.

Type of Request: To revise and extend a currently approved information collection for a period of three years.

Abstract: The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will request approval from the

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for a generic clearance that will allow NASS to rigorously develop, test, and evaluate its survey instruments and methodologies. The primary objectives of the National Agricultural Statistics Service are to prepare and issue State and national estimates of crop production, livestock production, economic statistics, and environmental statistics related to agriculture and to conduct the Census of Agriculture. This request is part of an on-going initiative to improve NASS surveys, as recommended by both its own guidelines and those of OMB.

In the last decade, state-of-the art techniques have been increasingly instituted by NASS and other Federal agencies and are now routinely used to improve the quality and timeliness of survey data and analyses, while simultaneously reducing respondents' cognitive workload and burden. The purpose of this generic clearance is to allow NASS to continue to adopt and use these state-of-the-art techniques to improve its current data collections efforts. These tests will also be used to aid in the development of new surveys.

NASS envisions using a variety of survey improvement techniques, as appropriate to the individual project under investigation. These include focus groups, cognitive and usability laboratory and field techniques, exploratory interviews, behavior coding, respondent debriefing, pilot surveys, and split-panel tests. After obtaining participants' permission, NASS plans to audio-record some cognitive interviews and usability interviews, in order to allow for more complete and accurate summaries of these qualitative interviews. This is a standard procedure for cognitive interviews and usability interviews at many other survey organizations, including Federal agencies. The consent form would be used for audio recording some cognitive interviews and usability interviews for research purposes. For these types of interviews, there will be no collection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) or any identifying information about the operator or operation.

In addition to the testing techniques listed above NASS will be including parallel testing with this renewal request. NASS is investigating methodologies using additional sources of farm operators (including web scraping). These methodologies will be tested against the NASS's current multi-frame methodology.

Following standard OMB requirements NASS will submit a change request to OMB individually for each survey improvement project it

undertakes under this generic clearance and provide OMB with a copy of the questionnaire (if one is used), and all other materials describing the project.

Authority: These data will be collected under the authority of 7 U.S.C. 2204(a). Individually identifiable data collected under this authority are governed by Section 1770 of the Food Security Act of 1985, 7 U.S.C. 2276, which requires USDA to afford strict confidentiality to non-aggregated data provided by respondents. This Notice is submitted in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104–13) and Office of Management and Budget regulations at 5 CFR part 1320. Participation in all surveys and studies conducted under this approval will be voluntary.

NASS also complies with OMB Implementation Guidance, "Implementation Guidance for Title V of the E-Government Act, Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (CIPSEA)," *Federal Register*, Vol. 72, No. 115, June 15, 2007, p. 33362.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for these collections of information is estimated to average from 15 minutes to 1.5 hours per respondent, dependant upon the survey and the technique used to test for that particular survey. The overall average is estimated to be 0.45 hours per response.

Respondents: Farmers, ranchers, farm managers, farm contractors, agri-businesses, and households.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 50,000.

Frequency of Responses: On occasion.

Estimated Total Annual Burden: 22,000 hours.

Comments: Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, 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; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, technological or other forms of information technology collection methods.

All responses to this notice will become a matter of public record and be summarized in the request for OMB approval.

Signed at Washington, DC, November 1, 2018.

Kevin L. Barnes,
Associate Administrator.

[FR Doc. 2018-24917 Filed 11-14-18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-20-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

Notice of Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed collection; comments requested.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Rural Business-Cooperative Service's intention to request an extension for a currently approved information collection.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by January 14, 2019 to be assured of consideration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Dickson, Rural Development Innovation Center—Regulatory Team, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, STOP 1522, Washington, DC 20250, Telephone: 202-690-4492, email: Thomas.Dickson@wdc.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Biorefinery, Renewable Chemical, and Biobased Product Manufacturing Assistance Program (Section 9003)

OMB Number: 0570-0065.

Expiration Date of Approval: March 31, 2019.

Type of Request: Revision of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: The purpose of this information collection is to obtain information necessary to evaluate loan applications to determine the eligibility of the applicant and the project for the program and to qualitatively assess the project's technical and financial merit to determine which projects should be funded.

Estimate of Burden: The following annual estimates are based on an average volume of activity which includes; 10 Phase 1 applications, 8 Phase 2 applications, and 1 new loan guarantees. Phase 1 applications are evaluated by the Agency to determine whether the Borrower is eligible, the proposed loan is for an eligible purpose, there is reasonable assurance of repayment ability, there is sufficient Collateral and equity, and the proposed

loan complies with all applicable statutes and regulations. Phase 2 applications are required for Phase I applicants who score favorable and are invited to submit a Phase 2 application. The Agency anticipates the number of respondents to fluctuate based on funding levels.

Respondents: Respondents for this data are lending institutions and for-profit businesses but also include individuals and corporations. The annual estimates below are for both subparts associated with this rule.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 11.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 17.7.

Estimated Number of Responses: 195.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 3,631 hours.

Comments: Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Rural Business-Cooperative Service's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments may be sent to Thomas Dickson, Rural Development Innovation Center—Regulatory Team, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, STOP 1522, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-1522.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Kimble Brown, Rural Development Innovation Center, Regulations Team, at (202) 692-0043 or email: Kimble.Brown@wdc.usda.gov.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: November 1, 2018.

Bette B. Brand,

Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service.

[FR Doc. 2018-24929 Filed 11-14-18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-XY-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

Notice of Solicitation of Applications for Inviting Applications for the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Programs for Fiscal Year 2019

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice is to invite applications for loans and grants under the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) Programs for fiscal year (FY) 2019, subject to the availability of funding. This notice is being issued in order to allow applicants sufficient time to leverage financing, prepare and submit their applications, and give the Agency time to process applications within FY 2019. Successful applications will be selected by the Agency for funding and subsequently awarded to the extent that funding may ultimately be made available through appropriations. An announcement on the website at <http://www.rd.usda.gov/newsroom/notices-solicitation-applications-nosas> will identify the amount received in the appropriations.

All applicants are responsible for any expenses incurred in developing their applications.

DATES: See under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section.

ADDRESSES: Submit applications in paper format to the USDA Rural Development State Office for the State where the Project is located. A list of the USDA Rural Development State Office contacts can be found at: <http://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cindy Mason at (202) 690-1433, cindy.mason@wdc.usda.gov, and Sami Zarour at (202) 720-9549, sami.zarour@wdc.usda.gov, Specialty Programs Division, Business Programs, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, MS 3226, Room 4204-South, Washington, DC 20250-3226, or call 202-720-1400. For further information on this notice, please contact the USDA Rural Development State Office in the State in which the applicant's headquarters is located.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Agency encourages applications that will support recommendations made in the Rural Prosperity Task Force report to help improve life in rural America,