

# AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION'S USDA-NASS WORKING GROUP EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Spurred by the concerns of farmers and ranchers nationwide, in 2020 the American Farm Bureau created a farmer-led Working Group to delve into the methodologies USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service uses to collect data and draft its reports.

The relationship between farmers and NASS is critical. NASS relies on farmer survey data as the basis for its reports. The more robust the data, the more reliable the reports, which is important for farmers making marketing plans and planting decisions based on NASS' information.

While USDA-NASS is considered the gold standard for agricultural statistics globally, its reputation among U.S. farmers and ranchers has diminished in recent years as its estimates of planted area, crop production, yields and inventory have too often sent markets spinning and left farmers questioning the data's

reliability. As farmers' trust in NASS wanes, so does their willingness to participate in NASS' survey data collection efforts.

After hearing from a variety of experts representing USDA, Capitol Hill, land-grant universities, trade associations and others, the Farm Bureau USDA-NASS Working Group developed several recommendations to help NASS restore farmer trust and engagement. At the heart of their recommendations is the need for the agency to be at the leading edge of technology adoption, data collection and statistical analysis, and to provide transparency, clarity and communication to its data providers and users. Simply put, farmers need to be able to easily input their data and know that it's going to be collected and analyzed in a secure, efficient and productive manner that gives them reliable information they can base critical decisions on.

## The Farm Bureau NASS Working Group Recommendations

**Increase transparency with the agricultural community** - NASS should help farmers understand how the agency arrives at the numbers reported and provide clarity on the relationship between aggregate, state, county and field-level reported numbers. If the numbers are not the most current due to a market event that occurred after the data collection period, NASS should note that or even delay the report release.

**Accelerate new and innovative technology adoption** - At a time when faster computers, speedier algorithms and access to better data and proprietary models give agricultural industry stakeholders, traders and the investment community a competitive advantage in commodity market analysis, NASS should have the best resources, information, data, software, hardware, talent and networks so that

it can accelerate the development of innovative survey techniques and analysis for the benefit of the agricultural community.

**Farm Bureau pledges partnership** - Farm Bureau is committed to being a partner for NASS by working to encourage farmers' accurate and timely participation in NASS' data collection efforts, encouraging lawmakers to provide NASS the funding it needs to upgrade its technology and hire and retain top-notch staff, participating in NASS advisory groups and continuing to consistently attend NASS data user meetings.

**Strengthen NASS for U.S. agriculture** - The implementation of the above recommendations will go a long way toward improving the great work already being done by NASS and strengthen the agency's position as a reliable collector and distiller of agricultural data, which will benefit farmers, ranchers and the industry as a whole. Transparency with the Agricultural Community

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