

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

**2023 Agricultural Resource
Management Survey**
Phase 3



Dear Enumerator,

Welcome! This guide will help you navigate the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) and assist you in getting the highest response rate and most accurate information possible. You play a vital role in this survey's success.

Your work gives farmers the opportunity to provide real-life data that will help shape the policies, programs, and issues that affect farms and ranches across the United States.

On behalf of the National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Economic Research Service, I want to thank you for your efforts to collect responses in a timely and organized manner.

Lance Honig
Acting Chairperson, Agricultural Statistics Board
National Agricultural Statistics Service
United States Department of Agriculture

Key Messages

ARMS is a complex survey, but it is possible to explain it in simple terms. The following key messages will be useful when approaching producers about the survey and explaining its purpose and benefits. Use the key messages to help facilitate dialogue, answer questions, and address concerns.

General

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and Economic Research Service (ERS) will conduct the ARMS survey beginning on December 27, 2023.
- By participating in the ARMS survey, farmers and ranchers have an opportunity to provide accurate, real-life data that will help shape the policies, programs, and issues that affect them.
- Farm organizations, researchers, other government agencies, members of Congress, and state and local officials will use the information from the ARMS survey to inform important decisions concerning the economic viability of American agriculture, rural communities, and other emerging issues.
- Every response counts. We encourage all producers who receive the survey to complete it promptly and accurately to help give a voice to U.S. agriculture.
- The information NASS collects for this survey is kept strictly confidential, as required by federal law. The results of this survey will be available for statistical purposes in aggregate form only, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified.
- NASS will publish the farm economic data in the annual Farm Production Expenditures report on July 26, 2024. All NASS reports are available online at nass.usda.gov/Publications.
- For more information on the ARMS surveys and reports, visit: nass.usda.gov/go/arms or ers.usda.gov/arms.

Why is ARMS important to producers?

Offering examples of the importance of the survey is critical when talking to producers. Above all, providing relevant benefits to producers will help you increase response rates. Here are some reasons to respond that enumerators have successfully used in the past.

- ARMS is the true measure of the health of the U.S. agriculture industry. More specifically, ARMS:
 - Determines the cost of producing various crop and livestock commodities.
 - Highlights financial burdens such as the price of fuel, feed, and other inputs.
 - Shows industry financial averages farmers can use for comparison purposes.
 - Provides real life data, not speculation.
- Policymakers have no other way of knowing the costs incurred by farmers and ranchers. They need this information to help them make informed decisions.
- Producers selected to take the survey are selected to represent other similar types and sizes of operations. Each producer speaks not only for themselves but for other farms as well. Every response is critical to ensure accuracy.
- While other NASS surveys estimate number of acres or inventories, ARMS is the only survey that assesses the economic state of the agriculture sector and the well-being of farmers in the United States.
- Policymakers can use financial information published in NASS and ERS reports to retain or alter farm programs and adjust financial assistance to farmers during tough economic times.
- Completing this survey gives elected officials information they can use to help you and the entire agriculture industry.

Tips from the Field

Simply having good information and relevant messages isn't always enough to convince a producer to respond to the survey. Here are a few tips from seasoned field enumerators that you may find useful when conducting the ARMS survey.

- It may be valuable to call ahead and set up an appointment time that is most convenient for the producer, and let them know how much time the survey will take to complete.
- Provide producers a list of materials they need at hand that will help survey completion go faster.
- Be on time.
- Be courteous, confident and positive.
- Avoid conversations about politics or other divisive topics. Keep on subject as much as possible.
- Be as efficient as possible when completing the lengthy survey.
- Be prepared to answer questions. Bring promotional materials along with previous NASS publications to reinforce your answers. Some useful resources are available for download and viewing at nass.usda.gov/go/arms.
- Explaining the ARMS 3 survey as an agriculture "report" instead of a "survey" sometimes has a more positive connotation with producers.
- Share NASS website information and highlight how survey information is available to the public.
- To reinforce confidentiality, provide a state agricultural statistics report to prove that no names or addresses are listed.
- Know your questionnaire and the questions in detail.
- Additional tips for enumerators can be found at: nass.usda.gov/nass/surveys.

Filter results by choosing "General Enumerator Training" for training resources such as "Telephone Enumerator Quick Guide For Conducting Surveys" and "Increasing Cooperation and Engagement: Dealing with Objections."

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are a few frequently asked questions you may receive from producers, news media, and the general public. Be familiar with the following information so that you are prepared to respond.

What is ARMS?

The Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) is an annual survey of farmers and ranchers conducted by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Economic Research Service to gather objective information on the finances and production practices of U.S. farms and the characteristics and economic well-being of farm households. ARMS is a major source of data for effective policy and decision-making in government and the agriculture industry. ARMS targets selected commodities on a rotating basis. The 2023 survey has a version in selected states focusing on cost of production and expenditure data for peanut, oat and soybean producers.

What data will be collected?

ARMS gathers information on operating costs, capital improvements, labor use, and assets and debts for agricultural production, as well as farm-related income, government payments, off-farm income, and operator and household characteristics.

Who receives ARMS?

All producers selected for this survey have produced or sold, or would normally have sold, at least \$1,000 of agricultural products during the previous year. This includes both large full-time and small part-time operations, as well as lifestyle and retirement farms and ranches.

How will ARMS benefit producers?

Farm financial and cost-of-production information collected by ARMS will document the current financial condition of the U.S. agriculture industry. The survey will benefit producers by providing objective, accurate information to farm organizations, the USDA, other government agencies, members of Congress, state and local officials, and farmers themselves to make informed decisions about various policies and programs that affect the future of U.S. farmers and farm families. The information collected from ARMS ensures decisions are based on facts and not opinions.

What should I expect if selected to participate in the ARMS survey?

If selected to participate in the ARMS 3 survey, we will mail you a survey in December. Please complete the questionnaire and mail it back in the enclosed, prepaid envelope.

Participants may also respond online at agcounts.usda.gov. Responding online is fast, and secure. To get started all you need is your survey code which is on the front page of your questionnaire.

If you don't respond, a trained enumerator will follow up with you to arrange a convenient time to collect the data by phone. Having farm financial and enterprise records readily available will ensure the accuracy of the information, help the interview run smoothly and reduce the time it takes to complete the survey.

Will my information be kept confidential?

Absolutely! The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only. Your response will be kept confidential and any person who willfully discloses ANY identifiable information about you or your operation is subject to a jail term, a fine, or both. This survey is conducted in accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2018, Title III of Pub. L. No. 115-435, codified in 44 U.S.C. Ch. 35 and other applicable Federal laws.

