

## **Friday Feedback for Friday, August 28, 2020**

### **Disconnect Reminders**

On Friday September 4, the Regional Field Office will be running a query of the CAPI system to look for any record where the expression “Bad Ph” was entered in as a comment in the Attempted Call Log for the major September 1 Surveys (Crops, CAPS, Hogs, Turkeys). Please do your best to try to contact each operator in your sample listings at least once before September 4 so we can more easily identify those records that require attention. Office staff will then research for the existence of better phone numbers, and will put any notes learned about better phone numbers in the “Enumerator Notes” for those records by the end of the day on Wednesday September 9. As a reminder, please do not submit records as “inaccessible” just because they have bad phone numbers until the end of the survey cycle. We need to leave these records available in the event that the respondent chooses to complete the form on their own online or if personal enumeration becomes permitted before the end of the survey cycle.

### **The Importance of Reviewing Comments**

Another quarterly survey cycle is about to begin. As we get ready to start contacting operators about their final small grain harvests, their current hog inventories, and their expected corn and soybean yields, we don't want to forget to review all of the comments attached to each operator's record. Some comments simply provide general information about the operation, other people associated with the operation, driving directions, and the best time to call. Other comments are more significant as they provide insight on successes and failures with previous contacts that can help guide how we should approach operators this month.

Some of the most important comments are those which contain questions regarding clarification. Perhaps an operator told us on a previous contact that they are no longer farming, but we could not drop the record because we need to find out what happened to the livestock that used to be on that operation. Sometimes an operator told us that they are involved in a second operation, but did not give us much information about that operation. Sometimes it is not clear to us whether two people are farming together or farming separately and reporting together or have some other kind of relationship that could cause duplication in our lists. Records like this are given a special code on our list in the ELMO system called “Person Status 49”, and the comments usually contain the words, “Please verify on next contact...” For the CAPS and Crops APS surveys, we added an additional enumerator note to help bring attention to these particular records which have questions that we need to have resolved.

If you see one of these comments that has a question needing resolution and you are able to get the operator to answer the question for you, be sure to not only enter the update in the CAPI comments, but please also include in the phrase, “Please Update ELMO Comments” as part of your CAPI comment. This way, those reviewing the records will know that this comment is one that needs particular attention when it comes to updating the list. If the answer to the question is too complicated to explain in a CAPI comment, you can call your NASDA Coordinator, or Lisa Jones or Marty Saffell at the Regional Field Office, or even the stat in charge of the survey who can make the appropriate updates to the list. Additionally, if the comment itself doesn't make sense because it might be using abbreviations or technical jargon that you're not familiar with, do not hesitate to reach out to your supervisor or your NASDA coordinator to ask for clarification.

Maintaining a good list of operators is nearly as important as the data provided by those operators. Together, we can work with due diligence to make sure our list frame is kept up to date.

## **Friday Feedback for Friday, August 21, 2020**

### **September 1 Packets** – Miyares/Collom/Courser

Due to printing problems at the Regional Field Office, the shipment of September 1 Survey Packets to enumerators was delayed. UPS packages containing survey information for this month's Crops APS, Hogs, Turkeys, Ag Yield, and Michigan Small Grain CAPS were shipped on Friday August 21 and should arrive at enumerator homes early next week. If you do not receive your packet by Wednesday August 26, please contact your supervisor or your NASDA Coordinator.

### **Ag Yield Date Adjustments** – Cooper/Miyares

The dates for enumeration of the September Ag Yield Survey have been adjusted to run from August 31 to September 7. Initially, the survey was supposed to end on September 3, but adjustments were made by NASS headquarters to move the final summary date to Tuesday morning after the holiday. Additionally, the start date, which had been set early to accommodate the extremely short data collection window, was moved to Monday to allow an extra day for slow mail responses to be processed by our National Operations Division in St. Louis. The net result of the move is a gain of one additional day of data collection for enumerators and more time on the front end to make sure operators have the questionnaires in hand before we begin phoning.

### **Objective Yield Reminders** – Erickson

Enumerators will be able to access the Form B CAPI instrument beginning Monday August 24. Although field work should not begin until the 25<sup>th</sup>, enumerators can begin entering refusals and lost samples into Form B based on information collected on Form A starting the 24<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, although data collection must end on September 1, the CAPI instrument will remain available until September 2 to allow for late submissions. Please contact your supervisor or NASDA Coordinator if you have any questions.

### **Small Grain CAPS Update** – Morris/Price

We are off to a great start on this year's Small Grain CAPS Survey. We already have over 2000 records in the system and we've only just started phoning in our tier 1 states this week! As you work your way through your assignment listings, please remember the following:

- The data collection is very long for this survey, as enumeration continues until October 9. Please do not code forms as "inaccessible" until we get closer to the end of the survey. If an operator has no phone number, it is best to hold that one aside in the event that we are able to begin personal enumeration before the survey period ends. Additionally, if a record is coded as inaccessible in CAPI this early, it becomes unavailable to complete later, either by enumerators in CAPI or by respondents trying to complete the form via EDR.
- If a phone number provided has been disconnected or is the wrong number, be sure to record "Bad Ph" in the attempted contact log. We will run two queries of the CAPI system during this survey: once on September 8 and on September 24, to look for records marked with "Bad Ph" in the attempted contact log and see if we can find better numbers for you to try. If a better number is found, please be sure to update the contact information when you submit the form in CAPI.
- If an operator is not growing any of the targeted small grain crops, please enter a quick comment in the CAPI record to confirm this. We've seen a number of records come in from CAPI with no information on them and it is difficult to tell whether those forms are refusals or they just aren't growing anything. Comments in this case can be extremely helpful.

## **Indiana Grain Transportation Survey Reminder** – Dothage

Don't forget that the last day to submit work in CAPI for the Farm to Market Grain Transportation Survey being conducted in Indiana is Monday August 24.

## **Letting the mail do its job for Crops APS** – Weber/Miyares

Approximately 1000 records in the September Crops APS sample will have their CAPI Start Dates delayed from August 31 to September 4 based on those operations' high positive history of responding to NASS surveys by web or by mail. This was a program that was piloted nationally for the March 2020 Crops APS and has been very successful in our region in keeping positive relationships with our best respondents and keeping data collection costs down. Please note that records identified as matches with other ongoing surveys (such as hogs) were not eligible for delayed calling.

## **ARMS II/Veg Chem Update** – Miyares/Cooper/Goings

We were asked to provide an update on the status of ARMS II and the Vegetable Chemical Use Survey (VCUS) scheduled to start around October 1, but honestly, we haven't received a lot of concrete information. We still do not have finalized questionnaires or samples, but we do have a few items we can share regarding the data collection plan for 2020:

Respondents will be mailed copies of the questionnaire, respondent booklets, and a special copy of the pre-survey letter explaining that although this survey is normally conducted through personal interview, circumstances this year are requiring we attempt to conduct the interview by phone. Return envelopes will not be provided to operators to allow data to be collected and recorded by enumerators through telephone interviews.

The random field selection process for the ARMS II will be modified to resemble something closer to this year's Objective Yield Field Selection process where the field selected may be either the field closest to the operator's residence, or may be the northernmost field, or southernmost field, or some other cardinal direction. We don't have a lot of details at this time, but we do know that they will still be focusing on production practices on a single field and we won't be using random number labels as we have in the past.

As was mentioned in a previous edition of the Friday Feedback, CAPI instruments are currently being developed for both surveys. The idea is that we will attempt to collect most of the data that is not specific to the fertilizer or chemical use tables by phone, then work with the individual operators to determine what is the best way to obtain a copy of the fertilizer and spray records. If there wasn't much sprayed, then perhaps the data may be collected over the phone. Otherwise, spray records may need to be mailed, emailed, or faxed to enumerators or to the regional office for processing. Data collected on paper over the phone with operators will be entered into the CAPI instrument by enumerators. Enumerators should then hold on to the paper copies of the questionnaire until after data collection ends in case a survey stat has a question about something entered into CAPI.

The enumerator training model is still being developed. In the event that we are unable to have mini-schools we will develop study materials that will be posted on the GLR website, including a set of training videos that focus on the different sections of the survey and a video on how to use the new CAPI instruments being developed. Supervisors will also be able to host teleconferences with enumerator groups with support from the regional office during the last two weeks of September to discuss some of the finer details of the survey.

## **New USDA Survey to Measure Areas for Improvement** – Hurlbut

USDA announced this week, a new annual survey of farmers, ranchers and private forestland owners. The survey will help USDA understand what it is doing well and where improvements are needed. Specifically for the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA). While NASS will not be conducting this survey, NASS was consulted on its sampling and design.

A selection of 28,000 producers from across the country will receive the survey over the next few weeks, but all farmers are encouraged to take the survey at [farmers.gov/survey](http://farmers.gov/survey). Please be aware that this survey is being conducted in case you are asked about it while doing your normal survey work.

This survey is part of the President's Management Agenda. It requires High Impact Service Provider agencies across the federal government, including FSA and NRCS, to conduct annual surveys to measure and respond to areas needing improvement. The survey consists of 20 questions and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Responses are confidential, and individual responses will be aggregated. The survey will be open for at least six weeks. Learn more and take the survey at [www.farmers.gov/survey](http://www.farmers.gov/survey).

## Friday Feedback for Friday, August 14, 2020

### **Objective Yield** - Erickson

I want to start by saying Thank You to all of the Supervisors & Enumerators for getting Objective Yield for corn & soybeans off to a great start. COVID has created unique challenges regarding training and data collection, but your flexibility and willingness to adjust to these challenges is very much appreciated. Please work with your Supervisor to ensure completed Form-A's are submitted on the iPad on a timely basis. Please try to complete and submit as many Form-A's as possible by the end of August. For Form-A's that are inaccessible at the end of August, please let your Supervisor know, do not submit the Form-A, and continue trying, perhaps when calling on the September Ag Survey shortly after the first of the month, as nearly everyone in the Objective Yield sample is also in the September Ag Sample. Whatever happens, Form-A's cannot be submitted as inaccessible.

Form-B's will be available on the iPad on August 24. Prior to them being available to you, we will allow the Supervisors a couple of days to make sure the assignments are correct. There are some cases where the fieldwork is going to be done by an enumerator who did not complete the Form-A, so the Supervisors need some time to make sure the Form-B assignments are correct. Here's a few reminders about the Form B's:

- All Form-B's for the September 1 survey must be submitted.
- If the Form-A is a refusal (and permission to lay out the units was denied), then the Form-B for that sample must also be submitted as a refusal.
- If the sample is lost because the respondent did not plant the commodity of interest (or all corn is for silage), then the Form-B for that sample must also be submitted, using the same status code that was used for the Form-A.
- For samples where the Form-A has not been completed because it is inaccessible, please submit the Form-B as inaccessible. This will allow us to populate those samples for the October 1 survey.

Please reference the materials on the Purdue website for specifics on field selection, unit layouts, making counts, completing the forms, etc. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to your Supervisor for assistance, and thank you for all of your efforts.

### **New Training Video for CAPI Posted** – Lawson/Miyares

The NASS Northern Plains Region has developed an excellent training video that demonstrates most of CAPI's basic features. All enumerators working one of the September 1 Surveys (Crops, CAPS, Hogs, Turkeys) should take the time to watch it and bill that time as part of your upcoming survey work. The video is approximately 15 minutes long. A link to the video has been posted to the GLR Home Page, or it can be accessed by clicking [HERE](#).

### **Don't Forget About the Attempted Contact Log**

We are excited to be seeing increased use of the Attempted Contact log built into the CAPI system, but we don't have everyone using it consistently yet. Just as it is important to update your time sheet on a daily basis, it is equally important that enumerators log each attempt to contact respondents with the date, time, and result of the attempt. If you are not certain how to use it, the [VIDEO](#) mentioned in the previous article does demonstrate its use. Keep in mind that supervisors and NASDA coordinators do review these logs to make sure that enumerators are consistently trying to contact operators, and field office staff have been developing procedures to incorporate this contact attempt information into reports that can be shared with supervisors regarding enumerator efficiency.

## **Don't Wait One Minute!** – Lawson/Laird

As was discussed in an earlier edition of Friday Feedback, much of the technical support for enumerator iPads has been taken over by USDA IT support staff outside of NASS. While NASS still has control over the CAPI application, and will still be managing samples and field assignments, NASS staff can no longer quickly reset passwords or PINs without relaying the request to USDA's Customer Experience Center. Because of the change in control, support activities that used to take a few minutes could now take up to 48 hours.

### **Here are some tips to help avoid issues with the iPad:**

1. **Don't wait one minute before calling!** Regardless of how many times you have tried to unlock the iPad, if you see the warning message: “iPad is disabled, Try again in 1 minute” DON'T TRY AGAIN, DON'T TURN IT OFF, DON'T EVEN PRESS THE HOME BUTTON. It is important to call for help that same day so that we can remotely unlock it and avoid a tedious 20-45 minute process to re-set it up again.
2. **Keep the iPad in contact with the security console.** Turn on your iPad at least once every other month and use it to open a Safari webpage such as the CAPI Dashboard or the GLR enumerator website. If you haven't used it in a while, be sure to test it a few days prior to when data collection starts.
3. **Take a moment to double check the iPad settings.** [HERE](#) is the most recent listing of settings.
4. **Follow the procedures for updating the operating system or iOS.** All NASDA iPads should now be running at least iOS version 13.2. Avoid updating the iOS too soon by keeping the automatic updates turned off and choose the following response if a popup says a new version is available. Select “Details” and then select “Cancel”. Do not select “Later”, or it will update during the overnight hours.
5. **Respond agreeably to all other popup messages.** Agree to all other pop-up's (other than updating iOS). Select: OK, allow while using, update carrier settings, continue to allow mobile iron to monitor in background etc. You are giving permission to know your location for mapping to work and for the security system to keep track of your iPad and avoiding a reset.
6. **Keep informed about known issues.** Read the weekly Friday Feedback and watch the Office Updates & Alerts section at the top of the GLR website for important information.
7. **Performing these steps in this exact order has been known to fix most CAPI issues:**
  - a. Logout of CAPI
  - b. Double press the home button and swipe up to close all small screens
  - c. Re-open the CAPI icon
  - d. Clear out the user name and password
  - e. Press “Clear Preferences” at the CAPI login screen
  - f. Enter user name and password and try to login again
8. **Don't hesitate to call if you have any questions or problems.** It is always helpful to know what you were doing when a problem occurred, such as what survey you were working on and if you know the particular POID. A picture is not necessary, but can be very helpful especially with long error messages or something that is difficult to describe over the phone.

## **Small Fruit and Hops Update** – Saffell

Representatives of the Regional Field Office have been in communication with the cooperator for the Michigan Small Fruit and Hops survey who has agreed that the data we need to collect from our largest operators is important enough to wait a few additional months to get it through face-to-face interviews when those are permitted again. For now, enumerators should continue to hold onto any Small Fruit and Hops forms that are coded for field enumeration until further notice. The CAPI Stop Date on these forms will be reset to November 30 and we will reassess the situation at that time. Any forms coded for telephone enumeration only that are still out in the field that were scheduled to be completed on July 15 should be returned to East Lansing and coded as inaccessible, if they have not been returned already.

## **Sharing our zucchini stories**

How do you use your excess zucchini? Do you have friends and relatives who are happy to share in your bounty? Have your friends and relatives stopped answering their doors when they see you coming up their walk with heavy bags of freshly picked zucchini? Have you ever been desperate enough to wait until the dead of night to quietly creep up to your neighbor's front door, leaving plenty of zucchini for them to enjoy? Have you ever woken up to a bag of zucchini on your front porch as a gift (or a curse)? We would love to share your zucchini and other gardening stories in the Friday Feedback with the rest of the NASDA team, whether they are stories from your childhood or stories from this season. Please send your contributions to [John.Miyares@usda.gov](mailto:John.Miyares@usda.gov) by Thursday August 20 to allow it to be included in next week's edition. This week's story comes from mid-Michigan enumerator Tonya Langdon.

“I had a farmer that wouldn't answer the phone. I had stopped by a couple of times and didn't get them home. Finally, on a very rainy evening I stopped by. Just as I pulled in the driveway, the zipper on the sky broke open. It was raining so hard I could barely see their porch, which was only 20ft away. I sat in the driveway waiting for it to lighten up. Finally, I made a run for the porch getting quite soggy in the process. I explained who I was. He invited me in and sat me down at the dining table. I asked him about the survey. He said he didn't usually do surveys. He had thrown this one away. We talked for a while about a variety of topics, and finally he asked me why he should do the survey. When I was through, he completed the survey. He apologized a lot for not answering the phone, and making me get wet. He and his wife insisted that they give me a couple of loaves of peanut butter zucchini bread she had made. I tried to refuse nicely, but they insisted. They continued to apologize all the way to the door. They now always answer when I call and complete the surveys. The Peanut Butter Zucchini Bread is the best I have ever had.”

## **Friday Feedback for Friday, August 7, 2020**

### **Ag Yield Update**

Special thanks to everyone for their efforts in getting through one of the most challenging Ag Yield cycles we have had in years. The August Ag Yield survey always tends to be a difficult one because the sample is much larger than all other months, and the data collection window is very short. There is also a lot of attention paid to how we perform on this survey in particular because of the wide attention paid to the August *Crop Production* report, scheduled to be released on Wednesday August 12, with its first forecast of corn, soybean, and hay yields for the season.

I am not certain that we could have had more obstacles stacked against us this month. With the current pandemic closing our call centers, and field enumeration still not permitted, the burden was on the GLR enumerators to complete all of the forms locally by telephone. Delays with the postal service meant that we began calling operators before they had received a copy of the questionnaire in the mail, and many respondents who normally reply by mail were not willing to complete the survey over the phone. Those same mail delays meant that it took that much longer for the forms that were mailed in to get to Saint Louis, evidenced by the more than 100 forms arriving in Saint Louis on Thursday morning. Finally, network issues on the last night of data collection slowed the CAPI system to the point where it was nearly unusable, causing us to open CAPI for a few hours on Thursday morning to collect additional reports.

Despite all of these challenges, which were all outside of our control, our regional response rate for the August Ag Yield survey only fell by four percentage points from last year, which the office staff is considering a success. This year had the potential to be much worse if it were not for the hard work, dedication, and true grit displayed by our enumerator teams to get the data we needed in order to provide useful, accurate, and timely statistics in service to agriculture. There is a motto, which is attributed to the Special Olympics, but could very well be the theme for our enumeration teams at this time that says, “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.” To everyone who has been going through the frustrations and challenges of data collection in this “new normal”, especially in the last few weeks, [thank you for being brave in your attempts.](#)

### **Looking for Feedback on the Farmers Market Manager Survey**

NASS HQ is soliciting feedback for the National Farmers Market Manager Survey, which was conducted in April and May. This was the first survey conducted of its kind and there are plans to do this survey again in the future. During the survey proper, we received several calls and messages from local enumerators with concerns, questions, comments, and gripes about how difficult this survey was to administer, be it because of the contact listings we had, or certain questions weren't asked in a way that made sense to respondents. While we have documented a number of those conversations about this, we wanted to make sure we did not miss anything. Given that most of the burden for data collection fell on local enumerators, we wanted to make sure that local enumerators were given an opportunity to provide recommendations on how this survey can be improved the next time it is conducted. If you have something you would like to share on this, please send an email by August 13 to either [John.Miyares@usda.gov](mailto:John.Miyares@usda.gov) or [Stephen.Doehage@usda.gov](mailto:Stephen.Doehage@usda.gov) and we will be sure to submit your concerns.

### **Sharing our stories – National Sneak Some Zucchini onto Your Neighbor's Porch Day – August 8**

Every gardener who has grown zucchini knows that at this time of the year, vines go crazy producing hundreds of tiny squash that can quickly grow to gargantuan size if not picked. A day's harvest from a plant or two can easily feed dozens of hungry people. Zucchini do not can or freeze well, and one can only bake and consume so much zucchini bread, quiches, and cakes.

Celebrated on August 8, National Sneak Some Zucchini onto Your Neighbor's Porch Day Pennsylvanian Tom Roy has a way for him and other growers to move a mountain of zucchini at harvest time. After all, you know your favorite neighbor would just love that zucchini that you somehow missed in your garden that has now grown large enough to feed a family of twelve.

Of course, as silly as this holiday might sound, it also promotes the donation of a nutritious food to local food banks and soup kitchens to share with the hungry. Institutions like Kent State University in Ohio even provide residents with drop off points for their zucchini.

How do you use your excess zucchini? Do you have friends and relatives who are happy to share in your bounty? Have your friends and relatives stopped answering their doors when they see you coming up their walk with heavy bags of freshly picked zucchini? Have you ever been desperate enough to wait until the dead of night to quietly creep up to your neighbor's front door, leaving plenty of zucchini for them to enjoy? Have you ever woken up to a bag of zucchini on your front porch as a gift (or a curse)? We would love to share your zucchini and other gardening stories in the Friday Feedback with the rest of the NASDA team, whether they are stories from your childhood or stories from this season. Please send your contributions to [John.Miyares@usda.gov](mailto:John.Miyares@usda.gov) by Thursday August 13 to allow for it to be included in next week's edition.