

Friday Feedback for Friday, February 25, 2022

Annual Requirements Update – Kimball

Just as a reminder, NASDA requires 3 annual “housekeeping” items at the beginning of each calendar year.

1. **Confidentiality form**- This is now being handled in iSolved electronically. Please acknowledge that you have read the information by checking the box (you actually have to open the document and read it for you to be able to move forward) AND sign it electronically. Please see the [LINKED MEMO](#) from Charlie Ingram on how to do this.
2. **Update your Driving License information in iSolved.** Please review the instructions on how to do this, which you can access by clicking or tapping [HERE](#).
3. **Performance Evaluation**- If your supervisor has not contacted you about your annual performance appraisal this year, please ask them when it will be available for you to review and sign in iSolved.

Please Note:

- **Auto Insurance information**- This is no longer required to be uploaded into iSolved. All vehicles driven for NASDA work purposes must still be insured but the paperwork does not need to be uploaded.
- **Security Awareness Training**- The date for the rollout of the training has not been determined yet. We will keep you posted.

Floriculture Reminder – Collom/Laird

Just a reminder that data collection for the **Commercial Floriculture Survey** ends Tuesday, March 1. Please have all remaining questionnaires into UPS to the regional office in East Lansing no later than Wednesday, March 2. Thank you for all your hard work on this always challenging survey.

Problem Discovered with Hog Paper Questionnaires – Erickson

Some minor errors have been discovered in the blank 2022 March Hog Report forms sent to Regional Field Offices. All of the errors are on pages 3 – 6 of the questionnaire, and involve the reference dates. More specifically, the reference year is incorrect in a few places. It is unclear if the errors are on all questionnaires sent to the RFO’s, or only some of them, but these questionnaires were used in preparing the enumerator packets sent last week, and a small number of them were mailed to respondents. The electronic copy of the questionnaire on the Purdue site is correct, and well as the CAPI version of the survey. Please compare the online copy of the form to the paper questionnaires you received. Also, be prepared to answer questions from respondents if they see confusing dates on their forms. The actual questions that require a number for an answer, are correct.

Here are a couple of examples of the errors. In item 1 at the top of page 3, the reference period should read ‘*December 1, 2021 through February 28, 2022*’. It should not read ‘*December 1, 2020 through February 28, 2021*’. Another example is in item 8 on page 4. It should read ‘*December 2021, January and February 2022*’, not ‘*December 2020, January and February 2021*’.

Also, don’t forget that data collection for March Hogs ends a few days before the end of data collection for March Crops APS (Ag Survey).

Mail Delay and Disconnect Reminders – Mivares

In an effort to reduce respondent burden, we have identified several hundred records in the March Survey samples which have a history of completing NASS Surveys by mail or online and changed the CAPI Start Date on those records to March 7. This later start date for these operations should provide sufficient time for those who prefer

to complete reports themselves to get them submitted before we start calling them, even with slower than normal mail speeds. If you see records in your CAPI listings that are grayed out and not checked in, please wait until after March 7 before calling on these records.

The procedures for handling disconnects for the March Surveys remain the same as in previous cycles. Please enter “Bad Ph” in the Attempted Call Log for any records where the phone number is bad. We will be querying the CAPI system on Monday March 7 looking for records with “Bad Ph”. Regional Field Office staff will conduct disconnect research on these records. Any updates we find will be updated in the “Enumerator Notes” and should be visible on these records no later than Wednesday March 9. Please do not submit records as “inaccessible” because of a disconnected phone number until research has been complete and we are able to determine that no new numbers are available. If one of the new numbers provided works, please be sure to update the contact information in CAPI. If some of the numbers do not work, please let us know through comments so we can make notes about bad numbers to not send out again.

ARMS 3 Remailing and Other Odds and Ends – Erickson/Miyares

Data collection for ARMS 3 is under way and we have nearly 900 forms already checked in to date, which is about one quarter of the way through. Thank you for your hard work on ARMS III. We’re making good progress so far, and hopefully we’ll be able to keep the efforts up as we head into the busy March Survey cycle next week. We realize it is a challenging questionnaire to complete, especially those that need to be completed by telephone. Your efforts are very much appreciated.

We have received several requests from the field asking us to mail new copies of blank questionnaires to respondents who say they never received or may have discarded previous copies of the forms sent to them from NPC. At this time, we have nearly exhausted our supply of blank ARMS questionnaires at the regional office, but our headquarters has graciously offered to work with NPC to mail these additional copies for us. Moving forward, if an operator needs another ARMS 3 questionnaire sent to them, please be sure to go through the following procedures.

1. **Verify the name and address.** In some cases, the previous two questionnaires sent from NPC never arrived because we had the wrong address on file or perhaps there was a problem with the spelling of the name. Please double check this information, and let us know if it needs to be changed.
2. **Please verify the POID and the version that the operator needs.** It is important to make sure that someone who has been selected to complete a commodity version (Corn or Dairy) is mailed the correct form; otherwise, they may accidentally get sent a Version 1 (CRR) by mistake.
3. **Please contact Alan Erickson and/or John Miyares,** preferably by e-mail, with your request, including the State, POID, Version, and verification of the name and address, and they will make sure the request gets passed along.

Don’t forget that refusals, inaccessibles, and out-of-business records are to be submitted on CAPI. For those records, please also enter comments in CAPI. The comments can be brief, but they should document why the record was submitted as such. Also, for records that are out-of-business, remember to complete the Out-Of-Business Screener and send it to the Regional Field Office in East Lansing. Submitting out-of-business records on CAPI works for coding the record correctly for ARMS III, but the Out-Of-Business Screener is needed to code the record out of business on ELMO.

Another reminder – only completed records with data are to be sent to NPC. All other ARMS III questionnaires (refusals, inaccessibles, and out-of-business records) are to be submitted on CAPI, and not sent anywhere. You may destroy those questionnaires after the survey is over.

Finally, be sure to regularly refresh your CAPI listings and watch closely for records checked in that you didn’t complete yourself. These are mail or EDR returns.

Friday Feedback for Friday, February 18, 2022

March 1 Survey Packets

Packets for Michigan and Indiana supervisors and enumerators were shipped on Thursday, February 17. Please contact your supervisor if your packet doesn't arrive by Tuesday, 22 February. Packets for Ohio supervisors and enumerators will be shipped from Reynoldsburg sometime late next week and should arrive by March 1.

Due to paper shortages associated with supply chain challenges, the regional office was not able to obtain as many blank March Crops APS questionnaires as it usually does. Supplies were rationed based on the number of samples assigned. This may be a trend for the next few months.

June Area and ACES

The June Area Survey will be administered in a similar way to last year where prescreening activities will be taking place from late March through mid-April in preparation for data collection activities that will take place in late May and early June. Additionally, the Agricultural Coverage Evaluation Survey (ACES) will be taking place this spring. ACES is conducted every five years in preparation for the Census of Agriculture and it includes a supplemental sample of Area Segments used to measure the incompleteness of the Census Mail List.

Supervisors may be reaching out this week to discuss assignments with enumerators for both Area and ACES. Aerial photographs and survey information will be sent to enumerators during the first few weeks of March, and supervisors will be scheduling mini-schools for the second half of March. Please stay tuned for more details as they become available.

Contactless Enumeration for ARMS 3 – Erickson/Miyares

During ARMS 2, enumerators were allowed to pick up completed survey forms and spray records from operators if they could do so in a way that was “contactless”, where enumerators were not interacting directly with operators, but forms were left out by operators somewhere that enumerators could easily pick them up. This helped us in to get several complete reports that we might not have from operators who were not willing to sit for a lengthy telephone interview.

We've gotten some questions recently asking whether unvaccinated enumerators can participate in “contactless enumeration” of ARMS 3 like was done with ARMS 2 and have been told that this is permissible under limited circumstances:

- A) This needs to be the exception rather than the rule. Our budget is very limited so if everyone starts charging a lot for mileage early, we may run out of money before the survey is over.
- B) Trips taken to pick up questionnaires from operators should only be done at the operator's request. If an operator wants/needs another copy of the questionnaire, the office can send a new form by mail (and we have extra blanks in the office we can send to operators who request them). Our HQ will be very concerned if they see a lot of mileage charges on enumerators that aren't vaccinated, especially if they are working with operators who weren't assigned forms designated for field enumeration.
- C) There still needs to be an appointment set up so that the enumerator doesn't waste a trip going to pick up a questionnaire and it's not there. We also have concerns about data security – we don't want to have a farmer leave out forms on their porch for us to pick up and have them left out there for a day or two where anyone can grab them.
- D) It needs to be truly contactless. There should be no interaction with the operator or others under any circumstances.
- E) It needs to be preapproved by both your supervisor and the NASDA Coordinator. The office does not want to have any surprise mileage charges show up on time sheets that they are not aware or the charges may be declined.

Please reach out to your supervisor if this situation arises.

Ag Counts Portal has Changed

Last week, NASS rolled out a new Respondent Portal for operators wanting to complete surveys online. Respondents accessing the Ag Counts website will be automatically directed to the new site, which can be accessed by clicking or tapping [HERE](#).

The new respondent portal offers more to respondents than just the ability to complete the survey. They now have access to localized weather data, data visualizations, current and upcoming surveys, and the most popular NASS reports. An optional feature is the ability to create an e-Authentication account for respondents to see previously reported data for the first time in NASS. The intention is for this system to eventually merge with farmers.gov to become a one-stop shop for operators interacting with multiple USDA agencies.

While the system has successfully collected hundreds of reports, there have been a few isolated issues reported. If a respondent reaches out to you to say they are having trouble with the new website, there are a few troubleshooting activities that can be tried to help.

1. Clearing out the Cache/Cookies: Sometimes cookies leftover from the old site might interfere with access to the new site.
2. Update Bookmarks/Favorites: Some respondents may have the site bookmarked slightly differently and should make sure they are using www.agcounts.usda.gov.
3. Outdated browsers: Having the most up-to-date browser will provide the best and most secure experience.
4. Incompatible browsers: Respondents should be instructed to use Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, or Apple Safari as the browser when accessing the website. Internet Explorer is no longer supported by Microsoft and cannot be used for this website.

The screenshot shows the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service Respondent Portal. At the top, there are navigation links: Home, My Surveys, Resources, and Reports, along with a Sign In | Sign Up button. The main content area features a large banner with a farm scene and the text "Welcome to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service Respondent Portal". To the right of the banner is a section for entering a unique survey code, with a barcode and a red circle highlighting the "SURVEY CODE" field. Below this is a "Submit & Get Survey(s)" button. Further down, there is a "NEED HELP? CALL 1-888-424-7828" section with a customer support icon and text. To the right of this is a weather widget for Washington, D.C. Below these are "NASS REPORTS" with four icons: Crop Progress (National), Crop Progress & Condition (State), Statistics by State, and Statistics by Subject. On the far right, there is a "DAIRY" section with a cow image and the text "Updating the Look & Feel of NASS Reports" and "Coming Soon: DAIRY".

ARMS 2 Wrapped Up – Mivares/Weber/Goings

We've received a few questions in the office about when it would be safe to send back the Fall Chemical surveys (ARMS 2 and Fruit Chem) back to the Regional Office. As part of this request, some enumerators have asked if

they could hold on to the ARMS 2 forms until ARMS 3 was over in the event that there is information they need to reference on Phase 2 in order to complete ARMS 3.

The Regional Office Staff have finished their review of data from the ARMS Phase 2 survey, but is still reviewing Fruit Chem. For those who have no need for their completed ARMS 2 forms anymore, they may be sent back to the regional office at any time, but please hold on to Fruit Chem forms you may have a little longer. The due date for sending all completed ARMS 2 or Fruit Chem forms to the Regional Office for scanning and filing will be April 30. Refusal and inaccessible forms need not be returned. The front page of the questionnaire with the operator information should be torn off and destroyed while the rest of the questionnaire can be recycled. Please check with your supervisor if you have any questions.

Name Badges and IDs - Kimball

If enumerators need a new name badge or photo ID, please reach out to your supervisor so we can get them ordered. For name badges, please specify whether you want the kind with the safety pin or the kind with the magnetic attachment. For photo IDs, a passport photo is required, and enumerators may be reimbursed for getting passport photos taken. We ask that if you do get new photos taken to send both copies of the photos you receive to the Regional Office so we can have a backup to create a second ID if yours gets damaged, destroyed, or expires.

President's Day Holiday

The Regional Field Office will be closed on Monday, February 21, in observance of President's Day.

Friday Feedback for Friday, February 11, 2022

New CAPI Application Coming Out Sunday Morning – Lawson/Laird

An updated CAPI Application is scheduled to be pushed out during the early morning hours of Sunday, February 13. The updates are necessary to accommodate changes to the June Area and ACES interfaces to be used for 2022, and to fix an issue in the out-of-business module where an incorrect year was coming up. All enumerators must be logged out of CAPI by 11:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 12. Both CAPI Production and CAPI Training applications should automatically update on each iPad.

For those using CAPI on a computer, be sure to be logged out of CAPI and have all CAPI browser tabs closed before 11:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 12. For iPad users, enumerators should make sure their iPad is powered on and sufficiently charged or plugged in before 11:00 p.m. on February 12. Enumerators will notice a blue dot under both applications, after a successful push, indicating the new Apps were installed.

On Monday morning February 14, or the first time thereafter; click on “Clear Preferences” on the CAPI login screen before you login for the first time. Verify that the correct version of (v2022.02.11) appears in the top right corner of the CAPI screen. If you do not see the correct version number, or if you do not see the CAPI apps on your iPad home screen, charge time to project code **380** to manually update both applications from Apps@Work.

Upcoming Due Dates

- The last day to submit Bee & Honey records in CAPI is Monday February 14
- The last day to submit Turkeys Raised records in CAPI is Tuesday February 15

With the new CAPI application becoming available, it is recommended that enumerators try to enter as much data for these two surveys by Saturday night, February 12, in the event that you have any problems getting back into CAPI after the weekend.

ARMS III Odds and Ends – Erickson/Miyares

The Regional Field Office in East Lansing received a case of *America's Diverse Family Farms – 2021 Edition* booklets a few days after the ARMS III Survey materials were sent to enumerators. A small number of these booklets will be included in the March 1 Survey packets, scheduled to be shipped to enumerators next week. These booklets can be a good resource to provide to operators to show them how the ARMS III data are utilized and summarized, and can be given to operators who complete the ARMS interview. We unfortunately received them too late to include in the ARMS III materials shipped a few weeks ago. A PDF version of the booklet is available on the ARMS III pages of the Purdue GLR Website at this [LINK](#).

The Regional Field Office has a small supply of extra blank ARMS III questionnaires of all versions. If an operator asks for a new, blank copy of the questionnaire be sent to them, please relay that request to Alan, John, Brooke, or Paul and we will get those forms out as soon as possible.

When making requests for additional mailings, please keep in mind a few things: The second mailing of ARMS III forms took place on February 7. If they haven't received that form yet, it might be that the mail is being slow, so you may need to wait just a few more days for the form to arrive. However, if the operator doesn't remember ever having received the first form that was mailed in December, or the reminder postcard that was sent in January, please be sure to verify the mailing address of the operator before asking the Regional Office to mail an additional copy. It could be that we have a bad address on file, and we will want to get that corrected before sending out what would be a third questionnaire.

There have been several articles written recently about increasing production costs for farmers and worries about the financial health of the farm sector. In one article at [DTN](#), it was noted that the price of anhydrous ammonia had reached an all-time high, while posts at [Modern Farmer](#) and [RFD TV](#) highlighted the most recent ERS Farm Sector Income report, which showed anticipated decreases in net farm income in the coming year. As a reminder, ARMS is the one survey USDA conducts where operators can provide indications as to the financial challenges of farmers directly from the source. Without the information provided by ARMS, legislators and USDA officials would not be able to develop programs to help support American farmers in their time of need. When working with operators on the ARMS III Survey this spring, it may be good to remind them that the ARMS gives them the opportunity to voice their concerns to those policy makers by showing the struggles they and many others are facing as they strive to meet the food, feed, and fiber needs for the country and the world.

Friday Feedback for Friday, February 4, 2022

ARMS III Odds and Ends – Erickson

ARMS III training is in full swing and the beginning of data collection is rapidly approaching. Please become familiar with the items on the [ARMS III Web Page](#). There are many training presentations, articles, and other reference materials that should help you prepare for this challenging survey. You can use this to develop an introduction, and quickly answer the respondent's questions on uses of the data and why they should report.

The second mailing of ARMS III will be February 7. Please use this to your advantage as you call respondents. It has been 6 weeks since the first mailing, so many respondents have likely forgotten about that. Referencing the second mailing should help you validate why you are calling. We rely heavily on self-reports, so please encourage respondents to complete the report on-line or mail it in. Be prepared to answer their questions regarding how to complete it on-line, and make yourself available to assist them if they need assistance with some of the Sections in the questionnaire.

Keep in mind that many times throughout the questionnaire, you will notice that you are instructed to skip questions based on the answer to a previous question. As you familiarize yourself with the questionnaire, pay close attention to these 'skip' questions. Doing this will shorten the interview time and make the interview flow much better. Also, based on the type of operation (livestock only, CRP only, greenhouse only, etc.), pay close

attention to the questions that should apply. For example, livestock operations should have livestock related income/expenses, such as feed, vet services, etc.

Finally, NASS often uses PRD (previously reported data) to assist in data collection. If you look closely at items 1 – 5 in Section A of your questionnaires, the numbers that appear just to the left of the item code were data reported during ARMS Phase I. Please use this information to assist you as you complete items 1 – 5. Keep in mind that the acres reported in Section A, item 4 define the operation for which the Phase III interview will be conducted. It is possible that data reported during Phase I was not completely accurate, so this information should only be used as a guide. Also, some records will not have any numbers next to the item codes, and some records will have a ‘-1’ next to item 4 and/or item 5. You may ignore this. Please reach out to your Supervisor, NASDA Coordinator, or Alan if you have any questions, and thank you for all of your efforts on this survey.

Partner Information and Phone Updates Made to Floriculture CAPI – Collom/Laird

We tried something new and incorporated partner names and partner phone and email info from ELMO into the Floriculture CAPI listing’s comments. If any partner information exists for the sampled POID, that information should now be in the comments in your CAPI listing. Also, any other updates to the operator’s information, including updated phone numbers, was loaded into the operation’s contact information, if any updates were available. If you are having a tough time reaching some operators, double check the contact info (phone icon) and the comments (comment box icon) to see if any new phone numbers or new partner info are available to try. Please note that not all sampled POIDs will have partners or phone updates. Thanks as always for your hard work and for your suggestions on how to make data collection easier.

Upcoming Due Dates

- The last day to submit Trout Production records in CAPI is Sunday February 6
- The last day to submit February Potato Stocks records in CAPI is Tuesday February 8
- The last day to submit Bee & Honey records in CAPI is Monday February 14