

**From:** Friends of Agricultural Statistics and Analysis <agricultural.statistics@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Please Support Agricultural Statistics and Analysis in FY 16 Appropriations!  
**Reply:** agricultural.statistics@gmail.com



## Friends of Agricultural Statistics and Analysis

June 18, 2015

Dear Representative <<Congressional Member Last Name>>,

As you continue to consider funding for the following year, we, the undersigned organizations, encourage you to support the statistical agencies and data resources within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The agriculture, food, and resource statistics, data, and analysis supplied by USDA are critical for supporting our vital agricultural economy.

The USDA produces valuable data and information that directly inform decisions by food and agricultural market participants; agricultural input and food businesses; banks and other credit institutions and those who make food, farm, economic development, and trade policy. American agriculture, rural America, food, and resource-based industries depend on the reliable production of timely, accurate, and objective food, agricultural, rural economic, and resource statistics and market information. The undersigned organizations support the *maintenance and growth* of agriculture, food, and resource statistics, data, and analysis through the USDA Research, Education and Economics Mission Area (USDA REE), as well as other sources in the USDA portfolio.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is committed to providing timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture. The agency conducts hundreds of surveys every year and prepares reports and information to communicate the survey results. Production and supplies of food and fiber, prices paid and received by farmers, farm labor and wages, farm finances, chemical use, and changes in the

demographics of U.S. producers are only a few examples of the type of information gathered. NASS reports the facts on American agriculture, facts needed by people working in and depending upon U.S. agriculture. A primary concern of the NASS is to *'safeguard the privacy of farmers, ranchers, and other data providers, with a guarantee that confidentiality and data security continue to be our top priorities.'*

The mission of the Economic Research Service (ERS) is to inform and enhance public and private decision making on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural development. To accomplish this mission, ERS manages a comprehensive program of economic research and analysis, including development of economic and statistical indicators that are coordinated with NASS efforts. Suspension of agricultural estimates programs at USDA's NASS impacts ERS's ability to publish data products and outlook reports. *Connecting with and working closely with researchers across the US, ERS issues cooperative agreements and grant awards and works with land-grant partners on many projects. These essential collaborations could be threatened if support waivers. Finally, the ERS is a primary source of economic information and research in the USDA, the work it does improves the Department's program effectiveness.*

The USDA's data products and analytical programs provide the U.S. with an important edge against the increasingly fierce global agricultural competition. These programs are beneficial throughout the supply chain, starting at the farm gate and enhancing decisions throughout national and international food, feed, fiber, and fuel economies. Public data products and projections serve to improve the accuracy of the expectations of market participants, reducing market pricing errors. Market volatility and related uncertainty significantly increase in the absence of publically-managed and produced statistics. Their work keeps the U.S. agricultural data information and analysis system second to none, worldwide. To continue to build future trade and finance capacity in an increasingly competitive marketplace, the U.S. must invest in and leverage all of its strengths, including the food and agricultural data and information system.

In FY13, the funding and services of both ERS and NASS was significantly cut, leading to suspension, aggregation, and even elimination of data and statistical series critical for understanding or alleviating market risk. Since, both agencies have taken a critical look at their products and reduced costs where possible. The reassessment led to discontinuation of updates for some data series and/or a reduction in the level of geographic detail for others. The essential products still exist, but are only possible with steady support for programs, products, and administration/rent. Today, NASS is *experiencing increased demand* for its statistical products and reports. Similarly, ERS is *experiencing significant requests* for its research, data products, and services.

As you continue to debate the coming fiscal year, *we encourage you to consider reinforcing and building upon programs that will assist in the recovery and growth of the U.S. economy. Agriculture's contribution to the annual trade surplus, a*

**significant part of our economic recovery, is partially due to the quality of information available in and about the marketplace.**

In closing, we encourage you to support these critical agencies and related data products and analytics so that they can continue to provide essential information to farm and agribusiness, government agricultural program, and food policy decision makers. If you have any specific questions with regard to agricultural data products related to your state, please contact (agricultural.statistics@gmail.com). Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of this information.

Sincerely,

Agricultural & Applied Economics Association  
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases  
American Dairy Science Association  
American Society of Agronomy  
American Society of Animal Science  
American Statistical Association  
American Sugar Alliance  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics  
Crop Science Society of America  
Federation of Animal Science Societies  
Global Cold Chain Alliance  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
National Coalition for Food and Agriculture Research  
National Farmers Union  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
North American Regional Science Council  
Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association  
Poultry Science Association  
Restaurant Services, Inc.  
Soil Science Society of America  
The Fertilizer Institute

*\*The undersigned are all members of the [Friends of Agricultural Statistics and Analysis \(FASA\)](#). [FASA includes a vast array of stakeholder groups](#). The FASA is a new but rapidly growing group of industry and academic members who recognize the critical value of public sector agricultural statistics and analysis. FASA stakeholders need these essential statistics and related analysis to make critical business decisions throughout the supply chain, from field to plate.*