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## Census Provides Opportunity to Grow the Future of Agriculture

### 2012 Census of Agriculture Arriving in Mailboxes across America

It's not every day that a walk to your mailbox leads to an opportunity to help shape farm programs, boost rural services and grow your farm future. But for producers across the country, that opportunity will soon become a reality. The 2012 Census of Agriculture, the only source of consistent and comprehensive agricultural data for every state and county in the nation, is currently being mailed to millions of farmers and ranchers across the United States.

Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the Census provides detailed data covering nearly every facet of U.S. agriculture. It looks at land use and ownership, production practices, expenditures and other factors that affect the way farmers do business and succeed in the 21st Century.

"The 2012 Census of Agriculture provides farmers with a powerful voice. The information gathered through the Census influences policy decisions that can have a tremendous impact on farmers and their communities for years to come," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "I strongly encourage all farmers, no matter how large or small their operation, to promptly complete and return their Census, so they can voice to the nation the value and importance of agriculture."

"The Census is the only source of comprehensive agricultural data highlighting the impact agriculture has on every county in Michigan," said Jamie Clover Adams, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Director. "I am asking Michigan's farmers and producers to complete their census to help us really get a true picture of the growth of agriculture in our state."

Vilsack added that in addition to affecting policy decisions, Census information also influences community growth and development. Census data are integral in allocating Federal resources to the State and local communities. For example, Census of Agriculture data are used to allocate Specialty Crop Block Grant program dollars to the State level. Michigan receives over \$1.3 million annually from this program in support of specialty crop initiatives, research, and extension.

"Along with their accomplishments as business men and women, farmers know about the challenges they face in their local areas," said Vilsack. "Taking part in the Census is increasingly important to farmers and every community in America because it provides important information and helps tell the true story about the state of agriculture in the United States today."

All farmers and ranchers should receive a Census form in the mail by early January. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2013. Farmers can return their forms by mail or online by visiting a secure website, [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov). Federal law requires all agricultural producers to participate in the Census and requires NASS to keep all individual information confidential.

For more information about the Census, visit [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov) or contact your local USDA, NASS, or the Michigan Field Office in East Lansing at 1-800-453-7501. The Census of Agriculture is your voice, your future, your responsibility.

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