

MULTI-CULTURAL OUTREACH FOR THE 2007 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

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Introduction

The census of agriculture, currently conducted every five years in the United States (U.S.), provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every State and county or county equivalent in the U.S. The first agriculture census was taken in 1840 as part of the sixth decennial census of population, and continued to be part of the decennial census through 1950. The responsibility of conducting the census of agriculture has rested historically with the U.S. Bureau of the Census. In 1997, that responsibility was transferred to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Agriculture census data are routinely used by all levels of government, the business community, educational institutions, and farm organizations to develop policies, programs, and business decisions in support of U.S. agriculture. These data include crop acreage and production, livestock inventories, agricultural sales, and numerous other agricultural data items. In addition, the census provides farm counts for all types and sizes of farms, including counts of farms operated by individuals belonging to different racial and ethnic groups. Language, lack of awareness and lack of trust in the government are major barriers to providing accurate census data for these groups.

This paper discusses an extensive multi-cultural outreach effort by NASS to promote participation in the 2007 Census of Agriculture. In early 2006, NASS contracted with Osborn & Barr Communications, Inc, a public relations firm specializing in agricultural issues, to develop a Marketing Communications Plan for the census. Portions of this plan addressed outreach to minority populations at the national level. Each NASS Field Office (FO) also developed a state-specific outreach plan. For the first time NASS conducted outreach through Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) who serve minority, immigrant, and other under-served populations. Also, NASS conducted extensive outreach to American Indian tribes and developed a thorough data collection plan with the Navajo, who have the largest American Indian reservation in the U.S. In addition, NASS developed a Spanish version of the census report form for use by their Field Offices for collecting data from Spanish speaking producers.

The Need for Census Outreach

Two important phases of conducting the census of agriculture are: 1) building as complete a list as possible of all farms and potential farms, and 2) obtaining a response from as many establishments on the list as possible. Neither of these steps is completely attainable so list incompleteness and non-response adjustments are necessary. Obtaining

adequate list completeness has proven to be an even greater challenge for minority operated farms. And while response has been adequate for all demographic groups in previous censuses, continued response is a concern as the number of new minority farmers increases and as new procedures are implemented for conducting the census on American Indian reservations. Operators who have no experience with NASS or the census of agriculture are often hesitant to participate in the census. Consequently, an extensive outreach program was implemented with special emphasis on minority operators with different cultural backgrounds.

List-building involves obtaining numerous lists of potential agricultural operators from various sources and merging them together to create the census mail list. Typically, some categories of records are screened prior to the census to identify their potential farm status and eliminate non-farm records from the list. The census methodology then uses an area frame to measure incompleteness of the census mail list. Prior to 2002, coverage adjustments based on area frame data were only calculated for major items at the State and National levels. Starting in 2002, a calibration process was used to reweight the list respondents to reflect under-coverage and allow coverage adjusted data to be published at the county level. Even though the data are coverage adjusted, adequate list coverage is still critically important in order to provide as accurate census data as possible.

Since 1969, all censuses of agriculture were conducted primarily as a mailout/mailback enumeration of the census mail list. Recent censuses have included some telephone and personal interview follow-up to help increase response. In addition, the 2007 census provided an electronic data reporting option over the internet. Different strategies have been used to categorize census mail list records into non-response weighting cells. County of operation and size of operation, as identified on the census mail list, are two primary variables used to create the weighting cells. Non-response weights are calculated for each cell and applied to each respondent record to adjust for non-response. However, as with adjusting for list incompleteness, a minimum adequate response is needed for all types and sizes of farms in order for these non-response adjustment to work well.

Non-response and coverage adjustments from the 2002 census for all farms, farms whose principal operator was of Hispanic ethnicity, and farms whose principal operator was of each specific race are provided in Table 1. Non-response adjustments were actually lower for each minority group except American Indians than for the total, indicating above average response rates by farm operators in these categories. However, continued response in 2007 and future censuses is a concern as the number of new minority and immigrant farmers increases and as new procedures for conducting the census on American Indian reservation are implemented. Also, Table 1 indicates that coverage adjustments were very large for Hispanic and Black or African American operators, indicating weak coverage of these minority operated farms on the census mail list.

Methodology for collecting census data on American Indian reservations is changing so the 2002 data are not necessarily indicative for future censuses. Prior to 1997, an American Indian reservation was counted as a single farm operation in the census. In

many cases there was a “tribal farm” that was operated collectively by a manager for the tribe. There were also many individual American Indian producers on most reservations that operated a farm/ranch independently of the tribal farm. These small farms were not counted prior to 1997. In 1997, NASS implemented a partial step toward counting these farms. A single census questionnaire was filled out by tribal leaders providing the total acres and agricultural production from these independent producers. The tribal leaders also made an estimate of the number of independent farms on the reservation. This information was published in both 1997 and 2002 in an appendix to the main census publication. As a further step, NASS conducted a pilot project for the 2002 census to build lists of American Indian farmers on reservations in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. This project was successful and resulted in approximately 1,500 individual American Indian operated farms in these three States being included in the U.S. total of 15,494. The 20.2% coverage adjustment for American Indian operated farms at the U.S. level only applies to the 15,494 American Indian farms counted in the census and does not reflect the coverage of American Indian farms on reservations in the other States. In 2002, the appendix data indicated there were 8,541 American Indian agricultural operators on reservations in addition to the 15,494 American Indian farms counted through existing methodology in the census. Most of these additional operators were in New Mexico and Arizona. In planning for the 2007 census, NASS made a commitment to work with American Indian tribes to implement these new procedures which were piloted in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota in 2002, involving building lists of farm operators, modifying collection methodology to accommodate the different culture, and collecting individual census questionnaires on reservations.

Table 1: Number of Farms and Percent Non-response and Coverage Adjustments by Principal Operator^{1/} Characteristic, 2002 Census of Agriculture

Principal Operator Characteristics	Number of Farms	Non-Response Adjustment (percent)	Coverage Adjustment (percent)
All Farms	2,128,982	12.3	17.9
Hispanic origin	50,592	9.8	43.1
White	2,067,379	12.3	17.5
Black or African American	29,090	11.1	43.9
American Indian	15,494	14.0	20.2
Native Hawaiian	983	10.5	18.0
Asian	8,375	10.6	18.6
More than one race	7,661	11.6	22.9

¹ An operator is someone who makes the day to day decision on a farming operation. A farm may have multiple decision-makers (partners). The Principal operator is defined as the senior operator on a farming enterprise. Thus there is one, and only one, Principal operator per farm. Interpretation of “senior” is left to the respondent.

There are a variety of factors contributing to the weaker list coverage of minority farmers, especially Hispanic farmers and Black/African American farmers, in the census. One factor is that these operators tend to have smaller farms which, in general, have weaker list coverage than larger farms. The definition of a farm used in the census of agriculture is any place from which \$1,000 (U.S. dollars) or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year. This definition was first used in the 1974 census and has been used in all subsequent censuses. Operators with less than \$10,000 in agricultural production often don't consider their operation as a farm and are less likely than other producers to join traditional farm producer associations or to sign up for government farm programs. So they are not included on traditional census list sources. Also, organizations serving ethnic and minority communities are often suspicious of any government inquiry for lists. Fears may be based on previous mistreatment and discrimination, concern about immigration status, and/or a culture that values privacy. These suspicions and fears also tend to reduce response for those minority operators who are on the census mail list. Recognizing the need for improved coverage, NASS set an agency goal for the 2007 Census of Agriculture to increase the coverage of minority-operated farms by 5 percent.

While non-response adjustments for Hispanic and the other minority racial groups were lower than for the majority white farmers in 2002, NASS is still concerned about maintaining adequate response for the 2007 and future censuses. Many representatives of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) who work with minority farm operators informed NASS that their clients are not aware of the importance of the census and are not likely to respond. This is partly due to the fact that the number of minority operated farms is growing, based on 2002 census data (see Table 2).

Table 2: Number of Farms by Principal Operator Characteristics, 1997 and 2002 Censuses of Agriculture, and % Change

Principal Operator Characteristics	Number of Farms (2002)	Number of Farms (1997)	% Change
All Farms	2,128,982	2,215,876	-3.9
Hispanic origin	50,592	33,450	+51.2
White	2,067,379	2,154,284	-4.0
Black or African American	29,090	26,785	+8.6
American Indian	15,494	12,911	+20.0
Asian and Native Hawaiian	9,358	9,620	-2.7
More than one race	7,661	(NA)	(NA)

Increasing numbers of farms in these groups implies that new operators, many of them new immigrants, are starting to farm or ranch in the U.S. As new operators, they have little exposure to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, NASS, or the census and so are hesitant to be included on the census mail list or to respond to a census inquiry. When list-building is possible for these groups, the lists are often of poor quality and contain agricultural workers or family members who are not actually operating a farm. A poor quality list can result in reduced response since many persons on the list do not consider themselves as farm operators and do not understand the need to respond.

All States contributed to the increase in the number of Hispanic operators from 1997 to 2002, with many States having over 100% growth, including the six New England states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont). The growth for the other groups was mixed at the State level. A general observation is that new immigrant farmers, primarily of Hispanic, African, or Asian descent, often locate together to support each other in similar types of agricultural enterprises. Many are involved in specialty fruit and vegetable production. Others operate as contractees for larger poultry or hog contractors. An advantage is that if these communities can be located, outreach can be targeted to these areas to address list-building and response.

Other response concerns include the new methodology for conducting the census on American Indian reservations, which will require that census data be collected from many individual American Indian operators who have never participated in the census before. In addition, the mailout/mailback methodology is problematic for any population with English literacy issues or who may have different cultural interpretation of questions.

The NASS Mission Statement reads:

The National Agricultural Statistics Service provides timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture.

In order to address these coverage and response needs and to provide accurate and useful statistics for all racial and ethnic groups, NASS embarked on an extensive multi-cultural outreach project in preparation for the 2007 census. A major focus of the outreach was to promote the census in Indian Country since this is the first census where NASS has attempted to collect census data from individual operators on reservations in most States.

Public Relations Outreach

In early 2006, NASS contracted with Osborn & Barr Communications, Inc, a public relations firm specializing in agricultural issues, to develop a Marketing Communications Plan for the census. To guide development of the plan, Osborn & Barr conducted focus groups of agricultural producers from a diverse range of farm types, races, and ages. There were three major findings from these focus groups:

- 1) Agricultural producers are cynical about the value and purpose of the Census.
- 2) Agricultural producers respond positively to the ideas that the Census:
 - a. Gives them a voice.
 - b. Can have a positive impact on their community.
- 3) Agricultural producers are also motivated by the fact that participation is required by law.

Based on these findings, the following key promotional message for the census was developed.

The 2007 Census of Agriculture is your voice, your future, your responsibility.
Voice: Showing the nation the value and importance of U.S. agriculture.
Future: Impacting the future of your operation and your entire community.
Responsibility: *Every* response makes a difference – and it's the law.

In general, this key message seemed to resonate well with the minority producers from different cultural backgrounds. They want their contributions to U.S. agriculture to be recognized as there are many USDA programs providing financial assistance where funds are allocated across race, ethnicity, and gender categories based on census data. So it is very important to be counted accurately. Also, the minority and socially disadvantaged populations are very community oriented and are concerned about their community's future. NASS's pledge to maintain confidentiality of the census data is also important to minority producers. Many minority producers have faced discrimination during their lifetime and are very careful about sharing information about themselves with persons outside of their community. Therefore, the NASS Field Offices emphasized confidentiality through their outreach efforts to specific minority groups.

As part of the marketing plan, the NASS Marketing and Information Services Office and the NASS Field Offices participated in numerous conferences and events sponsored by minority organizations during 2007 and early 2008. A wide range of publicity materials, news releases, and public service announcements (including Spanish-language and Navajo-language versions) were used to promote participation in the census. Although limited by budget, NASS also paid for some advertising in print media and on the radio in specific States and regions with the highest concentrations of minority producers

In addition, each NASS Field Office (FO) also developed a marketing plan that documented numerous outreach efforts through conferences, trade shows, radio programs, promotion of census ads to print media, visits to county USDA offices, and contacts with American Indian tribes and community-based organizations (CBOs). Promotion of the census was a major activity of all FOs during 2007.

An important outreach effort by many FOs who had large or concentrated populations of minority operators was the hiring of data collection enumerators from those populations who better understood and were sensitive to some of the cultural barriers that NASS faced in collecting census data. The NASS FOs do not directly hire enumerators, but

contract with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) for data collection enumeration. The hiring needs of NASS are closely communicated and coordinated with NASDA. This was especially true of FOs that had large numbers of American Indian operators on reservations who had not participated in previous censuses. In particular, over 200 Navajo enumerators were hired in Arizona and New Mexico to collect census data on the Navajo reservation (see further discussion in the section “Outreach on the Navajo Nation”).

Outreach through Community-Based Organizations

A community-based organization (CBO) is a nonprofit organization which works to serve the disadvantaged in the community in which it is located. CBOs may focus on African-American, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian or other social or demographic audiences. Many CBOs have an agricultural focus and provide training on agricultural practices or on USDA programs designed to support agricultural producers. CBOs generally have excellent contacts and respect within their communities, and thus, can provide NASS with promotional and data collection opportunities which may be difficult otherwise.

A few CBO leaders took the initiative in 2003 to start a dialogue with NASS and other USDA agencies about improving the quality of the census data for the 2007 Census of Agriculture. From these initial discussions, NASS started to develop partnerships with a few CBOs. For example, NASS developed a partnership with the Texas-Mexico Border Coalition (TMBC), which serves Hispanic/Latino agricultural producers in southern and western Texas. Through this partnership, NASS developed a brochure targeted for Hispanic/Latino producers that included:

- 1) a statement of support from the TMBC Chairman,
- 2) 2002 census data on Hispanic farms and ranches,
- 3) information on the benefits of census data to agriculture, and
- 4) information on how to “sign-up” to be included on the 2007 census list, including a tear-off postcard, a toll-free telephone contact, and a website to submit name, address, and demographic information.

Other brochures were subsequently created and targeted to other minority groups, including African-American agricultural producers, Asian producers, American Indian producers, and women producers. These brochures were distributed to the NASS Field Offices for their use at meetings and conferences and to distribute to their CBO partners. The brochures were also distributed at various national conferences of minority organizations.

A key concept the CBOs wanted to better understand was the mail-out / mail-back process that NASS uses to conduct the census. A fundamental part of the census process is building the census list of potential farm operators. Many CBO clients and minority operators are wary of being included on a list since they do not understand how the list will be used. These discussions provided NASS the opportunity to emphasize that their

list and individually reported data are strictly confidential and are protected through Title 7 of the U.S. Code.

By early 2006, NASS had assembled a list of over 600 CBOs, USDA contacts, university contacts, and other institutions that served different minority and socially disadvantaged agricultural communities across the U.S.. Each NASS Field Office was responsible for contacting the CBOs and institutions in their State to determine their interest in supporting preparations for the 2007 census and to start developing a partnership relationship, as appropriate. The FOs already had relationships with some of these CBO contacts. The CBOs were invited to support the census by:

- 1) providing lists of clients or supporting census list-building activities,
- 2) promoting response to the census by their clients, and/or
- 3) assisting with census data collection.

While some new partnership relationships were created by these contacts, in general, this effort was not as productive as anticipated. Many CBOs are busy with ongoing projects and have few resources to devote to other initiatives. Also, there is a lack of familiarity with NASS and the importance of the census to their clients. NASS recognized this effort as a beginning to develop relationships that could benefit the 2012 and future censuses.

Community-Based Organizations Partnering Workshop

In recent years, the USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights hosts a workshop for CBOs and other institutions to inform them of USDA programs and share ideas on supporting minority and socially disadvantaged agricultural producers. After the August 2007 workshop, several CBOs expressed interest in being more involved with the 2007 Census of Agriculture. They stressed the importance of accurate minority operator counts and wanted to help make that a reality. In response, NASS quickly organized a national CBO partnering workshop. The goals of the workshop were: (1) to have a 2007 Census of Agriculture that fully and accurately reflects all segments and aspects of the agricultural industry across the United States, including a complete and accurate representation of minority operators, and (2) to seek mutual partnerships with CBOs which would significantly enhance NASS's ability to reach minority populations. The hope was that the CBO partnering activities started at the workshop would serve as the beginning of strong long-term relationships.

The two and one half day national workshop took place in Kansas City, Missouri on November 14-16, 2007. Fifty CBO representatives were invited. Thirty-seven participants, representing thirty-two CBOs ultimately attended the workshop. The workshop consisted of basic information on NASS, training on the 2007 Census of Agriculture, and ample time for the CBO representatives to work among themselves and with NASS staff to develop preliminary CBO-NASS partnering plans. The partnering plans focused on setting up *Census Days* across the country.

Census Days were events planned and implemented through a partnership between NASS and CBOs. The events took place in selected counties across the country with significant numbers of minority operators. Most Census Days took place between January and March 2008 and consisted of NASS, NASS interviewers, and CBO staff being available to assist operators complete their 2007 Census of Agriculture questionnaires.

Two reoccurring themes during the Kansas City workshop concerned the mutual desire of the CBOs and NASS to improve the quality of Census data for minority operators and improve trust issues between these groups and USDA. The CBO representatives were appreciative of NASS's dedication to improving data for the 2007 Census and voiced multiple compliments to NASS's handling of CBO partnering activities.

Census Days

CBOs submitted preliminary partnering plans either during the Kansas City workshop, or during the days and months following the workshop. The preliminary plans were reviewed in NASS Headquarters (HQ) to ensure they abided by the basic expectations of Census Days. These expectations were conveyed to CBO representatives during the Kansas City workshop and included: (1) each Census Day must include a provision to have producers complete their 2007 Census of Agriculture forms, and (2) NASS would provide a maximum of \$2,500 per Census Day activity.

Once the preliminary plans were reviewed in NASS HQ, they were sent to the NASS Field Offices (FOs) involved in the plans. NASS Field Office Directors then contacted the CBO point-of-contact to discuss and clarify the provisions of the plans. In some cases modifications were made to the preliminary plans that were agreeable to both the CBO representative and the NASS Field Office Director. The preliminary plans were then submitted back to NASS HQ for funding approval. Once approved, NASS HQ informed the appropriate NASS Field Office Directors who implemented the plans.

There was no set formula for Census Days. However, they typically fell into two categories: (1) those that were held as "stand alone" events, and (2) those that were held in conjunction with existing CBO activities. NASS typically provided funds to cover such things as: (1) facility rental, (2) food/beverages, (3) promotional mailings or telephone calls, (4) CBO representative travel expenses, and (5) CBO staff time. In addition, Census Days sometimes included distributing non-Census information that was of interest to farmers. This included information on other USDA programs and farming practices. One consequence of this approach is that many census reports were obtained from agricultural producers who were not on the original census mail list. Typically, non-addressed census report forms were used to collect data from each producer. Special handling was required to insure proper non-response and coverage adjustment weighting of the census data.

Preliminary figures show that 183 Census Days were conducted across the country, mainly in southern states, resulting in around 600 completed census reports. However,

many unaccounted census reports were taken by the participants to be completed at home and returned to NASS through the mail.

Outreach to American Indian Tribes

As noted previously, new methodology was introduced for the 2002 census on a pilot basis in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota to obtain census data from individual American Indian farm operators on reservations. Previously, most reservations were counted as single farms in the census data, resulting in individual producers not being represented in the census farm counts. The census farm counts are increasingly being used for administering various USDA farm programs, so these counts need to accurately represent each demographic group. NASS recognized that expanding this change in methodology to all reservations in 2007 would require considerable outreach and discussion with tribal leaders on reservations around the country.

In January 2005, NASS created an American Indian liaison position to serve as a primary contact person with the American Indian tribes across the country. NASS moved the duty station for this position from Washington, D.C. to Albuquerque, New Mexico in August 2005 to facilitate closer contact with many of the western U.S. tribes and reservations, especially the American Indian pueblos located in New Mexico.

A large percentage of the American Indian agricultural operators were not at all familiar with the census of agriculture, nor with NASS and USDA. The initial outreach efforts began slowly and continued on a persistent and steady course to create rapport, build credibility, and establish relationships and networks. Over time, the liaison became a familiar face at many of the American Indian organized meetings and workshops, which helped bridge the gap of both a conspicuous absence of government on many tribal lands as well as an inherent mistrust of most government employees and programs due to historical mistreatment. Building trust and having someone accessible were key elements to successful outreach with many of the tribes. Also, becoming recognizable well before the initiation of the census data collection period and serving as a point of contact between tribes and NASS was a reassuring element.

The liaison was often the initial contact in meeting tribal agricultural officers and tribal leaders. These contacts were then forwarded to the respective state directors so that there was also a network established at both the local level and the national level. At times, the liaison would go with the directors to conduct initial field visits to tribes to introduce the state directors. As NASS became more visible, more trust and rapport were established with tribes. Tribal visits were imperative to the outreach effort, whether it was by the national liaison or field office staff, to demonstrate agency commitment to become an active participant and partner in better counting agriculture in Indian Country. Trust and confidence in NASS were ensured by the practice of making follow-up phone calls or visits to American Indian contacts every month, even if that was a five minute phone call to just verify the status of the contact person.

Many Indian societies must deal with high rates of diabetes, teen suicides, gang violence on reservations, poverty, methamphetamine abuses, and generational gaps where grandparents are raising grandchildren. As American Indian farmers and ranchers are dealing with these societal ills, it is sometimes difficult to convey the importance of the Census of Agriculture. Therefore, NASS learned not to assume that the community was going to embrace the idea of a census and champion the cause immediately. Outreach meant finding common ground, developing an understanding and trust of one another, then broaching the subject of agriculture, and finally introducing the concept of a census. A practice that proved successful to bring agriculture back into the forefront on many of the reservations was to introduce the concept of a community garden. The garden was not just a subsistence tool, but one that also brought communities together. Gardens act as botanical therapy for many of the seniors, who were the former farmers and ranchers in the once agrarian societies. These seniors became the agricultural instructors to the young, the learning disabled, the impoverished, and instilled a sense of worth and pride. The produce from the garden became the ingredients for a nutritional instructor to demonstrate preparation of a healthy diet. The circle of involvement grew, and at the center is agriculture, thus demonstrating its importance to all in the community.

In gaining access to a tribal community, the best efforts were those where both tribal leaders and grass roots farmers and ranchers were included in the information sharing process. Following protocol is most important to the success of outreach on an Indian reservation. Therefore any tribal visits were always cleared with the tribal leaders. However, NASS learned that it was also important to communicate and disseminate information to the individual farmers and ranchers who would be receiving census forms. In learning about American Indian cultures, it became obvious that many tribes did not have a written language but one that was spoken; therefore pamphlets and brochures were often considered meaningless because of the longstanding non-reliance on information in a written medium. Effective tools were agricultural education days where NASS partnered with other USDA agencies to bring pertinent and requested training to the Indian communities. Again, it was the individual operators that benefited by hearing the information first hand from the source.

This was not the only cultural norm that had to be recognized. Most American Indian meetings begin and end with a prayer or blessing. Therefore, when scheduling a meeting or a training session with American Indians, an elder or spiritual leader was always asked to officiate and lead a prayer. Also, it was learned that the American Indian culture is one that has close family ties, so it not uncommon for husband and wife, or father, mother and children to attend a meeting together. Another traditional and historical behavior is that many American Indians do not value money as much as non-Indians sometimes do. Therefore, monetary consideration or motivation is not always a good incentive.

The importance of the census of agriculture is much more widely recognized by American Indian tribes around the country than prior to the 2002 census. Participation in the census process by the tribes and individual American Indian operators in the 2007 census will reflect the impact of NASS's outreach efforts to date. The full impact will

only be realized in the 2012 and future censuses if the outreach efforts continue to firmly establish familiarity and trust between the tribes and NASS.

Outreach on the Navajo Nation

As plans for the 2007 census were developed, including the collection of census data from individual American Indian operators on reservations, the Navajo Nation government expressed strong interest in working with NASS to obtain accurate American Indian census data. The Navajo Nation is the largest American Indian reservation in the U.S., covering over 42 million hectares in three adjoining States: Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah.

Conducting an agricultural census for the Navajo Nation required a completely different data collection approach compared to USDA's traditional census. Some of the difficulties to address included cultural differences, educational differences, a very strong distrust of the U.S. federal government and the fact that you are dealing with a sovereign nation with a highly centralized government. A Navajo Nation census was made even more challenging because the reservation is large and has thousands of possible farms. Many of the processes developed over the years for the census do not work well in native communities and this was true with the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Nation has its own form of government with a strong centralized structure along with five Agencies and 110 Chapters at the local level. Agencies can loosely be compared to a U.S. State and the Chapters compare to a U.S. County. USDA-NASS had not had a presence on the Navajo Nation before the 2007 Census so conducting an outreach program and a data collection effort involved building new relationships with elected officials at all levels of their government.

For the 2007 Census of Agriculture, development of a data collection plan began in early 2005. Monthly discussions took place between officials of the Navajo Department of Agriculture, Navajo Department of Natural Resources, Navajo Livestock Grazing Officials and NASS. Staff from these four organizations made the primary decisions but input was gathered from groups including the U.S. Department of Interior, Navajo Farm Boards, Navajo Legislative Grazing Committee, other USDA agencies and various elected officials involved with agriculture.

There was great concern early on that the existing Census of Agriculture Report Form used to collect data primarily via the mail service was not appropriate for the Navajo Nation. Most people felt that the report form was too long, asked too many questions not related to Navajo farming practices and contained too many instructions that were difficult to interpret. There was also great concern that many Navajo farmers would have difficulty because their primary language was not English. Designing a new report form that fit the farming practices of Navajo producers was not possible because of time concerns to test and develop the instrument and because of the complex approval process.

The report form issues required NASS to develop a unique data collection plan. The data collection plan for the Navajo Nation excluded the use of mail as a primary data collection mode. Once NASS abandoned the mail approach, the focus turned to collecting the data using a face-to-face mode. This changed the traditional census process significantly because face-to-face data collection required NASS to hire over 200 Navajo enumerators in Arizona and New Mexico to collect the majority of the Navajo census data, which significantly increased the data collection costs compared to a mail-out approach. Also, this approach resulted in many reports from producers not on the original census list, similar to the Census Day approach used with CBOs. Consequently, special handling was required to insure proper non-response and coverage weighting adjustments.

To make data collection easier and to help the newly hired and inexperienced enumerator staff, NASS developed an Interviewer Aid that was used in conjunction with the official report form to facilitate data collection that better matched the farming practices on the Nation. This greatly simplified the training required and provided a more reasonable interview for both enumerator and farmer.

Another major component of the Navajo data collection plan included the involvement of all 110 Chapters. Each Chapter has a number of elected officials, a budget to serve the needs of their specific community, and a Chapter House for community meetings. NASS needed the help of Chapter officials to allow NASS to set up events at the Chapter House to collect data and to promote the benefits of the census to its members. Even though the Navajo Nation government supported the census and even signed an official Proclamation asking all Navajo people to participate, there was reluctance on the part of some Chapter officials to help. It was difficult for NASS to build relationships with the members of all 110 Chapters due to staffing and resource limitations. Having time to develop relationships with all Chapters must be an important part of any Navajo Census.

A third part of the Navajo data collection plan also included targeted radio advertisements. NASS ran census radio ads beginning in March 2008 through the completion of Census data collection. One ad was general in nature and stressed the importance of being counted. Other ads informed farmers that NASS staff would be at a specific Chapter House at a specific time and day to help local farmers complete their Census form. NASS received very good feedback regarding the radio ads and they will be part of the data collection plan for the 2012 Census of Agriculture.

Looking beyond the 2007 Census toward 2012, NASS must build on the successes in 2007. Developing stronger partnerships at the Chapter level is important. Developing a report form that can be used via the mail must also be a key component. Erasing some of the distrust with federal agencies also must continue. Even with these improvements, conducting the 2012 census on the Navajo Nation will still be challenging.

Spanish Language Initiatives

In addition to providing promotional material, news releases to the print media and public service announcements to radio stations in Spanish, NASS developed a Spanish-version

of the census report form for 2007 and also provided assistance over the telephone in Spanish. As noted previously, Hispanic producers increased by over 50% from 1997 to 2002. While most of these producers speak and understand English, some of these producers are only fluent in Spanish.

The Spanish-version of the report form was only used when requested by a producer. The English mail version includes a toll free number to call for assistance on the face page. Directions to call this number are also printed in Spanish. The recorded response then directs the caller to a Spanish speaking receptionist if requested. Less than 2000 callers have requested assistance in Spanish to date. Of these, around 200 have requested to receive a Spanish-version of the report form in the mail. In addition, many FOs are using the Spanish-version of the report form for Census Day events serving Hispanic producers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

NASS conducted an extensive outreach effort to publicize the 2007 census of agriculture to the entire agricultural community and specifically to minority operators, with general goals of increasing list coverage and response to the census. Aspects of the outreach effort included:

- 1) participation in conferences and events sponsored by minority organizations,
- 2) Spanish-language and Navajo-language public service announcements,
- 3) paid advertizing in specific States with large numbers of minority producers,
- 4) efforts to hire minority enumerators who were sensitive to cultural barriers,
- 5) developing partnership relationships with CBOs,
- 6) developing list-building brochures targeted to each minority group,
- 7) conducting a census workshop for CBO representatives,
- 8) conducting Census Days in partnership with CBOs,
- 9) assigning an American Indian liaison to develop initial relationships with tribes,
- 10) building working relationships with the Navajo Chapters,
- 11) using primarily personal enumeration on the Navajo Reservation,
- 12) using an Interview Aide to facilitate data collection from Navajo operators,
- 13) using targeted paid advertisements on the Navajo Reservation, and
- 14) using a Spanish-version of the census report form when requested.

It is difficult to measure the direct impact of each outreach effort. But each effort should be reviewed and evaluated as objectively as possible in order to develop effective marketing programs for each racial and ethnic group in preparation for the 2012 census. The strategies need to accommodate the increasing diversity of agricultural operators in the U.S. as new and recent immigrants pursue farming and ranching as a career. Targeted outreach to Indian Country will continue to be needed as NASS expands the census to individual operators on additional American Indian reservations in 2012. Multi-cultural outreach should continue to have a high priority for NASS in order to provide accurate and useful census statistics for all racial and ethnic groups.