

# Ag census outlines U.S. farm power

LANCASTER — A week ago Lancaster Farming published statistics of the 1974 Agricultural Census — a study which only then became available to the public after four years of fact finding and processing. This year marks the beginning of a new Census period for agriculture, results from which will be available four years from now.

According to information received by Lancaster Farming in Washington, D.C. last month, the Bureau of the Census is tuning up again to record the situation on the nation's farms. Report forms for the next census are being readied for mailing in late December to collect 1978 data from the country's 2.5 million farmers. All of the facts about farming — so well understood

by persons close to it — are not self-evident. They are gathered in this highly specialized collection effort. A key to success in this effort is the cooperation of farmers themselves in filling out their census report forms and mailing them back, so that the continuing story of American agriculture can be told, says the Census Bureau.

Following is background

information on the Census' purpose, coverage, and use.

The U.S. census of agriculture provides a periodic statistical picture of the nation's farming, ranching, and related activities. The census, taken every 10 years from 1840 to 1920 and every five years for 1925 through 1974, is undergoing a reference-year change. Two 4-year censuses will be taken for 1978 and 1982, thus adjusting the data-reference year to coincide with the censuses of business and industry for 1982. Thereafter, the agriculture census will revert to a 5-year cycle. It currently reports data on agricultural production, resources, and inventories for every county, State, and region of the United States, and for the Nation. It provides the only set of uniform agricultural

data at the county level. The 1974 census not only included farms in the 50 states but also in Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands, and agricultural service establishments in the United States.

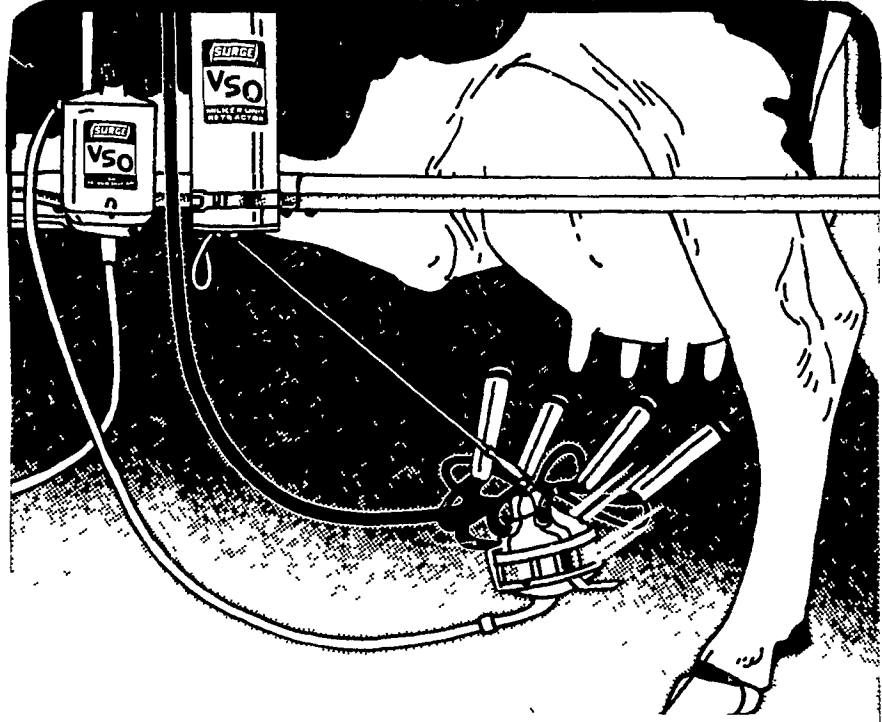
The censuses for 1969 and 1974 were taken by mail; most prior censuses were conducted by personal interview. In addition to the periodic census of agriculture, a variety of related surveys are conducted by the Census Bureau at various times to provide data on subjects, such as farm finance, horticulture, cotton ginning, corporations, and irrigation and drainage; some of these, at times, run concurrently or in association with the major census of agriculture.

In the first censuses of 1840 and 1850, farmers were

asked only about livestock in terms of the number of cattle, milch cows, and working oxen. Items such as production of Indian corn, pounds of cheese made, pounds of silk cocoons, and gallons of wine produced were also enumerated in addition to other items, many of which are similar to those questions asked in recent censuses.

As the Nation's agriculture expanded westward, the number of farms and ranches grew and gradually increased in mechanization, specialization, and complexity. The scope of the census of agriculture also had to expand at the same time to meet the needs for data to measure these rapid developments. For 1974, the principal categories of data

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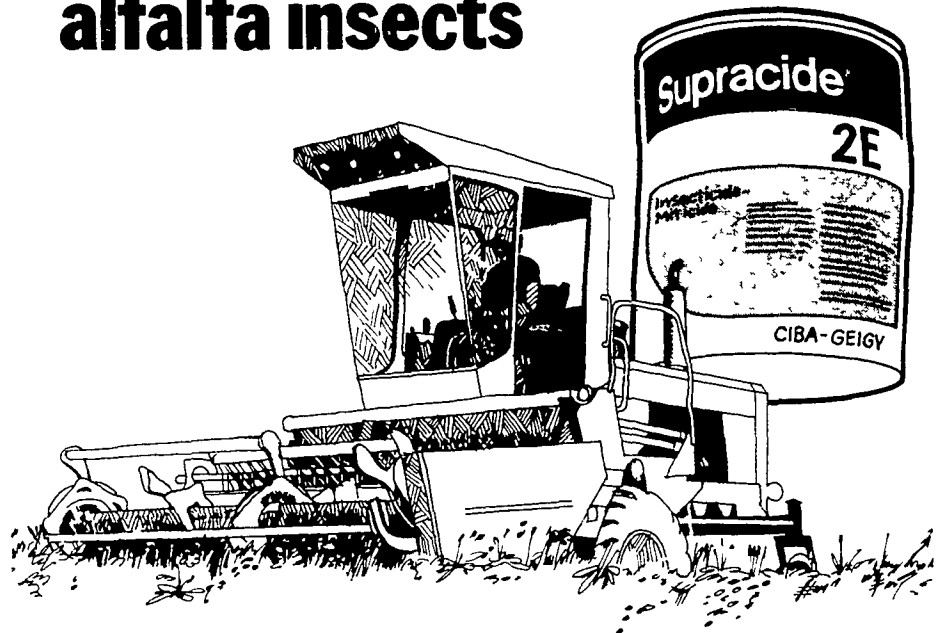
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