

PDA Secretary Reminds Farmers To Send In U.S. Census Of Agriculture Forms

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Acting Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff has urged all Pennsylvania farmers, growers, and agribusinesses to participate in the 2002 Census of Agriculture.

The Feb. 3 deadline has passed and a large number of Pennsylvania farmers, growers, and agribusinesses have returned their forms to the USDAs National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). However, there are still some census forms outstanding.

Pennsylvania's agricultural community has a critical stake in this census of agriculture, stated Acting Secretary Wolff. All of agriculture, whether a large dairy farm in Bradford County or a vegetable farm in Lancaster County, is critical to showing the importance and contribution of our farmers, understanding structural changes, and knowing how to meet the changing needs of our 21st Century agriculture industry.

In December 2002, over 91,000 agriculture census forms were sent out across Pennsylvania. Secretary Wolff noted that Pennsylvania ranks in the top ten states in response to the 2002

Census of Agriculture. However, to develop an accurate picture of Pennsylvania agriculture, it is vital that all farmers and growers who have not already returned their census forms take the time to submit them.

An accurate report of farm operations in Pennsylvania helps to formulate a complete, detailed picture of agriculture in Pennsylvania and the nation.

This is the 26th Census of Agriculture conducted by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) in conjunction with the Pa. Agricultural Statistics Service. Snapshots of U.S. Agriculture dating back to 1840 continue to be a valuable resource to farmers, growers, farm organizations, agribusiness, farm media, as well as county, state, and federal government.

Examples of organizations using county-level results are:

- Colleges and Universities: Development of new and improved methods to increase agriculture production. Cooperative Extension: Allocation of funding for county cooperative extension programs and services.

- Farm Organizations: Evaluation and proposal of agriculture policies and programs.

- Agribusiness: Meeting the farmers need for items such as fertilizer, seed, and equipment.

- Congressional Staff: Changes in the U.S. Farm Bill and other farm-related legislation.

- Farmers: Decision-making about potential new opportunities, efficiencies, and changes to their enterprises.

- State Departments of Agriculture: Development of policy considerations during drought and emergency outbreaks of diseases, as well as infestations of pests.

- State and Federal Government Officials: Draft legislation to help resolve agricultural problems and strengthen the agricultural industry.

By law, (Title 7, U.S. Code), data provided by individual farms is held in strictest confidence. No information will be disclosed about any individual operation.

For assistance in the completion of the census, a help line has been established at (888) 4AG-STAT.

To learn more about the 2002

Census of Agriculture contact the Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service at (717) 787-3904, or visit the Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service homepage through the PA PowerPort at www.state.pa.us PA Keyword agriculture or directly through the PA Department of Agriculture homepage at www.pda.state.pa.us and go to the Commissions and Laboratories side menu to access information on previous censuses of agriculture or current Pennsylvania agricultural statistics.

Weak Economy Not Affecting Consumers' Appetite For Beef

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Demand for beef has increased more than three percent since 2000 and nearly 10 percent since its low in 1998, officials announced today from the 2003 Cattle Industry Annual Convention and Trade Show.

Preliminary year-end demand data indicate that consumers' appetite for beef remained strong through, despite record-high beef supplies, softened exports to key international markets, and a struggling economy.

"We've seen substantial improvement in beef demand since 1998, which is largely due to the development of new high-quality beef products for consumers, said Dr. Wayne Purcell, an economist at Virginia Tech. Purcell also believes that the outlook for the U.S. beef industry is positive.

"Although the economy is still struggling, I expect that the industry's expansion of exports and the development of even more new beef products will increase beef demand in 2003. I'll be very surprised if anything different happens."

Beef demand, which is a measure accounting for both per capita consumption and consumer spending for beef, has trended upward since 1998. And while it's no surprise that beef demand was down 1.45 percent in 2002 compared to 2001, Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB) Chairman Dee Lacey is said the industry remains well on track to meet its Long Range Plan goal of increasing beef demand by six percent between 2001 and 2004.

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