



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

For immediate release: April 30, 2008 (08-15)
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WSDA director reminds farmers to be counted for USDA's Census of Agriculture *70 percent response rate from producers so far; 2007 Census forms still being accepted*

OLYMPIA – The deadline for returning completed 2007 Census of Agriculture forms issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture may have come and gone, but it's not too late for Washington farmers and ranchers to speak up for their communities, their industry and their future.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) reminds farmers that their voices are important and need to be heard.

"A strong agricultural industry is a critical component in having a strong state economy," says WSDA Director Valoria Loveland. "By providing town planners, community leaders, lawmakers and individual farm operators with the most comprehensive and accurate Washington agricultural reports, they have the resources to make informed, sound decisions to ensure a solid future."

Seventy percent of Washington state producers have turned in their Census so far and the U.S. Department of Agriculture is still accepting responses.

"The remainder of those farmers who did not turn in their information should do so promptly," Loveland urged. "Accurate information from all farmers—small-scale and large—is important, so it can provide a true picture of where Washington agriculture is today and help people plan appropriately for its needs in the future."

Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Census is a complete count of the nation's farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures and other topics. It provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the nation.

Census responses are required and protected by law, according to David Knopf, director, Washington Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Farmers can return their forms by mail or fill out the Census online. For more information about the Census, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov or call toll-free (888) 4AG-STAT or (888) 424-7828.

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