

What data are available ?

Since 1996 USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) have participated in the Agricultural Resource Management Study (ARMS). The ARMS is an integrated set of annual surveys that collect information from U.S. farms about crop and livestock production practices, financial and operating characteristics of farm businesses, and characteristics of farm operator households. Prior to 1996 this information was collected from the Cropping Practices Survey and the Farm Costs and Returns Survey.

From the surveys that collect cropping practice information, detailed data are available on production inputs and practices. These include seed information, pesticide treatments and pest management, fertilizer application and nutrient management, equipment use, tillage, crop history, and irrigation practices. For selected crops and years, cost information is also available. For farm operations, detailed data are available on crops produced, crop and livestock expenses, commodity specific income for crops and livestock, farm assets and farm debt. Data available for the farm operator and the operator's household include the operator's age, education level, and sources of off-farm income.

Who can obtain access to the data ?

Data may be made available to researchers and other government agencies who have collaborative projects with ERS or NASS that contribute to the public sector mission of

USDA. These must be formally administered through a contract, cooperative agreement, or memorandum of understanding. The level of disaggregation of data available for access will depend on the specific project. Data needs will be met with publishable aggregations whenever possible.

Are there any restrictions on the use of the data ?

Yes, all reports, publications and releases based on survey data must pass strict non-disclosure reviews. Entities and individuals outside USDA with access to confidential survey data are subject to the same Federal statutes that apply to USDA and its employees. Under these statutes, individuals who unlawfully disclose confidential data are subject to fines and other penalties.

Currently, the locations where access can be provided are limited to ERS in Washington, DC, and NASS in Washington, DC and selected state statistical offices.

What Steps are Required to Obtain Access to the Data ?

- After preliminary consultation with ERS personnel, you (the requestor) must complete a project outline that includes a brief project description and objectives, a detailed description of the data needed, and the planned uses of the data.
- We (ERS and NASS) review your proposal. We determine the level of aggregation that can meet the research demand, and that there are adequate

samples available to support the analysis and methodology. It is also necessary to assure that the project accounts for the complex survey design underlying ARMS. Changes, if required, are incorporated into a final agreement.

- Once formal agreements have been signed, access to the data will be provided at the ERS or NASS headquarters or at a NASS state statistical office. Scheduling is subject to the availability of ERS and NASS resources.
- All individuals are required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to receiving access to any unpublished information.

Can ERS run special tabulations from ARMS data for me?

- If your project contributes to the public sector mission of USDA, ERS can develop special tabulations on a cost reimbursed basis. Scheduling is subject to the availability of ERS staff resources.

Who should I contact ?

Send requests for information to:
Merritt Padgitt
USDA, Economic Research Service
1800 M Street, NW, Rm 4193
Washington, DC 20036-5831
mpadgitt@ers.usda.gov



Accessing USDA Survey Data for Collaborative Research

USDA's Economic Research Service obtains and disseminates information about U.S. farms, farming practices and farm households. Much of this information is obtained from annual surveys of U.S. farm operations conducted by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. This pamphlet briefly summarizes the types of data that are available, the restrictions on its use, and the process for obtaining access to the data for collaborative research.