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2012 Census of Agriculture

The end of December is typically marked by people returning holiday gifts that don't fit or aren't quite right. But this year, farmers and ranchers across the country can give themselves a gift that won't be returned and will keep on giving even after the holiday season – a voice for their industry and their community.

By filling out the [2012 Census of Agriculture](#), farmers are investing in the future of their farm and American agriculture. Their responses provide a strong and unified voice about their needs and current state of the industry. Law makers, government organizations, businesses, town planners and individual farm operations use this valuable information to help shape farm programs, boost rural services, and grow their farm futures. It's an important investment into the future and well-being of farming and all of agriculture in America.

Conducted only once every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's [National Agricultural Statistics Service](#) (NASS), the Census covers virtually every aspect of U.S. agriculture, providing a complete count of the nation's farms and ranches and the people who operate them. It looks at land use and ownership, production practices, expenditures and other factors that affect the way farmers do business and succeed in the 21st century.

The holiday season is a time of giving and receiving, but perhaps some of the best gifts are food, clothing and shelter provided to us with help from U.S. farmers. As we gather this season with friends and family, we celebrate and appreciate these essentials of everyday living. By participating in the Census, farmers help tell the story of U.S. agriculture today so that urban and non-farming residents and decision makers can better understand rural and agricultural America.

Farmers and ranchers should receive a Census form in the mail by early January. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2013. Farmers can return their forms by mail or online by visiting a secure website, www.agcensus.usda.gov. Federal law requires all agricultural producers to participate in the Census and requires NASS to keep all individual information confidential.

For more information about the Census, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov or call 1-888-4AG-STAT (1-888-424-7828). The Census of Agriculture is your voice, your future, your responsibility.