

**2017 Kansas City Data Users Meeting  
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Agricultural Statistics Service  
October 24, 2017**

**Introductions and Opening Remarks from agency representatives within USDA**

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)  
Economic Research Service (ERS)  
Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)  
Farm Service Agency (FSA)  
World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB)  
U.S. Census Bureau (Census), Department of Commerce  
National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

**Questions & Answers**

**Note:** The following write-up presents a topical summary of issues discussed during the afternoon open forum. Material is presented in chronological order.

**Attendee:** About 3 years ago in Chicago, I brought up the idea that we should do away with crop condition ratings. I think we continue them too long until 50% of harvest. I am concerned about the quality of the condition reports week to week.

**NASS:** There was a lot of discussion especially back in August because there seemed to be a much bigger divergence between our yield forecast and what the good to excellent rating showed this year. Conditions are based on a weekly survey that we do, we get about 2,000-2,500 responses each week and the respondents are primarily county extension agents, some local FSA employees and some others. They are reporting at the county level, we are asking them to give us their opinion of the condition rating in their county. When you look at the August forecast, we are talking about a couple of other surveys that we are using. We reached out to about 23,000 farmers across the country and we asked them what do you expect your yields to be for the various crops. In addition to asking farmers we do the objective yield work as well, sending enumerators into fields.

**Attendee:** I worry that the quality of information coming into you is not up to the standards that you guys have traditionally prided yourselves on. Are you confident in the quality of the data you get for the condition ratings? I know of 4 or 5 companies that would like to see you get out of the business of producing crop condition ratings. There is a substitute for it now that the industry did not have a number of years ago. People would have to pay for it but are you really providing something they wouldn't have access to somewhere else?

**NASS:** I think that was probably the key though is that you would have to pay for it. We are in the business of leveling the playing field by making this information available to everyone at the same time, same place.

**Attendee:** I do think we get value out of the pasture and range condition and the distribution by states that gives us some very good information on the calf crop throughout the year.

**Attendee:** I wasn't going to ask about crop conditions but we have had the worst rated heavy eared crop ever which kind of throws everything off. If you look at the standards that we use to create those conditions it seems extremely subjective there is no dividing point between excellent and good, there is no color standard on green, there is no height standard there

is no other standard. What I have learned from running my own surveys is that you have to ask the same person the same exact questions. Would maybe the metrics we use to describe good and excellent need some revision? My other question is wasn't the W-J model used in prior years for production?

**NASS:** I will go in reverse order, no NASS has never used the Wescott-Jewison model. That model is used before NASS gets into the forecasting season by the World Board. Couple of comments on crop conditions. We do use the same reporters every week, that doesn't mean they report every week. As far as the definitions go, yes it is very subjective but if you look at what we are asking it is subjective by nature. We do have to be a little careful about changing the definitions because the history is so valuable. You probably don't care as much about the raw numbers as how do they compare to last year, how do they compare to the five year average, how do they compare to a similar analog year. We're not opposed to looking at it but I think we would be very cautious for those reasons.

**Attendee:** I had a question on the Wescott model. That is used in the WASDE correct?

**NASS/WAOB:** Yes, it is used before August.

**Attendee:** It is not used by NASS but it used in the WASDE, I just wanted to make that clarification. It has not been updated since 2013 is that correct?

**WAOB:** It is reestimated every year using last year's weather. So it is reestimated using last year's July temperature, precipitation, etc.

**Attendee:** But you don't publish the updated slope coefficients?

**WAOB:** No we do not.

**Attendee:** Can that be done for the industry.

**WAOB:** It's something we can look into.

**Attendee:** If that model's being updated it would be nice to know what the new coefficients are. Is there any thought about adding new conditioning information into the model? Genetics were just mentioned, ERS has information about adaption of precision ag, to see if there is any statistical significance in the model with that type of information.

**WAOB:** We have been looking into but as of now there are no plans to do that.

**Attendee:** Given the subjective nature of the condition report. I know that are a lot of people in this room that have spent a lot of time on the road this year and it was an ugly looking crop. I remember '15 and '16 and it was very ugly so the condition made sense. Now the genetics play a large role in that. It wasn't much of a market mover but in August when the soybeans went up 7 and then down 6 the next week, that was a market mover and I don't think you want that.

Another comment, I hope stat chat gets out of twitter jail.

Given the fact that the National Academies report came out two weeks ago. Looking over the executive summary, collaboration showed up probably more than any other word. Is there a plan going forward on more collaboration?

**NASS:** To state that we do plan to bring that back. On the National Academy report, NASS plans to look at the recommendations. NASS knows that to stay relevant we have to work with all of our USDA partners to use all of the information that is out there. The report is not a surprise, we are already taking action on some of the recommendations.

**Attendee:** Before I ask my question, I want to say that I am an adamant supporter of crop conditions so please don't discontinue the report. We feel there is value in extended crop conditions. Lance, you were quoted in an article about a month ago stating that you look at objective yield data, survey data, and remote sensing data. Can NASS tell us the weighting of these 3 components in predicting crop production?

**NASS:** No, but there are a couple of reasons. There is no specific formula that weights them together. That's part of the process that we go through and the weighting this month probably won't be the same as last month. The weighting for corn may not be the same as the weighting for soybeans. Even if you are looking at corn this month, the weighting won't be the same in Illinois as the weighting in Iowa.

**Attendee:** Given the importance of the reports you put out has there been any serious consideration to putting the reports out when the futures markets are not open?

**NASS:** We did a survey of data users several years ago asking about the release time. There was support in both directions. Right now I don't think there is any evidence that supports us moving in either direction. If you have suggestions we are willing to listen and see if there is a need.

**Attendee:** I think things have changed a lot with the sophistication of computer programs since that survey was taken. I am not talking about if you want it in the morning or the afternoon, I am talking about the sophistication of these programs that read the numbers and make the markets react more violently than if you put them out at a time where there's opportunity for grain traders as well as Goldman Sachs to assess the information. Now it moves so quickly that sometimes you can't even get orders filled if they are on stop orders, it's a whole different world than it used to be.

**NASS:** I think one of the other things we talked about at the time was that if we move than some of these other things will also move.

**Attendee:** Regardless of release times, has the USDA done anything to improve server speeds? There have been times where the numbers have been released at 11:00 am but have not been available on the USDA or NASS website until 11:00 and 30 seconds where people that don't have access to low latency feeds are at a disadvantage?

**NASS:** We do evaluate when we have the reports out. Previously the report went to Kansas City and then back to USDA before being released, we have shortened that loop quite a bit. The other thing we are looking at is having more options on which report we load first.

**Attendee:** There seems to be a lot of confusion from the trade when we see ear counts or pod counts because the graphic that gets released in the NASS report tends to have that report's month correlated to final numbers rather than that historic month's numbers. Are there any plans to change that so we are comparing apples to apples?

**NASS:** We have not thought about doing that but maybe there is a better way of displaying that information. If you have any specific ideas other than subbing in those historic values, let me know.

**Attendee:** When the August report comes out and you are looking at pod counts or ear counts, it's a graphic that's not comparing the current data point to history, it's comparing it to final. If you change the graphic to saying these are the ear counts we have in September, these are the ear counts we have in October, and this is how the current months ear counts or pod counts compare to history for the current report, it seems this would be a better comparison because we all know those numbers change as we go through time but the average user of the report does not realize they are not looking at the same numbers side by side.

**Attendee:** Is there any effort to get the GATS data in an API format similar to the FSA data.

**FAS:** We are looking into doing an API for the GATS.

**Attendee:** Would there be an opportunity for industry to comment on that, like deeper tariff lines, make sure they are available at the 10-digit code.

**FAS:** Yes.

**Attendee:** Related to that question, I am really happy to see that WASDE is going to release historical databases and keep them updated on a monthly basis. I would ask if you could index it. We really appreciate the spreadsheets we download from NASS and they are indexed very well. Not only index them but put a tab on the spreadsheet with a table of contents for the indexes. That dramatically helps us as we automate our analysis on those reports.

The other comments I want to make go back to the crop conditions. The people I work with in our offices overseas would love to have a system as good as ours. It's not perfect but I think this is a year where crop models built off of all 5 categories of crop ratings probably did a better job picking up on what is happening with the crop that those that are just focused on good and excellent. I really appreciate going as long as we do on ratings as well, in a past life I was one of the observers who filled out the report and I know how it is, it's subjective. As you get into the maturity, the crops not changing but the yields are starting to come in and the surveyors are hearing those yields. So what I'm looking for now is change in ratings reflect what is happening in the yields that are coming in and they give me a better idea if the yields are coming in better than what we perceived or worse than what we perceived.

**Attendee:** Question on the NASS CDL (Cropland Data Layer) datasets. I would ask that you go back in and review those datasets, Minnesota gained 20 million acres a couple years ago. It jumped from 54 million acres to 74 million acres then back to 54 million acres. It's hard to rectify datasets when you have a state that is changing in size by 1/3. Missouri's got some data problems in that dataset and possibly even Kansas for multiple years. It's a dataset that's getting a lot more use particularly grass habitat and movement of crops and grass and right now the dataset is almost unusable.

**NASS:** Thank you for the comment. The CDLs are very interesting products but they are data products and you can have a problem. So if we need to dig into it, I will certainly take that back to our folks who work on developing it.

**Attendee:** What was the percent deviation on RMA to NASS yields on average?

**FSA:** I don't know off the top of my head but we can talk later I can get the data.

[At this point, there was a 15 minute break]

[The audio recording was delayed in recording after the break and the first question was missed. The recording picked up part way into the NASS response.]

**NASS:** ... we can't meet with everybody, we meet with impact farmers and agribusinesses, so that's one way. But another way is to make sure our message is out there and we are always working on that message. In addition to the Census of Agriculture using that web tool, we started to make it available on other surveys starting with the Milk Production survey and we want to expand that to all of our surveys over the next 1 – 2 years. We want to make it easier for respondents to respond to NASS.

**Attendee:** Are you expecting the ease of being able to fill out the Census of Agriculture to outweigh the loss in prices we had for the August Crop report? There were a lot of people that weren't too happy with that drop in prices after that release. Do you expect the response rate to increase for the Census of Agriculture?

**NASS:** I am not sure that most producers will tie those two together. First of all when you look at the Crop Report from August to September to October, I don't think NASS was the one that was changing, I think it was the industry that was catching up with NASS. I would think it would help our response rate for the Census because we are showing that we are putting out a consistent number over time. The Census is the only tool that farmers have for getting county level data. There are times when we will publish data that may be a bit of a surprise. But it is our responsibility for all of us here to put out the very best number that we can. Sometimes that will have implications for participants in the marketplace.

**Attendee:** On the issue of the August Crop Report. I don't have a problem with all of the information that comes out of the Crop Progress and Conditions report from the point of view of the progress, plantings, maturity that can be analyzed very well. The response we got back in August was the producers thought the crop was a bit better than the crop conditions. Do we really need an August Crop Report? Do we have enough good data to analyze and know what we've got in August?

**NASS:** The farmers did tell us in August that the yields were that good. A lot of people were surprised by that but the farmer survey carries a lot of weight for us in August. It's not an exact science how to weight those together but the general rule of thumb is earlier in the season the more weight you put on farmers because for objective yield [in August] we basically go in and count corn stalks. At least in the last five years if we focus on corn for a minute, the gap between August and our January numbers is within 2 percent.

**Attendee:** I think that's a good point on the August 1 Crop Report, when you are talking about only looking at plants for corn and soybeans I don't think in the publication there is even a pod count for the first of August so there is not a whole lot of data out there. When you talk to farmers, they are looking at the same crop, they are not seeing any pods, they are only seeing tiny little ears at that point so they are giving you their best estimate. How good is that August 1 Crop Report?

- Attendee:** For us that work with the mandatory price reporting data you produce a wonderful report for us each week, the comprehensive boxed beef report. Now that we have mandatory reporting for pork, is the data sufficient to produce something similar for pork?
- AMS:** We have been working to develop a comprehensive cutout for pork. One of the challenges that we have had is the number of product codes to sift through for pork. One of the reasons it is easier for beef is that the beef industry uses IMPS codes a lot more in their day to day business. When we went through the rule making process for pork, swine packers told us that they don't use IMPS codes but they really do in the background. If we had been able to capture that piece of information as a requirement it would at least give us the right buckets that those items should be in. On the pork comprehensive, we have looked at that with the boxed beef model. We've done the background on that. Sometime in 2018 we should be able to produce a comprehensive pork report.
- Attendee:** Right now about 30% of chickens in the US have never been treated with anti-biotics and are marketed as such and the target is around 40% by the end of next year which I think would make a larger share than what we have with cage free eggs as far as share of production. Yet we have a special report on cage free eggs that gives an estimate on the supply of cage free eggs and what the price premiums are. Are you looking to do something similar for anti-biotic free chickens in terms of production and price premiums?
- AMS:** That is something we can consider. We are reporting some antibiotic free chicken but we don't have any survey for production on that.
- ERS:** Just to respond to that question, I have seen the same statistics you have and I understand that you can get a price for features for poultry that include raised without antibiotics, vegetarian only feed and other attributes but not one solely for raised without antibiotics. There are also data on price premiums.
- Attendee:** We've had a couple of new hog slaughter plants come online recently and we've got more coming down the road. There was a lot of confusion I thought when they came online as to whether USDA was including that data or not. What's the procedure for incorporating new capacity?
- NASS:** For slaughter, NASS picks up the data from FSIS so once FSIS includes it in their counts, then NASS in turn picks it up. We don't do any extra work on the slaughter facilities, it is strictly taking FSIS data and packaging it.
- Attendee:** So we assume it would be there on day one?
- Attendee:** No, I think you are talking about a couple of different things because you are looking at an initial report that's simply an estimate that's generated from AMS where they call up the plants and talk to their established contacts but then the actual data is based on the inspectors is it not?
- NASS:** NASS works with AMS to get the weekly data but when the monthly data comes in that's a more comprehensive report.
- Attendee:** On the weekly, let's say the data that is going to be published at the end of this week, that is based on an estimate, it's not based on actual inspector reports?

**NASS:** NASS is providing data to AMS for those weekly reports, it's just not complete.

**AMS:** I think he is speaking to our daily estimated slaughter. Those are estimates.

**Attendee:** Second question has to do with the international situation, particularly how you rely on foreign sources such as Stats Canada or anything in China. For a while we were following anything from Stats Canada closely but just recently USDA kept its wheat estimate below StatsCan by several million tons. Has the way you look at the foreign data changed at all?

**WAOB:** As a general rule, the committee is looking at a variety of sources, they are not necessarily wed to a single statistical source anywhere in the world. If we feel like we have a better number through other means we will use that number. We will look at individual numbers such as Stats Canada and the NSB number from China but at the end of the day the committee is evaluating an entire range of data and making adjustments to put together the entire report.

**Attendee:** You held off and they [StatsCan] came back up.

**WAOB:** We didn't move they moved.

**Attendee:** You usually follow them though.

**WAOB:** They've had this tendency to increase over time in recent years.

**Attendee:** We've got twice as many cattle on feed in Mexico as we have in Canada and a much faster growth rate. We very much need Mexican cattle on feed numbers and we need to assemble a North American cattle on feed number. Is there any pressure we can put on them to persuade them to release that number?

**NASS:** We try to work with Mexico and Canada and we have a really good working relationship internally with both countries. With Canada we are able to put out joint reports for quite a few things. But data collection in Mexico is a problem and until they can internally come up with numbers it's going to continue to be a problem.

**Attendee:** I'll give some props to the GATS people and I had a question for them. One thing that is somewhat difficult to dig out of the GATS is biofuels imports and exports. It seems like the harmonized codes search option to find a biodiesel code is somewhat clunky. It seems like we are very limited in broad categories like exports of greater than 30% blend of biodiesel or 100%. It just seems like we're lacking some data, is it because the industry doesn't report well enough or is there another reason? Ethanol has 6 codes and there are only 2 codes for biodiesel. It makes it hard to keep track of some of the biodiesel imports and exports specifically.

**FAS:** We are looking into how we can do a better job with the biodiesel and ethanol so I can get back to you on where they are on improving that.

**Attendee:** The Chinese government has this policy of holding massive reserves, they report them, they are selling their reserves currently, corn something like 225 million metric tons where 50 million tons of that is permanent reserves and the rest is temporary reserve but if you were to factor that in as carryout or supplies, that greatly exceeds what the

WASDE reports. It seems like those numbers are ignored as if they are not official data even though the Chinese government reports them.

**WAOB:** I don't have any information on that. Again I would have to defer to the members of my committee and respond to you at a later time.

**Attendee:** 225 million metric tons is the entire production for 1 year for China and if that supply is available to the market or even deferring demand in some factor, that would impact the entire corn market.

**WAOB:** I understand the point, I am not sure how they are accounted for and what they are doing with that.

**WAOB:** The question always has been how accessible they are to the commercial markets.

**Attendee:** So does that mean that the World Outlook Board believes it is there just not accessible?

**WAOB:** We have made that assumption, the corn stocks are not accessible.

**Attendee:** None of the stocks in China are accessible to the market place because China has an export TRQ in place, they do not have a free market at all. Even if it's not accessible should it be reported? The market should know that the Outlook Board, if you guys believe this, that the stocks are there whether they are government reserve stocks or whether they are privately owned stocks.

**Attendee:** Especially now when they are becoming a net exporter of ethanol.

**Attendee:** The Chinese stocks are there but you cannot get a hard number, you make the best guess you can come up with. The key thing is it's not accessible. The thing with the reserves right now is that they are selling some of it out into the world which is fortunate for us but the key thing I think is needed is that we should be looking at the 5 major exporters and creating a supply and demand for that and that includes Russia. Right now they are in the other category. If you look at the WASDE reports for corn, right now we don't have Ukraine in there, we should get rid of South Africa and put Ukraine in there. Let's create information that's useful.

**WAOB:** I appreciate your comment on the updated tables. All I can say is that we definitely need to take that into account. There is inertia over time, I admit that and we will address that.

**Attendee:** I wanted to talk about the August 10<sup>th</sup> – September 29<sup>th</sup> gap this year on the spring wheat and durum wheat numbers and the challenge that caused. When we got to the August Crop Report, we didn't change the percent harvested. It would be useful in August or September to have some sort of assessment of what producers think in terms of percent harvested because I think the 5 year average on percent harvested as of September 1 is about 70-75%. So that time in there where we are wondering what yields are, we are wondering what percent is going to be abandoned is a big challenge. My question is can you devote resources towards that?

**NASS:** We actually used to include small grain crops in the September Crop Report as well. We stopped forecasting there roughly 15 years ago. The main reason we stopped doing it was because we rarely had good information to make much of a change from August from the relatively small sample size but we were collecting data from 60,000 – 70,000



producers at that time gearing up for the September 30<sup>th</sup> report. The feedback we got was that that data wasn't really providing a whole lot of value because it wasn't changing much from August, it wasn't signaling what we were going to do at the end of the month so we stopped doing it.

**Attendee:** You only need it when it's a bad crop maybe?

**NASS:** It could be, this year was a bit unusual. Most of the time acreage wouldn't be an issue, you could almost set the harvested to planted ratio without asking on spring wheat but not this year.

**Attendee:** I've got a follow up on that. Every month you ask producers the number of acres they intend to harvest. How do you incorporate that into your production estimates at that point? If they change the number of acres they are going to harvest, why didn't we see that in August?

**NASS:** We don't actually ask them every month. If they get a paper form in the mail, they have the opportunity to report their harvested acres. But if we call them, if they have already reported their harvested acres, we don't ask them again month after month. There is a reason for that. If we come back to you every month and ask, "How many acres are you going to harvest?" "Well I told you last month." It becomes a frustration. We are trying to reduce the respondent burden to some extent. The second point I would make is the greatest value we get out of the reported harvested acres is for weighting purposes. If you report a yield and you've got 5 acres and your neighbor has 5000 acres, we certainly want to put more weight on his yield than yours. We are going to use that harvested acres internally for weighting purposes but that doesn't necessarily mean we have enough acreage information to better evaluate state level totals.

**Attendee:** I would think on a year like this where you had the issue up in the Dakotas and Montana in particular with spring wheat that this was a year that you could really ask those people every month what they are doing. Not necessarily ask it every year but when you have a year like you did this year.

**NASS:** We could, and it's not just respondent burden but generally speaking, the yield survey we do each month is just that a yield survey and it's designed to measure yield, it's really not designed to measure acreage. We collect the acreage so we can weight those yields. We have on occasion gone back and asked harvested acres again because of situations like this and typically when we do that, we don't get enough information to warrant or validate a change at that time. So we haven't deemed it to be the best use of our resources based on how it's performed in the past.

**Attendee:** Dan, a couple of questions in regards to the Cattle on Feed report. The enhanced weight breakdowns are much appreciated however they would be even more appreciated if we could fill a number of those cells in. They've been conspicuously blank over the past year and as the industry expands, and feed costs stay relatively modest, chances are pretty good we are going to place more lighter weight cattle and fewer heavy weight cattle and as a result those cells may remain empty for an extended period of time. Is there another way that data might be aggregated so that it could be released?

**NASS:** Are you referring to the state level data?

- Attendee:** There are 4 states that the weight breakdown data is released and a number of those cells have not been populated over the course of the past year. Chances are pretty good that that may not change going forward under the current industry structure. So I'm wondering if maybe Nebraska and Colorado could be aggregated, Kansas and Texas?
- NASS:** Yes, let me look into it. We can look at different aggregations of the data but keeping in mind that we don't want the publication to be continuously changing. We should be able to look at different combinations of states to publish and discuss at the next Data Users Meeting.
- Attendee:** Over a period of the last several years we've seen the cold storage data on poultry and pork expanded rather significantly to include more topic areas. Beef for the most part is bone-in and boneless. Is there any possibility that we could get an additional breakdown on that data? At least at this point it's difficult for many of us to know whether they're fifties or nineties when it's boneless.
- NASS:** When you start talking about cold storage we always have to make sure that we don't reveal anything as far as the warehouse facility is concerned. So let me check into that. If you have some specifics on what you are looking for, send me an email.
- Attendee:** I've got a question on when we develop these production numbers earlier due to the technology that's coming through on the satellite imagery over the last 2-4 years. Are we placing a heavier weighting earlier on some of this data and incorporating that earlier from both the U.S. and world perspective?
- NASS:** We've had acreage data for a long period of time, yield data we've had about a half a dozen years or so. The more history we build the more we are able to rely on it more than we have in the past and I think because of technology it has improved as well. That's from the U.S. perspective.
- FAS:** I would have to follow up with our production experts on that one.
- WAOB:** Case in point for us, our meteorological staff got in front of Russia this year. Certainly that was justified. We thought last year was a record crop but certainly what they indicated to us early is that it was just going to get larger and it did. The harvest data as the crop year progressed indicated that as well. Yes, we did that earlier than we usually do.
- Attendee:** This is for the Farm Service Agency. Many of the State Directors, at least in Kansas there is no State Director. Is there any timetable to get State Directors into state FSA offices?
- FSA:** There is a timetable, I just don't know it. I think it is coming soon though.
- Attendee:** The Hogs & Pigs report has been much better over the last year. When you start making revisions again, you need to think about how you do it but I hope you don't have to make revisions. Second point I want to bring up is on beef. Mike pointed out about fifties and nineties, I would add that we need to know about boneless cuts and bone-in cuts too. I don't know how many bone-in cuts are in freezers but most of the stuff goes out in the box without the bones in it now so it all gets thrown into boneless I presume. There could be a lot of detail added to that beef, you don't have to get down to ribs and loins and rounds or anything like that. You could get that much detail and it would be helpful, not

just the fifties and nineties out of the boneless but there's a lot of other boneless cuts in there and it runs 90% boneless every month and it just doesn't provide very much information.

**Attendee:** For the last 4 or 5 years you have not been reporting prices paid but only an index on several things like crop seeds and fertilizers. Why did we quit reporting the price and are only reporting the index?

**NASS:** I will have to get back with staff to tell you exactly why we don't report it. But I can tell you that the index is part of the parity price process and the sample sizes don't support the publication of the data anymore, they've been reduced to only support the indices.

**Attendee:** So if the sample size doesn't support the data, do you actually have a good index?

**NASS:** It's enough to support the indices which we only use in combination with other external data sources to create the parity price indices.

**NASS:** C-FARE came in and looked at our price program and we are following what they requested and what they stated was the best policy for NASS to follow. So our indices are statistically sound. But if there is something in particular that you're looking for, the best thing is to email Jody so his group can respond back to you specifically on that.

**Attendee:** I might just mention that RMA is going to start using your indexes more because of margin protection plans and farmers sometimes do not like indices that they don't trust. So if you have an index that says here is what the fertilizer was, here is what the seed cost was, here is what the fuel price was and yet they don't see a number, it may impact the number of sales they would have for that particular plan because they don't trust the index unless they can see the numbers behind it.

**Attendee:** I have a question with regards to mandatory pricing rules for boxed beef. So the 22-90 is the XB455 report and we know under the regulations for reporting, what we call the 273 rule, that it will make sure that a packer doesn't have an undue influence on pricing. So on that report, if there are trades let's say to one packer, it reports on there that there was a trade but it doesn't give us the number of reports, it doesn't give us the number of trades, and it doesn't give us the price levels. So it doesn't give us the low, the high, or the weighted average. My question for you is, has there been any thought process for that report to at least have the number of trades and the weight so we know how much of that particular complex was traded that will be sold within 22-90 days of when that was reported?

**AMS:** On the 22-90 day, we are simply showing that the trade occurred, it is not passing through 3,70,20 confidentiality, the guidelines. I didn't fully hear the rest of your question.

**Attendee:** Is there a way that we can at least see the number of trades at the weight that was traded? The number of trades are going to be a very good indication, whether this was a single source or multiple sources. Is it going to move the market? Is this just a one-off? And the weight helps to tell us where those complexes are going. So I am going to give an example, we know the consumers suffered a 155% increase on a shoulder tender this year. Well those shoulder tenders were sold by a packer but it was not reported on the 22-90. Also, intercompany and intracompany sales between packers, have you put any thoughts into more regulation and/or more reporting as far as those sales are concerned?

We know that there is a very large packer who is actually one of the largest consumers to other packers in the industry but we don't see those sales.

**AMS:** Your first question, the 22-90's, we can look at providing more data just off the price series itself for confidentiality purposes. Your second question, at this time the statute and regulation doesn't speak to intercompany transfers. We did have beef and cattle stakeholder meetings where some of those items were brought up, intercompany sales, further processing type reporting of product, etc. No conversation really came of it so at this time we are not looking at reporting intercompany sales because it's not covered in the Act.

**Attendee:** My question is will case rated sales ever be reported at any time because packers are putting more and more of the knife to their products because it is what the consumer is demanding. However, if they put the knife to that product, it's not reported. In a lot of respects we have lost a lot of transparency with regards to where that meat is going and we call it hiding meat and we face that every single day. It does affect us as the consumer and I have to speak to my customers and my constituents and my executive leadership team why can we not see this and why can we not control some of the volatility in the box market.

**AMS:** It's some good comments, they're received, I don't have a fixed answer for you at this time we'll take your questions and get back to you.

**Attendee:** Dan, you mentioned you had some changes and ideas about things you are going to redo on your various reports. Is there going to be someplace where we are going to be able to see those things before next April?

**NASS:** Like an example report of how it might look?

**Attendee:** Yes something like that.

**NASS:** On this topic too, I posed a little bit earlier, I know a number of folks on this panel and across government are really investing in visualization and you can create some great stuff but at the same time, it is an investment. And that's something we have talked about too, about going deeper, more investment in that area and just any thoughts about how much you use Tableau and some of the other visualizations you see on our websites and where we might be able to add value.

**Attendee:** I do have a comment on Tableau. We have been, at Farm Bureau, taking a lot of the data and analysts have been putting it into Tableau and posting it on websites. We found very good response to that so we are very supportive of that type of presentation. It makes the data much more useable from a visual standpoint.

**NASS:** And I am sure whatever we would do we would make sure that it is something that others could harvest and lift and expose on their own sites.

**Attendee:** With Tableau, it's often difficult to load it on a mobile device and fully utilize it. We experienced that at Farm Bureau trying to use Tableau because a lot of our content is read on a mobile device. This is just a comment it's not a question. In the HTML code you can have it detect the type of browser the user is on and you can have two different Tableau dashboards and it will load based on whatever type of device the user is

accessing the page on. It's a lot more legwork to do so but that would make it work better for users depending on the device.

**NASS:** Good comment, thank you. That's certainly true in any web forms that we produce too in terms of survey forms. They need to be able to recognize what your device is and also what your browser is and renders in a way that makes sense given your conditions.

**Attendee:** On another topic this afternoon, advanced technologies have been mentioned a couple of times and even drones. Can someone respond as far as what NASS has been using as far as drone technology or any talks about that for the future?

**NASS:** The answer is we are not using drones. We don't use drones and we aren't using that technology. We will use remotely sensed data if it's available to us, there is more and more satellite imagery becoming available. Obviously FAS is a big consumer of commercial satellite imagery as well. We are interested in what's out there but we are not doing it.