

As I have gotten older and especially as I have been blessed with grandchildren, I see how true the saying “time flies” is.

It seems like it was about a year ago that we were talking about the last Census of Agriculture, which is taken every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. But it is Census time again.

North Carolina producers should have received their 2022 Census in the mail. Questionnaires were sent out to around 87,000 known producers in the state with information on how to fill out the form or how to go online and enter your information.

I know people can be reluctant to share their information but answering the questions on the Census of Agriculture is important for agriculture because it allows growers at every level to have their voice be heard.

By answering the questions, you are contributing to a source of impartial, comprehensive state and county level data. But is only comprehensive if everyone takes a few minutes to answer the questions.

The information collected is helpful to federal and local governments, agribusinesses, extension staff, researchers and others in making informed decisions on matters that affect the farming community and agribusinesses.

Protecting and conserving farmland is a big priority in North Carolina and information collected as part of the Census helps us keep track of how many farms we have and the amount of land in farms. That becomes powerful information when compared to other states across the country. We see where we stack up, and the level of risk of farm loss.

Additionally, we also get a true picture of the size of farms in North Carolina. While we do have a number of large farms, we are primarily a small farm state and the numbers in the Census help illustrate that point the best. It literally provides the number of farms that fall into predetermined revenue ranges.

Those are just a couple of broad insights gained from the Census of Agriculture, but you will also see information on commodity production and comparisons to other years along with highs and lows for production.

I cannot urge you enough to take a few minutes when you receive your questionnaire to answer the questions. The information you provide is kept confidential and will be part of aggregated numbers so as not to reveal individual producer’s information.

Interestingly, the Census of Agriculture can trace its roots back to 1820 when U.S. Marshalls began asking whether anyone in households were engaged in agriculture as part of a decennial, or every 10 years, census. In 1840, the Census of Agriculture officially came into existence, becoming a standalone questionnaire.

The Census of Agriculture is an ever-evolving document, reflecting the changing landscape and nature of agriculture and industry needs. Stakeholder meetings are routinely held that help determine what questions to ask.

Please take a few minutes to fill out the Census and have your voice counted in agriculture.