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Current Activities

Project Management Certifications Awarded

Five ERS employees were recently certified as Project Management Professionals by the Project Management Institute. Andrew Kerns, Peter Kostik, Gina Pearson, Douglas Parry, and Stephen Peterson successfully completed the requirements for certification and will now use their expertise to lead information technology improvement efforts at ERS. In particular, they will upgrade the bandwidth of ERS's communications lines to allow transmission of large amounts of data from external sources to support ERS research projects. They will also implement a content management system to enhance presentation of research data and publications on the ERS website and further improve the Agricultural Resource Management Survey and Market Analysis and Trade Electronic Reporting System data tools. **Ron Bianchi, rbianchi@ers.usda.gov**

Research Project Wins Award

In September 2005, ERS received the 2005 Outstanding Public Issues Education Program award from the National Public Policy Education Committee (NPPEC) for the research project, "What the Public Values About Farmland." This multi-year effort, spawned from a research planning workshop co-sponsored by ERS and Farm Foundation, consisted of several workshops and research projects that were designed to created a dialogue between economic researchers and the end users of research results at the State and local levels. The project was led by individuals from ERS; USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service; and several land-grant universities. The purpose of the program was to commission high-quality research on valuing the nonmarket amenities provided by farmland and put it in the hands of land use planners and other policymakers. **Mary Ahearn, mahearn@ers.usda.gov**

Recent Meetings

Organic Sector Innovations

In October 2005, ERS co-sponsored an interdisciplinary workshop on organic agriculture, "Innovations in Organic Marketing, Technology, and Research," along with the USDA's Risk Management Agency; USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; and Farm Foundation. The U.S. organic sector has experienced growing pains and low adoption levels for some crops during the past few years, as well as rapidly growing consumer demand. Speakers from USDA, universities, State agencies, organic associations, and other organizations joined over 100 participants in exploring key challenges and opportunities for organic producers and processors. Speakers' presentations and a workshop summary are available on the Farm Foundation website, www.farmfoundation.org. **Catherine Greene, cgreene@ers.usda.gov,** and **Lydia Oberholtzer, loberholtzer@ers.usda.gov**

Global Food Markets

In October 2005, ERS hosted the 46th annual conference of the Food Distribution Research Society, in Washington, DC. "Global Food Markets, New Challenges, New Opportunities" was the theme of the 3-day conference, which featured panel sessions covering such topics as firm market access strategies, product quality and safety, global food market strategies for improving diet and health, and the prospects for further growth in global food markets. Panel participants included members of the food industry, university researchers, and government agencies. Invited papers and research presentation abstracts will be published in the *Journal of Food Distribution Research, Proceedings* issue. **Phil Kaufman, pkaufman@ers.usda.gov**

Impacts of Tobacco Program Elimination

In September 2005, ERS and Farm Foundation co-hosted a workshop in Washington, DC, "Impacts of the Tobacco Quota Buyout." The tobacco industry is facing unprecedented change as the quota and price support program is replaced by free-market policies. With implementation of the Fair and Equitable Tobacco Reform Act of 2004, U.S. tobacco acreage is projected to fall by 25 percent in 2005. This workshop brought together leaf dealers, manufacturers, and representatives from trade associations, government, cooperatives, and higher education to provide insights into such questions as: Which producers have left tobacco production and where is production expanding? How are lower prices, combined with increasing efficiencies, affecting the competitiveness of U.S. tobacco in world markets? How are manufacturers and leaf dealers changing procurement policies? Insights developed through this workshop will be used to guide future research. **Tom Capehart, thomasc@ers.usda.gov**

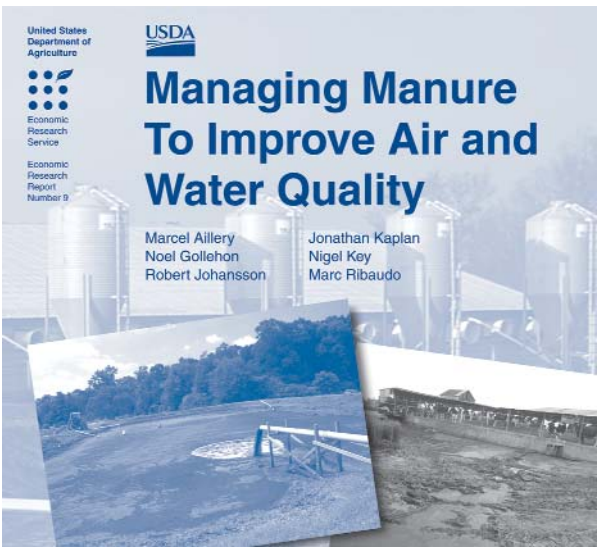
Second Annual Taylor Lecture

In September 2005, ERS hosted the second annual lecture in the Henry C. Taylor Lecture series. A pioneer in the field of agricultural economics, Taylor helped to create the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the predecessor of ERS, and served as its first director. Professor Vernon L. Smith, a 2002 Nobel Laureate, traced the development of experimental auctions to simulate and study the functioning of markets. Recognizing that Taylor was also the first leader of the Farm Foundation, the event concluded with a presentation of the Taylor Commemorative Plaque to Smith by current Farm Foundation President Walt Armbruster. This annual lecture series is designed to promote discourse on contemporary economic issues of interest to agricultural economists within and outside ERS and USDA. **Susan Offutt, soffutt@ers.usda.gov**

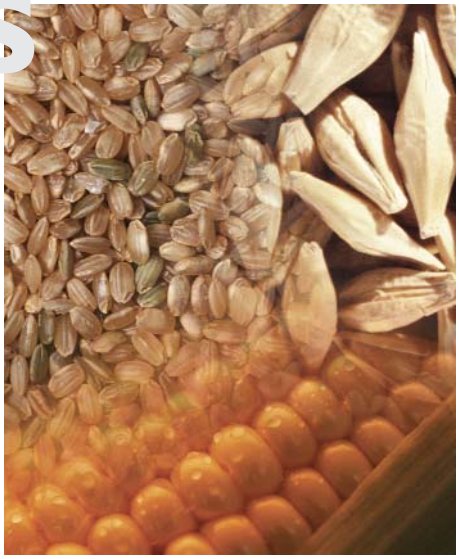
New Releases

Animal Agriculture Affects Air and Water Quality

Animal agriculture produces a variety of pollutants. These pollutants pose challenges to farmers and to resource managers because they can affect multiple resources (air and water), while environmental laws typically focus on only a single resource. Regulations to restrict emissions from animal operations to water might inadvertently increase emissions to the air and vice versa. A recent ERS report, *Managing Manure To Improve Air and Water Quality* (www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err9/), assesses the economic and environmental tradeoffs between water and air quality policies that could require the animal sector to take potentially costly measures to abate pollution. The findings are based on a farm-level analysis of hog farms, a national analysis that includes all sectors, and a regional assessment in an area with high animal numbers. **Marc Ribaudo, mribaudo@ers.usda.gov**



The citations here and in the rest of this edition are just a sample of the latest releases from ERS. For a complete list of all new ERS releases, view the calendar on the ERS website: www.ers.usda.gov/calendar/



Feed Grains Database Redesigned

The ERS Feed Grains Database (www.ers.usda.gov/data/feedgrains/) has recently been expanded and redesigned to offer users more statistics on corn, grain sorghum, barley, oats, hay, and related items. In addition to supply (beginning stocks, production, and imports), demand (food use; industrial uses; seed, feed and residual uses; exports; and ending stocks), and price data (farm and market prices), users can now query the database for quantities fed, feed-price ratios, and much more. Data are monthly, quarterly, and/or annual, depending on the data series. **Allen Baker, albaker@ers.usda.gov**

Commodity Background Reports

ERS recently released *Peanut Backgrounder* (www.ers.usda.gov/publications/ocs/oct05/ocs05i01/), the first of a series of nine background reports on key U.S. commodities to be issued over the next few months. Published every 5 years, these backgrounders provide a concise overview of important sectors of the agricultural economy. They contain information on production areas, new uses, export markets, policy changes, farm households, and other information that provides insights into key issues confronting each commodity. **Erik Dohlman, edohlman@ers.usda.gov**, and **Linwood Hoffman, lhoffman@ers.usda.gov**

Current Indicators on Rural America

The latest edition in the annual *Rural America At A Glance* series (www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib4/) includes the most current indicators of social and economic conditions in rural areas, for use in developing policies and programs to assist rural people and their communities. This edition focuses on the importance of recreation and tourism for rural areas, rural employment growth, rural poverty, and the effect of immigration on rural population growth. **Karen Hamrick, khamrick@ers.usda.gov**