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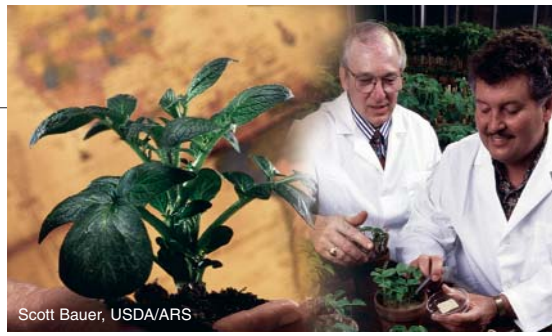
Current Activities

U.S. Food Security Measurement Methods Adapted for Use in Other Countries

In 1995, the United States became the first country to measure and monitor household food security (access to enough food for active healthy living) at a national level. Since then, ERS—which plays a leading role in U.S. household food security measurement—has provided technical assistance to researchers interested in adapting the U.S. methods for use in other countries, including Brazil, India, Israel, Bangladesh, Portugal, and Burkina Faso. Earlier this year, ERS sociologist Mark Nord described lessons learned from measuring U.S. food security to nutritionists and social scientists from Israel, Palestine, and the United States at a conference jointly sponsored by Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (Israel), the conference site; Al Quds University (Palestine); and Tufts University (United States). Conference participants met to plan collaborative research on child nutrition in Israel and Palestine and considered, among other issues, the role food security measurement could play in improving child nutrition. **Mark Nord, marknord@ers.usda.gov**

Interagency Group Discusses the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources

In June 2005, a U.S. interagency group met with representatives from Canada in Washington, DC, to discuss developments related to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The treaty governs the exchange of germplasm of 35 crops and 29 genera of forages. Though the Treaty entered into force on June 29, 2004, the lack of a standard Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) has left uncertain the terms of germplasm exchange. The group—which included representatives from ERS, other USDA agencies, and the State Department—discussed issues and proposals regarding MTAs for the upcoming First Meeting of the Contact Group on the Terms of the Standard Material Transfer Agreement, scheduled for August in Hammamet, Tunisia. The standard Material Transfer Agreement will play a key role in determining future germplasm exchange among parties to the Treaty. The U.S has signed, but not yet ratified, the treaty. **Kelly Day Rubenstein, kday@ers.usda.gov**


Scott Bauer, USDA/ARS

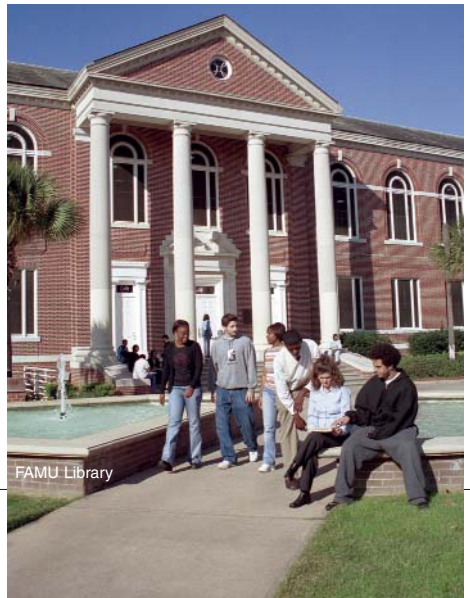
Recent Meetings

Globalization and Restructuring in Rural America

In June 2005, ERS and Farm Foundation hosted a workshop in Washington, DC, on "Globalization and Restructuring in Rural America." Technological breakthroughs, changes in consumer preferences, and global factors have transformed how and where goods are produced. In addition, industries that once evolved over a generation to meet new competitive challenges are now expected to restructure every few years. The critical policy challenge is finding ways to smooth the progress of welfare-enhancing structural change while reclaiming the productive potential of workers and communities bearing the costs of job loss and local economic contraction. This workshop brought together community leaders, policy officials, program administrators, and researchers concerned with rural economy issues, displaced worker issues, and trade issues. Participants gained a broader understanding of how global economic forces impact rural communities, and how government responses might assist in economic restructurings. Papers are available at: www.farmfoundation.org/projects/05-22restructuringofruralamerica.htm **Karen Hamrick, khamrick@ers.usda.gov**

Bridging the Gap—1890 and 1862 Land Grant Institutions

In June 2005, ERS hosted a workshop, "Bridging the Gap Between 1890 and 1862 Land Grant Institutions' Agricultural Economics Programs," sponsored by the Committee on the Opportunities and Status of Blacks in Agricultural Economics, a section of the American Agricultural Economics Association. Funded by ERS and USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, the workshop focused on the state of agricultural economics in 1890, 1862, and other private institutions; the under-representation of minorities in graduate agricultural economics programs, academia, and other research professions; and strategies to bridge the gap between the various institutions' teaching, research, and extension programs. Workshop participants developed a series of recommendations aimed at fostering collaboration among institutions in research, teaching, and extension. **Christopher Davis, chrisdavis@ers.usda.gov**, and **Keithly Jones, kjones@ers.usda.gov**


FAMU Library

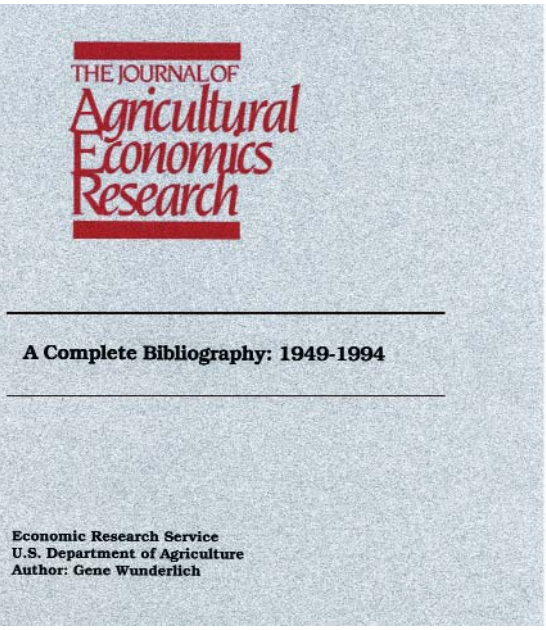
Farm and Rural Economies Face Challenges

In June 2005, ERS and the National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy co-sponsored a workshop entitled "Farm Policy and the Rural Economy: Alternative Approaches to the Economic Challenges," in Washington, DC. Researchers and policymakers discussed the impact of traditional farm policy on farm households and the rural economy, explored new approaches to farm and rural development policy, and framed key issues that will be considered in the next farm bill. Workshop presentations are available at: www.ncfap.org. **Betsey Kuhn, bkuhn@ers.usda.gov**

New Releases

On the Shoulders of Giants

Between 1949 and 1994, ERS and its predecessor agencies published the quarterly *Journal of Agricultural Economics Research* to disseminate technical discussion of economic issues, analyses, and measurement. ERS recently released a bibliography of all the articles and reviews that appeared in the *Journal* (www.ers.usda.gov/publications/jaer/), compiled by Gene Wunderlich, one of the *Journal's* editors. A number of distinguished scholars graced the *Journal's* pages over its 45 years. You can form your own Who's Who list by scanning the index of contributors, as Don Paarlberg did in a 1988 article, citing Fred Waugh, Marc Nerlove, and Karl Fox on statistical methods; George Walter and Ray Anderson on soil and water conservation; Harry Norcross and Clark Edwards on macroeconomics; Allen Paul on agribusiness; Harold Breimyer on livestock; Calvin Beale on demographics; Sherman Johnson and D. Gale Johnson on foreign development; Alex McCalla on trade; and the list goes on. **Thomas McDonald, thomasm@ers.usda.gov**



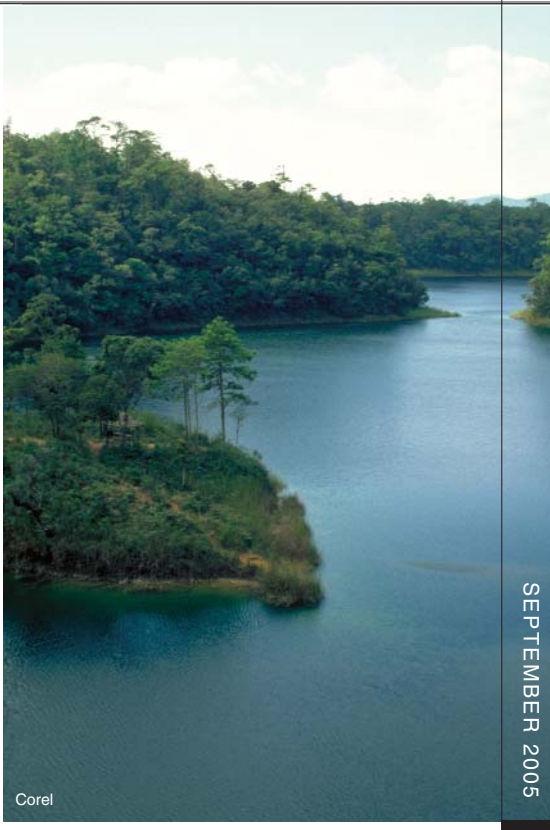
Comprehensive China Database

China Agricultural and Economic Data (www.ers.usda.gov/data/china/) is the world's most comprehensive English-language online collection of agriculturally related statistics for China. ERS has assembled in a single database 250 data items at the national level and 45 items at the provincial level, which can be downloaded in various formats. Included are statistics on agricultural production, food consumption, macroeconomics, prices, and industrial output in China, one of the world's most important agricultural economies. Many series go back as far as 1949, and the most recent data currently available are for 2003. **Fred Gale, fgale@ers.usda.gov**

Many Factors Influence Overweight and Obesity

In "Dietary Habits, Demographics, and the Development of Overweight and Obesity among Children in the United States" (*Food Policy*, 30(April 2005):115-128), researchers from ERS, Southern Arkansas University, the University of Georgia, and the University of Florida examined the factors that influence overweight and obesity among school-age U.S. children using data from USDA's 1994-96 and 1998 Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals. Black and Hispanic children seem more likely to be at risk for being overweight. Poverty is also associated with the likelihood of overweight among school-age children. Frequency of physical exercise was positively associated with normal weight. Sedentary behavior was negatively associated with normal weight and positively associated with overweight among children ages 12-18. The consumption of low-fat milk, other dairy products, fruits, and legumes is negatively associated with risk for overweight and obese. In contrast, increasing consumption of soft drinks, fats and oils, and sodium appears to be the major dietary factors that are positively associated with childhood overweight. **Biing-Hwan Lin, blin@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/



New Environmental Quality Incentives Program Data

USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to producers for a wide range of agri-environmental activities. ERS's EQIP database (www.ers.usda.gov/data/eqip/), updated in June 2005, presents an overview of which conservation practices are being funded, preliminary estimates of unit costs for the most commonly contracted conservation practices, and a comparison of unit costs for different contract sizes to determine the extent to which economies of scale exist practice by practice. All results are presented at the national level, for ERS Farm Resource Regions, and for ERS Farm Production Regions. Allocation of EQIP funds is also broken down by State. **Rob Johansson, rjohanss@ers.usda.gov**

Commodity Markets and Trade

ERS Outlook reports provide timely analysis of major commodity markets and trade, including special reports on hot topics. All reports are available electronically and can be found at www.ers.usda.gov/publications/outlook/, along with a calendar of future releases. **Joy Harwood, jharwood@ers.usda.gov**