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IN THIS ISSUE

Notes from the Department Head by FRANCES HOMANS	3
Giving Back: An Interview with Professor Emerita JEAN KINSEY	4
Implications of Cow Nutrition on Whole-Farm Profitability of Minnesota Dairy Farms: ALEX GAMBONINI	5
Research Spotlight: SUNGHUN LIM	6
Economic Mobility and Educational Attainment in Immigrant and African American Communities: BESUFEKAD ALEMU	6
Remembering JASON BEDDOW	7
Professor Emeritus: JEFF APLAND	8



Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota



@ApEcMN



Notes from the Department Head

BY FRANCES HOMANS



A few months back, I opened a FedEx envelope and was stunned to discover that our department was named in the will of **Sachiko Yamashita Sidhu**. We were to receive a generous gift from her and her late husband, **Surjit Singh Sidhu**. The gift was designated “for the use and benefit of the Department of Applied Economics.” I quickly learned that these two earned their degrees in our department in the early 1970s. Sachiko Yamashita wrote a dissertation about the taste and demand for food under the supervision of **Vernon Ruttan**. Surjit Sidhu, under the supervision of **Lee Martin**, completed a dissertation on the economics of technical change in wheat production in Punjab, India.



I’ve learned more about these two in the past few months. Sidhu grew up in a rural area in Northern India where the local school was only available through the fourth grade. Still, he pursued his education, earning

a B.S. in agriculture with the financial help from a generous village elder. Before pursuing graduate study in the United States, he worked in extension helping to improve crop yields. He also collaborated with the U. S. Agency for International Development to help establish Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana. After his PhD, Sidhu worked as an economist, primarily for the International Fertilizer Development Center. His career took him to Tanzania, Egypt, Sudan, and Bangladesh. Yamashita was one of 10 children born in a farm family in Southern Japan in the Kagoshima prefecture. Her childhood included World War II, and she remembered the effects of war and land re-distribution quite well. She told her father

that she wanted to go to Tokyo (20+ hours train ride away) to study further. She talked about a professor’s encouragement to study in the US for further education. I imagine that this professor was **Yujiro Hayami**, a longtime collaborator of Ruttan’s.

The gift was truly unrestricted, leaving me with the decision of how best to use it. After mulling over some options, I landed on adding to the endowment supporting AgEcon Search. AgEcon Search is a repository co-sponsored by the department and University of Minnesota Libraries with over 150,000 papers representing over 70 countries. The obvious benefit is that papers in AgEcon Search are freely available to anyone in the world. The less obvious benefit is that researchers around the world, through AgEcon Search, find an audience for their work.

The following story further strengthens the link between AgEcon Search and Sidhu and Yamashita. Co-coordinators **Linda Eells** and **Julie Kelly** regularly attend professional meetings to drum up content for AgEcon Search. At one meeting, they were approached by an editor at the *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics* and given a thumb drive with the entire corpus of articles, dating back to the first issue in 1946. Because the files were for each volume, rather than by article, each file had to be divided into articles and each article then needed a cover page and a DOI. It took years of meticulous work, but it is now possible to search for, find, and download any article in the *Indian Journal*. Give it a try, and maybe learn about wheat production in Punjab or the economics of fertilizer, at AgEconSearch.umn.edu!

The generosity of Sachiko and Surjit Sidhu will help the department continue to host and grow AgEcon Search into the future.

In gratitude,

Frances Homans

DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED ECONOMICS



Giving Back: An interview with Professor Emerita **JEAN KINSEY**

When I retired in 2010, I decided to establish an endowed graduate fellowship in the University of Minnesota Foundation that would fund graduate students who wanted to study the economics of consumer behavior and/or food consumption/marketing/demand/health relationships. Since that time nine graduate students have received a partial year funding from this fellowship which is matched by a University of Minnesota endowment. Colleagues and industry partners helped kick start this fellowship; my goal is to increase the size of the endowment funds so that at least one student can receive a full year of fellowship funding.

Why did you establish a fellowship?

I believe that research into and education about the economics of consumer behavior as it relates to the food availability, public policy, and industry organization is critical for consumers' health and well-being. Public policies that provide equitable access to safe and healthy food depend on this type of research.

I know from experience as professor and Director of the Food Industry Center that funding to support graduate student research is increasingly hard to secure. Fellowships are one way to supply some of the funds that will allow students to explore and expand a base of knowledge that informs choices made by law makers, regulators, health care workers, educators, and consumers in general.

I was privileged to advise many bright, enthusiastic, passionate students who care about consumers' access to safe and healthy food. They studied how food policies and industry practices affect consumption patterns, nutrition, and health. Some of those students went on to help shape food stamp policies, dietary guidelines and more. We need future generations of students to carry on that work.

I have a desire to "give back" to a university and a profession that afforded me one of the best jobs in the world; it was an opportunity to develop my intellectual passion and help to further knowledge in my field of interest. I am excited to see that current students have similar opportunities.

How did you get interested in economics as applied to consumers' well-being?

My first career job after graduating from St. Olaf College was to teach Home Economics in a high school in California. I found that teaching household finance and management led me to understand that the naïve use of usurious consumer credit enhanced peoples' problems with poverty and poor nutrition. After seven years in a high school classroom, I entered the Agricultural Economics Department at UC-Davis where I studied and researched the economics of consumer choice and public policy. I was always interested in the demand (vs. supply) side of the market. The Applied Economics Department at U of M provided an intellectual environment with a practical mission that supported my work and allowed me to mentor students with similar ambitions.



Implications of Cow Nutrition on Whole-Farm Profitability of Minnesota Dairy Farms: ALEX GAMBONINI

Alex Gambonini

grew up on her family’s dairy farm in northern California, leading her to study Dairy Science and Agricultural Business at the California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. During her time at the University of Minnesota, she was a Graduate Research Assistant to **Dr. Joleen Hadrich**, focusing her research on dairy farm management economics. Her MS thesis, entitled “Implications of Cow Nutrition on Whole-Farm Profitability of Minnesota Dairy Farms,” was recognized with the Department’s 2020 Outstanding Master’s Thesis Award. In her thesis, she combined farm-level financial data from the Center for Farm Financial Management’s FINBIN with cow-level production data to analyze how nutrition and other herd management aspects impact long-term whole-farm profitability. A key aspect of her research was finding appropriate ways to allocate whole-farm yearly financials to individual cows across 82 farms.

During her program, Alex collaborated with Dr. Hadrich and **Amber Roberts**, an Agricultural Business Management Extension Educator at the University of Minnesota. Funding for their research was provided through a USDA-NIFA grant titled “Merging Milk Quality and Financial Databases to Improve Farm Level Decisions and Enhance the Economic Viability of Small and Medium-sized Dairy Farms.”

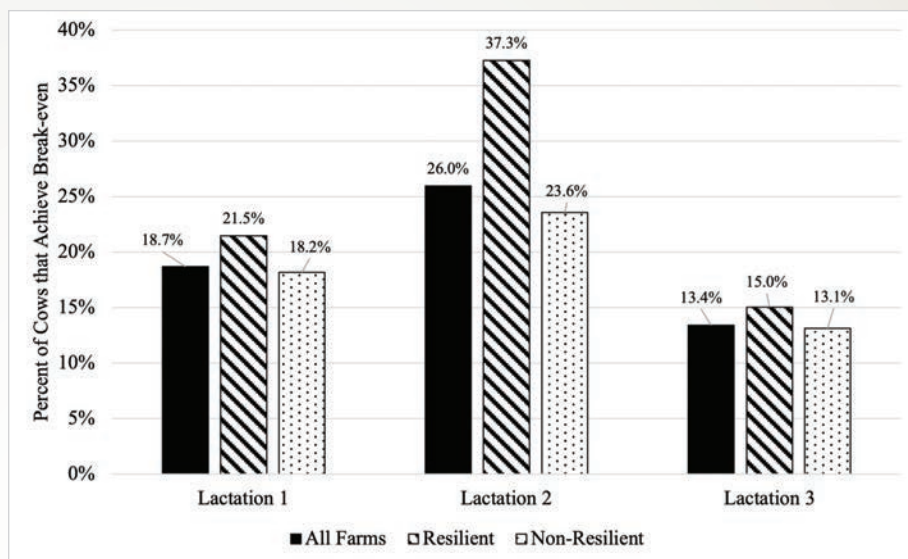


Figure 1: The percentage of cows from the break-even sample that achieve a cumulative lifetime break-even by lactation for all farms, resilient farms, and non-resilient farms.¹

Gambonini is currently employed full-time as an Agricultural Economist for the California Federal Milk Marketing Order, which is a part of the USDA-Agricultural Marketing Service-Dairy Program. Although most of her time as a University of Minnesota student was spent virtually due to the pandemic, she truly enjoyed her time in person and online with her fellow students and faculty. “The University of Minnesota provided me with great opportunities to expand my knowledge of economics and how it relates to the dairy industry and dairy business management, accelerating me to my career as a dairy economist today.”

1 All three groups are statistically different as determined through t-tests. Lactation 1 had a t-stat of -3.82 and a P-value less than 0.01; Lactation 2 had a t-stat of -25.59 and a P-value less than 0.01; and Lactation 3 had a t-stat of -4.00 and a P-value less than 0.01.



Research Spotlight: SUNGHUN LIM

Dr. Sunghun Lim completed his dissertation in 2020 under the supervision of Marc Bellemare and was recognized with the Department's Outstanding Dissertation Award. The rise of global value chains, wherein the different stages of the production process are located across different countries, has changed the nature of agricultural production around the world. In his dissertation, Lim found evidence that modern agrarian countries transform their structure of economies by participating in agricultural global value chains. In addition, Lim examined the relationships among risk aversion, crop diversification, and food security using a sample of Ethiopian households.

Lim is now an assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at Texas

Tech University. His research lies at the intersection of international trade, agricultural development, and agricultural trade policy. Most recently, he studied how US and Chinese agricultural trade policies affected the 2020 US presidential election and exacerbated political polarization in the US. Find his paper in AgEcon Search! Dr. Lim's research has been featured in the 2020 FAO the State of Agricultural Commodity Markets (SOCO) edition as well as the 2021 NBER Conference on Risks in Agricultural Supply Chains. In 2020, Dr. Lim was invited to become a member of the International Agricultural Trade Research Consortium. In his first year at Texas Tech University, he was awarded a USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Capacity Building Grant by collaborating with agricultural science scholars and stakeholders.



Economic Mobility and Educational Attainment in Immigrant and African American Communities: BESUFEKAD ALEMU

Dr. Besufekad Alemu completed his dissertation in 2020 under the supervision of Joe Ritter and was recognized with the Department's Outstanding Dissertation Award. Alemu's dissertation consists of studies within the topics of economic mobility and educational attainment. The main groups under study are immigrants and African Americans within the U.S. Each of the three chapters use a combination of historical linked Census records, administrative, and other publicly available data. The first chapter studied the impact of ethnic capital during childhood on the future economic outcomes of immigrant males. The second chapter made use of a combined dataset of linked census records and lynchings to analyze the effects of exposure to county-level lynchings during childhood on the economic and labor outcomes of African American

males. The third chapter focused on elementary students in a Midwestern county and investigated how wintry weather affects the Black-White disparity in unexcused absences.

Alemu's graduate studies were supported by a University of Minnesota DOVE Fellowship, the Hsieh Fellowship, and a CFANS DOVE Fellowship. He also worked as a research assistant for the Minnesota Population Center, the School of Social Work, and the Office for Business and Community Economic Development. Dr. Alemu is now an economist at the U.S. Census Bureau, Social, Economic, and Housing Statistics Division. His work aims to understand the factors contributing to the persistence of racial and ethnic disparities in labor market and educational outcomes.

Remembering JASON BEDDOW

“As my academic advisor and close friend, Jason guided me through my PhD studies by sharing his own experience and teaching me how to think like an agricultural economist to solve real world problems. His brilliant mind and caring personality make working with him always very rewarding. Even today after so many years of his passing, I am still actively applying the thinking processes and data techniques he taught me to my current research. His influence on my life can never be erased, and he will be remembered by the great work he has done.”

—YUAN CHAI

“Jason was a rapidly rising star in the profession who was already gaining international attention. His technical skills were par excellence, he had a truly inquisitive and creative mind that pushed the analytical boundaries, and above all, was motivated by questions that really mattered. On top of all that he was among the most caring and considerate individuals I’ve been fortunate to know. We all still miss him on many fronts.”

—PHIL PARDEY

“Jason was one of the most brilliant and humble researchers I have ever met. He should be remembered for his mind and impressive contributions to the field of economics during his all-too-short career. He was also an incredibly kind and caring man who always had time for his colleagues, friends, and family. I cannot thank Jason enough for the countless times he would interrupt his own work to help me navigate my own Ph.D. and early career journeys. I miss his dry humor, wry smile, and quiet, yet still seemingly large presence in our module. Even today, five years after his untimely death, he is still brought up often in conversation—be it to marvel about one of Jason’s ideas that is still bearing fruit or to lament on how excited he would have been to be part of one of our team’s current projects.”

—ALI JOGLEKAR

“Jason was the first person I interacted with when I first started working for the University of Minnesota, he was also my mentor. He was very caring always very concerned about injustice be it a systemic one or a specific isolated incident. Jason always had a brilliant way of solving problems, he always thought of things from a different angle cutting the time we need to find a solution. It was truly an honor and privilege that I have worked with him. He is very much missed in our research group. I still think of what his feedback would be when dealing with new ideas.”

—SENAIT SENAY



PHOTO: BEN CLASEN

Jason Beddow joined the University of Minnesota Department of Applied Economics faculty in 2013 after completing his Ph.D at Minnesota and several years of postdoctoral work focused on the HarvestChoice initiative for InSTePP. Earlier in 2016, he was one of a dozen early-career faculty featured in the “The Future is Now” edition of CFANS Solutions magazine. Jason was leading the development of new spatial bio-economic analytical methods to address key global food security challenges. He was a rising star with a broad professional reach around the college, the campus and internationally. He was also one of the first MnDRIVE Fellows, selected to be a key leader in discovering new paths to solving the problems of food insecurity. He died unexpectedly in April of 2016 at the age of 41.

In honor of Jason, CFANS has established the **Jason Beddow Memorial Fund**. The purpose of the Fund is to provide research support to early-career faculty in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences conducting research projects across multiple disciplines, especially for research that focuses on food security. The fund has reached the level required to establish an endowment, guaranteeing a steady stream of support dollars for early-career faculty.

If you’d like to contribute in Jason’s honor, checks may be made out to “University of Minnesota” and mailed to:

Jason Beddow Memorial Fund
Univ of MN Foundation
P.O. Box 860266
Minneapolis, MN 55438

1994 Buford Avenue
Ruttan Hall Room 231
Saint Paul, MN 55108



PROFESSOR EMERITUS: JEFF APLAND

Professor Jeff Apland (now Emeritus Professor Jeff Apland) was hired in the Ed Schuh era and arrived in the department in December of 1980. He had earned his PhD from Purdue University and spent a short time on the faculty at the University of Kentucky before joining our faculty.

Jeff's consistent professional focus—in his undergraduate and graduate teaching, his research, and his thesis supervision—was on production economics and applied mathematical programming. His first PhD student was Harry Kaiser, who expressed his gratitude to Jeff in his Acknowledgements: “the guidance, support, and substantial amount of time he devoted to me is surpassed only by his patience and enthusiasm.”

That combination of patience and enthusiasm really captures Jeff's approach and led to steady and meaningful contributions in teaching, research, and mentorship throughout his career. As a teacher, Jeff's classes always have been characterized by his precise lecture notes and presentations and by examples that are simple, clear and enlightening. As a researcher, Jeff has been a valued collaborator, especially in interdisciplinary work that adds an economic dimension to the analysis of physical production processes and spatial relationships. As a mentor, Jeff always has been available to students and colleagues, and the impact of these one-on-one interactions was extended significantly during his terms as a major coordinator and director of graduate studies.

Jeff chose a retirement date that seemed fitting—December of 2020—forty years after his arrival. Best to him and Babette in the years ahead!