ERS INFORMING POLICY AND RESEARCH

Eileen Kennedy
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ERS – Areas of Emphasis

- Animal Products
- Countries & Regions
- Crops
- Diet, Health, & Safety
- Farm Economy
- Farm Practices & Management
- Food & Nutrition Assistance
- Food Sector
- Natural Resources & Environment
- Policy Topics
- Research & Productivity
- Rural Economy
- Trade & International Markets
RANGE OF IMPACTS

- Methodology
- Applied Research Linked to Policy
- Cutting Edge Research
FOOD SECURITY AND HUNGER

- 2000 National Nutrition Summit:
  
  - Food Security is the foundation of good health
  
  - Yet issues related to food insecurity and hunger in the USA have had a very volatile history
  
  - 1984 Presidential Task Force could not agree whether and to what extent there was hunger in United States.
NEWER METHODS

- Historically food insecurity and hunger in the U.S. were linked to clinical signs of malnutrition.

- 1984 Task Force recognized that clinical definition did not provide a sensitive indicator of food insufficiency.
NEW FACE OF FOOD INSECURITY

Task Force noted:

“"To many people hunger means not just symptoms that can be diagnosed by a physician, it bespeaks the existence of a social, not a medical problem: a situation in which someone cannot obtain an adequate amount of food, even if the shortage is not prolonged enough to cause health problems.”"
New Methods

- ERS involved in development of newer methods to measure food security.
- Qualitative but not subjective
- Food Security Module developed and administered in April 1995 as a supplement to the Current Population Survey.
- Questions in the module developed into a food security scale. Used to rank severity.
IMPACT

- Food Security Module administered every year since 1995.
- Important monitoring device for the U.S.
- Food Security Module spurred more research
- Links between:
  - food insecurity and dietary inadequacy (Tarasuk and Beaton, 1998) just one example
IMPACT

Equally Important: Spurred interest globally in modifying food security module

- Bangladesh – Webb et al- Tufts University with World Vision
- Burkina Faso – Nanama and Frongillo – Cornell
- Most recently CRSP at Tufts University and Partners – develop simple qualitative measures of food insecurity
- Nepal – develop and test qualitative measure.
**IMPACT**

- FAO – Revisit newer methods to document food insecurity
- Keynote Paper: Qualitative Measures of Food Insecurity and Hunger, Eileen Kennedy
- Influenced the discussion and debate in the US.
APPLIED RESEARCH LINKED TO POLICY

- National Governor’s Association – 2006

- Creating Healthy States: Building Healthier Nutrition Programs – Kennedy, Wilde, Rogers.
OVERARCHING QUESTION

- How can the federal nutrition programs (particularly Food Stamps and WIC) be part of the solution to promoting healthier lifestyles?

- Answer to this question based heavily on ERS research.
CHANGING EXPECTATIONS

- Foods Stamps - large body of ERS and ERS funded research; food stamps
  - Increased food spending
  - Improved diet quality

- WIC – associated with:
  - Improved diet; decreased rates of anemia
  - Decreased rates of LBW and increased BW
  - Reduced neonatal deaths
  - Improved growth in infants and children
NEW EXPECTATIONS

- Food Stamps (now SNAP) and WIC have achieved many of their initial objectives.

- But – are these nutrition programs making us overweight and obese???

- Volatile issue
ERS Research

- Combined body of research – access to nutritious foods alone will not resolve complex issues related to obesity.

- “Participation in (Food Stamps) and weight is neither uniform across sex, race and ethnicity, nor consistent over time. Weight status is a result of eating and physical activity behaviors that interplay with individual and household economic, social, cultural and genetic factors.”

- Source: Ploeg et al, 2006
OBESITY

- Multi causal
- Puzzle with a 1000 pieces
- No Magic Bullet
New Directions

- Pilot test changes in Food Stamps
  - Green Stamps – pilot launched in 2010 USDA
  - WIC – Partnerships – WIC, Head Start and health care providers
CUTTING EDGE RESEARCH

- Behavioral Economics – Sept 2010
- Facilitating new and innovative research on the application of behavioral economic theory to child nutrition programs.
- “Delivery Science” – we know a lot about what to do, but less about “how” to do it.
WHAT NEXT

- Newer Nutrition Profile of US population; problems of food insecurity side-by-side with problems of overweight and obesity.

- ERS important “actor” in conducting and sponsoring research.

- Longitudinal data sets – address many of the limitations of existing data.
ERS LOOKING FORWARD

- Rigorous, science base to answer the question:

  - What combinations of policies and programs most effective do address the changing nutritional needs of the U.S. population?
ERS RESEARCHERS

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- Michele Ver Ploeg
- Margaret Andrews
- Gary Bickel
- Elizabeth Frazao
- Victor Oliveria
- Mark Nord