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# Recent Meetings

## Assessing the Measurement of Food Consumption

In May 2004, at the request of ERS, the Committee on National Statistics of the National Research Council held a workshop designed to assess the status of the data infrastructure underpinning USDA's numerous food consumption-related responsibilities. Experts from academia, USDA, and other Federal agencies discussed food consumption data needs in order to evaluate the outcomes of food and nutrition programs, assess food safety regulatory proposals, and understand consumer demand for food and agricultural commodities. USDA's current data collection activities are heavily weighted toward understanding agricultural production rather than food consumption.

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## Integration of North American Agriculture

In May 2004, ERS co-sponsored a workshop in Cancún, Mexico about the integration of North American agriculture. The workshop was conducted by the North American Agri-Food Market Integration Consortium, which includes representatives from government, academia, and the private sectors of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. ERS economists Thomas Vollrath, Steven Zahniser, and Chris Bolling collaborated with Darcie Doan and Andrew Goldstein of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada on a background paper for the workshop. Other topics at the workshop included lessons from the European Union, policy issues concerning bovine spongiform encephalopathy ("mad cow disease"), and the impact of integration on rural Mexico. For more details, see <http://naamic.tamu.edu/>.

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**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/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/calendar/)**



## Agricultural Risks in a Water-Short World

In May 2004, ERS and the Farm Foundation co-sponsored a workshop with financial support from USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) on "Agricultural Risks in a Water-Short World: Producer Adaptation and Policy Directions." The workshop focused on measuring the costs of, and exploring mitigation options for, unanticipated water supply interruptions, and provided a forum for research supported by RMA, ERS, and others. Presenters from academia, Federal and State agencies, and stakeholder organizations discussed the current Federal role in mitigation of agricultural risk from water shortages, the agricultural costs of restricted water supplies, the role of institutions in allocating water and water-related risk, and the use of water markets as a risk-mitigation strategy for irrigated agriculture. Abstracts of the presentations are available at: [www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/wateruse/wkshopagenda.htm](http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/wateruse/wkshopagenda.htm).

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## Research Presentations on Ag Biotech Topics

In April 2004, at the University of Illinois, ERS researcher Paul Heisey delivered a paper (prepared with John King) on "Public Provision of Knowledge for Policy Research: The Agricultural Biotechnology Intellectual Property Database." The conference, entitled "Seeds of Change: Intellectual Property Protection for Agricultural Biotechnology," convened experts from different disciplines and professional backgrounds to address the key legal, economic, and public policy issues regarding intellectual property rights in agricultural biotechnology. Jorge

Fernandez-Cornejo presented his research on "The Adoption of Biotech Crops: Extent of Adoption and Impacts" at a workshop to educate personnel in the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service (NPS) on issues related to genetically engineered (GE) crops. A goal of the workshop was to begin developing a consensus on the major elements of a GE policy for NPS. [Paul Heisey, pheisey@ers.usda.gov](mailto:pheisey@ers.usda.gov), and Jorge Fernandez-Cornejo, [jorgef@ers.usda.gov](mailto:jorgef@ers.usda.gov)

## Annual Meeting of Geographers

In March 2004, ERS researchers participated in the American Association of Geographers (AAG) annual meeting in Philadelphia, PA. AAG, founded in 1904, includes 8,400 regional economists, geographers, and demographers. William Kandel presented a paper documenting how Hispanic population growth and changing demographic characteristics in rural areas are leading to new demands for public services, such as schooling, health care, and housing. John Cromartie and William Kandel reported that over 1.2 million Hispanics live in census-defined rural areas within metropolitan counties and discussed how changes in this population have affected their spatial concentration, social and economic well-being, employment, and integration into the community. Dennis Brown presented research findings on the economic and policy implications of rapid population growth in non-metro recreation counties defined by ERS. As part of AAG's centennial celebration, Calvin Beale discussed the landmark contributions in the 1930s of O.E. Baker, a geographic demographer with USDA's Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the predecessor of ERS.