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Current Activities



Ken Hammond, USDA

ERS Contributions to Understanding Obesity Recognized

"Weighing In on Obesity," a collection of articles in the final issue of ERS's *FoodReview* magazine, has been selected as a Merit winner in the 2003 National Health Information Awards. Sponsored by the Health Information Resource Center, a national clearinghouse for consumer health information programs and materials, this award represents a "seal of quality" for health professionals in search of consumer health information resources for their programs. Other winners include the Mayo Clinic, and the National Cancer Institute. These articles represent early contributions to ERS's ongoing research on the economic aspects of diet and health. **Nicole Ballenger**, nicole@ers.usda.gov

Rural Demographic Trends from 2000 Census Data

Rural regions and communities are changing rapidly from increased immigration, changes in age and racial/ethnic composition, and related social and economic restructuring. ERS is investigating whether

these changing patterns are contributing to the revitalization of many small towns or are seriously straining local resources. Using newly released 2000 Census data, ERS, in cooperation with Cornell University, will explore how changing demographic trends in rural areas affect employment and earnings, family structure, human capital development, land use, and social and economic well-being. **William Kandel**, wkandel@ers.usda.gov

Changing Patterns of Food Consumption

U.S. food consumption patterns have changed considerably in the last three decades. ERS researchers are studying consumer food preferences by age, income, region, race, site of consumption (at home or away), and other characteristics and publishing their results in a series of articles. The first article examined the demographics of dry bean consumption, while more recent reports have focused on mushrooms and oranges. For example, the orange study found that per capita orange consumption is greatest in the Northeast and West. Seniors (men and women age 60

and over) consume the most fresh oranges per capita, while children age 12 to 19 consume the most orange juice. Future studies will focus on pork, beef, and chicken consumption. These studies contribute to our understanding of the consumer side of the market, an area we know much less about than the supply side. **Biing-Hwan Lin**, blin@ers.usda.gov, and **Chris Davis**, chrisdavis@ers.usda.gov

ERS Awards Grants for Research on the Economics of Invasive Species Management

ERS recently awarded 12 grants totaling \$1.5 million for research on the economics of invasive species management. Research will focus on three areas: (1) the economics of trade and invasive species, (2) resource implications of invasive species policy and program alternatives, and (3) bio-economic integration and risk assessment. Award recipients and details of their planned research are at www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/invasivespecies/. **Donna Roberts**, droberts@ers.usda.gov, and **Jan Lewandrowski**, janl@ers.usda.gov



for USDA commodity data and information, and other ERS work of interest to those analyzing commodity markets. Participants included agribusiness and USDA analysts and university economists. **Janet Perry**, jperry@ers.usda.gov and **Lewrene Glaser**, lglaser@ers.usda.gov

Economic Measurement, Methodology, and Policy

In October 2003, ERS co-sponsored the 13th Federal Forecasters Conference at the Bureau of Labor Statistics in Washington, DC. These conferences enable forecasters to exchange information on data issues and data quality, on forecast methodologies, and on evaluation techniques. This year's theme was "The Right Data: Measurement, Methodology, and Policy." **Karen Hamrick**, khamrick@ers.usda.gov

Recent Meetings

How Does the Public Value Farmland?

In November 2003, ERS, the Farm Foundation, and other USDA agencies will host a workshop in Baltimore, MD on improving public decisions about farm and ranch land preservation. The workshop will bring together local program managers and economists who have studied the issue. **Mary Ahearn**, mahearn@ers.usda.gov

New State-Level Estimates from ARMS

For the first time, the 2003 Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) will field enough questionnaires to generate statistically significant state-level estimates for the 15 states with the largest value of agricultural production, in addition

to national and regional estimates. In December 2003, ERS and the Farm Foundation will host a workshop in St. Louis, MO on new opportunities to use these data. Participants will include commodity groups, state officials, conservationists, community groups, educators, and researchers. **Jim Johnson**, jimjohn@ers.usda.gov

Keeping Up With Data Developments

In October 2003, several ERS analysts and managers participated in USDA's Data Users' Meeting in Chicago. They highlighted ERS's work on a system that classifies data by specific attributes, ongoing efforts to improve the factors behind calculation of per capita food use estimates, an interagency effort to develop a one-stop portal