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Current Activities

How Will New Dietary Guidelines Affect Agriculture?

In January 2005, USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services issued updated Dietary Guidelines for Americans. As the official statement of Federal nutrition policy, the Dietary Guidelines influence nutrition education, labeling, and regulations for Federal food assistance and nutrition programs. Updated every 5 years, the 2005 Dietary Guidelines continue to recommend including foods from all the major food groups, while balancing calories to avoid overweight. New emphases include recommendations to consume at least three servings of whole-grain foods daily, and to eat more fruit, dark-green and orange vegetables, legumes, and low-fat and nonfat dairy products. These increases should be balanced by decreasing intake of saturated fats, added sugars, and refined grains. USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion is updating its food guidance system, popularly known as the Food Guide Pyramid, to reflect the 2005 Dietary Guidelines. ERS is examining the potential impact of the guidelines on agriculture and food processing. **Joanne Guthrie, jguthrie@ers.usda.gov**

How Is Rural Hispanic Growth Affecting Rural Public Schools?

The Hispanic population in rural areas has doubled since 1980 and is now the fastest growing demographic group in rural and small-town America. This growth has significant impact on rural public education. Increasing numbers of school-aged Hispanic children have increased demand for educational facilities, contributed to school overcrowding, and increased the need for translators and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in many rural areas. But, infusions of new students can bring additional State funding to schools, helping rural communities avoid school closures and other problems associated with declining school-age populations. Researchers from ERS and Duke University are assessing the effects of rapid Hispanic population growth on the demand for public education and on measures of schooling quality, such as crowding, standardized test scores, and completion rates. **William Kandel, wkandel@ ers.usda.gov**

New Releases

Effects of USDA's Food Assistance and Nutrition Programs on Nutrition and Health

A new ERS report series provides a comprehensive review and synthesis of existing research on the impact of USDA's food assistance and nutrition programs. Though the review indicates that conclusions from past studies must be interpreted with caution, the review highlights some specific findings. For example, research has consistently shown that the Food Stamp Program increases household food expenditures, which in turn leads to increased availability of certain nutrients at the household level. Also, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children increases mean birthweight, lowers the incidence of low birthweight, and decreases birth-related health care costs. The review comprises four reports: *Effects of Food Assistance and Nutrition Programs on Nutrition and Health. Volume I: Research Design* (FANRR 19-1), *Volume II: Data Sources* (FANRR 19-2), *Volume III: Literature Review* (FANRR 19-3), and *Volume IV: Summary of Literature Review* (FANRR 19-4). **Biing-Hwan Lin, blin@ers.usda.gov**

Technology Adoption Updates from ARMS

Recent data from the Agricultural Resource Management Survey highlight the extent of precision technology adoption among producers. For example, cotton producers adopted satellite-driven guidance systems on about 6 percent of planted area in 2003, similar to adoption levels reported by corn and soybean producers in previous years. However, cotton producers had not adopted other precision agriculture technologies, such as yield monitors and yield maps, to the same extent as producers of corn, wheat, and soybeans. These and other data are available on the ERS website at: www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/agchemicals/table1.htm and www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/agchemicals/table2.htm, **Stan Daberkow, daberkow@ers.usda.gov and Tim Payne, jpayne@ers.usda.gov**

Redesigned Food Consumption Data System

In January 2005, ERS released a redesigned per capita food consumption data system (see www.ers.usda.gov/data/foodconsumption/). Users can access per capita food availability data (also known as U.S. food supply data or disappearance data) for all commodities through 2003, either by downloading spreadsheets or using the newly expanded custom database to develop tables or charts for specific food groups, commodities, and years. For the first time, spreadsheets are now available on per capita servings and can be compared with servings recommendations for the U.S. population. **Jean Buzby, jbuzby@ers.usda.gov and Hodan Farah, hfarah@ers.usda.gov**

Agriculture in the WTO

The myriad issues facing trade negotiators are explored in a new book, *Agricultural Policy Reform and the WTO: Where Are We Heading?*, recently released by Edward Elgar publishers. An outgrowth of a 2003 conference cosponsored by ERS, the book covers both challenges for the major countries and regions of the world as well as critical negotiating issues that require global compromises, such as market access, domestic support, and export competition. The increasing complexity of global agricultural markets is also analyzed, including the economic implications of food safety, intellectual property rights, and regional trading arrangements. **Mary Bohman, mbohman@ers.usda.gov**

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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/

Recent Meetings

USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum

Agricultural Outlook Forum 2005, to be held on February 24-25 in Arlington, VA, focuses on the connections between science, policy, and the marketplace. Science holds the key to raising productivity and safeguarding the environment, and informs domestic policymaking on trade regulations, nutrition and health, and energy. Sessions will feature ERS analysis on such topics as food prices and retail outlets, farm finance and household well-being, and rural development. Following the Forum, papers will be available at: www.usda.gov/oce/forum/. **Donna Roberts, droberts@ers.usda.gov**

USDA Biotechnology Conference in North Africa

In December 2004, ERS economist John King gave two presentations at a conference in Cairo, Egypt, sponsored by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, on "The Role of Agricultural Biotechnology in Food Safety." One presentation concerned the role of intellectual property rights in promoting agricultural biotechnology. The second concerned the role of intellectual property rights in ag biotech, focusing on the U.S. experience and technology transfer. **John King, johnking@ers.usda.gov**

Allied Social Science Association Meetings

In January 2004, several ERS researchers participated in the annual meeting of the Allied Social Science Associations, held in Philadelphia, PA. ERS researchers presented work or organized sessions on, among other topics, the economics of invasive species, effects of food stamps on food security, and the health and well-being of American agricultural workers.

Future of Our Food & Farms Summit

In December 2004, two ERS economists participated in the Sixth Annual "Future of Our Food & Farms" Summit in Philadelphia, PA, sponsored by USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. Mary Ahearn discussed the prevalence of contracting in U.S. agriculture and Doris Newton discussed small farm statistics, both as part of a training track for minority farmers. **Mary Ahearn, mahearn@ers.usda.gov and Doris Newton, dnewton@ers.usda.gov**

Food and Nutrition Research Small Grants Conference

In December 2004, the ERS Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP) sponsored the annual Small Grants Program Conference in

Washington, DC. FANRP partners with five institutions to administer the Small Grants Program, which applies a multidisciplinary approach to examine the impacts of food assistance. The conference brought together the 2003 grant recipients from each institution to present their research results. Key themes for the conference included obesity, nutrition and food security, and the connections among food assistance participation, welfare reform, household well-being, and the local community. **Eileen Stommes, estommes@ers.usda.gov**

Community Colleges and Creative Economies

In November 2004, ERS and Regional Technology Strategies, along with the Appalachian Regional Commission and other rural interest groups, cosponsored a conference on Community Colleges and Creative Economies in Asheville, NC. In today's challenging economic environment, many rural communities are turning their attention to using arts, crafts, and other creative/cultural assets to develop or sustain market niches and supplement family incomes. Community colleges, which are the most accessible and flexible post-secondary educational institutions in rural America, can be key players in this effort. **Leslie Whitener, whitener@ers.usda.gov**

Keith L. Pope

Professional Agricultural Workers Conference

In December 2004, ERS provided support for the 62nd Professional Agricultural Workers Conference (PAWC), held at Tuskegee University. Since 1942, agricultural workers have convened at the PAWC to discuss strategies for enhancing the economic opportunities and well-being of rural residents. Samuel Calhoun represented ERS at the conference and serves on the Advisory and Planning Committee. **Samuel Calhoun, scalhoun@ers.usda.gov**

Agricultural Trade Policy Modeling Workshop

In November 2004, ERS and Pennsylvania State University cosponsored a workshop, "Agricultural Policy Modeling," bringing together researchers from organizations around the world with a common interest in using economic models for analysis of agricultural trade policy issues. The workshop was designed to be a first step toward establishing a consortium of partial equilibrium agricultural trade and policy modelers. **Jim Stout, jstout@ers.usda.gov**