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THE JOURNAL OF *Agricultural Economics Research*



United States
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Economic
Research
Service

Articles

A Career of Conceptualizing and Quantifying in Social Science

The Role of Functional Form in Estimating the Effect of a Cash-Only Food Stamp Program

The Effects of Domestic Agricultural Policy Reform on Environmental Quality

Output and Input Subsidy Policy Options in Bangladesh

A Note on the Value of the Right Data

A Comment on the Role of Professional Journals in Facilitating Data Access

Book Reviews

Agriculture and Water Quality: International Perspectives

Forest Resource Economics and Policy Research: Strategic Directions for the Future

Public Policies for Environmental Protection

Developments in Land Information Management

A Community Researcher's Guide to Rural Data

Guide to Economic Indicators

Developmental Impact of Rural Infrastructure in Bangladesh

The Humane Economy: Populism, Capitalism, and Democracy

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In This Issue

The Economic Research Service, a faithful contributor to economic intelligence since 1961, is celebrating its 30th birthday this year. Congratulations, ERS, from the editors, board, and staff of the Journal.

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics created the Journal in 1949. In 1961, Willard Cochrane challenged the new agency, ERS, with his Journal article, "The Role of Economics and Statistics in USDA." Also, for this 1961 volume, Fred Waugh and Howard Davis wrote an article on the Food Stamp Plan, Bud Stanton on seasonal demand for beef, pork, and poultry, Tony Rojko on time series analyses, Fred Stocker on the urban fringe, and Ray Anderson on irrigation. There were notable others. The players have changed but the game goes on.

With this issue, the Journal ends a series of 10 essays by prominent agricultural economists and their distinguished allies on the condition of the agricultural economics industry and its products. These thoughtful essayists have ranged widely. They have been occasionally profound, sometimes provocative. But mostly they have written their essays as overviews, generalizations, or abstractions. In closing this series, the Journal provides a reminder that the agricultural economics industry consists not just of ideas, but of real people, like Karl Fox.

Professor Fox reveals the growth and change of agricultural economics through his personal experiences. The development of his career over half a century took place in an environment of agricultural revolution, not only in production but in a transformation of rural society. Fox reflects these developments in the methods and theories employed in agricultural economics. His story is, to some degree, our story.

Thirty years ago, Fred Waugh and Howard Davis described food stamps, a welfare program for needy families, as "one of the most effective programs—dollar for dollar—for maintaining farm income." In this issue, Levedahl reports how converting the Food Stamp Program from stamps to cash will affect food expenditures. He found this conversion probably would result in a smaller decline in food purchases than was previously estimated. The predicted effect of such a conversion depends on the functional form of the equations estimating the marginal propensity to consume.

Tobey and Reineit used a general equilibrium model to show the effects of agricultural policy changes on environmental quality. They examined the Conservation Reserve and commodity price support programs, using selected chemicals and erosion as indicators of damage to environmental quality. Given the conditions specified in their scenarios, they claim an easing of acreage restrictions and reduced commodity price subsidies would produce an improved environment.

Nehring compares the effectiveness of input subsidies with commodity price supports as agricultural policies for Bangladesh. To encourage domestic production and reduce dependence on food grain imports, that government had provided fertilizer to producers at half the market price. Nehring reports, with customary qualification, that price supports are preferred to fertilizer subsidies for increasing output, at least in terms of reducing government costs and foreign exchange requirements.

"The role of economics in the Department of Agriculture is to make both basic and applied economic research a force for the betterment of all groups in our Nation and in the world."

Willard Cochrane, *Agricultural Economic Research*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, July 1961

We also include two short comments on data. The first comment, by Martin and Emami, demonstrates how choice of data can influence analysis. They illustrate their point with a Japan/United States

trade model. The second comment, by Young, is an argument for making access to author's data a condition of article acceptance in a professional journal. The board and editors of JAER debated the issue actively, and concluded that although we encourage the open, free exchange of data, the problems of disclosure and preparation preclude such a policy for this Journal.

Book reviews. Crutchfield gives a qualified recommendation to read Braden and Lovejoy's set of non-mathematical papers, *Agriculture and Water Quality: International Perspectives*. Stier, with mixed feelings in his review, takes measure of Ellefson on *Forest Resource Economics and Policy Research*. Tobey examines still another composite of descriptive papers, *Public Policies and Environmental Protection*, edited by Portney and published by Resources for the Future. Leppert reviews a set of papers edited by Dahlberg, McLaughlin, and Niemann, *Developments in Land Information Management*.

As if to respond to the comments on data, Reinsel assesses a couple of purely data-oriented publications: Salant, *A Community Researcher's Guide to Rural Data*, and Fiumkin, *Guide to Economic Indicators*. Following up on his article in this issue, Nehring

favorably reviews the Ahmed and Hossain book, *Developmental Impact of Rural Infrastructure in Bangladesh*. And, as if anyone reads policy history, Wunderlich reviews a fine book on Populism by Pollock, *The Humane Economy*.

So, happy birthday, Economic Research Service, thank you for your many years of support for the Journal, and may you continue to analyze interesting times

Gene Wunderlich