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Good data for rural development research are hard to come by. USDA researchers frequently find themselves trying to squeeze rural development information out of data which were collected for other purposes. The data traditionally collected by the agricultural establishment are frequently not applicable to rural research. Such data are generally collected with an agricultural problem in view, yet six out of seven people in rural areas are not farmers. Persons involved in urban and national research and policymaking tend to be the collectors of nonfarm data, and they collect with their problems in mind. Consequently, persons doing research on nonfarm, non-metropolitan problems sometimes feel trapped in a double-negative data bind.

When a new source of secondary data shows potential for describing rural problems, it attracts attention in rural development circles. Such was the case when USDA commissioned the Bureau of the Census to prepare tabulations from the May 1975 Current Population Survey using an updated definition of metropolitan status. The Bowles article uses the special tabulation. Bowles found that persons moving into rural areas during the early seventies tended to have different social and economic characteristics than those moving out; they also have different characteristics than those rural people whose new neighbors these migrants have become. The number

of movers is large; thus, these changes can affect social, political, and economic activity in rural areas for years to come.

Within the agricultural data establishment, good data on the hired farm workforce are relatively scarce. The Elterich article illustrates how old data can be turned to solving new problems. Information from a 1969/70 survey is used to assess likely impacts of legislation which became effective in 1978 concerning unemployment insurance.

Data used by agricultural economists for commodity analyses are relatively plentiful, and the researcher tends to become more concerned with difficulties stemming from explanatory methods than data sources when working on such problems. Mittelhammer and Price demonstrate how prior knowledge, such as the fact that demand for food is inelastic, can be combined with sample data so that mixed estimation techniques can be used to develop econometric models. Gallagher illustrates a corn acreage response model for which the elasticity of response varies according to whether market prices are close to support levels.

The final article in this issue was written after the author read a book by Thomas S. Kahn on the structures of scientific revolutions.

Clark Edwards

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