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1

Area Frame Estimators in
Agricultural Surveys:
Sampling Versus
Nonsampling Errors

11

Farm Family Characteristics
and the Viability of Farm
Households in Wisconsin,
Mississippi, and Tennessee

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Optimization of Policy Goals
in the Context of a Sector
Model

37

The Growth and Structure of
International Trade Since the
Second World War

Agricultural Economics Research

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In This Issue

In the first issue of *Agricultural Economics Research* 38 years ago, O V Wells indicated that the new research periodical would publish articles (1) reporting results of economic research supported by the U S Department of Agriculture, (2) describing new methods or critically evaluating old methods still in use, and (3) describing new or expanding areas of research or statistics

Most articles in this journal since then have been in the first category, reporting research results Yet, the lead article in the new journal was "Designs of Samples For Surveys," by Earl E Houseman, then a statistical consultant to the Office of the Chief, Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE), but later an employee of BAE and the Statistical Reporting Service and a frequent AER contributor This fact is noteworthy because by leading with this article, the journal emphasized questions about designing samples for social science research It also represented symbolically the crucial role of the statistician and sample surveys in supporting the quality of data used in economic research The editor continued this emphasis, carrying eight articles on surveys and sampling questions in Volume 1, compared with seven articles on economic questions Emphasis over the years shifted more toward economics articles, with the sampling and survey articles appearing in varying frequencies Articles related to the survey and sampling techniques underlying our data base have been lacking in recent issues

The recent void disappears with this issue's lead article in which Ford, Nealon, and Tortora compare sampling and nonsampling errors in area frame estimators in agricultural surveys Reading this article *and* the Houseman article in Volume 1, Number 1, I was struck, not only by how far survey and sampling techniques have advanced in the three decades, but also by the similarity of the problems the two articles address

The second article by Smale, Saupe, and Salant addresses the research question of using data from sample surveys of farm households in Wisconsin and Mississippi-Tennessee to gain insights into those human resource, farm business, and financial characteristics which contribute to farm household viability

The final article by Ballenger and Norton departs from survey emphases and presents results of a large-sector model that simulates economic equilibrium They use a quadratic programming framework for their economic model that analyzes the impacts of Mexican pricing policies on Mexican agriculture and that illustrates the difficulty of designing a support program for a sector when there are multiple policy objectives

Gerald Schluter

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