

■ Economic Research Service

The bottom-line benefits of biotech cotton and soybeans. Rising sales of nutritionally improved foods. Hedge-to-arrive contracts, clause by clause. Prospects for U.S. grain sales in Asia. What happens when we change the Food Stamp program, or the welfare system. The outlook for wheat prices, and milk prices, and lettuce prices, and pork belly prices, and sugar prices. The legacy of polluted creeks and rivers. The effects of tomato imports on U.S. producers. The formulas for Farm Act payments. The ebb and flow of rural population trends. Society's burden from *E. coli* and *salmonella*.

It's all economics. And USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) stays right on top of it, dissects it, parses it, and tells the Nation and the world all about it.

■ **Did you know?**

- *Agriculture is one of the three most hazardous U.S. occupations. CSREES-supported farm safety education programs in all 50 States and Puerto Rico teach volunteer firefighters and rescue crews how to respond to farm accidents, certify training for the safe operation of tractors and other machinery, and instill in children a general awareness of farm hazards, including poisons, all-terrain vehicles, and other equipment.*
- *The CSREES AgrAbility project provides on-farm assistance to over 2,000 farmers with disabilities and educates agricultural, rehabilitation, and health professionals on safely accommodating disability in agriculture.*
- *The CSREES Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program uses a sustainable approach that manages crop pests through biological, cultural, physical, and chemical procedures to minimize economic, health, and environmental risks.*
- *CSREES is a leader in developing training programs for public and private pesticide applicators that combine education with new technology to minimize pesticide drift. Current pesticide applicator programs train over half a million people each year on the safe and environmentally sound use of pesticides.*
- *CSREES water quality programs include Farm*A*Syst, an award-winning water pollution prevention program which conducts surface and groundwater audits, and the Blue Thumb Project, which brings water education into the community and empowers local residents to address their own water problems.*
- *CSREES environmental management flagship programs are nationally recognized for excellence in education for individuals and businesses seeking to improve management of air, water, soil, forests, rangelands, and fish and wildlife resources.*
- *CSREES rural manufacturing modernization programs provide technical assistance, business education, and training to small manufacturers in food processing, wood products, and other rural enterprises.*
- *The CSREES Agricultural Telecommunications Program, established in the 1990 Farm Bill, helps universities develop agricultural telecommunications capacity by funding projects in support of formal and nonformal courses, faculty and staff education, program delivery, community-based access to education, student training in food and agricultural careers, facilitation of scientific interaction, and expansion of agricultural markets for farmers.*
- *CSREES small farm programs include on-farm research to adapt and incorporate new practices and technologies into smaller-scale agriculture.*

- *CSREES international programs are building democracy through agriculture in Poland, Armenia, Bulgaria, Russia, and Ukraine by providing the education and technical assistance needed to help these countries make the transition to a market economy.*
- *The CSREES Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) helps limited-resource youth, pregnant teens, and families with young children in all 50 States and 6 Territories improve their nutritional well-being, make better use of their food dollars, and decrease the number of families on Food Stamps and WIC.*
- *CSREES collaborates with the ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center, located at the College of Medicine at Baylor University, to improve the nutrition education provided from kindergarten through grade 12 and to link the medical, research, extension, and education communities.*

ERS is USDA's economic research Agency, providing information and analysis on agriculture, food, natural resources, and rural America. The information produced by ERS is used by farmers and consumers in the decisions they make and by public officials in developing, administering, and evaluating agricultural and rural policies and programs.

The topics that ERS researches, analyzes, and monitors include:

- Domestic and international agriculture,
- Nutrition education and food assistance, food safety regulation, determinants of consumer demand for quality and safety, and food marketing trends and developments,
- Agricultural resource and environmental issues, and
- National rural and agricultural conditions affecting the rural economy, the financial performance of the farm sector, and the implications of changing farm credit and financial market structures

ERS-produced information is available to the public through research reports, commodity and trade reports, electronic media, newspapers, magazines, radio, and frequent participation of ERS staff at public forums. In addition, ERS publishes several periodicals, including *Agricultural Outlook*, *FoodReview*, *Rural Conditions and Trends*, and *Rural Development Perspectives*.

ERS has four principal functions: research, development of economic and data indicators, commodity and trade forecasting, and analysis of policy and program alternatives.

Research, together with economic and data indicators, provides the knowledge and the data base for the commodity and trade forecasting and policy and program analysis. The products are periodic reports for major agricultural commodities, agricultural exports, agricultural finance, agricultural resources, and world agriculture, and analyses assessing issues requiring policy decisions by the Administration and Congress.

ERS reports are available in a variety of formats. Printed reports can be ordered through the ERS Information Center by calling (202) 219-0515. Many reports, data

bases, and other types of information are available on the ERS World Wide Web site at *<http://www/econ.ag.gov>* and on the ERS AutoFAX system at (202) 219-1107.