



SECTION 6 – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 SUMMARY FINDINGS

The WASDE/ICEC Process: The existing WASDE/ICEC process is sound, provides adequate security safeguards, and produces a WASDE report that is highly regarded by both internal and external stakeholders/users as reliable, accurate and consistent.

The existing WASDE/ICEC process is heavily dependent on support from USDA agency commodity analysts, without whom the process will not function and whose continued career development and reward systems must be consistent with the value of the end product.

The WASDE commodities are traded in a world market. The statutory mandate for the WASDE requires that USDA provide a “world-view” for consensus estimates of the WASDE commodities, not just domestic projections. This requirement appears to obviate any possibility of publishing the U.S. crop data, supplied by NASS, on a separate schedule from the rest of the WASDE data, without causing significant aberrations in the commodity markets and agribusiness industry.

The WASDE is used extensively as a reference tool and data source by customers and stakeholders outside USDA. Because it is the only report of its kind, it is widely viewed as the “one best estimate” or benchmark for commodities, especially among commodity brokerage firms who themselves must estimate commodity prices. USDA is the only entity with world-wide resources available to collect the WASDE data.

The WASDE reports undoubtedly influence the commodities market. The WASDE is recognized in the market as objective, independent, and the best forecast report available. No other government organization was found to produce a comparable market forecast report.

The Workload Survey: The Workload survey collected responses from 58 commodity analysts in FAS, FSA, ERS, and AMS. The workload analysis shows that the equivalent of 22 staff members from supporting agencies are employed in the process, in addition to the members of the WAOB. The total number of USDA staff touched by the WASDE/ICEC process has been estimated by this study to be between 70 and 80, including the WAOB and commodity analysts from support agencies. Thus, although not all staff participated in the survey, the survey represented a substantial sample for purposes of this study. Therefore, by extrapolating from the survey data, it is estimated that nearly 30 full time equivalent (FTE) commodity analysts are required in the production of the WASDE through the end-to-end WASDE/ICEC process, for the busier months of the year.



There is a wide disparity in the level of effort provided to WASDE-related processes by the four support agencies. For example, the number of commodity analysts who participate in the WASDE/ICEC process varies (on average) from a low of two for AMS to a high of 38 for FAS. Overall, analysts from the four agencies divide their time about 60/40: 60% in working for their home agencies (6400+ hours per month) and about 40% in working directly for the WASDE/ICEC process (4200+ hours per month). In terms of level of effort, the principal subscribers to the WASDE/ICEC process are ERS and FAS. Although the workload data show that FAS contributes much more heavily to the process than other agencies, the team had no yardstick to determine whether any of the other agencies were not contributing enough staff time to the process. This study found no evidence to correlate the missions of the supporting agencies to their current level of support for the WASDE/ICEC process.

Conclusions that can be drawn from the workload survey are that efficiency improvements should be targeted in the following areas:

- The level of effort required to support the marginal core business processes of the WASDE/ICEC process are significant to warrant focusing efficiency improvement efforts to reduce the level of resources required by the process, or to maintain and utilize the existing level of resources more effectively.
- Suggestions for building knowledge communities presented later in this report identifies appropriate resources from the agencies mandated to contribute to the WASDE/ICEC process.
- Alleviate contributing resources at the agency level by leveraging analytical resources with more general knowledge and experience rather than with more experienced commodity analysts. For example, in ERS the ratio of qualified Ph.D-level analysts to other staff is approximately 2 to 1. This presents an opportunity to assist Ph.D. staff by leveraging cheaper and more flexible resources in support of some core business processes that will free up the senior staff for either agency-related activities or more critical WASDE/ICEC processes, such as consensus building.

This study found no evidence to correlate the missions of the supporting agencies to their current level of support for the WASDE/ICEC process. The principal motivators for agency involvement in the process appear to be a history of interest in commodity-related issues. There are no metrics available to demonstrate whether the level of support from any of the supporting agencies is adequate to meet their own requirements or those of the WAOB/ICEC. A guideline is needed that provides either the incentive or the mandate for all four agencies to support commodity outlook forecasting and the WASDE/ICEC process.

Interagency involvement is essential to the WASDE/ICEC Process: The



WASDE/ICEC process is cyclical in nature and depends heavily on the interagency involvement of approximately 75 commodity analysts from the WAOB and the four principal supporting agencies (NASS involvement was not a subject of this study). Total resources in the WASDE/ICEC support agencies have declined dramatically since the reorganization of 1994. The overall staff reduction across the Department, based on 1993 staffing levels, has been about 15%, whereas, the staff reductions in agencies supporting the WASDE have ranged from 2.5% in FAS to 32.4% in ERS (with AMS and FSA reductions at 12.5% and 23.3% respectively). Comparable data is not available for the WAOB, but it appears that they have had a slight increase over that time period. As the availability of commodity analyst resources becomes even more constrained, the mission of the WAOB will be in direct conflict with the mission of those very agencies upon whom success of the process depends.

WASDE estimates can move the markets: An implicit assumption in production of the WASDE report is that the commodity projections must serve the Department as a “benchmark” forecast of the commodity industry without unwarranted effect on the commodity markets. This means that the WASDE projections are, by their nature, conservative estimates of year-end supply, demand, and price. Therefore, they reflect only known market conditions or program decisions without regard to future events or decisions.

The ICEC consensus building process is costly, but effective: The findings of this study indicate that the current ICEC process for generating the monthly WASDE report are both efficient and effective. However, a preliminary analysis indicates that future prospects for a continuation of that record of success are not so sanguine.

Mission of the ICEC must be reaffirmed and strengthened: The mission of the WAOB and the resultant and inherent objectives of the WASDE process can be explicitly defined; namely, to provide commodity forecast and outlook management information to the Secretary. Regulations governing the WASDE/ICEC functions are so dated as to be detrimental to performance of the mission in a constrained resource environment. There is a need to strengthen the existing mission through renewal of governing Departmental regulations and reaffirmation of the mission of the WASDE. In view of the critical role played by the supporting USDA agencies, the updated regulation should be used as a vehicle to achieve alignment of agency and Department goals with regard to the WASDE. As commodity analyst resources become more and more constrained, this alignment becomes even more important since the WAOB mandate may cause resource conflicts between supporting the WASDE and competing agency objectives.

Organizational Misalignment Regarding the Authority, Responsibility and Accountability for Commodity Analysts: The organizational and reporting structures of the WAOB/ICEC are not in congruence with the principles of good organizational design. The CFR clearly delineates that the WAOB Chair is *responsible* for ensuring the quality and independence of the WASDE report. The WAOB Chair is also responsible for ensuring that the analyst resources participating in the ICEC process have access to



relevant data and produce high-quality estimates. Therefore, in the current environment, authority and responsibility to request and to utilize quality resources from different agencies for ICEC related activities reside with the WAOB Chair.

However, the current matrix management structure is not conducive to the management of resources required to produce the WASDE estimates. In that case, authority and responsibility (per the CFR) reside with the WAOB Chairperson. The CFR, however, is silent with regard to the assignment of accountability for those supporting resources. Accordingly, the accountability for resources participating in ICEC has been assumed by the agency supervisors. In the current environment of declining resources, this misalignment is causing conflicts between the authority of the WAOB Chair for analyst participation and the accountability of the agency supervisors.

Thus far the WAOB has formally done little to provide agency supervisors with management information regarding WAOB support requirements or the analysts' performance while participating in ICEC activities. This creates a problem in that agency heads are being held accountable for analysts' performance, and, in the absence of demonstrated WAOB responsibility, are assuming responsibility for the quality and participation of ICEC resources. The agency heads have little knowledge of the analysts' performance, the desired skills and competencies, or the required level of their analysts' participation in ICEC activities. This dynamic creates a management information "vacuum" between agency heads and the WAOB that will ultimately lead to miscommunications, misinterpretations of intentions and a struggle for resources.

The WAOB/ICEC is a Knowledge Based Organization: Given the nature of the WASDE/ICEC process and the role of the WAOB, it is evident that the production of the WASDE draws on deep knowledge, experience, and expertise. The characteristics and attributes of the WASDE/ICEC process and its associated resources provides for the conclusion that the WAOB, and those contributing to the ICEC process, are part of a knowledge-based organization.

As a knowledge-based organization, effective knowledge management can help the WAOB and the WASDE/ICEC process by:

- improving process and staff efficiency and performance;
- increasing the rate of innovation and both data and knowledge sharing;
- ensuring that vital knowledge is not lost when individuals leave the Department; and
- facilitating the efficient and expeditious building of consensus.

Knowledge Management Strategy is Needed: The Department has no formal knowledge management strategy in place for the identification, management and sharing of information and knowledge. This has wide ranging implications for the WASDE/ICEC process, the WAOB, and supporting agencies. Potentially, there are two alternatives, although poles-apart, that may serve as a focus for a general knowledge management strategy.



Commodity and Economic Analysis Strategy is Needed: There is no formal strategy in place across the Department to manage data and information by commodity or economic type. Departmental activities related to economic and commodity analysis have not been given a recognized identity and career path based on a strategy to manage data and information by commodity or economic issue. Instead, agency commodity analysts are given direction and focus by the senior agency management. Although the Department wishes to provide a single voice for commodity outlook and forecast reports (that is clearly satisfied by the WASDE/ICEC process) the overall strategy is for the continued production of economic and commodity outlook and situation analysis is unclear. The WAOB is the primary business function of the Department in which the economic and commodity analyst contribution are formally recognized. A Department-wide strategy is needed to collectively bring together analysts with common interests from across the Department.

Competency Indicators Were Assessed Correctly: All of the competency ratings had mean scores towards the high end of the scale in importance, indicating that these competencies are important to the ICEC process. Meaningful distinctions in both the effectiveness and importance scales on all indicators confirmed that these indicators are perceived to be the skills, knowledge and behavior that are required for the WAOB Chair, ICEC Committee Chairs, and ICEC Commodity Analysts to perform their jobs.

All Competency Ratings Were Above Average: Aggregate ratings for the ICEC participants, and committees as a whole, was not possible due to the fact that each position was rated using a different set of competencies and performance indicators. However, when analyzed individually, ratings for each of the three positions were high, confirming the high caliber of participants in the ICEC process as a whole. In almost all competency categories, the aggregate competency ratings for all respondents were above a 4.5 indicating that the WAOB Chair, the committee chairs, and the analysts are effective to a great extent in demonstrating those competencies necessary for performing their jobs

ICEC Experience of Agency Commodity Analysts Varies by Agency: Demographics for the number of years that analysts were involved in the ICEC process show that the experience of the analysts varies from one agency to another. Of the four support agencies involved in the production of the WASDE, ERS has the highest number of participants who are veterans of the ICEC process, with 57% of their analysts participating in the process for 10 years or more. In contrast, a little over half of the FAS analysts (53%) have participated in the ICEC process for 5 years or less. The breakdown of ICEC participation for FSA is evenly distributed.

Participation of Analysts Varies by Agency: According to self responses, all of the Sugar and Rice committee analysts always participate in the ICEC process. On the Livestock committee, 88% of the analysts always participate, and 13% participate often. On the Soybean, Cottonseed, & Oils committee, 80% always participate, 10% participate



often, and 10% participate sporadically. On the Cotton committee, 67% always participate and 33% participate often. Finally, on the Dairy, Wheat and Feed Grains committees, 60% of the analysts always participate, 20% often participate, and 20% participate sporadically. This means that, on average, about half of the available agency analysts participate on the ICEC only on a part-time basis.

Overall, the WAOB Chair, the ICEC Committee Chairs, and the ICEC Commodity Analysts are strong performers: In general, all of those that participated in the competency assessment meet the requirements of all competencies at a high performance level. With respect to competency ratings by all respondents, all groups rated high on the effective scale in every competency category. Within the individual competencies, there were some cases in which groups of respondents had aggregate ratings between 3 and 4.5, indicating areas in which foundational skills exist, but could be improved. The low number of performance indicators, that fall into these areas supports the fact that all participants in the ICEC process perform at a highly effective level.

6.2 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the principal recommendations of this second phase study and assessment of the WASDE/ICEC process:

6.2.1 ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Acknowledge WAOB Chair's authority: The WAOB Chair has expressed his concern for the adequate resources and for the quality of future WASDE reports. The WAOB Chair, however, has met some resistance because of a misunderstanding of his authority to require the participation of agency analysts with the necessary skills to support the ICEC process. This authority must be reaffirmed by the Department and acknowledged by supporting agencies in order for the WAOB Chair to acquire the proper skill set. In addition, agency heads must recognize the importance of and necessity for certain analysts to dedicate the forty-odd hours each month to the WASDE production process. This is not to say that this recognition eliminates flexibility for the agencies to rotate these experts, but communicates the fact that the WAOB Chair has the authority to utilize expertise from various USDA agencies during the time necessary to complete the ICEC process.

Improved high level cooperation through improved communication: The WAOB should improve communications with agency heads through the use of management-level meetings. In order to justify the participation of current and future analysts, the WAOB must be able to effectively communicate the level of current analyst participation, as well as additional resource needs to agency heads. Knowledge of resource needs could easily be assimilated during periodic meetings with ICEC Committee Chairs. This information could then be presented to agency representatives in a forum similar to the Management Advisory Team (MAT) meetings currently used to conduct this project. This forum



would allow both the WAOB Chair and agency heads to present their concerns and needs in order to achieve a compromise. Consistent with the authority of the WAOB Chair, agency heads would be able to contribute the necessary resources to the ICEC process. This forum could be held on a monthly or quarterly basis.

Communication of expectations: ICEC committee chairs have expressed concern over the level of participation by certain analysts. The committee chairs acknowledge the tremendous workload faced by those analysts trying to complete both agency and ICEC commitments, but concede that only those analysts that actively participate on a regular basis are the most beneficial to the process. Therefore, the WAOB could benefit from outlining some basic requirements for participation in the ICEC process. Enforcement of professional concepts, such as regular participation, preparedness, and related matters, could greatly improve the efficiency of the ICEC process. In addition, communication about the specific competencies necessary for a strong performance would aid agencies in identifying appropriate resources. Currently, no such information is provided. If expectations are not met and specific performance problems arise, these issues could be communicated and discussed during the MAT meetings.

Similar direction from committee chairs to their analysts could also improve understanding of specific expectations the chair has for each analyst with respect to producing WASDE estimates. A brief one-on-one orientation session with each new analyst may help to solidify understanding of the ICEC process, individual analysts' roles, and specific tasks expected to be completed by each individual. If an evaluation and rewards system was also created, as suggested below, the specifics of this process should also be communicated.

Develop an analyst selection process: Currently, agency commodity analysts are "volunteered" to participate in the ICEC process. This forces the Committee Chairs to rely upon the enthusiasm and dedication of certain individuals for the production of WASDE estimates. At times, this results in Committee Chairs utilizing the skills of individuals who do not greatly add to the process and resulting WASDE report. In order to allow committee chairs to create effective committees, the WAOB Chair must effectively communicate to the agencies the needs of each committee with respect to analytic resources. Then, the agencies, following this criteria, could send up to three resumes of analysts with appropriate skills from which the Committee Chair or WAOB Chair could select. This system would allow agencies the flexibility to offer available resources, yet at the same time, would allow Committee Chairs and the WAOB Chair the flexibility to build a more productive committee. In addition, the selection of an individual by the WAOB organization would instill a sense of allegiance to the ICEC organization, thus strengthening the idea of shared authority and responsibility over ICEC resources.

Develop a performance evaluation system: Currently, agency supervisors prepare annual assessments for analysts despite the amount of time spent by that analyst on ICEC activities. As indicated by the workload assessment, for the majority of participating



analysts, each spends one week per month on ICEC activities. Therefore, one fourth of an analyst's work year is not spent in the agency, but under the direction of the ICEC committee chairs. Yet, ICEC committee chairs are not able to directly contribute to the evaluation of their analysts. The development of a performance assessment that could be completed by committee chairs and factored into the overall evaluation produced by the agency would improve the accuracy of each assessment since the assessment would reflect work performed both in the agency and on the ICEC committee. This tool would help committee chairs effectively communicate expectations and areas for improvement to each individual. Currently, many analysts stated that they are uncertain of how

valuable their contributions are to the ICEC process and would find the feedback from the WAOB extremely valuable.

Develop a rewards system: Every performance assessment should be accompanied by a complimentary rewards system that gives incentives for employees to perform well in any given position. If a committee chair observes that the work of one analyst is exceptional and this information is factored into the agency performance evaluation, the analysts' efforts should be reflected in an appropriate reward system of the agency. Similarly, this individual would be selected to participate in the ICEC process again. The opposite would be true if an analyst proved to be a poor performer. Hopefully, the incentive system would build prestige for the position of ICEC analyst, and thereby strengthen the quality of resources contributed to the process. The combination of the evaluation system with a rewards system would align performance and incentives in an effort to communicate expectations, improve performance, strengthen skills, build loyalty, and elevate job prestige, and bring renewed strength to the enthusiasm of analysts that are currently being pulled in multiple directions. For example, one way to promote knowledge management through a reward system would be institute a performance criteria, "contributes to Knowledge Management databases" as either a performance requirement or a reward requirement. Another example would be for the support agencies to consider instituting the fulfillment of a rotational assignment with the ICEC as a prerequisite for promotion within the agency.

Conduct regular competency assessments: In order for the WAOB Chair to effectively communicate resource needs, analyst competency data must be available. To conduct competency assessments, the WAOB Chair must identify the competencies necessary for strong performance on ICEC activities as well as the competencies possessed by each analyst in order to compare the two. This study provides the necessary models (see Appendix 2) to define these competencies. In this way, skill gaps can be identified pertaining to demographic breakdowns (i.e. by committee or agency). Once gaps in skills are identified, the WAOB Chair can either recruit the appropriate resources from participating agencies or target training to develop skills within existing analysts. If done on a consistent basis, this process will indicate how competencies and aggregate skills change over time. This activity should include periodic succession planning for the ICEC Chairs and supporting commodity analysts (see section 3.8).



Develop a training program for committee chairs and analysts: Once the competency assessment results are tallied, gaps in skill level can be identified. These represent opportunities for developmental training. Training needs can then be prioritized, and a program of supplemental training can be created to improve performance in those areas of highest priority. Later, additional programs can be developed to aid in the development of the remaining skill areas. In this way, the appropriate training programs are identified and implemented with respect to greatest need.



6.2.2 EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENT

Knowledge Management: New technologies and management approaches are changing the traditional economics of managing professional intellect and capital. An effective knowledge management strategy must be developed that accomplishes the following:

1. Boost professionals' problem solving abilities through capturing knowledge in systems and software: As integrated knowledge management software tools and products are continually emerging in the market place, there are a number of existing office information system technologies that may be utilized to support capturing the intellectual capital that drives the WASDE/ICEC process. Relevant products are readily available from Microsoft and Lotus, and include:

- Discussion databases to capture questions, responses and ongoing discussions;
- Workflow analysis and knowledge inventory to codify an enterprise's internal processes and understand where knowledge repositories are; and
- Document management systems to improve access to repositories of digital information.

The Intranet offers new opportunities that may provide an adequate point of entry for a small-scale knowledge management effort that would be required for the WASDE/ICEC process and associated agency inputs. The success of an Intranet-based knowledge management solution is contingent upon recognizing the implications of the data-to-knowledge management process and adequate focus on the required cultural and organizational issues.

2. Overcome professionals' reluctance to share information: Information sharing is critical as intellectual assets, unlike physical assets, increase in value with use. Overcoming professionals' natural reluctance to share their most precious asset, knowledge, presents some common and difficult challenges. Competition among professionals often inhibits sharing, and assigning credit for intellectual contributions is difficult. Because professionals' knowledge is their power base, strong inducements to share are necessary.

These inducements become more effective when they form part of a performance assessment program with resulting rewards and incentives. Breaking down organizational, systems, and working around process barriers will prove to enhance the economic and commodity analysis knowledge and expertise in the Department. This could further improve the quality and depth of the WASDE and other forecast and outlook reports.

3. Organize around intellect: The silo organizational boundaries are unlikely to be broken down even in the long-term. Currently the organizational structures are seen



as a barrier to effective knowledge management, not so much due to their existence, but the degree of power of the organizational infrastructure over the functional economic and commodity analysis. This is a traditional problem in matrix organizations, and it is always difficult to determine whether the solution lies in organizational initiatives or process improvement initiatives.

4. ***Develop a knowledge management strategy:*** The best knowledge management strategy for commodity and economic analysis in support of the WASDE/ICEC process probably lies somewhere between a strategy that is closely tied to the individual, where knowledge is shared through direct person-to-person contacts, and one in which management and sharing of knowledge is done by leveraging the use of information technology. The greater the need is for reliable and accessible data the more the strategy should favor the application of a “technology network.” The greater need is for access to the human knowledge component to give meaning and value to the data, the more the “human network” strategy will benefit the process. The important factor in selecting a strategy is to begin with a recognition that a knowledge management strategy is required, and form a project team to develop a tailored strategy that can become an ethos adopted by the WAOB and supporting agencies to manage the WASDE/ICEC process.
5. ***Develop a commodity and economic analysis strategy:*** A Department-wide strategy is needed to collectively bring together analysts with common interests from across the Department. Such a strategy would also facilitate the recruitment and accession for resource gaps within the Department, and a collective and collaborative business case to support budgetary funding increases. While this may not entirely be within the organizational reach of the WAOB, there is an opportunity for the WAOB to provide direction to this effort.
6. ***Invest in a knowledge culture:*** Although the WASDE/ICEC process requires the collection, preparation, and building of consensus, there is still a prevailing sense of “knowledge is power.” Currently analyst knowledge is brought to the ICEC meetings in “floppies and folders.” This culture is reinforced by the IT infrastructure. Although information may be shared through publication of outlook, forecast, and market pricing related reports, there is a reluctance to allow direct access to agency owned data that support the official forecast. Despite an overriding culture that limits knowledge sharing, it is evident that analysts have overcome these barriers where personalities and professional interests have allowed.



6.2.3 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

What the Department Must Do:

1. It is imperative that the existing departmental memos and regulation covering the mission and function of the WAOB and ICEC, dating back almost twenty years, be updated to reflect today's realities. A regulation that contains substantially the criteria laid out in the example in Appendix 6 should be prepared by the Office of Chief Economist and approved by the Secretary and Under Secretaries of each of the affected agencies. In conformance to the Government Performance and Results Act, the new regulation should define the mission of the WAOB and ICEC in terms that are both customer-oriented and outcome oriented. The regulation should also define the role of each support agency with regard to both the commodity outlook function and individual support for the WASDE/ICEC function. The new regulation should also empower the WAOB Chair to become an active resource management of agency commodity analysts, on whom the success of the WASDE/ICEC process depends.
2. The Department should periodically review and reaffirm the fundamental mission of both the WAOB and the WASDE as providers of management information to support policy and program decisions for the Secretary and senior managers.
3. The Department should favorably consider agency requests for personnel staffing increases for commodity analysts that meet the core competency requirements established through this study.

What the Chief Economist Must Do:

1. The Chief Economist must ensure that the WAOB Chair is provided appropriate delegations to achieve the mandates of the new regulation.
2. The Chief Economist should mediate resource issues between the WAOB and support agencies to ensure continued success of the Board's functions.
3. The Chief Economist should authorize a staff position to support the WAOB Chair to achieve three critical missions: (1) Oversight for assignment and assessment of requirements for agency resources; (2) Leadership in establishing new opportunities for sharing commodity data between support agencies and the WAOB; and (3) Leadership in knowledge management methods, procedures and technologies.
4. Establish guidelines for the supporting agencies in terms of their level of responsibility in the WASDE/ICEC process.
5. Form a project team to develop a tailored knowledge management strategy that can be adopted by the WAOB and supporting agencies to manage the WASDE/ICEC



process.

What the WAOB Must Do: It is essential that the WAOB proactively manage of the human capital that makes the WASDE/ICEC process possible. To that end the WAOB Chair must:

1. Take action to implement the mission defined in the proposed regulation.
2. Establish a staff position supporting the ICEC with responsibility for three critical missions: (1) Resource management and coordination of the assignment and assessment of agency resources; (2) Leadership in establishing new opportunities for sharing commodity data by commodity among support agencies and the WAOB; and (3) Leadership in knowledge management methods, procedures and technologies.
3. Form a project team to develop a tailored knowledge management strategy that can be adopted by the WAOB and supporting agencies to manage the WASDE/ICEC process.
4. Assist support agencies to optimize the level of support required on a month-to-month basis.
5. Work with supporting agencies to foster acquisition of highly qualified commodity analysts that best meet the competency requirements of the ICEC as identified by this study.
6. Serve as a focal point for knowledge management and data sharing among ICEC support agencies and the WAOB including download, preparation, processing, and sharing of commodity data throughout the Department.
7. Contribute to the performance appraisal of commodity analysts from supporting agencies.
8. Lead interagency forums for periodic re-evaluation of the ICEC process.

What the Support Agencies Must Do:

1. Affirm their commitment to the WASDE/ICEC process and provide a career path with incentives and rewards for the commodity analyst function.
2. Formally assign primary and alternate commodity analysts to each ICEC committee based on the core competency requirements of this study.
3. With coordination of the WAOB, ERS and FAS should establish a joint project to create commodity centers of excellence to collect, process, evaluate and share commodity related data. These centers of excellence should also serve as a forum for



periodic assessment of the resources needed to support the WASDE.

4. Work cooperatively with WAOB committee chairs and staff to periodically re-evaluate the capabilities of commodity analysts assigned to the ICEC.
5. Work cooperatively with WAOB committee chairs and staff to periodically re-evaluate the ICEC processes for improved efficiency and more effective output products.