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Office of the Chief Economist Contributes to USDA Success in 2017

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21, 2017 – The agricultural sector of the economy is driven by data, and in 2017, the U.S. Office of the Chief Economist provided reliable information on U.S. agricultural production to help American farmers succeed.

“The USDA is committed to helping American farmers, ranchers, and foresters thrive and profit in today’s global market,” said USDA Chief Economist Robert Johansson. “These benefits pass on to American and global consumers through a high-quality supply of abundant food, fuel, and fiber.”

The Office of the Chief Economist supports a range of services for the USDA, including the development and analysis of Departmental budget proposals; proposals for the 2018 Farm Bill, review, and development of cost-benefit analyses for significant USDA regulations. OCE also provides economic and policy analysis in support of key U.S. multilateral and bilateral trade initiatives, including support for NAFTA negotiations and bilateral dairy trade concerns with Canada, WTO enforcement actions. In 2017 OCE gathered economic information and analysis on the impacts on agriculture from disasters such as the western wildfires, northern Great Plains drought, and Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, ensuring USDA decisionmakers had timely, accurate information.

Convening agricultural decisionmakers

The [Agricultural Outlook Forum](#) is a platform facilitating conversation on key issues and topics within the agricultural community, including producers, processors, policy makers, government officials, and both foreign and domestic non-government organizations. 2017 was the 93rd year of the USDA’s largest annual meeting. The event attracted more than 1,800 attendees. Along with the plenary panel discussion, attendees chose from 30 sessions with more than 80 speakers and a host of agriculture-related exhibits. Concurrent track sessions supporting the 2017 theme included “India: Challenges & Opportunities,” “Ag Financial Stress Test,” the “Growing Demand for Cage-Free Eggs,” “Marketing-Driven Changes In Ag Production,” and “GMO Disclosure: Transparency for the Market” as well as the annual commodity outlooks and luncheons. The OCE launched the updated AOF portion of the website and instituted audio and video promos for the AOF and Student Diversity Program (SDP).

Managing risk

The Office of Risk Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis (ORACBA) provides clearance reviews of regulatory impact analyses and risk assessments for significant and economically significant regulations, builds capacity for conducting risk assessments and economic analyses in the Department and provides direction to Departmental agencies in appropriate methods of risk assessment. The Office reviewed 13 significant rules or notices from six USDA agencies, and provided advice at an early stage of development or in collaboration with other OCE offices for six rules. ORACBA also sponsored two seminars on risk assessment methods and a full-day workshop on “Benefit Cost Analysis: Advancing Analysis.”

Promoting new energy sources

The Office of Energy Policy and New Uses (OEPNU) assists the Secretary of Agriculture in developing and coordinating Departmental energy policy, programs, and strategies. In 2017, OEPNU has supported five peer-reviewed journal articles; three articles submitted for peer review, and three articles being revised for submission and publication, and 5 OEPNU web publications and several others in review. OEPNU’s director received two industry awards/recognitions: among the Top 100 People in the Bioeconomy for 2017 (number 32) of Biofuels Digest; and by the Commercial Airline for Alternative Fuels Initiative the Partnership Award for commitment to the Farm to Fly 2.0 initiative on alternative jet fuel.

Climate data tools for agricultural producers and professionals

The Climate Change Program Office (CCPO) provides analysis, planning, research coordination, and the development of USDA’s responses to climate change, focusing on implications of climate change on agriculture, forests, grazing lands, and rural communities. CCPO ensures that USDA is a source of objective, analytical assessments of the effects of climate change and proposed response strategies both within USDA and for our partners. This year CCPO released a [new web portal](#) for the USDA Climate Hubs Program. The new portal will make it easier to assist stakeholders in quickly and easily finding the information they need to manage climate change risks.

Expanding market opportunities

In FY 2017 OEM continued to expand environmental market opportunities for farmers, ranchers, and forest land owners. OEM released a new portal for accessing the latest information on environmental markets. The information is being provided as part of the [EPA EnviroAtlas](#). The new capacity integrates data from water, carbon, and biodiversity projects as well as state and regional policies.

Dependable global supply and demand estimates

The World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) report is prepared monthly and includes forecasts for U.S. and world wheat, rice, and coarse grains (corn, barley, sorghum, and oats), oilseeds (soybeans, rapeseed, palm), and cotton. U.S. coverage is extended to sugar, meat, poultry, eggs, and milk. USDA World Agricultural Outlook Board analysts chair the Interagency Commodity Estimates Committees (ICECs) comprising representatives from several key USDA agencies. The nine ICECs -- one for each commodity -- compile and interpret information from USDA and other domestic and foreign official sources to produce the report.

Learn more about agricultural economic issues and developments by visiting <https://www.usda.gov/oce/>.

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