

USDA RADIO FEATURE TRANSCRIPT:

USDA's Annual Forum Highlights Sustainability and Productivity, 12/07/21

STEPHANIE HO (SH): USDA's 98th annual [Agricultural Outlook Forum](#) will be held in late February. The theme is "New Paths to Sustainability and Productivity Growth."

USDA CHIEF ECONOMIST SETH MEYER (SM): "New" refers to how are we going to achieve this – including what technologies, or innovations are we going to bring, in order to achieve this goal of both productivity and sustainability? They don't have to be at opposite ends of the spectrum, right? You don't have to be either sustainable or increase productivity – there are innovative ways to accomplish both.

SH: That was the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Chief Economist Seth Meyer.

SM: What's so significant about the Forum is it's our chance to embrace and engage our constituencies across all the things that USDA does.

SH: He says he always looks forward to the forum's commodity outlooks and trade sessions, because that's his background. At the same time, though, he says other sessions will give him a chance to learn more about important topics he may not know much about.

SM: There's one here that I think is really fascinating, on heirs' property, for instance – not something I deal with every day – but get in there and understand the issue, who it affects and how USDA engages in this.

SH: Yet another session focuses on the updated Thrifty Food Plan, which is key to USDA nutrition programs, while other sessions incorporate climate change.

SM: The emphasis on climate filters its way into many of these sessions, as an example, and there's lots of very interesting ones as a result

SH: Meanwhile, the 2022 forum will indeed cover many topics, but it also will continue with its core economic outlooks.

SM: We will obviously talk about current market conditions, talk about livestock, dairy, poultry, grains, oilseeds, all the important factors in here – what the market looks like, and what production might look like for the coming year.

SH: No spoilers, but here's a preview of one topic to watch.

SM: This year will be very interesting in terms of the outlook for acreage for the coming year. We'll talk about things like rising relative input costs. Is the increase in perhaps fertilizer expenditures shifting acreage between corn and beans?

SH: The annual Agricultural Outlook Forum is aimed at encouraging dialogue between USDA, its stakeholders and the general public.

SM: I think we'll hit all those important topics that are on our constituents' minds – everything from the producers input costs to get the crop in the ground, to consumers' grocery costs when they go to the grocery store.

SH: The forum will be free and open to the public -- and it will be held virtually.

SM: We used to do this all in-person, and I'd show up for all the trade sessions, and I'd show up late because I was busy, and the room would be full, and I couldn't even get in the room. So, I actually like the virtual format, because I can jump over to the trade sessions, or watch them after the fact – and get really engaged.

SH: [To find out more information and to register](#), just input USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum in your search engine. This is Stephanie Ho, for the US Department of Agriculture, in Washington DC.