

Research Informs Policy Decisions

As Under Secretary of USDA's Research, Education, and Economics mission area, I am pleased to see our research applied to critical issues facing the Nation today. This farm policy special issue of *Amber Waves* does just that by giving insight to pertinent topics that are being considered in the upcoming 2007 farm bill discussion.

For example, funding for conservation programs will be a focus in the 2007 farm bill and is highlighted within this collection of articles. ERS research summarized in the articles gives insight to program cost-effectiveness, conservation compliance, green payments, and environmental credits.

Programs related to specialty commodities, such as fruit and vegetables, are also important topics addressed in this compilation. The implications for relaxing fruit and vegetable planting restrictions for commodity program participants and fruit and vegetable availability for nutrition assistance program participants are topics included to stimulate thinking about specialty commodity policy.

One of the feature articles presents information on managing risk with revenue insurance. Implications of adjusted gross farm income with payment limitations are revealed by indicators of the geographic distribution of government payments as a proportion of gross income. In addition, Food Stamp Program effectiveness, policy challenges posed by the changing face of rural America, and fast-paced growth of a bioenergy sector are also covered in these reprinted articles.

This special issue is a great opportunity to showcase our exciting and timely research. It is my sincere hope that these articles serve to inform, enlighten, and provoke thought as discussion of the upcoming 2007 farm bill continues.



Gale Buchanan
Under Secretary
Research, Education, and Economics
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Amber Waves is published five times per year (February, April, June, September, and November) by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

To subscribe, call 1-800-363-2068 or 703-605-6060, weekdays 8:30-5:00 ET. Subscription price is \$49.95 per year (to U.S. addresses). Call for prices for subscriptions sent to foreign addresses.

Send questions, requests, and letters to Sheila Sankaran, Editor, *Amber Waves*, USDA/ERS, Rm. N4165, 1800 M St., NW., Washington, DC 20036-5831, or to ssankaran@ers.usda.gov.

The editorial content of this magazine is in the public domain and may be reprinted without permission. Unless otherwise noted, the Economic Research Service (ERS), U.S. Department of Agriculture, is the source for all charts and tables shown in this magazine, although the underlying raw data often come from other agencies. The *Amber Waves* eZine (www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/) is the authoritative version and may sometimes contain minor corrections and updates to reflect new information received after publication of the print edition.

ERS is the main source of economic research and analysis from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, providing timely information on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America.

Cover photo: Original photo by Stephen Peterson, digitally enhanced by Cynthia A. Ray.

Use of commercial and trade names does not imply approval or constitute endorsement by USDA.

EDITORIAL BOARD:

Sheila Sankaran,
Executive Editor
Stephen Crutchfield
Adrie Custer
Elise Golan
Barry Krissoff
Mary Maher
Thomas McDonald
Greg Pompelli
Robbin Shoemaker
Patrick Sullivan

MANAGING EDITORS:

Linda Hatcher
Dale Simms
John Weber

GRAPHIC AND WEB

DESIGNERS:

Cynthia A. Ray, Art Director
Shawn Bucholtz
Susan DeGeorge
Chris Dicken
Lou King
Wynnicke Pointer-Napper

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:

Mary Ahearn
Kathryn Lipton
Nancy Cochrane
Rosanna Mentzer Morrison
Carmen Sandretto

David Nulph

Anne Pearl

Victor B. Phillips, Jr.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.