



# Dateline ERS

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Economic Research Service

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U.S. Department of Agriculture

ERS is the main source of 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.

## Updated data on the web

### Adoption of Genetically Engineered Crops in the U.S.

2006 data were added in July. This data product summarizes the extent of adoption of herbicide-tolerant and insect-resistant crops since their introduction in 1996.

[www.ers.usda.gov/data/biotechcrops/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/biotechcrops/)

## Commodity Markets and Trade

ERS Outlook reports provide timely analysis of major commodity markets and trade, including special reports on hot topics. All reports, along with a calendar of future releases, are available at:

[www.ers.usda.gov/publications/outlook](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/outlook)

## Amber Waves July 2006

This special issue of *Amber Waves* magazine showcases agriculture and the environment. The special issue reprints and updates a selection of articles that take a closer look at the relationship between agriculture and the Nation's land, air, water, and biological resources.

[www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/july06specialissue](http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/july06specialissue)

### *Emphasis Shifts in U.S. Conservation Policy*

Recognizing the potential negative impact that some farming practices (excess fertilization and manure, for example) can have on our Nation's natural resources, policymakers have been devoting more attention and funding to conservation policies and programs.

### *Farmland Retirement's Impact on Rural Growth*

Conventional wisdom holds that efforts to protect natural resources and the environment affect resource-related jobs, and consequently the economies of nearby communities. Recent ERS analysis of the impact of the Nation's largest farmland retirement program—the Conservation Reserve Program—on rural economic growth suggests otherwise.

### *Improving Air and Water Quality Can be Two Sides of the Same Coin*

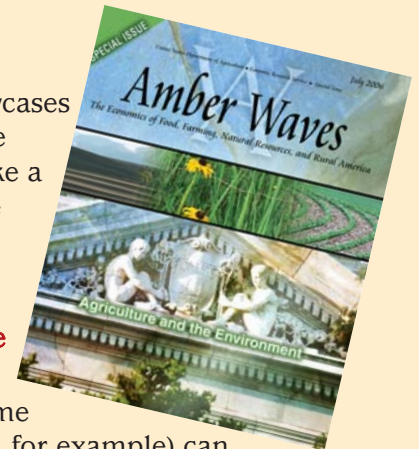
Since farmers began tilling the soil to grow crops and raise animals, agricultural production practices have generated a variety of substances that enter the atmosphere and have the potential of creating health and environmental problems. Environmental regulations and incentives that simultaneously address multiple media, like air and water, are more likely to be cost-effective in meeting resource quality goals.

### *Measuring the Success of Conservation Programs*

Most conservation programs are designed to improve the environment by changing farmers' practices (through incentives). But the path from programs to practices to environmental quality is complex. Measuring the success of conservation programs requires careful navigation of the complex series of interactions that link programs and environmental quality.

### *Environmental Credit Trading: Can Farming Benefit?*

Environmental regulations often require firms that emit pollutants to limit emissions to a set level or to install specific emission-reducing technologies. While fairly straightforward, this command-and-control approach can be costly both to the firms and to society. Environmental credit trading is a market-based approach to complying with environmental regulations that could achieve pollution abatement goals at lower costs to society.



## Many Farms Not Directly Covered by the Current Safety Net

[www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB15](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB15)

In recent U.S. farm policy debates, several “whole-farm revenue” programs have been proposed as a new form of safety net that would be available to all U.S. farms, according to *Whole-Farm Approaches to a Safety Net*. A whole-farm program is based on revenues from all farming activities added together and is not linked to the production of particular commodities. This report looks at the risk management potential for such programs and the obstacles to implementing such a whole-farm revenue approach to a farm safety net.



## Farm Exits and Entries Essentially in Balance

[www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR21](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR21)

The rate at which U.S. farms go out of business, or exit farming, is about 9 or 10 percent per year, comparable to exit rates for nonfarm small businesses in the United States, according to *Understanding U.S. Farm Exits*. U.S. farms have not disappeared because the rate of entry into farming is nearly as high as the exit rate. The relatively stable farm count since the 1970s reflects exits and entries essentially in balance. The probability of exit is higher for recent entrants than for older, more established farms. Farms operated by Blacks are more likely to exit than those operated by Whites, but the gap between Black and White exit probabilities has declined substantially since the 1980s. Exit probabilities differ by specialization, with beef farms less likely to exit than cash grain or hog farms.

## Agricultural Resources and Environmental Indicators 2006 Edition

[www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/arei/eib16](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/arei/eib16)

The 2006 Edition of *Agricultural Resources and Environmental Indicators* describes trends in resources used in and affected by agricultural production (including natural, produced, and management resources), as well as the economic conditions and policies that influence agricultural resource use and its environmental impacts. Twenty-eight chapters provide concise overviews of specific topics with links to sources of additional information. Chapters are available in HTML and PDF formats.



## California and Iowa Top U.S. Agricultural Exporting States

[www.ers.usda.gov/publications/FAU/June06/FAU11401](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/FAU/June06/FAU11401)

U.S. agricultural exports reached a new record in fiscal 2005 at \$62.4 billion, but only \$1 million higher than the record set in fiscal 2004 according to a new outlook article titled *California and Iowa Remain Top U.S. Agricultural Exporting States in Fiscal 2005*. While California and Iowa continued their reign as top exporting states, Texas regained its third place position ahead of Illinois; Indiana moved back into the top 10. Iowa moved ahead of Illinois in soybean exports; California continued to dominate vegetables, fruits, tree nuts, seeds, and dairy.

### How to get more information ...

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