



# DatelineERS

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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.

## 2007 Agricultural Outlook Forum REGISTRATION

Registration for the March 1-2, 2007 Agricultural Outlook Forum is now open. Register by February 5 and save on the registration fee.

[www.usda.gov/oce/forum](http://www.usda.gov/oce/forum)

## 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)

## Food Assistance Landscape

[www.usda.gov/Publications/EIB6-3](http://www.usda.gov/Publications/EIB6-3)



USDA expenditures for its 15 food assistance programs totaled \$27.7 billion during the first half of fiscal 2006 (October 2005-March 2006), a 7-percent increase over the first half of fiscal 2005. If this trend continues during the second half of the year, it would mark the fourth consecutive year in which expenditures for food assistance exceeded the previous historical record. Some of this increase is explained by a spike in participation in the Food Stamp Program due to hurricanes Katrina, Wilma, and Rita in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. In November 2005, 29.6 million people participated in the Food Stamp program, the largest number of participants in a single month ever. *The Food Assistance Landscape: FY 2006 Midyear Report* uses preliminary data from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service to examine trends in the programs at the midpoint of fiscal 2006. It also summarizes a number of ERS research reports on the Food Stamp Program released in recent years that may help inform discussions of the 2007 reauthorization of the farm bill.

## Nutrition Concerns Can Influence Eating-Out Choice

[www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib19](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib19)



Americans are consuming an increasing share of their calories from full-service and fast-food restaurants. On average, these foods tend to be more calorie dense and nutritionally poorer than foods prepared at home—suggesting that consumers may not consider health when choosing to dine out. The report *Let's Eat Out: Consumers Weight Taste, Convenience, and Nutrition* finds that when making choices about where and how often to eat out, the desire for health is one of several determinants of consumer behavior, along with convenience and the entertainment value of a dining experience.

## Spinach: Background Data



[www.ers.usda.gov/News/spinachcoverage.htm](http://www.ers.usda.gov/News/spinachcoverage.htm)

Get information, data, and forecasts on spinach consumption and production. This web feature also contains data on the farm value of spinach and on U.S. and State-level production.

## Cost of Living Differences Affect Nonmetro-Metro Poverty Comparisons

[www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR26](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR26)



The prevalence of poverty has been greater in nonmetro areas than in metro areas in every year since the 1960s when poverty rates were first officially recorded. Accordingly, Federal funds for social assistance programs and community development have favored nonmetro areas. *The Cost of Living and the Geographic Distribution of Poverty* report suggests that adjusting poverty measures to account for cost-of-living differences between metro and nonmetro areas reverses that ranking. Once adjusted for cost-of-living differences using the Fair Market Rents index, metro poverty is greater than nonmetro poverty in terms of prevalence, depth, and severity over the entire 1991-2002 study period.



### Canada: A Macroeconomic Study of the United States' Most Important Trade Partner

[www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/WRS0602](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/WRS0602)

Canada has become the most important trading partner of the United States in terms of total trade and agricultural trade. Canada is a large exporter to the United States of critical raw materials—including natural gas, petroleum, and wood products—and a substantial importer of finished industrial and consumer goods. Canada's agricultural trade continues to grow in importance reflecting trade liberalization and greater integration of agricultural markets. The trade outlook is enhanced by Canada's prospects for long-term economic growth of about 3 percent per year, which is underpinned by expected moderate growth in working-age population and labor productivity.

### Animal Products Markets in 2005 and Forecasts for 2006

[www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/LDP/2006/08Aug/LDPM14601](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/LDP/2006/08Aug/LDPM14601)

Uncertainty continues to shape the forecasts for animal products markets in 2006. Potential and actual animal disease outbreaks, consumer sensitivities, volatile exchange rates, and growing competition from producers in other countries cloud U.S. trade prospects for major meats. Loss of U.S. trade market share, partly caused by disease outbreaks and related trade restrictions that have affected animal product exports since 2003, compounds the problem. The outlook for U.S. meat, poultry, and dairy markets in 2006 depends on how well domestic production adjusts to changes in input costs, the effect of exchange rates on trade, the continuing effects of disease and trade restrictions on exports, and the increasing competitiveness of emerging animal products exporters.

#### How to get more information ...

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