



THE FREE RIDER

THE USDA ECONOMISTS GROUP
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<http://www.usdaeconomists.org>

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FROM THE PRESIDENT – BILL JANIS

Recently, a member of our list serve informed me that he had received 15 responses to a data question within 20 minutes. This event prompted me to ponder the flexibility and value of this resource. Therefore, I urge all our members and potential members to begin posting their most challenging economic questions to our list serve. We offer a great deal for a only \$15 yearly!

On June 9, I moderated a teleconference about current and emerging trends in global agricultural trade. The National Association for Business Economics <http://www.nabe.com/> sponsored this event. Stewart Ramsey of IHS Global Insight's agricultural practice and Ron Trostle of USDA's Economic Research Service shared their perspectives on the trade impacts of the 2006-2007 bubble in agricultural prices. Both speakers agreed that prevailing agricultural prices would not return to their pre-2006 levels owing to continued price increases of inputs for farming around the world. Please visit our web site to download copies of the presentations.

Your Board convened on June 2 in the South Building's library conference room. Discussion focused on various topics. First, we established that a quorum of Board members was available. Then, Steve Neff, our Treasurer, reported that we have reached 102 members with \$2,410 in our bank account.

Discussion shifted to improving our web site through better tracking of hits and a more user-friendly format. We inconclusively returned to the topic of institutional memberships. At the July Board meeting, a professor from Johns Hopkins University, who wants his institution to join as an institutional member, will share with the Board his views about institutional memberships.

Your Board completed about half of the agenda. The agenda again listed a motion to authorize the purchase of perpetual plaques listing all recipients of our Economist of the Year Award and the Fred Woods Public Policy Award.

We hosted a May 27 webinar at the Economic Research Service. This presentation about carbon trading attracted 45 participants in person and another 40 individuals via the web. Henry Bahn reports that he received many enthusiastic comments about this event. Henry is organizing follow-up seminars to address creating an index for carbon trading and to examine the legal issues of carbon trading.

On May 14, Robert Kenney, the Acting Administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, presented our inaugural John E. Lee Teamwork Award. He bestowed the honor on Jerry Cessna and Howard McDowell of AMS Dairy Programs. Jerry and Howard used public data to develop the Dairy Programs National Econometric Model. The result of nine years

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work, this flexible tool helps their USDA colleagues to better quantify domestic dairy forecasts and to determine the impact of alternative policy options on the U.S. dairy industry and consumers. Former Administrator of USDA's Economic Research Service, John E. Lee, participated in the awards ceremony.



(Robert Kenney, Acting Administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service; Jerry Cessna and Howard McDowell of the Agricultural Marketing Service; and John E. Lee, former Administrator of USDA's Economic Research Service)

Join us for the USDA Economist Group Summer **Happy Hour!**

Date: Thursday, July 16th, 5:30-7:00pm
Location: Poste Brasserie Bar & Courtyard (inside Hotel Monaco)
555 8th Street, NW Washington DC 20004
Nearest metro: Gallery Place (red line)
<http://www.postebrasserie.com/>.

Specials: \$5 red and white wine selections, \$5 Sam Adams Lager, and \$5 truffled frites

Thank you to Abraham Avidor and Petra Schultze for organizing

RSVP: petra.schultze@wdc.usda.gov

IN FOCUS

While the world of biofuels descends on the June 16 – 18, 2009 African Bioenergy Conference & Expo in Ethiopia to reflect on the impact of the economy over the last 18 months, research continues.

[Can biofuels and rainforests coexist?](#)

SEMINARS UPDATE

My Experiences as an Agricultural Advisor in North Babil, Iraq

George Stickels, Farm Service Agency

Date: June 29, 2009

Time: Noon – 1:30 PM

Place: USDA Headquarters (South Building) – Room 3074 -S

1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Politics and Players Driving Agricultural and Rural Policy

Sara Wyant, President, Agri-Pulse Communications

Date: July 22, 2009

Time: Noon – 1:30 PM

Place: USDA Headquarters (South Building) - Rear of South building Cafeteria

1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Sponsors: USDA Economists Group

MORE UPCOMING

The *United States Agricultural & Food Law and Policy Blog* is a news, research, and information blog provided through a partnership of the National Agricultural Law Center and the American Agricultural Law Association, two national institutions uniquely serving the nation's agricultural community. The *Blog* is currently comprised of more than three dozen subject areas that correspond with the reading room subject areas on the Center website. [Click here](#) for more information and an access link to the *Blog*.

<http://www.agandfoodlaw.com/>

Ag in uncertain times is an interactive Extension webinar series designed to assist ag professionals, including producers, to better understand the changing conditions in today's economy. The series is targeted towards providing information that helps producers make informed decisions and improves ag professional's ability to work with their farm and ranch customers/clients. Each session is scheduled for 60 to 90 minutes with plenty of

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opportunity for the participants to interact with the presenters. All webinar start times are at 9AM Pacific. (10AM Mountain, 11 AM Central, and 12 noon Eastern)

The Ag in uncertain times webinar series runs through December as follows:

Operating in the face of uncertain markets, September 9, 16, and 23

Families facing uncertainty in agriculture, October 7, 14, and 21

Operating in risky environments, November 4, 11, and 18

Pulling it all together: Managing Ag Enterprises in Uncertain times, December 2, 9, and 16

Operating in the face of uncertain credit – June 9, 10, 17, and 24

June 17 & 24 - Three individuals with extensive loan officer experience will address how producers can manage the evolving credit situation in their businesses. On June 24, participants will be introduced to several of the excellent financial analysis tools that are available for ag enterprise managers to use.

For additional information about topics and speakers for this webinar series, please visit <http://www.farmmanagement.org/aginuncertainties/>

To Participate: (no pre-registration is required – first come – 500 seats available)

Equipment you will need: A computer that has a set of speakers and a high speed internet connection (LAN, DSL/Cable Modem, High speed wireless).

Web link used for the entire series:

<http://www.msuextensionconnect.org/aginuncertaintimes/>

This web link opens a screen that has the “Enter as a Guest” option selected. Use this option and enter your name and then click on the “Enter Room” button.

The start time for all webinars in this series is 10:00 am Mountain Daylight time. Please log on a few minutes early to view information about how to ask presenters questions and to make sure your audio is working.

This webinar series is the result of the collaborative efforts of the following members of the Western Extension Committee: Trent Teegerstrom, University of Arizona; Ramiro

Lobo, University of California – ANR; Jeffrey Tranel, Colorado State University; Duane Griffith, Montana State University; John Hewlett, University of Wyoming; along with Jon Newkirk and John Nelson, Washington State University Extension Western Center for Risk Management Education; and Bob Craven, University of Minnesota Center for Farm Financial Management. The Western Extension Committee is an organization of Extension Economists from the 13 western states, Guam and other Pacific Islands supported by Extension Directors in the western region and the WSU Extension Western Center for Risk Management Education.

For additional information email, westrme@wsu.edu

Western Agricultural and Resource Economics Association 2009 Annual Meeting

June 24 - 26, 2009

Kauai, Hawaii

<http://waeaonline.org>

Agricultural and Applied Economics Association 2009 AAEA & ACCI Joint Annual Meeting

July 26 - 28, 2009

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

<http://www.aaea.org>

2009 Midwest, Great Plains & Western 2009 Outlook Meeting

August 17-18, 2009

Columbus, Ohio

<http://www.matthewcroberts.com/Outlook/Welcome.html>

CALLS FOR PAPERS

21st Century Watershed Technology Improving Water Quality and the Environment

February 21-24, 2010
Costa Rica

ASABE is excited to announce the call for papers is available for the 2010 ASABE 21st Century Watershed Technology: Improving Water Quality and the Environment to be held in Costa Rica, February 21-24, 2010. Deadline for proposal submission is July 29, 2009.

Topics include:



Measuring success – post Implementation monitoring
 Emerging Problems of new water quality/quantity case studies
 Political and social ramifications
 Biological monitoring for water quality/quantity projects
 Solutions for increasing stakeholder involvement in the water quality/quantity process
 Bacterial monitoring, source identification and control practices
 Economic implications of water quality/quantity
 Watershed implementation planning
 Performance and validation of models for water quality/quantity
 Pollution control/management practices for point and nonpoint sources
 Field and watershed scale modeling
 Water quality standards
 Data quality and management
 Water quality issues for forest and rangelands
 Agricultural BMP effectiveness
 Data collection to support water quality/quantity development
 Establishing sediment standards
 Establishing clean sediment water quality/quantity
 Management practices for sediment control
 Impact of extreme weather conditions for water quality/quantity
 Environmental legislation and regulation applicable to agriculture in developing countries
 Data mining, knowledge discovery in water quality data set
 Emerging tools in water quality analysis
 Bioremediation systems for agriculture (wetlands, infiltration ponds, photocatalysis, radio frequency, UV pulsed and others)
 Watershed management in developing countries
 Education in water resources
 Wetlands, stream and river restoration, biomonitoring and land use impacts on downstream water bodies
 Payments for environmental/hydrologic services programs
 Effects of climate change on water resources and water quality
 Regulatory approaches to watershed management
 Management standards for watershed management
 Environmental credits and payments

To submit a paper proposal, please visit
http://www.asabe.org/meetings/cfp/call.cfm?mtg_code=water2010

Over the last decade there has been a maturing of watershed science with new research findings and modeling approaches. These new solutions have resolved many of the problems that first faced watershed managers in dealing with water quality and quantity issues, but there are also emerging impediments to watershed assessments and achieving water quality goals. This international conference 21st Century Watershed Technology: Improving Water Quality and Environment will look at emerging problems and new solutions to managing watersheds to meet water quality and quantity standards.

For more information, please visit
<http://www.asabe.org/meetings/water2010/index.htm>.

RECENT RELEASES BY DC AREA AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS

[Emerging Issues In the U.S. Organic Industry](#)

Consumer demand for organic products has widened over the last decade. While new producers have emerged to help meet demand, market participants report that a supply squeeze is constraining growth for both individual firms and the organic sector overall. Partly in response to shortages in organic supply, Congress in 2008 included provisions in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (2008 Farm Act) that, for the first time, provide direct financial support to farmers to convert to organic production. This report examines recent economic research on the adoption of organic farming systems, organic production costs and returns, and market conditions to gain a better understanding of the organic supply squeeze and other emerging issues in this rapidly changing industry.

More related news: June 17 - [The United States and Canada have reached an agreement to allow foods certified organic to be sold in both countries.](#)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Lynn Knight – Former USDA employee
 Sherry Wise – AMS
 Irene Xiarchos - OCE Office of Energy Policy and New Uses



U.S. GOVERNMENT JOBS FOR AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS AND RELATED

USA jobs has a new query interface. So, if you had one set up you may want to check that it is still working. Now you can browse by agency, state, and occupation on one screen! It's great. There are currently 947 jobs open in the U.S. Dept of Agriculture. Race you there!
[USA Jobs](#)

YOUR USDA ECONOMISTS GROUP TEAM

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FEEDBACK?

Do it here!
<http://myblog.usdaeconomists.org>

NOTED

Doggerel from Will Masters
Agricultural Economist, Purdue University

Damn supply and damn demand:
Why cheap hogs and costly ham?
Bargain wheat, expensive flour,
The oldest villain's market power.

Just one seller makes us nervous,
Like that U.S. Postal Service:
They may offer bargain prices,
But who disciplines their vices?

Middlemen have long been blamed
For every market that's inflamed,
Yet better explanations come
From many a Hyde Park alum.

Modern views from Chicago-Booth
Give a nuanced view of truth,
Steven Levitt and John List
Made each of us a freakonomist.

We let data speak its mind
No matter what Friedman opined
And find the price of fruit and veg
To be driven by the market's edge.

Like the tail that wags the dog,
Marginal thinking clears the fog:
Sellers, buyers, traders too,
Interact and prices ensue.

A kiwi costs 33 cents
Simply because no one prevents
Another farm or New York store
From entering and selling more.

In contrast apples may be dear,
For reasons that will soon be clear:
Picking them's below our station,
To lower costs we need migration.

Bananas have a different story,
Seedless magic, breeder's glory,
Cheap to harvest and to ship,
Who cares if workers get paid zip?

Each crop's method of production,
Where it grows and how it's trucked in,
Satisfies some needs quite cheaply
While other costs will rise more steeply.



A buyer's choices matter too,
For nonsense stuff like posh shampoo,
Prices are not down to earth,
The more you pay the more it's worth.

Behavior is as behavior does,
Maybe some things are "just because,"
Much of life's a mystery,
A habit due to history.

For prices, though, it's competition
Plus tariffs set by politicians,
That determines whether we see
Such delightfully cheap kiwi.

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2009 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

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