



United States Department of Agriculture

Economic Research Service

The Economics of Food, Farming, Natural Resources, and Rural America

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This update covers Monday, August 3, 2009 to Friday, August 7, 2009

RESEARCH INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT GRANTS IN ECONOMICS (RIDGE) PROGRAM: REQUEST FOR COMPETITIVE GRANT APPLICATIONS TO ESTABLISH RESEARCH CENTERS

The Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP) is now accepting applications for grants to fund partner institutions in the Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics (RIDGE) Program. ERS invites applications from university-based institutions for competitive grant awards to oversee the application, peer review, subgrant award, and quality-assurance processes of the RIDGE Program. ERS expects to fund two RIDGE Centers for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research beginning in fiscal 2010—one center focusing on food and nutrition assistance research at the national level and the second center targeting specific populations. Subject to availability of funds, initial year grants will be approximately \$250,000 each for the RIDGE Center for National Studies and the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies. The deadline for submission of applications is **September 15, 2009**. For more information, see: www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/AP/AP038/

Released Friday, August 7, 2009

See <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/Funding/RIDGE.htm>

PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING BY ORGANIC HANDLERS

The Procurement and Contracting by Organic Handlers database contains select results from the 2004 and 2007 Nationwide Surveys of Organic Manufacturers, Processors, and Distributors. The surveys covered a variety of topics related to the procurement and contracting of organic products and ingredients. Data are available on 9 commodity groups, such as fruit and nuts, and 45 commodities, such as berries and citrus. In 2007, the procurement data include information from 1,013 facilities; the contracts data include information from 620 facilities that use contracts.

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See <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/OrganicHandlers/>

FARM INCOME AND COSTS

This release includes the first estimates of 2008 calendar year national and State farm income that incorporate farm survey data specific to the 2008 calendar year. The release also includes revised estimates of farm income for 2007 and earlier years that reflect the availability of new data from the 2007 Census of Agriculture and USDA's official national and State estimates program.

The Farm Income and Costs briefing room provides indicators of economic performance for the U.S. farm sector and major crop and livestock farm groups. Farm balance sheet estimates are used by USDA and other public and private sector clients to form a perspective about the financial health of the U.S. agricultural economy. Distributional analyses identify sub-sectors and business types that are performing well relative to past trends and to other groups and types

of farms. Identification of these businesses enables analysts to more closely examine factors contributing to financial performance, such as assessment of debt-repayment difficulties of specific farm types, industry sub-sectors, and regions of the country.

Released Thursday, August 6, 2009

See <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FarmIncome/>

FARM BUSINESS AND HOUSEHOLD SURVEY DATA: CUSTOMIZED DATA SUMMARIES FROM ARMS

This data-delivery tool has been updated with 2006 crop production practices data for soybeans. It also includes updated estimates of 2007 finances, structure, and characteristics of U.S. farm businesses and farm households. The updated 2007 estimates reflect the incorporation of revised survey weights based on information obtained from the 2007 Agricultural Census. Use this interactive tool to create tailored reports on agricultural production technology, farm business and farm household viability, and the structure of U.S. agriculture from the latest ARMS data.

Released Thursday, August 6, 2009

See <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/ARMS/>

U.S. FOOD IMPORT PATTERNS, 1998-2007

Using import data from the U.S. Census Bureau, this study examines patterns of U.S. food imports for fiscal years 1998-2007. Results indicate faster import growth trends for consumer-ready foods, such as fruit, vegetables, meats, seafood, and processed food products. Although the United States imported most bulk food commodities and perishable consumer-ready products, such as fruit and vegetables, from neighboring countries in the Western Hemisphere, it imported processed foods, spices, and other tropical products from more global sources, with rising import shares for many countries in Asia.

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See <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/FAU/2009/08Aug/FAU125>

U.S. FOOD IMPORTS

U.S. consumers demand variety, quality, and convenience in the foods they consume. As Americans have become wealthier and more ethnically diverse, the American food basket reflects a growing share of tropical products, spices, and imported gourmet products. This data set provides import values of edible products (food and beverages) entering U.S. ports and their origin of shipment. Food and beverage import values are compiled by calendar year into food groups corresponding to major commodities or level of processing.

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See <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/FoodImports/>

ISSUES AND PROSPECTS IN CORN, SOYBEANS, AND WHEAT FUTURES MARKETS: NEW ENTRANTS, PRICE VOLATILITY, AND MARKET PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

The past 5 years have seen large increases in trading of corn, soybean, and wheat futures contracts by nontraditional traders, a trend that coincided with historic price increases for these commodities. These events have raised questions about whether changes in the composition of traders participating have contributed to movements in commodity prices beyond the effects of market fundamentals. Evidence suggests the link between futures and cash prices for some commodity markets may have weakened (poor convergence), making it more difficult for traditional traders to use futures markets to manage risk. This report discusses the role and objective of new futures traders compared with those of traditional futures traders and seeks to determine if the composition of traders in futures markets has contributed to convergence problems. Market activity is analyzed by focusing on positions of both traditional and new market traders, price levels, price volatility, and volume and open interest trends. Convergence of futures and cash prices is examined, along with implications and prospects for risk management by market participants. The report also discusses the implications for market performance and the regulatory response of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

Released Wednesday, August 5, 2009

See <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/FDS/2009/08Aug/FDS09G01/>

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