



United States Department of Agriculture

# Economic Research Service

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

Objectivity  
Quality  
Clarity

What part of the retail food dollar goes to farmers?

Are healthy foods really more expensive?

How have farm programs affected farmers' reaction to drought risk?

What percentage of American households face food insecurity?

How do agricultural trade pacts affect U.S. farmers and consumers?

How cost-effective are current and potential conservation practices?

**The mission of USDA's Economic Research Service** is to anticipate trends and emerging issues in the food, agriculture, rural, and environmental sectors, and to conduct economic research that informs public program and policy decisions in those arenas.

## ERS Past and Present

The Economic Research Service (ERS) was established in 1961, combining USDA's economic research functions into one agency. Its mission was to provide unbiased research and analysis to inform decisionmakers. Today, ERS continues that mission, addressing issues at the domestic and global forefront, including the challenge of feeding a growing world population; childhood obesity and dietary choices; farm and conservation policy; and agriculture's adaptation to climate change.

## The Scope of ERS Work

ERS conducts research on a wide range of topics reflecting the mission of USDA. Among the ERS topics:

### Agricultural Economy

- Farm sector performance, and the well-being of farm households
- Trends in farm size and concentration
- Impacts of current and potential farm policy and programs
- Market analysis, data, and projections on commodity supply, demand, and prices

### Global Markets and Trade

- Impacts of trade policy and trade agreements on U.S. agriculture
- Global farm production, consumer demand, and food marketing
- Global food security

### Food and Nutrition

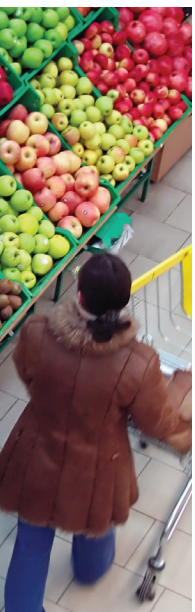
- The role of information in determining dietary choices
- Food security among U.S. households
- Effectiveness of food assistance and nutrition programs
- Structure, performance, and costs of food retailing and marketing

### Food Safety

- Interplay of regulation and private decisions on food safety
- Food safety as it relates to global trade
- Economic impacts of specific food hazard alerts

### Rural Economy

- Evaluating alternative rural development strategies
- Researching demographic change, including migration
- Examining the drivers of rural economic performance





## Resources and Environment

- Economic consequences of alternative conservation programs
- Estimates of agricultural productivity growth, and the role of research
- Economics of technologies for irrigation, pest management, and organic production

## Data and Mapping Tools

ERS assembles data in platforms that users can easily access. Some popular examples:

- *Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS)* - the major source of information on production practices, resource use, and financial conditions of farms and farm households.
- *Data Visualizations* - interactive charts, graphs, and maps on topics from per-capita agricultural trade to fruit and vegetable availability.
- *Food Availability (Per Capita) Data System* - a widely used proxy for food consumption, providing over a century of data.
- *Feed Grains Database* - current and historical data on corn and other feed grains covering production, yield, use, and trade.
- *Major Land Uses* - a comprehensive accounting of all major uses of public and private land in the United States.
- *Mapping Tools* - geographic data on rural areas, farm program benefits, and indicators of access to healthful, affordable food.

## Closely Watched Products

ERS work includes regularly released data and findings that are highly anticipated by policymakers, the media, researchers, and others.

- *Amber Waves* – online magazine, gateway to ERS information
- *Charts of Note* – daily snapshots of key ERS findings, in charts, maps, and graphs
- Annual report on food security of U.S. households
- Forecasts of farm income and farm household income
- Forecasts of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for food
- *Charting the Essentials* - the big picture on farms, food, rural communities, and more, in over 75 website charts and maps
- Outlook reports on major crops covering supply and demand, prices, and trade
- Annual 10-year projections for the farm sector



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