



# NERA News & Notes

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From the Office of the Executive Director

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## ***Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) and Farm Bill Background Papers***

As you know Congress mandated Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) for beef, lamb, pork, poultry, and fish in 2002. The mandate continues to be the subject of debate. Attached is an interesting series of short papers on COOL from *Choices* magazine.

You are all aware of the federal budget situation. Between changes resulting from potential budget reconciliation and changes that could be necessitated by the Brazilian cotton case against the United States, development of the next Farm Bill will present major challenges with respect to agricultural policy. The attached series of papers on agricultural policy may help to frame some of these important issues.

Both set of articles can also be found at:  
<http://www.choicesmagazine.org/index.htm>



## ***NOAA - Environmental Literacy Projects***

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recognizes it has a role and responsibility to the nation in advancing education leading to greater environmental literacy. In order to effectively carry out this activity, NOAA recently established an Office of Education and Sustainable Development (OESD) and an Education Council. Their role is to lead NOAA in articulating, assessing and sustaining a comprehensive education program directly supporting the agency's mission. NOAA's Plan for Education outlines the vision and scope necessary to address exponential increases in our society's informational needs and bring the riches of

NOAA data and information to all learners. A copy of the NOAA Education Plan can be found at the following url: [http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA\\_Ed\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf)

NOAA's Office of Education and Sustainable Development (OESD) is soliciting 1- to 3-year proposals for environmental literacy projects (Federal Funding Opportunity No. USEC-OESD-2005-2000118). Applications are due May 12, 2005. Funded projects will further NOAA's education goals articulated in the NOAA Education Plan [http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA\\_Ed\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf). Funding is available to encourage the development of partnerships and to support existing, or foster growth of new, environmental literacy projects. This program has two funding priorities for FY05:

- Partnerships that promote systemic change in NOAA-related science education
- Innovative presentation of NOAA science and earth observing data through educational data visualizations and other educational tools.

Within priority two, NOAA has committed to funding the installation of up to four "*Science on a Sphere*" (SOS) data systems at informal education venues. These "*Science on a Sphere*" installations will be funded by way of one- to three-year cooperative agreements. It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made in mid Calendar Year 2005, and that projects funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than September 30, 2005.

Applications are available at <http://www.grants.gov/Apply>. Click on link to "Apply Step 1" and download application for USEC-OESD-2005-2000118. (You will first need to download free PureEdge Viewer

software to view the forms. This software is available at the same location.) Additional information about this grant program is available on the OESD web site at [www.oesd.noaa.gov](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov).

Note about Grants.gov: Each institution applying for funding must register their institution on Grants.gov before submitting their application. It can take up to 3 weeks to complete the registration process on Grants.gov therefore NOAA urges prospective applicants to begin this registration process now, if their institutions are not already registered! Please visit the "Get Started" section at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) to begin the registration process.



### ***New Journal - Food Law and Policy***

The University of Arkansas School of Law has announced the ***Journal of Food Law & Policy***, the first student-edited law journal in the U.S. devoted exclusively to the study of food law and policy.

The publication of this journal coincides with the increasing worldwide attention given to food and food systems. Scholarly contributions to the journal will address timely food law topics, including food regulation, food safety, biotechnology, obesity litigation, labeling, food and dietary supplements, food security and bioterrorism, and international food trade.

Special attention will be given to global food law developments, with each edition including an update on U.S. and European food law and eventually other world regional updates.

Several prestigious authors have already committed to contribute to the debut issue, including Peter Barton Hutt, co-author of *Food and Drug Law: Cases and Materials*, former Chief Counsel for the Food and Drug Administration, and a Lecturer on Law at Harvard Law School. The second edition will include a description and analysis of the newly formed European Food Safety Authority and its

relevance to U.S. food companies.

The Journal also announced that the prominent Washington, D.C. law firm Arent Fox will sponsor an "Arent Fox/Dale Bumpers Excellence in Writing Award," which will be presented to the outstanding student paper published in the Journal each year. Former Senator Bumpers from Arkansas is of counsel to Arent Fox and was instrumental in the development of agricultural and food law interest at the University of Arkansas School of Law.

The journal will be published twice a year. Publication of the inaugural issue is expected at the end of April 2005. The cost of a subscription is \$34. An order form, article submission form, and more information are at the Journal's web site at: <http://law.uark.edu/student/orgs/foodlaw/index.htm>.



### ***Structural and Financial Characteristics of U.S. Farms: 2004 Family Farm Report***

*USDA Economic Research Service has just released its 2004 Family Farm Report that should be of interest to many of you. This publication is available at: [www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aib797](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aib797).*

#### ***Summary***

Farms in the U.S. are extraordinarily diverse, ranging from very small retirement and residential/lifestyle farms to establishments with sales in the millions of dollars. Farming continues to be a distinctive industry in part because most production, even among very large farms, is carried out on family-operated farms whose operators often balance farm and off-farm employment and investment decisions. The organization of farming affects the efficiency and competitiveness of the farm sector, the well-being of farm households, the design and impact of public policies, and the nature of rural areas. Agricultural policy analyses require an accurate source

of basic information on how farming in the United States is organized. Analysts need to know how many farms there are, and of what sizes; the degree to which farms specialize in certain commodity combinations; the importance of families in farm operation and land ownership; the commercial methods that farmers are using to obtain inputs and sell farm products; and the sources of income received by farm households. This report provides current information and explores trends in the organization of farming.

Most farms in the U.S. are family farms (97 percent in 2001). Family farms are defined as farm operations organized as proprietorships, partnerships, or family corporations that are not run by hired managers. Even the largest farms tend to be family farms. For example, 86 percent of the farms with sales of \$1 million or more in 2001 were family farms. Large family farms are often organized as family corporations, and these account for a growing share of farm sales. The share of farms and sales accounted for by non-family corporations is small and has been relatively stable since 1978.

Small family farms (sales less than \$250,000) accounted for 90 percent of the farms in the U.S. but produced a modest share (28 percent) of farm output in 2001. Large (sales of \$250,000 to \$499,999) and very large family farms (sales of \$500,000 or more) accounted for only 7 percent of farms but 58 percent of the value of production in 2001. Non-family farms accounted for another 3 percent of farms and 14 percent of the value of production.

Small farms made higher proportionate contributions to the production of specific commodities, including oats, tobacco, hay, wheat, soybeans, corn and beef cattle. Small farms also held about 68 percent of all farm assets, including 60 percent of the land owned by farms. As custodians of the bulk of farm assets—including land—small farms have a large role in natural resource and environmental policy.

Census of agriculture data show that the number of large farms (sales of \$250,000 or more after adjusting for price changes) increased from 5 percent of all farms in 1987 to 8 percent of all farms in 1997. The share of sales attributed to large farms also increased significantly, from

51 percent in 1982 to 72 percent in 1997. The largest share increases occurred in farms with sales of \$1 million or more. These farms accounted for about 21 percent of agricultural sales in 1997, compared with about 12 percent in 1982.

Farm program payments go to different types of farmers, depending on the program. In 2001, three-fourths of commodity-related payments went to high-sales small farms (sales of \$100,000 to \$250,000), large family farms, and very large family farms. In contrast, over 50 percent of payments from the Conservation Reserve and Wetlands Reserve Programs went to retirement and residential/lifestyle farms.

In general, farm households are not a low-income group. Farm household income has been at or above the average for all U.S. households in recent years but varies substantially across households. Household income averaged \$64,500 for farm operators in 2001, 11 percent higher than the average for all U.S. households. Operators of residential/lifestyle farms, large family farms, and very large family farms had average incomes well above the average for all U.S. households. Operators in the limited-resource, retirement, and low-sales groups had average incomes that were below the national average.

Farm households received most of their income (91 percent) from off-farm sources. The importance of off-farm income varies widely among farm operator households. Residential/lifestyle farms account for nearly half of all U.S. farms, and they dominate average income measures because of their number and high income from off-farm work. At the other extreme, another major group, very large family farms, specializes in farm activities and receives little or no income from off-farm employment.

Contracts have governed much of the production and marketing of some commodities—like broilers and processing vegetables—since the 1950s. Over the past 40 years, the overall growth in contract-governed production has been slow and steady, reaching 36 percent of all agricultural production in 2001. However, rapid changes in market organization can and do occur for individual commodities. Contracts covered two-thirds of

hog production in 2001, up from one-third just 5 years before. Virtually nonexistent in tobacco marketing in 1999, contracts covered half of production in 2001.

While the overall number of farms dropped by 8 percent from 1978 to 1997, the number of farms operated primarily by women rose from 5 percent of all farms in 1978 to 9 percent in 1997. Nearly half of that increase was due to growth in animal specialty farms and general livestock farms. Once primarily focused on beef cattle, women farmers have diversified in the last 20 years to specialize in other kinds of livestock such as horses, aquaculture, and fur-bearing animals.



### ***Fourth National Organic Farmers' Survey: Sustaining Organic Farms in a Changing Organic Marketplace***

The recently completed *4<sup>th</sup> National Organic Farmers' Survey* that has just been completed and is available online. The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) has conducted surveys of organic farmers since 1993. Over 1000 certified organic farmers nationwide participated in OFRF's 4th national survey. The results highlight many producer perspectives on organic farming. The results of OFRF surveys have been relied on to support organic farming policy initiatives. Given the large number of organic producers in the NE region, this publication and its findings should be of interest. Copies are available at [www.ofrf.org](http://www.ofrf.org)



### ***NERA Spring Meeting Minutes***

You will find the minutes from the spring annual meeting of NERA posted on the association's website at the url below. I encourage those participating in this spring annual meeting to review and forward any corrections to this office for incorporation so that we can approve

when we meet in July at Peabody, MA, July 10-12, 2005.

<http://www.agnr.umd.edu/users/nera/workshop/NERAMinutesMarch2005.html>



### ***HUD Community Outreach Partnership Centers Program***

The Department of Housing and Urban Developments "Community Outreach Partnership Centers" (COPC) program is designed to provide funds to community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities to establish and operate centers to address the problems of urban areas. The program also seeks to encourage structural change, both within an institution and in the way the institution relates to its neighbors.

The five key concepts that a COPC Program should include are:

- Outreach activities and technical assistance to address multi-dimensional urban problems,
- Empowerment efforts that engage community-based organizations and residents as partners with the institution throughout the life of the project and beyond,
- Applied research related to the project's outreach activities (Note: Applicants are not required to undertake any research as part of their project and may apply for a project that is totally outreach focused),
- Assistance to target communities primarily from the faculty, students, and to a limited extent by neighborhood residents and community-based organizations funded by the university, and
- Support from the university's senior officials to make the program part of the institution's broader effort to meet its urban mission.

This year, the department will award two kinds of grants— *New Grants* to applicants who have never received a COPC grant before to undertake eligible work, and *New Directions Grants* to fund previous COPC recipients. HUD anticipates awarding up to \$5.2 million to fund approximately 13 First Time Grants and up to \$1.4 million to fund approximately 7 New Directions Grants. Further information can be found on the HUD web site at:

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/grants/nofa05/grpucp.cfm>.

The COPC program is limited to one submission per institution. HUD Deadline: June 23, 2005



### ***Is Your Project Due for a Mid-Term Review?***

If the multistate project you are advising is scheduled to terminate on Sept. 30, 2007, then it is due for a mid-term review. Following is a list of Northeast projects that are terminating in 2007: NE1007, NE1008, NE1009, NE1011, NE1012, NE1013, and NE1014.

***Why a mid-term review?*** At this point, your project is in its third year of implementation. It is time to evaluate the project to identify problems, if there are any, and take corrective measures. The mid-term review will also help you and your committee decide which course to take in the future. If implementation is on target and the members are ready to take on new challenges, or the direction of the project is changing, a revision or a proposal for a new project is the most likely outcome. A project that is productive but losing relevance will be allowed to continue for the next two years while addressing the issue of relevance. If unsuccessful, then it will have to be terminated. At any rate, all projects will terminate.

An extension of a year, two years for exceptional cases, is allowed. The most common rationale for an extension

is to allow the committee to complete its objectives. Exceptional cases include, for example, when project results are affected by severe weather conditions, such that two or more years of data collection and experimentation will be needed to complete the research. Field experiments and laboratories can be destroyed as a result of accident or weather-related incidents. These exceptional cases can justify extensions for more than a year.

***How do I conduct a mid-term review?*** Neither the national nor the Northeast supplementary guidelines offer a clear-cut procedure, so much is left to the Advisor's creativity. The national guidelines recommend using Appendix I or K in NIMSS. If you need to put together a group of reviewers, please contact the NERA office and we will be happy to facilitate and provide the administrative support. If the project is small and you think, as an Advisor, you can evaluate the health of your project, contact the NERA office too if you need help using the form in NIMSS.

***When is the mid-term review report due?*** The review should be completed by August 31<sup>st</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the project and the report submitted to the Multistate Activities Committee soon thereafter for consideration at their Fall meeting.

The following are useful tips taken from the FAQs of the Northeast Supplementary Guidelines:

***How do I judge a project's health?*** As in any human endeavor, some projects are healthier than are others. Identifying a weak Multistate Research Project or Coordinating Committee is the responsibility of the Administrative Advisor, inasmuch as he or she is in the best position to decide whether an activity should continue. There are some vital signs that can be taken by the Administrative Advisor to check a project's health status.

- Attendance patterns by participating scientists, the Administrative Advisor, and the CSREES Representative are strong indicators of the project's status. When attendance begins to decline a clear warning sign should be recognized by the Administrative Advisor and the causes quickly identified.

- The Administrative Advisor should be in a position to judge the practical worth of Multistate Research Project or Multistate Coordinating Committee. If it is not worthwhile, consideration should be given to either redirection or termination.
- Another indicator of a Multistate Research Project or Multistate Coordinating Committee's health is the willingness and success of individual participating scientists in seeking additional financial support for the activities of the activity. As noted earlier, supplemental funding is often key to a project's success.
- Publications are another indication of an activity's success, and the patterns of authorship of these publications will indicate the degree of collaboration that is taking place within the activity. Independent activities are often reflected in single-authored publications, and this should be taken as a warning sign.

When a Director is assigned a Multistate Research Project as the new Administrative Advisor it is strongly recommended that she or he review the project's history, especially with the former Administrative Advisor and with the CSREES Representative. The new Administrative Advisor should evaluate previous decisions that have been made, and check to see if the objectives match the priorities and the plans of the Multistate Research Project or Coordinating Committee. Struggling projects often are not on target with respect to their objectives.

Sound judgment by the Administrative Advisor is often necessary to either regain the activity's health, or to perform the actions necessary to terminate the activity.

***Are there any fixes available?*** If you, as Administrative Advisor, are confronting some difficult choices regarding the health of an activity, it is sometimes advisable to call in additional expertise for advice. This could be done through an external review commissioned by CSREES or by NERA. The review team's terms of reference could be: to assess the quality of science; to evaluate the accomplishments of the project; or to look at the

It is the responsibility of the Administrative Advisor to be the "eyes and ears" of the Region's Directors. As the Administrative Advisor you are in the best position to decide if a project is in trouble and as the Administrative Advisor should initiate corrective action. Ignoring obvious difficulties in a Multistate Research Project or Coordination Committee serves no purpose.

