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COSSA
HEADLINES
A monthly look at what's new and
noteworthy in social science policy

- ❑ This Month's HEADLINES
- ❑ This Month's DEEP DIVE: The Economic Research Service, featuring Katherine Smith Evans.
- ❑ This Month's HOMEWORK: What you can do this month

COSSA HEADLINES

A monthly look at what's new and noteworthy in social science policy



Julia Milton
COSSA Director of Public Affairs
jmilton@coffa.org



Katherine Smith Evans
Director for Government Relations,
American Economic Association
kitty.s.evans@aeapubs.org

This Month's Experts

Questions

Use the chat box to ask a question.



More opportunities for Q&A at the end.



This Month's Headlines



CONGRESS

- Senate catching up to House on appropriations; Government funded until Thanksgiving
 - More: www.cossa.org/tag/fy-2020
- House Science Committee Hearings on the Future of Work, Extreme Weather Highlight Social Science
 - More: <https://science.house.gov/hearings>

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

- OSTP, NIH Acting to Improve Research Security
 - More: www.cossa.org/tag/research-security/
- NICHD Releases 2020 Strategic Plan
 - More: www.nichd.nih.gov/about/org/strategicplan
- NSF Releases Dear Colleague on SBE Program Repositioning
 - More: www.nsf.gov/pubs/2019/nsf19089/nsf19089.jsp

COMMUNITY

- Applications Open for 2020-2021 AAAS Fellowships (Deadline: Nov. 1)
 - More: www.stpf-aaas.org



COMMUNITY (cont'd)

- CNSTAT Data Linkage Day, Oct. 18
 - More: <https://sites.nationalacademies.org/DBASSE/CNSTAT/data-linkage-day-2019/index.htm>
- AERA Brown Lecture Featuring Prudence L. Carter, Oct. 24
 - More: www.aera.net/Events-Meetings/Annual-Brown-Lecture-in-Education-Research
- New National Academies Reports on Integrating Social Care into Health Care Delivery, Shaping Youth Summertime Experiences
 - More: www.cossa.org/resources/recent-reports/

COSSA

- COSSA, AESIS Partnering on International Conference on Societal Impact of Social Sciences & Humanities, Oct. 17-18
 - More: www.aesisnet.com/events/ssh19
- Adam Seth Levine Answers “Why Social Science?”
 - More: www.whysocialscience.com
- Advocacy Day 2020 Hotel Block Open
 - More: www.cossa.org/event/2020-advocacy-day
- Share your stories with COSSA
 - More: www.cossa.org/share-your-story



WASHINGTON UPDATE

Subscribe for more news: www.cossa.org/washington-update

Questions

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Deep Dive



The Economic Research Service

Today's Guest:
Katherine Smith Evans
Director for Government Relations
American Economic Association



An underwater scene with a blue gradient background, featuring numerous bubbles of various sizes rising from the bottom right towards the top left. The lighting is bright at the top, creating a shimmering effect on the water surface.

A DEEP DIVE ON THE ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE

KITTY SMITH EVANS

OCTOBER 10, 2019

ROADMAP

- **WHAT IS ERS?**
- **WHAT HAPPENED TO ERS?**
- **WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES FOR ERS PRODUCTS/
PROGRAMS/CUSTOMERS?**
- **WHAT DOES THE ERS EXPERIENCE IMPLY FOR THE
FEDERAL STATISTICAL AND RESEARCH SYSTEMS?**

ERS IS THE STATISTICAL AND POLICY RESEARCH ARM OF THE USDA, SERVING USDA'S FARM, FOOD, NATURAL RESOURCE AND RURAL ECONOMIC PROGRAM AND POLICYMAKERS.

- **COLLECTS ORIGINAL STATISTICS VIA SURVEYS**
- **COMPILES AND ORGANIZES MULTIPLE DATA SETS TO ELUCIDATE ISSUES**
- **ANTICIPATES USDA POLICY ISSUES ON THE HORIZON**
- **PLANS AND CONDUCTS EMPIRICAL RESEARCH TO INFORM ANTICIPATED POLICY ISSUES – PROGRAM AND POLICY DECISIONMAKERS ITS PRIMARY AUDIENCE**

ERS IS ORGANIZED INTO 4 DIVISIONS

- **MARKET AND TRADE ECONOMICS**
- **RURAL AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS**
- **FOOD ECONOMICS**
- **INFORMATION SERVICES**
 - **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**
 - **GEOSPATIAL DATA DEVELOPMENT**
 - **PUBLICATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

ERS CONDUCTS

- **INTRAMURAL RESEARCH**
 - **EXTRAMURAL RESEARCH**
 - **GRANTS**
 - **COOPERATIVE RESEARCH AGREEMENTS**
 - **STAFF ANALYSIS AT THE REQUEST OF DECISIONMAKERS AND BASED ON DATA AND RESEARCH FINDINGS**
- AND**
- **IT IS ONE OF 13 OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED STATISTICAL AGENCIES OF THE US**

MAJOR DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

- **AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SURVEY (ARMS)**
 - **COST OF PRODUCTION ESTIMATES (MANDATED FOR VARIOUS COMMODITIES)**
 - **BASIS FOR FARM & FARM HOUSEHOLD INCOME ESTIMATES & PROJECTIONS**
 - **ALLOWS ESTIMATION OF RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PRODUCTION PRACTICES, THE FARM BUSINESS, AND FARM HOUSEHOLD WELL BEING**
 - **GENERATES HIGHLY DETAILED DATA, MUCH AVAILABLE AT THE COUNTY LEVEL**

MAJOR DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

(CONTINUED)

- **NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD FOOD ACQUISITION AND PURCHASE SURVEY (FOODAPS)**
 - **NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY OF AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS TO COLLECT COMPREHENSIVE DATA ABOUT HOUSEHOLD FOOD PURCHASES AND ACQUISITIONS: FOODS PURCHASED OR OTHERWISE ACQUIRED FOR CONSUMPTION AT HOME AND AWAY FROM HOME, INCLUDING FOODS ACQUIRED THROUGH FOOD AND NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.**
 - **OVERSAMPLES LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS**
 - **PUBLIC USE DATA FILES AND RESTRICTED FILES FOR RESEARCH**

SOME HIGHLY VALUED ERS DATA MASHUPS AND TOOLS

- **FOOD ENVIRONMENT ATLAS – GEOSPATIAL DATABASE MAPS COMMUNITY ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, HEALTHY FOOD, TYPES OF FOOD OUTLETS, DIET RELATED HEALTH INDICATORS, AND OTHER VARIABLES**
- **ATLAS OF RURAL AND SMALL TOWN AMERICA – GEOSPATIAL INDICATORS ABOUT PEOPLE, JOBS, INCOME, VETERANS, COUNTY TYPES. ETC.**
- **FOOD ACCESS RESEARCH ATLAS -- A MAPPING TOOL ALLOWING USERS TO INVESTIGATE MULTIPLE INDICATORS OF FOOD STORE ACCESS, INCORPORATING ALTERNATIVE ESTIMATES OF LOW INCOME AND LOW ACCESS CENSUS TRACTS**
- **FOOD SECURITY DATA ACCESS AND DOCUMENTATION – PROVIDES INFORMATION FROM PUBLICLY AVAILABLE NATIONAL SURVEYS THAT INCLUDE QUESTIONS FROM THE U.S. FOOD SECURITY SURVEY MODULE**

SOME EXAMPLES OF VALUE ADDED DATA SERIES

COMMODITY COSTS AND RETURNS

COST ESTIMATES OF FOODBORNE ILLNESSES

ERS CREATIVE CLASS COUNTY CODES

FOOD DOLLAR SERIES

FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL TRADE OF THE US

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

NATURAL AMENITIES SCALE

PRICE SPREADS, FARM TO CONSUMERS

SEASON AVERAGE PRICE FORECASTS

ADOPTION OF GMO CROPS IN THE US

AGRICULTURAL TRADE MULTIPLIERS

FARM INCOME AND WEALTH STATISTICS

FERTILIZER USE AND PRACTICES

LOSS ADJUSTED FOOD AVAILABILITY

SOME EXAMPLES OF ERS INTRAMURAL RESEARCH INFORMING FEDERAL POLICY

- **NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION PROGRAM OPTIONS –EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS**
- **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CROP INSURANCE PROVISIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**
- **IMPLICATIONS OF ALTERNATIVE TRADE AGREEMENT PROVISIONS TO INFORM INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS**
- **RELATIVE SUCCESS OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
- **UNDERSTANDING FOOD DESERTS TO IDENTIFY FEASIBLE ROLES FOR FEDERAL PROGRAMS**
- **IMPLICATIONS OF DECLINING PRODUCTIVITY ACCOUNTS FOR AGRICULTURE**

2 UNIQUE ERS EXTRAMURAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS

- **GRANTS UNDER THE FOOD AND NUTRITION RESEARCH PROGRAM, 2003-2008**
- **COMPETITIVE GRANTS IN THE APPLICATION OF BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS TO RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

HOW WELL HAS ERS PERFORMED?

- ERS RANKS IN THE TOP 5-PERCENT OF ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH OVERALL**
- ERS CITED AS AN “ACKNOWLEDGED INTELLECTUAL LEADER IN CONSTRUCTION AND INTEGRATION OF... PRODUCTIVITY ACCOUNTS IN AGRICULTURE”**
- AGENCY LEADERS AND RESEARCH STAFF HAVE RECEIVED HIGHEST PROFESSIONAL AWARDS**

USDA SECRETARY PERDUE'S ERS REORGANIZATION AND RELOCATION

- IN AUGUST 2018, PERDUE ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO:
 - MOVE ERS FROM USDA'S RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND ECONOMICS UNDER SECRETARY AND PLACE IT ORGANIZATIONALLY UNDER THE CHIEF ECONOMIST IN THE SECRETARY'S OFFICE (**LATER RESCINDED**)
 - PUT OUT A NOTICE FOR LOCATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE DC NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TO BID TO HOUSE ERS AND A SISTER AGENCY, THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (NIFA)
- IN JUNE 2019, THE SECRETARY SELECTED THE KANSAS CITY REGION FROM AMONG BIDS SUBMITTED, BUT NO PERMANENT SITE WITHIN THE REGION HAS YET BEEN ANNOUNCED
- A USDA COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS TO JUSTIFY THE RELOCATION WAS RELEASED TEN MONTHS AFTER SECRETARY PERDUE HAD ANNOUNCED THE MOVE AND SUGGESTED SAVINGS OF \$300 MILLION. – **AN AAEA ANALYSIS DISPUTES ANY NET COST SAVINGS**

ERS RELOCATION PLANS ERRATIC AND FRANTIC

- LIMITED TIME FOR INDIVIDUAL STAFF TO DECIDE WHETHER TO MOVE**
- INADEQUATE FORETHOUGHT ABOUT EMPLOYEE INCENTIVES**
- ABSURD ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT**

OUTCOME

- **OF 181 EMPLOYEES SCHEDULED TO MOVE, 16 PEOPLE (9-PERCENT) HAVE MOVED TO KANSAS CITY, 24 WILL REMAIN IN D.C. UNTIL THEY MUST EITHER QUIT OR MOVE BY DEC. 9, AND 141 (78-PERCENT) HAVE RESIGNED OR RETIRED SINCE JUNE 15.**
 - **THE ENTIRE PUBLICATIONS STAFF QUIT**
- **THE MOVE HAS DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED FEMALE EMPLOYEES.**
- **INCORRECT ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT EMPLOYEE RETENTION LED USDA TO OFFER TEMPORARY REHIRES TO INDIVIDUALS WHO HAD SEPARATED FROM THE AGENCY.**

IMPACTS SO FAR

- **USDA SAYS “DUE TO DECREASED STAFFING LEVELS, ERS WILL FOR CONSIDERABLE TIME BE UNABLE TO PROVIDE THE SAME LEVEL OF BREADTH AND DEPTH IN ITS ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND OUTLOOK ANALYSIS AS IT DID IN THE PAST.”**
 - **DELAY OR DISCONTINUATION OF NUMEROUS ERS REPORTS OR STUDIES.**
 - **ROUTINE REPORTS IN THE MEANTIME ARE SHORTENED, WITH LESS BREADTH AND DEPTH OF COVERAGE**
- **SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT OF NEW RESEARCH STAFF TO BE LOCATED IN KANSAS CITY IS SLOW**
- **INTERAGENCY COORDINATION STYMIED**

NOT AN ISOLATED INCIDENT

- **BLM RELOCATION**
- **PROPOSAL FOR CITIZENSHIP QUESTION ON 2020 CENSUS**
- **ALTERED HURRICANE FORECAST**
- **REDUCED RESEARCH PROGRAMS AT EPA**
- **ELIMINATION OF NUMEROUS FEDERAL SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

IMPLICATIONS

- **POTENTIAL LOSS OF TRUST IN GOVERNMENT SCIENCE AND STATISTICS**
 - **EXACERBATING LOWER SURVEY RESPONSE RATES FOR ALL FEDERAL SURVEYS**
- **REDUCED EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY DECISION MAKING**
 - **AND MORE BAD DECISIONS**
- **INCREASED DIFFICULTY RECRUITING HIGHLY QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS FOR FEDERAL SERVICE**

Discussion



Let's hear from you!

If using computer microphone: **raise your hand!**

Step 1: select "participants"

Step 2: select "raise hand"

(may be in sidebar)

Step 3: after you're unmuted, ask your question!

If using telephone audio/microphone: **put your question in the chat box!**



Homework



- Join the Strong ERS listserv to share information and get involved in efforts to protect USDA statistics and research.
 - Email jmilton@coffa.org to be put in touch with organizers.

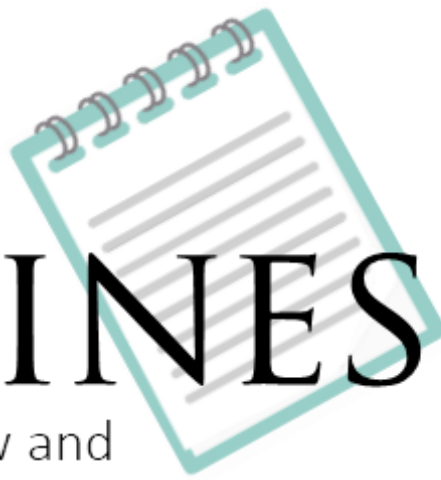
- Plan your travel for 2020 Social Science Advocacy Day, March 30-31
 - Hotel block details available on the COSSA website. Registration will open in December.
www.coffa.org/event/2020-advocacy-day

- Share your story with COSSA
 - www.coffa.org/share-your-story



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Next Month:

- November's HEADLINES
- DEEP DIVE: 2020 Census with Mary Jo Hoeskema (PAA Director of Government Affairs & Co-Director of the Census Project)

Miss last month's Headlines?

www.cossa.org/resources/headlines

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- Tune in** each month – 2nd Thursday
- Tell your colleagues to **sign up for COSSA Member Messages and Alerts**— MEMBERS ONLY (*email Julia at jmilton@coffa.org*)
- Encourage other organizations and universities to **Join COSSA** (*email Wendy at wnaus@coffa.org*)
- Send us your ideas** for DEEP DIVES (*email Camille at chosman@coffa.org*)



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Julia Milton

Director of Public Affairs

Email: jmilton@coffa.org

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