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Economic Research Service

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U.S. Department of Agriculture

ERS is the main source of research and analysis from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, providing timely information on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America.

New on the Web: Japan Briefing Room



With a population of about 125 million, Japan imports over \$30 billion in agricultural products each year. The United States is the leading supplier of Japan's agricultural imports, and Japan is the second-largest export market for U.S. agriculture.

The web briefing room provides analysis of important aspects of Japan's food and agricultural sectors and the policies that affect its role in world agricultural trade.

www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/japan

Commodity Markets and Trade

ERS Outlook reports provide timely analysis of major commodity markets and trade, including special reports on hot topics. All reports, along with a calendar of future releases, are available at:

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Meat Industry Stimulates Private Investment in Food Safety Innovation

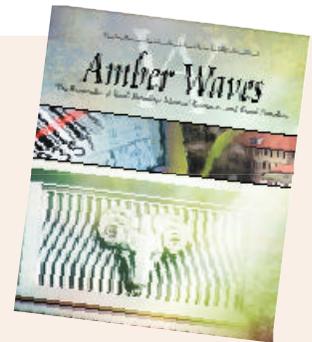
www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aer831

The market incentives that motivate private firms to invest in food safety innovation seem to be fairly weak. However, ***Food Safety Innovation in the United States: Evidence from the Meat Industry*** finds that the meat industry has developed a number of mechanisms to overcome that weakness and stimulate investment.

Amber Waves April 2004

Amber Waves magazine covers the full range of ERS research and analysis, including articles on food, farming, natural resources, and rural America.

www.ers.usda.gov/amberwaves



Food Traceability:

One Ingredient in a Safe and Efficient Food Supply

Food traceability is touted as a way to contain mad cow disease, thwart food tampering, and inform consumers about the genetic makeup of their corn chips. What exactly is traceability, and does the U.S. food supply have enough?

Savvy Buyers Spur Food Safety Innovations in Meat Processing

Meat processors face weak incentives to invest in food safety improvements. A tainted hamburger (and any subsequent illness) is not easy to implicate, and a "safer" meat product is not easy to market. So what motivates meat processors to invest in food safety?

Beyond Environmental Compliance: Stewardship as Good Business

U.S. agriculture is a source not only of food but also of pollutants. Can environmental stewardship coexist with a healthy bottom line? Corn producers using crop residue management think so.

A Historic Enlargement: Ten Countries Prepare to Join the European Union

Eight former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe are slated to join the European Union in May 2004, enlarging the arable land of that trading bloc by nearly 40 percent. Farmers will receive higher prices for some products and EU subsidies. So why are they apprehensive?



Farming Can Reduce Greenhouse Gases

www.ers.usda.gov/publications/TB1909

Atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases can be reduced by withdrawing carbon from the atmosphere and sequestering it in soils and biomass. According to *Economics of Sequestering Carbon in the U.S. Agricultural Sector*, agriculture can provide low-cost opportunities to sequester additional carbon through land use and land management changes, though the estimates of economic potential to sequester carbon are lower than previous estimates of the technical potential.

Bankruptcy Plays a Small Role in Farm Exits

www.ers.usda.gov/publications/AIB788

Farmer Bankruptcies and Farm Exits in the United States, 1899-2002, finds that bankruptcy played a small role in the overall decline in farms over the last 70 years. The decline in farms occurred mostly between the 1940s and 1970s, when bankruptcy filings were relatively low. Not all bankruptcies result in farm exits, and most farm exits involve other factors, such as rising agricultural productivity and expanding off-farm opportunities.



U.S. Soybean Prices Affected by South American Production

www.ers.usda.gov/publications/OCS/APR04/OCS04D01

How Does Structural Change in the Global Soybean Market Affect the U.S. Price? concludes that structural change in the global soybean market is due largely to sharply expanding competition from South America. U.S. soybean prices—and price forecasting—are also increasingly affected by production in South America, specifically in Brazil and Argentina.

Effects of Financial Risk Management

www.ers.usda.gov/publications/tb1908

Private and public tools used to manage financial risks in agriculture may influence farmers' production decisions. *Risk, Government Programs, and the Environment*, a technical report, examines the conceptual underpinnings of risk-related research, the challenges involved with measuring the consequences of risk for agricultural production decisions, government programs that influence the risk and return of farm businesses, and how production decisions influence both the environment and the risk and average returns to farming.

Regional Differences Affect Rice Production Costs

www.ers.usda.gov/publications/sb974-7

Characteristics and Production Costs of U.S. Rice Farms finds that regional differences (in production practices, farm characteristics, and growing conditions) were major influences on production costs among rice producers. More than half of the low-cost farms were located in the Arkansas Non-Delta, the largest rice region. Most high-cost farms were in California and the Gulf Coast regions.



A New Look for the ERS Newsroom

You may have noticed some changes recently in the look of the ERS newsroom at www.ers.usda.gov/news. We hope these changes make the newsroom more useful to you.

How to get more information . . .

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