

Rural Conditions and Trends

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This is the inaugural issue of our new three times-a-year publication schedule. Each of the three issues will be dedicated to a specific topic area—rural industries, rural socioeconomic characteristics, and rural effects of Federal policies and programs. The issues will no longer be referred to by season because they will be published as soon as possible after we receive the most up-to-date data on the topics.

As promised in the Fall 1995 issue, this issue provides much more detailed information on rural industries than we had published under the old format. Some articles are enriched by information on value of production, productivity, or value of exports, adding to our understanding of employment conditions in rural industries.

The articles report on current trends in farm-related industries, mining, manufacturing, retailing, banking, and government. Additional articles discuss recent changes in the general economy which affect rural areas and the significance of international trade to rural areas. Obviously, not all rural industries are covered. Next year's Rural Industries issue will include articles on additional services industries, forestry, and other industries not included in this issue.

This is my last issue of *Rural Conditions and Trends*. Serving as executive editor since summer 1991 provided me with the very rewarding opportunity to work closely with authors to put out informative, timely situation and outlook reports on rural America. Nevertheless, I am happily moving back into research here at ERS while Douglas Bowers moves from research to the executive editorship. I would like to thank the readers who provided positive feedback and constructive criticism during my tenure. I hope that you will continue to provide Doug with that support.

Linda M. Ghelfi

Linda M. Ghelfi
Executive Editor

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