

Message from Chairman of C-FARE

One of the objectives of the Council on Food, Agricultural, and Resource Economics (C-FARE) is to represent the profession in working with the traditional Land Grant research, extension, and residential instruction system, USDA agencies, other Federal and state agencies, Congress, foundations, and other sources of support and users of research and education. Another objective is to communicate the role of economic analysis in public and private decision-making (CHOICES, Second Issue, 1993, p.1). These objectives have been the driving force behind ongoing meetings between C-FARE and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) to further integrate economic analysis into research and extension efforts. As many of you are aware, the National Research Initiative (NRI) is an important source of competitive funding for many agricultural and applied economists, in addition to other scientists. And even though many of us have diversified our research portfolios to include funding from other sources, the NRI remains an important funding source.

Traditionally, researchers in the social sciences have used the Markets and Trade and Rural Development topic areas of the NRI as their primary targets. Both topic areas have received a decreasing level of real funding over the past years and this year each topic area was moved to an every other year basis. Rural Development was funded at the \$4.8 million level in 2006, while Markets and Trade was dormant. It is anticipated that Markets and Trade will be funded at similar levels in 2007 and Rural Development will be dormant. Three additional topic areas that should be of particular interest to agricultural and applied economists are: (1) Agricultural Prosperity for Small and Medium-Sized Farms, (2) Water and Watersheds, and (3) Human Nutrition and Obesity.

The Agricultural Prosperity for Small and Medium Sized Farms (APSMF) program of the NRI awarded \$5 mil-

lion in grants in 2005, combining funding from 2004 and 2005 appropriations. Of the 74 proposals submitted over these two years, 15 were funded (20%) and 10 of those had lead investigators from departments of agricultural economics. In 2006, funding was increased to \$5 million per year and the program received 34 proposals. The purpose of the APSMF program is to increase interdisciplinary examination and analysis of the interactions between economic and environmental components crucial to the viability of small and medium-sized farms. Thus, much of the emphasis is on enhancing economic opportunities for small and medium-sized farms and, in turn, rural communities. Dr. Suresh Sureshwaran is the contact person for this program (ssureshwaran@csrees.usda.gov).

The Water and Watersheds program has had language inserted in its Request for Proposals (RFP) that explicitly includes “enhancing economic opportunities by reducing economic liability from water contamination” into its goals. In 2006, this program was funded at the \$5.3 million level. It has been estimated that about 47% of that funding related to identifying producer management behaviors and/or economic and policy incentives and strategies to improve and maintain watershed habitat and water supply protection. Dr. Mary Ann Rozum is the contact person for this program (mrozum@csrees.usda.edu).

The Human Nutrition and Obesity program now includes language requesting research on the influence of economic factors and public policy on nutrition and obesity. In 2006, this program was funded at the \$11 million level and it has been estimated that about 45% is devoted to economic and behavioral issues. Dr. Etta Saltos is the contact person for this program (esaltos@crees.usda.gov).

As economists, we believe economic analysis is an important component in most human decisions. C-FARE

is working to increase the portion of the NRI devoted to Markets and Trade and Rural Development. But we also realize that the addition of programs and economic analysis to other NRI program areas is a step in the right direction and has increased the available funds to agricultural economists to over \$17 million in 2006. C-FARE and CSREES and other agencies and organizations will continue to have a dialogue about research priorities at the national level. Summer is a good time to write research proposals and contacting program leaders before you submit your proposal is always a good strategy. And when your project is complete, please send C-FARE a short description of the impact of the results. This inventory of impact statements helps to highlight the importance of economic analysis. It contributes to the arsenal as C-FARE continues to work on expanding research funding opportunities at the national level.

Steve Turner
C-FARE Chair
Mississippi State University

C-FARE Open Session on Census of Agriculture at the AAEA Meetings

C-FARE will be hosting an “Open Session on the Census of Agriculture” at the AAEA Annual Meeting in Long Beach, CA on Monday, July 24 at 5:00 pm in Hyatt Regency Ballroom E. C-FARE has agreed to conduct a comprehensive and independent review of the NASS Census of Agriculture. At the Open Session, members of the committee will be seeking input on the census content, coverage, methodology, products, and more. If you’re a direct user or an indirect user of the Census of Agriculture, we encourage you to attend the Review Committee meeting. For details please visit the C-FARE website at: <http://www.cfare.org/updates/cfareopensesionAAEA-meetingLongBeachflyer.pdf>.