



# Dateline ERS

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Economic Research Service

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U.S. Department of Agriculture

ERS is the primary 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.



## Net Farm Income Forecast Up 10 Percent in 2008

Read more at:  
[www.ers.usda.gov/  
Features/FarmIncome](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Features/FarmIncome)

## Commodity Markets and Trade

ERS Outlook reports provide timely analysis of major commodity markets and trade.

### **This Month**

- Wheat
- Feed
- Cotton and Wool
- Rice
- Oil Crops
- Livestock, Dairy and Poultry
- Sugar and Sweeteners

All reports along with a calendar of future releases are available at:

[www.ers.usda.gov/  
publications/outlook](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/outlook)

## Amber Waves

*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](http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves)

### **Obesity in the Midst of Unyielding Food Insecurity in Developing Countries**

Income disparity within and among developing countries explains how there can be obesity in the midst of under-nutrition. Rising incomes, urbanization, global integration, and more supermarkets have contributed to increased consumption of convenient, high-calorie foods among the higher income population. Obesity-related diseases have become more widespread in developing countries. (Includes audio podcast [www.ers.usda.gov/Podcast/Obesity/ObesityFinal.mp3](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Podcast/Obesity/ObesityFinal.mp3))

### **Creating Markets for Environmental Stewardship: Potential Benefits and Problems**

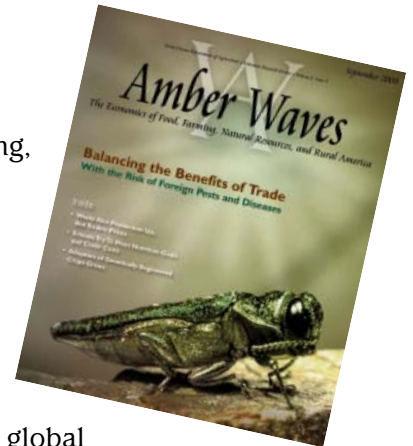
Farmers and other landowners typically under-provide environmental services such as clean air and water, carbon sequestration, and improved wildlife habitat. Markets for environmental services could increase farmer investments in environmental stewardship, thereby expanding the supply of environmental services. Impediments to the formation of fully functioning markets for agricultural environmental services may be difficult or costly to overcome.

### **Regulating Agricultural Imports To Keep Out Foreign Pests and Disease**

Increasing agricultural imports benefit U.S. consumers, but shipments can transport harmful foreign pests and diseases. The United States and other nations use a number of approaches to reduce risks to agriculture and the environment from pests and diseases entering through trade. Economic analysis can help identify measures that mitigate risks of economic or environmental damage with minimal impact on trade benefits.

### **Balancing Nutrition, Participation, and Cost in the National School Lunch Program**

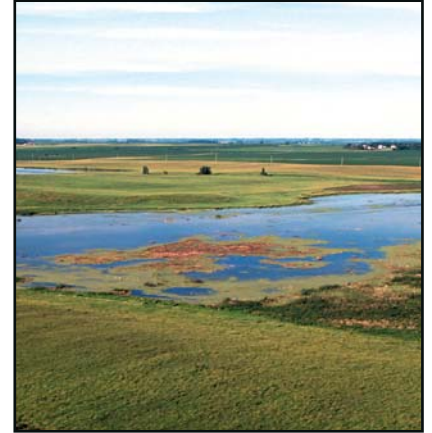
Recent reports of high rates of obesity among children have focused attention on the nutritional quality of school lunches. But, can schools meet the program's nutrition goals while covering costs, especially in times of rising food prices? The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) provides federally subsidized meals to more than 30 million children each school day. Some school foodservice managers say that to appeal to students and raise revenues, they need to offer less nutritious a la carte foods and vending snacks. But other schools keep their budgets in the black while serving nutritious lunches. The free-meal subsidy covers most of the per meal cost, but the price paid by most paying students covers only half of the per meal cost.



## Markets for Environmental Benefits?

[www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR64](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR64)

U.S. farmers and ranchers produce a wide variety of commodities for food, fuel, and fiber in response to market signals. Farms also contain significant amounts of natural resources that can provide a host of environmental services, including cleaner air and water, flood control, and improved wildlife habitat. Environmental services are often valued by society, but because they are a public good—that is, people can obtain them without paying for them—farmers and ranchers may not benefit financially from producing them. As a result, farmers and ranchers underprovide these services. *The Use of Markets to Increase Private Investment in Environmental Stewardship* explores the use of market mechanisms, such as emissions trading and eco-labels, to increase private investment in environmental stewardship. Such investments could complement or even replace public investments in traditional conservation programs. The report also defines roles for government in the creation and function of markets for environmental services.



### **Production Expenses of Specialized Vegetable and Melon Farms**

[www.ers.usda.gov/publications/vgs/2008/09Sep/vgs32801](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/vgs/2008/09Sep/vgs32801)

Vegetable and melon production requires a substantial investment in production inputs. Using data from USDA's Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS), this report presents and explores the major expense components of specialized U.S. and regional vegetable and melon farms during 1998-2006. Total cash expenses per acre for specialized U.S. vegetable and melon farms increased 32 percent between 1998-2000 and 2004-06, and were highest in the West and lowest in the Midwest. Labor accounted for 30 percent of U.S. cash expenses, followed by fertilizer and agricultural chemicals at 18 percent.

### **Free Workshop: Broadband in The Rural Economy**

**Monday, Sept. 29 - Tuesday, Sept. 30, 2008**

[www.ers.usda.gov/ConferenceCenter/Broadband](http://www.ers.usda.gov/ConferenceCenter/Broadband)

We invite you to learn from experts as they discuss the economic opportunities and challenges that broadband Internet adoption has for rural America.

The workshop is free and open to all, but space is limited. **Register now!**

#### **How to get more information...**

More information about the items featured in DatelineERS can be found on our Website: [www.ers.usda.gov](http://www.ers.usda.gov) by going to the web address listed in each article. This newsletter is available online at [www.ers.usda.gov/news](http://www.ers.usda.gov/news)