

## Economic Development



### **Agricultural Marketing Service Technical Assistance (AMSTA) project**

Led by the Northeast Center and launched in 2014 to provide grant-writing training to potential applicants of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service grants related to promoting local foods and farmers markets, this project provided training to more than 3,000 individuals in all 50 US states in its first year. All state trainings were geared towards expanding the participants' understanding of how to write a better grant application to USDA AMS. In year two, the project provided additional grant-writing training in 16 high-priority states. Follow-up evaluations with existing Farmers Market and Local Foods Promotion Programs (FMPP and LFPP) grant recipients are underway as well as exploring with AMS how to support the grantees who received FMPP and LFPP grants in carrying out their work. For more information, visit <http://www.amsta.net/>

### **Policy Options for Reducing the Prevalence of Food Deserts in Rural Areas**

The Northeast Center has just completed a study that examines policy options for reducing the prevalence of food deserts in rural areas: Bonanno, A., R. Cleary, L. Chenarides, and S.J. Goetz (2018). Store Profitability and Public Policies to Improve Food Access in Non-Metro U.S. Counties. Food Policy.

### **Effects of Public Investment in Land Grant University Programs**

A 2016 study conducted by the Northeast Center found that agricultural research and Cooperative Extension programs helped more than 137,000 farmers stay on the farm between 1984 and 2010. In addition to publication in Applied Economics Perspectives and Policy, these findings were shared via a press release, a policy brief, and an infographic. See <http://aese.psu.edu/nercrd/news/2016/land-grant-programs-keep-farmers-farming>.

### **Health Insurance, Rural Economic Development and Agriculture (HIREdNAg)**

Led by Shoshanna Inwood (Vermont University) in partnership with all four RRDCs and a national set of collaborators, the goal of HIREdNAg is to understand how health insurance policy influences farmers' decisions to invest, expand and grow their enterprises, and how these decisions contribute to workforce vitality, development and security in the food and agricultural sector. As part of the research, over 1,000 farmers and ranchers responded to a survey across 10 states: Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Nebraska, Mississippi, Kentucky, Washington, Utah and California. Additionally, up to 10 families in each of the study states were interviewed. A national webinar offered an in-depth explanation of their findings and is archived at <http://hirednag.net/webinars>. A recent report: Inwood, S., A. Knudson, F.A. Becot, B. Braun, S.J. Goetz, J.M. Kolodinsky, S. Loveridge, K. Morris, J. Parker, B. Parsons, R. Welborn, and D.E. Albrecht. 2018. "Health Insurance and National Farm Policy." Choices. Quarter 1. <http://www.choicesmagazine.org/choices-magazine/submitted-articles/health-insurance-and-national-farm-policy>

### **Asian American Pacific Islander Limited English Proficiency Resource Center**

The North Central Center is home to the Asian American Pacific Islander Limited English Proficiency Resource Center. Established in 2015, the Center's mission is to work nationally to provide AAPIs with limited English proficiency access to USDA resources through education and technical assistance to help improve and build successful farms and rural enterprises. The Center is supported by USDA agencies

that include Rural Development, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Food Safety Inspection Service. Details about the Center can be found on the project website: [www.hmongusda.info/](http://www.hmongusda.info/)

### **Survey on Heir Property Issues in the South**

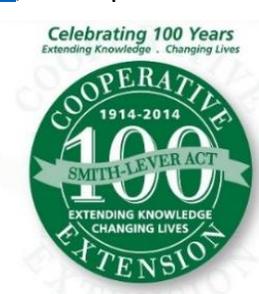
The Southern region is particularly plagued with issues around heir property. USDA defines the issue like this: “Heir property refers to land that has been passed down informally from generation-to-generation. In most cases, it involves landowners who died without a will. Heirs’ property is land owned ‘in common’ by all of the heirs, regardless of whether they live on the land, pay the taxes, or have ever set foot on the land.” Land held in this manner lead to limitations of land usage and can prevent leveraging the resource in significant ways. The Southern Center recently launched a survey of research and Cooperative Extension Service efforts taking place across the region to help families navigate these difficult issues. The survey closed on February 9, 2018 and is currently being analyzed, with plans to convene stakeholders to explore gaps and opportunities for future efforts.

### **Southern Local & Regional Foods Initiative (SERA 47)**

The Southern Center is providing leadership to a team of research and Cooperative Extension Service specialists to strengthen support for local and regional food systems efforts. A survey of the regional needs has been complete, and teams are actively developing work teams around the top issues, designing a resource bank as a “go-to” spot for finding research and Cooperative Extension Service resources, developing common measures and tools, and examining different models for how Cooperative Extension Service has invested in this work.

### **Investing in Recreation to Advance Regional Economies**

Regional solutions are gaining traction, particularly in rural areas, as multi-county collaboration is often needed to identify and capitalize on competitive advantages. This type of planning, at the heart of the Stronger Economies Together (SET) initiative, led by the Southern Center in partnership with USDA Rural Development and Cooperative Extension Service, has resulted in a number of regional initiatives focusing on the importance of recreation, both for quality of life as well as an economic driver. Three examples are: (1) **Indiana 15 Regional Planning Commission** is finalizing a new half mile of trail, funded through the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Recreational Trail Program. This project increases connectivity of trails within the region and will be advanced further by for additional trail construction projects across the region; (2) **Foothills Region, North Carolina** formally adopted The North Carolina Districts Bike Plan to highlight the natural resources and scenic trails of the region. The region is creating and distributing maps of the Bike Plan to assist in cross-marketing cultural and natural resources throughout the region; and (3) **Northern Shenandoah Valley, Virginia** completed a regional interactive outdoor recreation resource tool, [www.shenandoahvalleyoutdoors.com](http://www.shenandoahvalleyoutdoors.com), to help establish the region as a premier Mid-Atlantic outdoor recreation destination. This website uses a regional database of trail heads, public water access, and boat ramps and includes a “what makes us great” narrative, four trip idea pages (Kids and Family, Outdoor Adventure, Romantic Outings, Community Events), a web app portal to access GIS maps, a weather page, and an app for picture sharing and blogging.



Regional Rural Development Centers: [www.rrdc.info](http://www.rrdc.info)