



FoodHub in the News

Rural Community Building

February 29, 2012

USDA shares 2012 Ag Outlook presentations

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Last week, USDA hosted the Agricultural Outlook Forum 2012 with the theme “Growing, Innovating, and Celebrating 150 Years.” Many of the presentations are online and can be accessed from the agenda, which links to all the Powerpoint presentations and speaker bios.

Some of the sessions of particular interest to rural communities were Mary Ahearn’s (Economist, Economic Research Service, USDA) Farm and Farm Household Income Trends that discussed the distribution of income across farm households grouped by various characteristics including on- and off-farm income, the tenure of the operation, farm typology, and farm size. Also in the same session, Jason Henderson (Vice President and Omaha Branch Executive, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Omaha, NE) presented Agriculture’s Role in Rural Economic Growth, a discussion about the economic health of rural America and the prospects for rural communities to lead the U.S. recovery.

Doug O’Brien, Deputy Under Secretary of Rural Development at USDA, moderated a panel on Regional Approaches to Rural Economic Development. There is a consensus that rural communities are more likely to see increased prosperity if they band together on a multi-county or regional basis. Stronger Economies Together (SET), presented by Lionel J. “Bo” Beaulieu (Director, Southern Rural Development Center, Mississippi State), helps rural communities or counties work together in regional teams to develop and implement economic development blueprints that builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region. Essential Building Blocks for Competitive, Sustainable Communities was presented by Matt Chase, Executive Director of the National Association of Development Organizations. NADO works with hundreds of multi-jurisdictional regional planning and development organizations nationally. These public-based entities foster intergovernmental collaboration among federal, state and local officials; deliver and manage various federal and state programs; and work to solve area wide issues while addressing the fundamental building blocks required for competitive, sustainable communities and economies. Amanda Osborne (FoodHub Acting Project Director, Ecotrust, Portland, OR) presented Creating a Regional Food System in the Northwest by giving us a tour through www.food-hub.org, an online food hub designed connect food buyers and sellers in the greater Northwest.

In the session “Making Locally Grown Food More Available,” moderated by Kathleen Merrigan, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, USDA, the three presenters explored “what is

driving demand for local foods, what challenges local food producers face in trying to market their products, and what is being done to facilitate local food marketing.” The presentations were: What Is Driving Consumer Demand for Local Foods? Dawn D. Thilmany, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO; Challenges and Solutions for Local Food Producers, by producer Jim Crawford of Tuscarora Organic Growers, Penn’s Corner Farm Alliance, Hustontown, PA; and Food Hubs: One Solution for Overcoming Barriers for Local Producers by Jim Barham, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, Washington, DC.

Another Rural Development track, Why Every American Should Care About the Future of Rural Water, explained how water usage and waste water management affects the health and wellbeing of rural communities, the environment and, ultimately our nation’s economy. Two of those presentation are available online and are: Water Needs — Now and Into the Future by James Richardson, Dept. of Agricultural Economics, Texas A&M, College Station, TX; and How Does Rural Water Impact Daily Life in Urban America? By Robert B. Stewart, Executive Director, Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc., Washington, DC.

Next year’s Ag Outlook will also be in Arlington, VA in late February 2013.

URL: <http://ruralcommunitybuilding.fb.org/2012/02/29/usda-ag-outlook-2012-presentations-online/>