



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND APPLIED ECONOMICS

January 31, 2017

**How does health insurance affect farmers and ranchers? Help influence rural health policy in upcoming survey**

Farmers and ranchers in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Vermont: How does health insurance affect you? Help influence rural health policy by participating in an upcoming USDA funded survey. Potential participants will receive a letter and survey; keep your eyes out for a mailing this February. Your responses will help researchers understand how health-insurance policy affects farmers' and ranchers' decisions to invest, expand, and grow their enterprises.

This survey is a chance for farmers and ranchers to make their voices heard about their experiences with health insurance and how that affects both their economic development and family's quality of life.

"We're interested in hearing from multi-generation, beginning, and first generation farm and ranch families across all ages and sectors of agriculture. We want to understand what parts of health insurance are working well for farmers and ranchers and what types of policy and program modifications need to be made. Results will be shared with agriculture and health policy makers," said lead researcher, Shoshanah Inwood, rural sociologist and professor at the University of Vermont. All responses will be confidential and only summary statistics will be reported.

"We know from our prior research that farmers identify the cost of health insurance as a key barrier to growing their farms or farming full-time," said Inwood. This study is a joint effort with the NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Policy, and the four USDA Rural Development Centers. Findings will be used to guide the development of training materials for professionals who work with farmers and ranchers—such as Extension Educators, farm consultants, and tax accountants—so that they can support farmers' and ranchers' ability to make well-informed decisions regarding health insurance.

The survey questions are based on interviews conducted in 2016 with smaller groups of farmers and ranchers in the 10 states being researched. This study is a four-year national project exploring how health insurance options impact the farm and ranch population in the U.S. The

project, titled “Health Insurance, Rural Economic Development and Agriculture” (HIREDnAG), is funded by a \$500,000 USDA Rural Communities and Regional Development grant. States included in the study are California, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Utah, Vermont, and Washington.

Project partners include the Northeastern, North Central, Southern and Western Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs); University of Vermont Center for Rural Studies; University of Vermont Extension; Center for Rural Affairs; University of Maryland Extension; and, the Farm Foundation.

For more information, visit the HIREDnAG website: <http://www.hirednag.net/>  
Or contact Katlyn Morris, HIREDnAG Project Coordinator at <mailto:katlyn.morris@uvm.edu> or by phone at 802-656-0257.

###

Contact:

Shoshanah Inwood, PhD, Assistant Professor

UVM Department of Community Development and Applied Economics

[email:Shoshanah.Inwood@uvm.edu](mailto:Shoshanah.Inwood@uvm.edu)