

# Hold the Date Request and Call for Papers: Pre-Conference Research Workshop on Advances in the Economic Analysis of Food System Drivers and Effects

**The 2018 Northeast Agricultural and Resource Economics Association (NAREA) Pre-Conference Workshop, co-sponsored by the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, will be held on June 9-10, 2018, in Philadelphia, PA.**

**Request for Papers: ABSTRACT Deadline is February 16, 2018**

The modern food system has important effects on consumers, the natural environment, and society more generally. At the same time, a wide range of policies, economic incentives and other factors influence the food system and determine its outcomes and impacts. The 2015 Institute of Medicine/National Research Council (IOM/NRC) report, *A Framework for Assessing Effects of the Food System*, outlines how such impacts can be evaluated but stops short of providing actual research results.

This pre-conference workshop seeks to highlight recent advances in the economic analysis of food systems in the U.S. as well as globally. We seek papers that address individual impacts and causes as well as papers that examine system-wide interactions within the food system, including production, distribution and consumption linkages.

Examples of the questions and issues we expect papers to examine include: the growing conflict over global land use around cities and what this means for food production capacity; the potential for urban agriculture to meet (some of) the food needs of cities; implications of climate change for the (shifting) optimal locations of individual establishments within the U.S. food distribution system; institutional innovations targeted at incentives that influence the amount of waste in the food system; the potential for public policy to mitigate the prevalence of “food deserts;” the changing food system as a complex, adaptive network; implications for energy use of moving towards a food diet that is more consistent with federal dietary guidelines; etc.

In addition to this singular focus on individual issues, we encourage papers and sessions that use holistic, boundary-spanning perspectives that examine the different components and issues as integral parts of an entire system. We also encourage papers that identify largely neglected policy gaps and future research needs.

## Abstract Submission Guidelines

Authors wishing to have a paper considered must submit an extended abstract by Friday, February 16, 2018. Abstracts must be submitted online at [URL coming soon], where authors will be prompted to provide:

- name, address, e-mail address and phone number of paper presenter or primary contact;
- title of paper;
- name and institutional affiliation of paper presenter and co-author(s);
- 2-4 key words;
- extended abstract: 1000 to 1500 words maximum;
- references cited; and,
- a very brief description of your session in 25 words or fewer (which we will use to advertise your session).

Abstracts that do not comply with these guidelines will be returned without review. Electronic acknowledgements of submissions will be sent to all submitters. Abstracts will be reviewed by the NAREA Pre-conference Workshop Selected Papers Committee in terms of the significance to the field, strength of methodology/design, and clarity of writing. Authors will be notified of the status of their abstract by March 13, 2018.

Selected paper presentations will be 20 minutes. Full papers must be received from notified authors by May 16, 2018, to be included in the workshop's program. Papers presented at the workshop will be considered for expedited review and publication in a special 2018 issue of the *Agricultural and Resource Economics Review* (ARER); however final versions of the papers must be sent to ARER by July 31, 2018.

Thanks to a USDA/NIFA conference grant we will be able to provide a combination of travel support and honoraria on a limited basis. In addition, all paper processing fees will be covered for papers accepted into the journal.

## For More Information

Further information concerning workshop registration and the final program will be provided in the spring issue of the NAREA Newsletter and on the NAREA website. For more information, please contact the NAREA Workshop Organizing Committee:

- Stephan J. Goetz ([sgoetz@psu.edu](mailto:sgoetz@psu.edu)), Penn State and NERCRD
- Carolyn Dimitri ([carolyn.dimitri@nyu.edu](mailto:carolyn.dimitri@nyu.edu)), New York University
- Ted Jaenicke ([ecj3@psu.edu](mailto:ecj3@psu.edu)), Penn State

## Additional Workshop Details

This year's NAREA conference features a lineup of leading experts in the field of food systems economics, starting with Timothy Richards (Arizona State University) who will be a featured speaker at the workshop. At the conference following the workshop, Joseph Price (Brigham Young University) and Kevin Volpp (University of Pennsylvania) will speak on behavioral economics and health/food consumption, while Marc Bellemare (University of Minnesota) and Pol Antras (Harvard University) will present on food supply chains in developing countries.

### Workshop Objectives

The 2018 NAREA pre-conference workshop on Advances in the Economic Analysis of Food System Drivers and Effects will facilitate a discussion about the causes, potential interventions, and challenges of understanding the food system in the U.S. and globally. The food system is shaped by wide range of actors, each with diverse goals, and the decisions made in the food system impact the environment, human health, and society. The aforementioned IOM/NRC report, *A Framework for Assessing Effects of the Food System*, concludes (p.15), that to evaluate these impacts and find solutions to any adverse impacts or problems,

"... it is important not only to identify the effects of the current system but also to understand the drivers (e.g., human behavior, markets, policy) and how they interact with each other and with the observable system effects. Such understanding can help decision makers to identify the best opportunities to intervene and to anticipate the potential consequences of any intervention."

The workshop will provide a forum to researchers, policy makers, and other stakeholders who seek to understand these drivers and develop efficient and effective policy interventions.

Three specific objectives of this workshop are as follows.

1. Convene recognized and emerging experts to present, debate, and advance research on the frontiers of food system drivers and effects, across a wide range of issues. Presentations will include both technical research as well as results translated for lay audiences (policy makers, practitioners). At least one session will be devoted to assessment of current data and future data needs.
2. Encourage open discussion among policymakers, practitioners and scientists, including feedback from policy makers and practitioners to scientists, with the goal of identifying research gaps to be addressed in the future. Audience participation will be facilitated and encouraged. This will also include a roundtable dialogue towards the end of the workshop.
3. Ensure additional dissemination of workshop results through a special issue of the *Agricultural and Resource Economic Review*, published by NAREA and Cambridge University Press, as well as through publication of summaries in the NERCRD's newsletter and website.

## **Motivation**

There is growing recognition among policymakers, business leaders, and academics that increasing the quality and quantity of U.S. food production through improved technology is necessary but not sufficient to meet basic 21st century human needs in a sustainable and efficient manner. Once produced, food still must be distributed efficiently, with minimal waste, and using handling practices that maintain product quality and safety. This occurs within a (normally) tightly coupled system in which products flow from production to consumption and consumer preferences are signaled back to producers. To that end, this workshop seeks to contribute to solving “...key problems of local, regional, national, and global importance in sustaining conventional, organic, and urban agricultural systems” (2017 NIFA Foundation Grants RFA, p. 5)

A recent overview of the local food systems prepared for Congress (Low et al., 2015) indicated that data to assess the economic impact of local foods are costly to obtain. New data collection efforts by the National Agricultural Statistics Service include a census of farm-to-school programs in the United States and a local foods marketing practices survey (USDA, FNS, 2015; USDA, NASS, 2015).

Food waste is another example of a food-system consequence that has begun to receive increasing attention from economists and scientists in related fields. While some of the first work in this area attempted to document the level of food waste, recent efforts seek to understand the underlying causes.

Obesity, local foods, and food waste are just three examples of relevant topics for the proposed conference that are the focus of new and existing research. Because the conference will encourage a wide range of issues and topics – some of which might only be identified after researchers respond to the conference announcement – our list of prior research is necessarily incomplete.

The IOM/NRC (2015) document in part concludes that (p.15):

“Even though major improvements in the U.S. food system have resulted in the past from the introduction of new technologies, needed future improvements in the system may not be achievable solely through technological innovation. Achieving them may require more comprehensive approaches that incorporate non-technological factors to reach long-term solutions. Systemic approaches that take full account of social, economic, ecological, and evolutionary factors and processes will be required to meet challenges to the U.S. food system in the 21st century.”

And it continues (*ibid.*):

“To discover the best solutions to these problems, it is important not only to identify the effects of the current system but also to understand the drivers (e.g., human behavior, markets, policy) and how they interact with each other and with the observable system effects. Such understanding can help decision makers to identify the best opportunities to intervene and to anticipate the potential consequences of any intervention.”

The most pressing need identified by the IOM and NRC is that of specific attention focused on (1) data collection, which includes both validated metrics and methodologies, and (2) increased capacity to conduct systems-level research, both by academic and government researchers.

The present workshop emphasizes a tightly integrated and highly participatory conference attended by about 50 participants. The targeted focus of the proposed workshop is to promote conversation, debate and planning by invited and selected speakers, and other attendees, with presenters and session coordinators chosen for their expertise and relevance of ongoing work, with attention to the data, research, and capacity needs called for by the IOM and NRC. The proposed 2018 workshop will immediately precede the 2018 NAREA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, an arrangement that provides cost savings on facilities, meeting logistics, and travel for many attendees.