

2014 Highlights

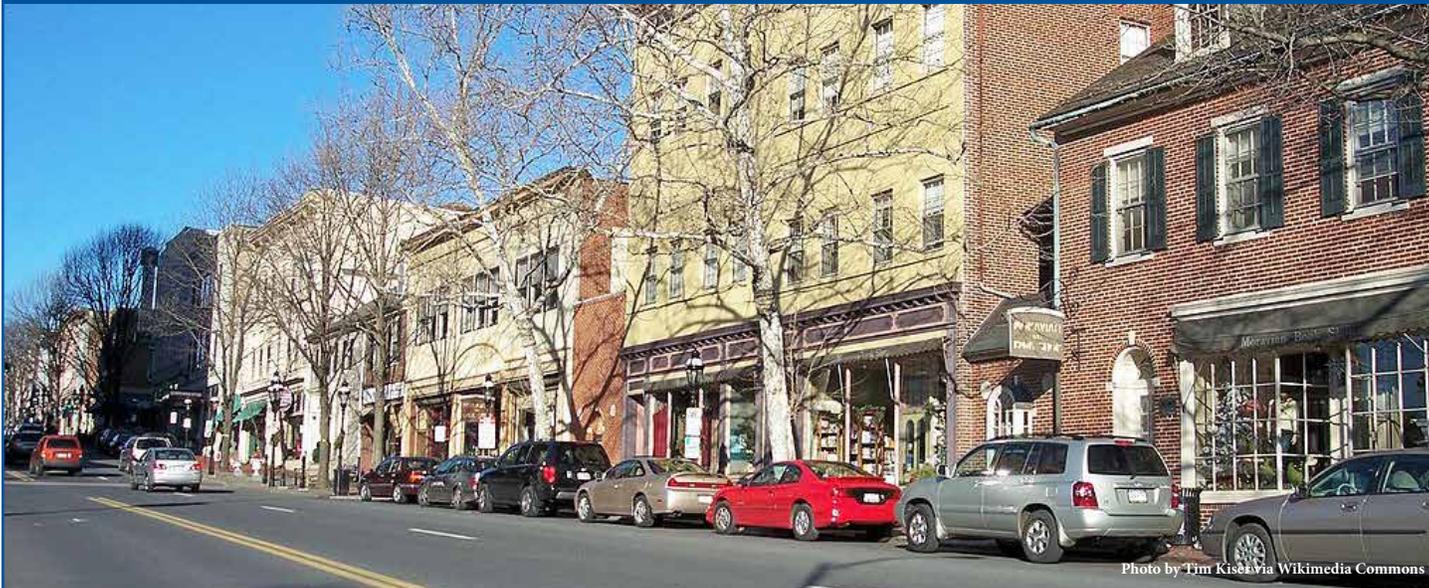


Photo by Tim Kiser via Wikimedia Commons

Economic Development Entrepreneurship Food Systems Land Use

In 2014, we continued to advance the rural development agenda in our region, with the help of our Board of Directors, Technical Advisory Committee and other collaborators. In particular, we deepened our efforts in the area of local food systems development and food security through our Enhancing Food Security in the Northeast through Regional Food Systems (EFSNE) signature grant as well as related grants with partners.



The ongoing success of our EFSNE project led to the awarding of a new \$900,000 grant from the Agricultural Marketing Service to deliver technical assistance over the coming grant cycle to applicants to the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program. This exciting new initiative meets an important public need and allows us to engage even more directly and fund Extension educators along with other collaborators in the local and regional foods arena within each of our states. Comparable training will be delivered across the nation in partnership with the three other Regional Rural Development Centers.

Through our policy think-tank, the National Agricultural and Rural Development Policy (NARDeP) Research Center, we were able to organize two special paper sessions at the National Regional Science Association annual conference, held during November in Washington, DC. Notably, this initiative builds on exciting new work that examines the factors influencing economic mobility across different US counties. One of the factors that has been shown to play a role in enhancing economic mobility is stocks of social capital, the county-level measurement of which was first made possible by the Center. This work on inequality, and how advancement up the economic ladder may be increased in rural areas has attracted the attention of senior leadership within USDA.

Looking back over the past year, we are deeply grateful to the collaborators who make our work possible. We look forward to another banner year in 2015.

Stephan J. Goetz, Ph.D.
Director, NERCRD

University Park, PA
December 2014

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More staff members are listed at
nercrd.psu.edu/about/center-staff

building capacity

“What Works” and National Value Added Joint Conference

A major initiative this year was the organizing of the Center's third “What Works” conference, which was co-hosted with the National Value-Added Agriculture Conference and took place on May 13-15, 2014. From ranchers to researchers to entrepreneurs, more than 100 people gathered in Baltimore to exchange ideas around the conference theme of “Enhancing Food Security and Rural Viability through

Innovative Food System Practices and Opportunities.” The event featured 33 workshops and breakout sessions, an ongoing poster exhibit, and even a field trip to Maryland's largest organic farm. In addition to numerous networking opportunities, the two-day program included workshops on wide-ranging topics and drew interest from around the world:

- 87 registrations from within the region
- 46 registrations from outside the region
- 26 registrations from outside the country

159
conference
registrations

Food Systems Webinar Series Grows in Popularity

For the second year running, Center Scholar Dr. Doolarie Singh-Knights of West Virginia State University hosted two successful webinars on local and regional foods. This series served to improve research and extension integration across the region and to strengthen networks among land-grant and related institutions in the Northeast.

The first webinar, titled “Climate Change and Its Implications for Local and Regional Food Systems,” was held on April 25.

The second webinar, titled “Urban Agriculture - Economics, Successes and Challenges,” was presented on June 27. More than 160 people attended the live webinars. This represents a 23 percent increase over last year's webinar attendance, and web visitors continue to access the archived recordings that are available online: <http://goo.gl/FJu396>

160
webinar
participants

sharing discoveries

Website and Newsletter Updates

At the suggestion of our Technical Advisory Committee, we began sending our newsletter on a bi-monthly basis this year, resulting in two additional newsletters per year. This change has facilitated more frequent contact with our stakeholders, and has allowed us to deliver program and event announcements to our 1,000+ subscribers in a more timely manner. Our website continues to be a valuable resource to visitors. In 2014, we had **16,360 new** and **8,454 returning web visitors**. Visit us online at: nercrd.psu.edu

Analyzing Networks, Sharing the Results

As part of its ongoing efforts to improve collaborations among stakeholders, the Northeast Center conducted a network analysis of the participants at a recent Joint Northeastern/Canadian Climate Change workshop, and shared the resulting maps and interpretations with the conference organizers. In addition, we conducted network analyses of the minority farmer groups that are being studied under our Capacity Building Grant with several collaborators. As part of this grant we are developing an online curriculum for conducting social network analyses with minority farm groups. With funding from the Kauffman Foundation we constructed network graphs of the Twitter accounts followed by entrepreneurs in the Kansas City area. Finally, we will survey EFSNE participants in early 2015 to construct a network analysis of interdisciplinary collaborations on that project. This will mark the fourth such analysis, allowing us to study the evolution of that network over time.

7
invited
presentations

leading innovative research

Enhancing Food Security in the Northeast (EFSNE)

Now well into the second half of its project timeline, the EFSNE team marked several major milestones this year:

- A comparison of the region's production to its consumption was conducted, resulting in a "self reliance" measurement for 100 foods.
- Intercept surveys were conducted with 1,800 shoppers in the project's eight study locations
- Supply chain case studies for cabbage and fluid milk were completed, and case studies of other supply chains are in progress.
- The project's innovative use of modeling methods inspired the creation of a national Food Systems Modeling Learning Community.
- Five students whose research was connected to the project graduated with master's or doctoral degrees.
- The project's newsletter was launched in January, and four issues were sent to more than 300 external subscribers in 2014.

Visit the EFSNE project website at: <http://goo.gl/91Gr9J>

National Agricultural and Rural Development Policy Center (NARDeP)

Now in its second year, the NARDeP Center has engaged dozens of experts at land-grant universities, national organizations and agencies to develop and deliver timely policy-relevant information for leaders in the public and private sectors, via policy briefs, data briefs, webinars, working papers, and a book. A recent selection of these resources appears below. These and more are available at www.nardep.info.

Selected Recent Policy & Data Briefs:

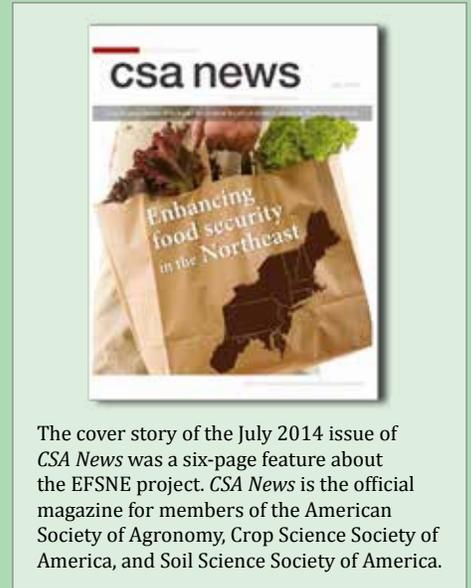
- Refugees in Rural Communities: A Win-Win? (Bloem, November 2014)
- Regional Water Management Institutions and Unconventional Gas Development in the Northeast/Central U.S. (Abdalla, August 2014)
- The Future of Jobs in America (Moretti, June 2014)
- Local and Non-Local Employment Associated with Marcellus Shale Development in Pennsylvania (Hardy and Kelsey, July 2014)

Selected Recent Special Projects:

- Our Energy Future: Socioeconomic Implications and Policy Options for Rural America (Book by Don E. Albrecht, published in 2014)
- Paper Sessions Presented at Regional Science Association meetings:
 - Regional/Rural Development I: The Geography of Inequality and Income Mobility I: Inequality
 - Regional/Rural Development II: The Geography of Inequality and Income Mobility II: Economic Mobility

Agricultural Marketing Service Technical Assistance Program (AMSTA)

The Northeast Center, along with the three other Regional Rural Development Centers, was selected by the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service to develop and help deliver a national curriculum designed to support grant seekers applying for the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Programs (FMLFPP). This represents an exciting opportunity, especially for Extension in the Northeast region, to provide leadership in developing a program to support farmer and other groups in rural and urban areas that are seeking to better connect consumers and producers through local food markets. The project, which started in September 2014, is funded for one year in the amount of \$900,000. The Center director has been working with Extension in each of the Northeast states to identify staff who would administer the program within each state in 2015. Learn more at www.amsta.net.



The cover story of the July 2014 issue of *CSA News* was a six-page feature about the EFSNE project. *CSA News* is the official magazine for members of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America.

Center-Related Publications (Selected)

- Brown, J.P., S.J. Goetz, M.C. Ahearn and C. Liang. "Linkages Between Community-Focused Agriculture, Farm Sales, and Regional Growth," *Economic Development Quarterly*, February 2014.
- Goetz, S.J. and A. Rupasingha. "The Determinants of Self-Employment Growth: Insights From County-Level Data, 2000-2009," *Economic Development Quarterly*, February 2014.
- Marasteanu, I.J., C. Liang, and S.J. Goetz. *Spatial and Cluster Analysis for Multifunctional Agriculture in New England Region*. Poster presented at AAEA July 27-29, 2014.
 - Loveridge, S., D. Albrecht, R. Welborn, and S.J. Goetz. "Opportunities for Rural Development in Cooperative Extension's Second Century," *Choices*, January 1, 2014.
 - Pillen, L. and C. Hinrichs. "Land Link Programs in the Northeast US: A program assessment and lessons learned," *Northeast Regional Center Rural Development Paper no. 53*, February 2014.

12
Center-related
publications

⇒ 8 grants totalling \$2.5 million in additional funding ⇐

For more information on our funded projects, visit: <http://goo.gl/9ICA04>

Northeast Center Researchers Find That People in Unhappy Places Are Depressed More Than a Week a Month

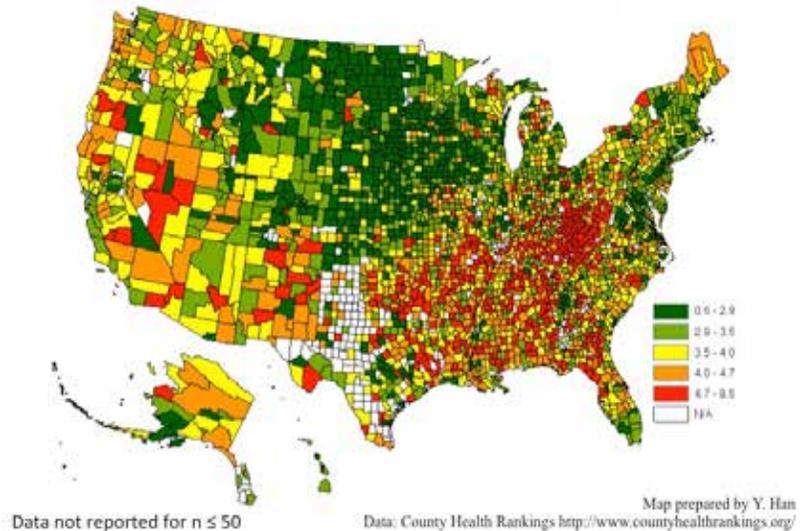
In a paper published in *Social Indicators Research* this year, Northeast Center scientists reported that people in the country's unhappiest communities spend about a quarter of the month so far down in the dumps that it can harm their productivity.

"This is a real concern not just in the United States, but across the world," said Stephan Goetz, director of the Northeast Center and lead author of the study. "Poor mental health can result in considerable economic costs, including losses of billions of dollars to lower productivity and this doesn't even include the staggering personal costs of negative mental health and depression."

"As economists we talk a lot about financial costs, but often don't consider the high personal costs that are incurred in some of these communities, including those associated with drug abuse and crime," said Goetz. "It's gut wrenching to hear stories of how substance abuse has hurt people and destroyed families and we're eager to work with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services to research the problem and find ways to help these communities."

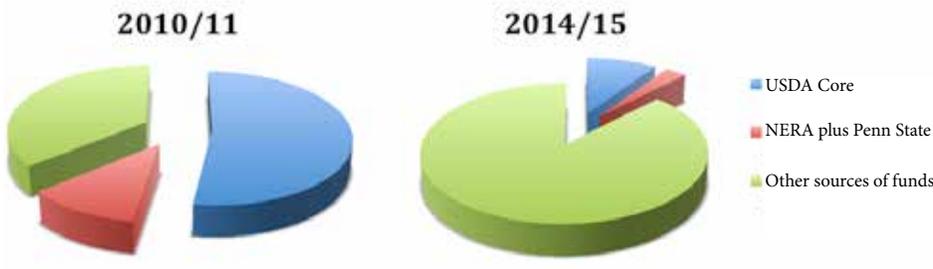
— Matt Swayne

Poor mental health days 2013



Perspectives on NERCRD Funding

NIFA funding of the RRDCs continued to decline with the federal budget sequester (-7.8%) in 2013/14, while NERA maintained its support at previous levels and Penn State's contribution increased.



Download our entire annual report

You can access our full-length annual report using this QR code, or by visiting us on the web: <http://nercrd.psu.edu/>



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