

1998-1999

Year

in

Reviews

Southern Rural Development Center  **SRDC**



From the Director

As SRDC Director, I have had the opportunity to meet with several groups and organizations, some who are part of the land-grant university system, and others who have a vital interest in the research and Extension activities of our land-grant institutions. During the last two years, I have seen a resurgence in the interest of land-grant administrators, faculty, and county agents in activities that are clearly rural or community development in nature. No doubt, the economic difficulties that have impacted many farm families and agriculture-dependent communities in the region have demanded that new creative economic development strategies be explored to assist the region's agricultural sector. Many have realized that sound rural development programming is a vital ingredient to the land-grant system's capacity to respond to the challenges facing our agricultural community.

At the same time, rural areas of the South are showing remarkable progress in their capacity to capture jobs that offer decent wages for local workers, although much remains to be done on this front. Moreover, many areas of the rural South are witnessing a significant influx of new migrants—growth that is placing demands on local services, governments, physical and natural resources. These trends, plus many other forces, are providing the rationale for Southern land-grant institutions to invest in sound, comprehensive, and innovative rural/community development work.

The following report highlights the many activities that the Center has spearheaded or facilitated during the last fiscal year (October 1998-September 1999). Several of these efforts have been directed at strengthening the capacity of our Extension and research colleagues to carry out rural development activities within their states, counties, parishes, and territories. Others have focused on building stronger partnerships between our land-grant institutions and rural development cooperators outside the land-grant system. All in all, it has been a very active and rewarding year for the SRDC. We extend our appreciation to the administrators and faculty of our research and Extension programs in the South, to our county Extension colleagues, to our federal partners, and to our rural development partners, for believing in the Center's work, and for dedicating their time, talents, and resources to advancing the goals of the SRDC over the past year. We thank you sincerely.



Bo Beaulieu



Mission and Vision

The Southern Rural Development Center is one of four USDA-sponsored regional centers in the nation. The Center coordinates rural development research and Extension (education) programs cooperatively with the 29 land-grant institutions in the South. The Center supports and strengthens individual state efforts in rural areas by drawing upon multi-disciplinary networks of university research and Extension faculty in the region. The SRDC serves as a proactive leader and primary facilitator of rural development research, education, and policy dialogue that will improve the socioeconomic conditions of the Southern region. The SRDC fosters innovative and creative approaches to sustainable rural development and serves as a key player in building collaborative networks that reach across agencies, institutions, and communities. The Center is co-sponsored by Mississippi State University and Alcorn State University.

Institutions Served

Alabama

- ♦ Alabama A&M University
- ♦ Auburn University
- ♦ Tuskegee University

Arkansas

- ♦ University of Arkansas
- ♦ University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Florida

- ♦ Florida A&M University
- ♦ University of Florida

Georgia

- ♦ Fort Valley State University
- ♦ University of Georgia

Kentucky

- ♦ Kentucky State University
- ♦ University of Kentucky

Louisiana

- ♦ Louisiana State University
- ♦ Southern University

Mississippi

- ♦ Alcorn State University
- ♦ Mississippi State University

North Carolina

- ♦ North Carolina State University
- ♦ North Carolina A&T State University

Oklahoma

- ♦ Langston University
- ♦ Oklahoma State University

Puerto Rico

- ♦ University of Puerto Rico

South Carolina

- ♦ Clemson University
- ♦ South Carolina State University

Tennessee

- ♦ Tennessee State University
- ♦ University of Tennessee

Texas

- ♦ Prairie View A&M University
- ♦ Texas A&M University

The Virgin Islands

- ♦ University of the Virgin Islands

Virginia

- ♦ Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
- ♦ Virginia State University

About the SRDC





The Southern Rural Development Center has five major priority goals under which it operates:

Priority 1

Strengthen and support the capacity of Southern land-grant institutions and their partners to conduct rural development research and outreach education programming.

Priority 2

Enhance the economic, environmental, and social well-being of rural communities and people.

Priority 3

Strengthen the human capital resources of the region's rural communities.

Priority 4

Improve rural Southerners' access to vital community services.

Priority 5

Enhance the capacity of rural people and communities to carry out their expanded responsibilities in the design, management, and financing of government programs.

This annual report outlines the various activities that the SRDC undertook during the 1999 fiscal year (October 1, 1998, through September 30, 1999) in support of these five key goals.

PRIORITY 1

Priority 1 Activities

Enhance communications with land-grant faculty

- ♦ The Southern Rural Development Consortium
- ♦ Southern Region Program Leaders Committee (PLC)
- ♦ SRDC Web Site Expansion
- ♦ Year 2000 Outreach Initiative to the South: Facilitating Active Engagement of the Region's Cooperative Extension Service System

Communicate land-grant research activities to key audiences and the general public through news releases

- ♦ News Releases About Center Activities and Land-Grant Research

Heighten land-grant faculty awareness of rural development grant opportunities

- ♦ Grant Connections

Produce newsletters that offer in-depth treatment of current and emerging rural development issues in the region

- ♦ Southern Perspectives

Provide comprehensive community development training to land-grant personnel

- ♦ Southern Region Community Development Institute

Invest in the production of educational resources that enhance rural development programming in the region

- ♦ Ca\$hing in On Business Opportunities: A Guide to Building a Home-Based and Micro-Business Program

Invest in land-grant rural development research products that respond to priority policy and information needs of rural development partners

- ♦ Rural Development Issues Impacting the South
- ♦ Visit from the Ilembe Regional Council of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Provide information about critical issues facing the rural South in the 21st century

- ♦ The Rural South: Preparing for the Challenges of the 21st Century

Priority 1—Strengthen and support the capacity of Southern land-grant institutions and their partners to conduct rural development research and outreach education programming.

Southern land-grant universities are vital resources dedicated to the generation of research and delivery of Extension education programs that address the unique needs of the region. The Southern Rural Development Center stimulates, facilitates, and promotes rural development research and Extension outreach education programs across the region's land-grant university system. Several activities have been initiated by the SRDC during the past year to further advance the rural development mission of the region's 29 land-grant universities. The SRDC has further sought to promote the capabilities of land-grant faculty with rural development stakeholders and partners.

Enhance communications with land-grant faculty

The Southern Rural Development Consortium. Southern land-grant faculty can join a consortium of colleagues sponsored by the SRDC and identify their areas of expertise in rural development. Currently, the consortium has 412 members. This group provides a strong two-way link for communication between the SRDC and land-grant institutions in the South. With this comprehensive listing, the SRDC has been able to respond quickly to extramural funding opportunities and to facilitate multi-state programming and research.

Southern Region Program Leaders Committee (PLC). In 1991, Extension directors and administrators formed the Southern Region Program Leaders Committee with representatives from 1862 and 1890 institutions in each of the four program areas: agriculture and natural resources, community develop-

ment, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H youth development, along with communications and information technology, middle management, and program and staff development. In addition to serving multi-state, multi-discipline programming, the Center coordinates the annual meeting of PLC. Moreover, it facilitates planning and communication among leaders across all Extension program areas engaged in PLC





work. With funding provided by the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors and 1890 Extension Administrators, the SRDC is developing a PLC web site that will be accessible from the SRDC home page in the near future.

SRDC Web Site Expansion. The SRDC began a concerted effort in early 1999 to improve the design and content of its web site to better serve the land-grant institutions in the South and their partners. In addition to a more user-friendly design, the new web site also features a keyword search engine for information about rural development issues. From September 1998 to August 1999, the SRDC web site received nearly 7,000 hits, averaging 580 per month. With the new site design, the Center hopes that number will increase as more land-grant researchers and educators become aware of what is available. The web site can be accessed at <http://www.ext.msstate.edu/srdc>.

Year 2000 Outreach Initiative to the South: Facilitating Active Engagement of the Region's Cooperative Extension Service System. The SRDC received a \$51,000 grant from CSREES to aid small businesses, family farms, local government officials, and others in learning about the Year 2000 millennium bug. As part of this project, the SRDC funded travel for two representatives from each land-grant institution in the South to attend Y2K training sponsored by the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, Small Business Administration, and USDA. Throughout the project, the SRDC has been in constant communication with Southern Extension directors and 1890 administrators to facilitate the engagement of their institutions in this effort.

Communicate land-grant research activities to key audiences and the general public through news outlets

News Releases About Center Activities and Land-Grant Research. In conjunction with the Office of Agricultural Communications at Mississippi State University, the SRDC has made efforts to increase the publicity about the Center and its activities in news media across the Southeast. OAC news writer Bonnie Coblentz contacted her counterparts at one land-grant institution in each of the 15 states and two territories served by the Center and established a distribution network for news releases. Nine stories, written by Center staff and OAC writers, have been sent to newspapers all over the Southeast. The SRDC is currently attempting to determine how many times the information has appeared in various newspapers around the region.

Heighten land-grant faculty awareness of rural development grant opportunities

Grant Connections. This electronic newsletter provides information about grant opportunities available to land-grant faculty in the region and is disseminated to members of the Southern Rural Development Consortium. The newsletter also is available on the SRDC web site. The newsletter has identified 45 grant opportunities in the six newsletters published this year. The publication dates for the newsletter were:

- October 1998, Volume 2, Number 5
- December 1998, Volume 2, Number 6
- January 1999, Volume 3, Number 1
- April 1999, Volume 3, Number 2
- June 1999, Volume 3, Number 3
- August 1999, Volume 3, Number 4

Produce newsletters that offer in-depth treatment of current and emerging rural development issues in the region

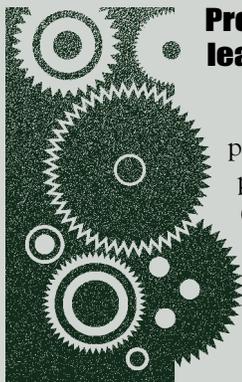
Southern Perspectives. This quarterly newsletter features a theme of regional interest in each issue. The newsletter is distributed to nearly 3,400 individuals in hard copy, more than 300 by e-mail, and is available for downloading via the SRDC web site in both pdf and html formats. Newsletter themes this past year included:

- ♦ **The Changing Complexion of the South's Rural Labor Markets, Volume 3, Number 1, Spring 1999**
Articles focused on the rural labor market demand and supply issues in the rural South. The text presented were a subset of works presented during a two-day conference held October 1998 in New Orleans.
- ♦ **Economic Impact of Forestry and Forest Products in the Southern Region, Volume 3, Number 2, Summer 1999**
Articles focused on the forest system in the South as a major force in the economic well-being of rural communities. Authors from the Mississippi State University Extension Service and from the USDA Southern Region Forestry Office concentrated on the role of forestry and forest products in current and future efforts to advance the region's rural development and economic development agendas.
- ♦ **Water Quality and Quantity Issues in the Southern Region, Volume 3, Number 3, Fall 1999**
Members of the Southern Region Extension Water Quality Planning Committee contributed articles about the vital role that the land-grant system is playing in promoting water quality and sound resource management. Collectively, the articles make the case that the land-grant system is a key ingredient in the region's pursuit of a sustainable future for its communities.

Provide comprehensive community development training to land-grant personnel

Southern Region Community Development Institute. With faculty from across the region, the SRDC planned, organized, and sponsored its second Southern Region Community Development Institute, May 17-21 in Asheville, N.C. The Institute targeted Extension a diverse group of educators from the Southern region, including agriculture/natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, community development, and middle management. Thirty-nine people from 10 states attended. Thirteen

faculty from Southern land-grant institutions and the SRDC director led the training sessions, which were designed to build a stronger conceptual foundation and strengthen the skills on Extension personnel in carrying out community development programming.



Program leaders work together, learn from each other

The SRDC works in close partnership with all Extension program areas. One way the Center does this is by assisting in the organization, management, and implementation of important Extension in-service training and conference programs.

This year, the Center supported three training/conference activities targeting various Extension program areas—the Southern Region Middle Managers Conference, the Southern Family and Consumer Science Accountability Workshop, and Sustainable Community Development: A Southern Region Conference on Sustainable Farms, Forests, Communities, and Families—that attracted 340 participants from 13 Southern states.

In addition, the SRDC continues to provide multi-state programming as part of the annual SPLC conference and also maintains listserves for program leaders in agriculture and natural resources, community development, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H youth development.

Invest in the production of educational resources that enhance rural development programming in the region

Ca\$hing in On Business Opportunities: A Guide to Building a Home-Based and Micro-Business Program. SRDC staff is working closely with the National Home-Based and Micro-Business Design Team to update the 22-chapter curriculum first developed in early 1998. The second edition will be available in January 2000. More than 450 copies of the initial edition of the curriculum have been distributed nationwide.





Invest in land-grant rural development research products that respond to priority policy and information needs of rural development partners

Rural Development Issues Impacting the South. These five reports, produced over the last year with funding from the Economic Research Service/USDA, address current and emerging topics of concern to State Rural Development Councils, land-grant institutions, and other rural development entities located in the South. The SRDC provided mini-grants to land-grant researchers to support the preparation of these reports. All five reports, with associated maps, tables, appendices, and executive summaries, are available online. A synopsis of each report is provided below:

- ♦ **Linking Community Development with National Forest Planning and Management in the South (June 1999)**
Donald E. Voth, Martin Jardon, Cindy McCauley, Zola K. Moon, and Irene Frentz, University of Arkansas
Current development in forest management and rural community development present a special challenge and opportunity for forest-dependent rural communities in the Southern region. All national forests are required to revise their long-range plans every 10 to 15 years. Many in the Southern region have already done so, or are nearing completion of their revised plans. Others have not, but will be doing so in the near future. In the past, local communities have played a minor role in this process. However, greater involvement is being sought and, if it can be achieved, there is potential to use this planning process not only for the benefit of the USDA Forest Service but also to stimulate community strategic planning and development in many forest-dependent communities in the region. It is the thesis of this report that achieving such a collaborative, community-based strategy, one that sees forest dependent communities as subjects and not merely the objects of USDA Forest Service policy and programs, ought to be of the highest priority within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. However, to actually achieve it will not be easy. This document reviews the definitions of forest-dependency, shows which communities are forest-dependent in the Southern region based upon various definitions, and examines the hypothesis that forest-dependent communities suffer from a special “disadvantage.” It then provides a review of the USDA Forest Service’s emerging strategies for relating to forest-dependent communities, and summarizes the current Rural Community Assistance (RCA) program. Next, it presents the formal forest planning process in some detail, focusing upon opportunities for citizen access to this process. Then, there is a brief summary of rural and community development agencies and programs available which might be mobilized to assist the USDA Forest Service in developing an integrated approach to forest-dependent communities, and a detailed presentation of several ongoing efforts to both implement and analyze strategies for linking community development efforts with forest planning and management. A summary of emerging efforts to use local government—mostly county government—as a way for local citizens to gain “a place at the table” in forest planning and management follows. Finally, recommendations and a discussion of some of the issues or challenges that must be confronted in developing an integrated, community-based strategy are presented.
- ♦ **The Changing Nature of Work in the South: The Polarization of Tomorrow’s Workforce (July 1999)**
Melissa A. Barfield and Lionel J. Beaulieu, Southern Rural Development Center
Labor markets have undergone many changes in the South, shifts which have had a profound impact on the region. Simply put, a switch from industrial production to service employment is occurring; white collar workers are slowly, but surely, replacing blue collar workers. Such shifts have raised the qualifications needed to hold certain service-sector jobs. Consequently, an increasing proportion of the workforce now finds itself in need of better education and higher level skills. But, at the same time, job growth is also occurring at the other extreme, in occupations requiring little or no formal training. This report examines the changes occurring in the Southern workforce. Serving as the primary data sources for illustrating the nature of labor market adjustments in the region are the industry and occupational projections from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, America’s Labor Market Information System, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The analysis shows that a polarization is emerging within

tomorrow's workforce. The largest numbers of jobs are taking place among those occupations requiring no post-secondary degree. On the other hand, a significant portion of the fastest growing occupations is demanding post-secondary training or degrees. These trends have important implications on the anticipated earnings and employment experiences of Southerners.

- ♦ **Land Prices and the Changing Geography of Southern Row-Crop Agriculture (August 1999)**
James C. Hite, Emily J. Terrell, and Kang Shou Lu, Strom Thurmond Institute of Government, Clemson University

Using enterprise budgets for major row-crops and county mean yields, the returns to land, risk, and management in 12 Southern states for 1992 are estimated, and the results to mean county farm real estate prices reported in the 1992 Census of Agriculture are compared. Similar analysis is also performed for six of the states using 1959 budgets and data. Maps and tables are presented. The resulting maps show that traditional row-crop agriculture remains potentially profitable in some relatively remote counties and in the productive soils near the Mississippi River. But urbanization, the demand for second or retirement homes, and relative low commodity prices have forced rural land prices above their use values for producing row-crops in much of the rest of the South. The changing geography of rural land prices has implications for land use changes and for the development of a new, niche-based market for garden agriculture in some parts of the South. It also suggests that owners of land, particularly those who have invested in the land at levels that cannot be recouped by row-crop production, have a strong vested interest in non-agricultural development and are likely to be initiators of new types of local economic development activities in places where traditional row-crop production is no longer feasible.

SRDC-funded national forest research recognized by CSREES

A rural sociology professor at the University of Arkansas has received a National Flagship Award from the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service for research partially funded by the SRDC.

Rural sociologist Donald Voth initiated a project focusing on the social dimensions of natural resource management to design, initiate, and facilitate a challenge cost share grant program with the National Forest Service. This research was instrumental in the preparation of *Linking Community Development with National Forest Planning and Management in the South*, a publication that is part of a series from the SRDC focusing on rural development issues impacting the South.

Voth's research project, titled "Ozark-Ouachita Highland Assessment—National Forest Communities Project," was recognized as an innovative program that demonstrates how education can be a catalyst for achieving harmony between agriculture and the environment.

In addition to Voth, other project members include Bill Bell of the Ouachita National Forest and Mike Hedges, Tamara Walkingstick, Tom Riley, Cindy McCauley, Zola Moon, Frank Farmer, and Molly Sizer, all of the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville.

- ♦ **Great Expectations: From Welfare to Work in the South (August 1999)**
(forthcoming)

Deborah Tootle, Louisiana State University

In the South, as in the rest of the country, we hold great expectations for welfare reform and the ability of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the revised public assistance program replacing Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), to help the poor in this country become more self-sufficient. Appreciable work requirements are embedded within the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), the legislation mandating welfare reform. Almost daily, we read reports on the dramatic declines in welfare caseloads across the nation since President Clinton signed PRWORA into law in August 1996. These declines are generally interpreted to mean that welfare-to-work strategies must be effective. However, not much is known yet about the dynamics of moving people from welfare to work to make such assessments. Nor do researchers have a good understanding of caseload reduction in the rural South where unique social and economic conditions may affect implementation and success of welfare





reform. This report describes recent welfare reform efforts and identifies some of the conditions that may affect welfare reform and the potential for the new legislation to move welfare recipients into the workforce in the South.

♦ **The Telecommunications Act of 1996: Its Implementation in the U.S. South** (*September 1999*)
(forthcoming)

John C. Allen and Erin L. V. Koffler, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

With the passage of the Telecommunication Act of 1996, the pace of regulatory change increased exponentially. The impact on rural areas is significant; the issues specific to Southern states and communities are unique. This report provides a brief history of telecommunications regulation and an overview of the key elements of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Innovations in state telecommunications regulations, as well as a summary of actions taken by Southern states since the 1996 Act was adopted, are also discussed. Next, the document examines the evidence for the importance of telecommunications technology in rural areas, and reviews key technology innovations that hold promise for rural areas. Finally, a checklist of items that state and local decision-makers need to consider when defining telecommunications policy for their regions is presented.

Visit from the Ilembe Regional Council of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Seven representatives visited the Southern Rural Development Center and the Mississippi State University Extension Service as part of a 22-day U.S. project study tour. These delegates met with Extension personnel and administrators in Neshoba and Madison counties. They received information on water and sanitation projects, low-cost housing, rural electrification programs, local economic development initiatives, and public and private funding partnerships and met with the directors of the Agribusiness Institute, the Social Science Research Center, and the Center for Small Town Research and Design, all located on the campus of Mississippi State University.

Provide information about critical issues facing the rural South in the 21st century

The Rural South: Preparing for the Challenges of the 21st Century. Over the past decade, the rural South has realized important progress on many fronts, including improved educational standing, economic expansion, and a resurgence of new residents into many rural areas. At the same time, the long-term health of the agriculture sector remains in question, the creation of good-paying jobs has been difficult, and pockets of poverty persist in many rural areas. The next century is likely to offer a host of opportunities and challenges to the South's rural localities.

In an effort to more effectively articulate these opportunities and challenges, the SRDC sought input from Southern land-grant faculty regarding major forces that are likely to effect the well-being of the rural South. With assistance from the SRDC Technical Advisory Committee, broad themes were outlined, coupled with specific topics to be explored under each theme. Next, the Center commissioned individuals to prepare policy briefs on the various identified topics. The list of working titles of these briefs, as well as the lead author, are outlined below. The policy briefs will be published over the next several months. The series also is sponsored by the Economic Research Service, the Farm Foundation, and the TVA Rural Studies Program at the University of Kentucky.

Overview Piece of the Series (*Bo Beaulieu, SRDC, and Lori Garkovich, University of Kentucky*)

Agriculture in Transition

- ♦ The changing structure of agriculture in the South (*Joe Molnar, Auburn University*)
- ♦ Forest-based economic development opportunities (*Bill Hubbard, University of Georgia*)
- ♦ Sustainable agriculture (*Jeff Jordan, SARE, University of Georgia*)
- ♦ The challenges and opportunities of biotechnology implications for the U.S. South (*Thomas Hoban, North Carolina State University*)
- ♦ The role of small and part-time farmers in the South (*John O'Sullivan, North Carolina A&T State University*)

The Changing Demography of the Rural South

- ♦ The increasing diversity of the rural South (*Steve Murdock, Texas A & M University*)
- ♦ Population growth in the rural South: Rural renaissance or urban sprawl (*Calvin Beale, Economic Research Service, USDA*)
- ♦ Race relations in the rural South (*The Honorable William Winter, Member of the President's Commission on Race Relations, and former Governor of Mississippi*)
- ♦ Latino population (*Cruz Torres*)
- ♦ Elderly population (*author TBA*)

Managing our Natural and Environmental Resources

- ♦ Urban/suburban/rural interface (*Lori Garkovich, University of Kentucky*)
- ♦ Water quantity and quality issues in the South (*George Smith, University of Tennessee*)
- ♦ Waste management issues (*author TBA*)
- ♦ Sustainable forestry for the next century (*Don Harker, MACED-Kentucky*)

Education and Workforce Issues

- ♦ The role of rural community colleges (*Stuart Rosenfeld, Consultant*)
- ♦ The under-utilized human resource capacity of the rural South (*Bo Beaulieu, SRDC*)
- ♦ Technology and rural schools (*Tim Collins, Appalachian Educational Laboratory*)
- ♦ Distance learning (*Tim Collins and Sarah Dewees, Appalachian Educational Laboratory*)



SRDC-published home-based business curriculum has been well-received

“The HBB curriculum training was wonderful and

one of the best if not the best training that I have attended since beginning my Extension career 27+ years ago. The curriculum itself is fantastic. Ready to go and a wonderful composite of just what we need. In my county, the Chamber of Commerce has a Micro-Business Development Program that they run with 16-hour training quarterly. It is grant funded and it has money to give/loan and because of the money, people are attracted to it. After I attended the training and had time to look through the curriculum, I met with the director and staff of the Micro-Business program to share the curriculum and let them know what Extension could now offer and to offer to network with them. I now am one of seven people who teach the 16-hour course quarterly.”

–RR, Virginia Extension agent

“I have made a presentation to the Business Development Network. I gave them an overview of the curriculum and noted the diversity of its use. The group’s composition makes it perfect to collaborate with. Also, I have referred to the curriculum on several occasions to locate answers and resources for clients.

–G.D., North Carolina Extension agent

Diversifying the Rural Economy

- ♦ Micro-businesses (*Beth Duncan, Mississippi State University*)
- ♦ Home-based implications on the rural economy of the South (*Pam Brown, Texas A&M University and Glenn Muske, Oklahoma State University*)
- ♦ Technology’s role in the rural economy (*Don Harker, MACED-Kentucky*)
- ♦ The role of the health care sector in promoting economic development (*Gerald Doeksen, Oklahoma State University*)
- ♦ Tourism development (*Mike Woods, Oklahoma State University*)
- ♦ Rural Manufacturing (*David McGranahan, Economic Research Service/USDA*)
- ♦ Entrepreneurial development as a means for diversifying the rural economy (*author TBA*)

Providing Vital Community Services

- ♦ Rural housing (*Leslie Whitener, Economic Research Service/USDA*)
- ♦ The impact of electric deregulation (*David Freshwater, TVA Rural Studies Program*)
- ♦ Telecommunications deregulation (*Vicky Hobbs, University of Missouri*)





Building Community in a Time of Policy Changes

- ♦ Strengthening citizen engagement in community decision-making (*author TBA*)
- ♦ Local government and devolution (*author TBA*)

Family and Child Well-Being

- ♦ Poverty: Its impact on families and children (*Rox Harris, University of Kentucky*)
- ♦ The changing structure of families (*Patricia Hyjer Dyk, University of Kentucky*)
- ♦ The status of children in the rural South (*Cheryl Amey, Children’s Defense Fund*)
- ♦ Child care and the well-being of children (*Ron and Ann Mullis, Florida State University*)
- ♦ Food security (*Mark Nord, Economic Research Service/USDA*)

Health Care Issues

- ♦ *Issues to be determined (Regional Committee)*

Priority 2 Activities

Expand economic development opportunities that hold promise for rural areas

- ♦ Entrepreneurial Education and Training Conference

Priority 2—Enhance the economic, environmental, and social well being of rural communities and people.

The rural South is a rich haven of natural resources and environmental beauty, but it is facing many hardships in its

capacity to realize a proper balance in its pursuit of a vibrant economy, social progress, and a sound environment. The SRDC believes that the well-being of the rural South can be further advanced through the active engagement of the Southern land-grant universities, along with its public and private sector partners, in addressing the economic, environmental, and social challenges impacting rural people and communities of the region.

Expand economic development opportunities that hold promise for rural areas

Entrepreneurial Education and Training Conference. The SRDC, along with Tennessee State University, responded to a request for proposals from the Appalachian Regional Commission for a four-state regional conference, involving Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee, to showcase innovative and high quality entrepreneurship education and training programs. To plan a conference with broad-based input, the SRDC assembled a planning committee with representatives from the four states, mailed a “call for presentations” brochure, and developed a conference based on this input. Scheduled for November 18-19 in Birmingham, Ala., this conference is one of three sponsored by the ARC, with others being held in North Carolina and New York.

Seventh regional water conference gets stellar reviews

Participants in Working Toward Solutions, the seventh biannual Southern Region Extension Water Quality Conference, called the program “excellent with great networking and educational opportunities.”

More than 97 percent of the attendees said the conference strengthened their capacity to produce successful water quality programming, and nearly 90 percent said the cooperative working relations within Extension were enhance.

Participants emphasized conference strengths as

- ♦ the number and diversity of topics available through the different programs tracks;
- ♦ the opportunities to share ideas and programs with colleagues and resource people, not “re-inventing the wheel;” and
- ♦ the participation and interaction among individuals from all different levels of programming, including county, state, and national.

The conference is sponsored by CSREES, the Farm Foundation, and the SRDC. The SRDC also provides logistical support.

PRIORITY 2

PRIORITY 3

Priority 3 Activities

Provide relevant information on the labor force experiences of youth through the publication of research reports

- ♦ Human Capital Endowments and Labor Force Experiences of Young Adults in the South

Strengthen the pool of local leaders who are engaged in community empowerment activities

- ♦ Mid-South Delta Community Development Institute

Expand research activities that shed light on current and future labor force supply and demand issues in the rural South

- ♦ Regional Workshop on Labor Force Supply and Demand Issues
- ♦ Building a Quality Workforce in the Rural South: From Issues to Action

Priority 3—Strengthen the human capital resources of the region's rural communities.

The rural South has historically lagged other areas of the country in terms of its educational progress. While levels of education has improved significantly over the past two decades in the nonmetro South, far too many residents have had little success in securing an education beyond high school. The SRDC has been committed to facilitating research that addresses the role that human capital endowments play in shaping the workforce experiences of the region's residents.

A second important component of the SRDC's activities being pursued as part of this goal is to strengthen and expand the base of local leaders who are committed to advancing the well-being of their communi-

ties. Equipping local citizens with the tools for carrying out sound community development activities is critical for ensuring the long-term vitality of the South's rural communities.

Provide relevant information on the labor force experiences of youth through the publication of research reports

Human Capital Endowments and Labor Force Experiences of Young Adults in the South. With funding from the TVA Rural Studies Program at the University of Kentucky, and the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, the SRDC examined the link between human capital endowments of Southern workers and their labor force experiences over time. The SRDC research team studied nearly 5,000 individuals who were part of the national High School and Beyond study who left high school in 1982, and traced their experiences over the course of a 10-year period. Results suggested that serious challenges will continue to plague those individuals who enter the workforce with no post-secondary education. Although jobs will be available for these individuals, most will be situated in secondary labor markets and pay wages that are significantly below those paid to college-educated workers. Over time, the gap between the wages of college-educated workers and those of non-college bound individuals will likely widen, particularly in a context of global competition and technology advances in the work place. Moreover, in times of economic uncertainty, non-college bound individuals will be victims of greater job instability.

Strengthen the pool of local leaders who are engaged in community empowerment activities

Mid-South Delta Community Development Institute. Held in Tunica, Miss., in 1999, this two-day conference targeted teams from five counties in Northwest Mississippi—Bolivar, Coahoma, Quitman, Tallahatchie, and Tunica. Sponsored by the SRDC, the Mississippi State University Extension Service, and the Community Development Society, the workshop featured topics such as understanding self and community, asset-mapping, strategic planning, building partnerships, and consensus-building. After the initial meeting, the nearly 100 participants were charged with returning to their counties and starting local projects, with ongoing reports back to the Southern Rural Development Center. Each county received a \$1,000 seed grant to continue its efforts. County team projects being initiated include a public transportation survey, strategies for youth involvement, and a parents' resource center.





Expand research activities that shed light on current and future labor force supply and demand issues in the rural South

Regional Workshop on Labor Force Supply and Demand Issues. The SRDC joined with the TVA Rural Studies Center at the University of Kentucky, the Farm Foundation, and the Economic Research Service/USDA in planning a regional conference to explore the nature of labor markets in the rural South.

The conference focused on four key areas:

- ♦ Labor force demand issues,
- ♦ Worker supply in the rural South,
- ♦ Differences in supply/demand across urban and rural areas of the South, and
- ♦ Types of institutional responses to supply/demand issues.

Key findings outlined in the papers developed for the meeting were published jointly by the SRDC and the TVA Rural Studies Program in a report titled *Ready or Not? The Rural South and Its Workforce*. Furthermore, condensed versions of a select number of papers were published in *Southern Perspectives*, and a four-part series of news releases from the report were sent to news media across the South. These papers also are being peer-reviewed for publication in a special issue of *Southern Rural Sociology*, due out in 2000.

Building a Quality Workforce in the Rural South: From Issues to Action. Held in Gulfport, Miss., in July 1999, this conference focused on the impacts of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and targeted state and local Workforce Investment Boards, Private Industry Councils/JTPA representatives, county and city officials with workforce investment responsibilities, land-grant researchers and Extension educators, community college faculty and staff involved in workforce investment, among others. More than 150 representatives from 12 states attended. The workshops focused on workforce investment policy, rural labor market research, community assets building, strategic planning and visioning, linking workforce development with economic development, technology in the workplace, preparing youth for the future, performance accountability and evaluation, and building state and local partnerships. The SRDC, with support from Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service and the TVA Rural Studies Program at the University of Kentucky, provided information and publications concerning workforce issues to all participants. Information also was provided to the local news media, and two

SRDC-funded health care study goes national

Seed funds provided by the SRDC in support of research by three agricultural economists (Gerald Doeksen and Chuck Willoughby, Oklahoma State University, and Tom Johnson, University of Missouri and formerly Virginia Tech) helped position these individuals to garner sizable extramural funds to further advance their work. The team's work focused on measuring the economic impact of the health sector on the local economy. SRDC resources allowed the three researchers to develop a methodology for determining the county-level impact of the health sector for any county in the United States.

In 1999, the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, the Rural Policy Research Institute, and the Federal Office of Rural Health, provided funds to Doeksen and Willoughby to conduct studies on the impact of hospitals, nursing homes, pharmacies, and doctors for counties located in five states— Kentucky, Oklahoma, Missouri, Nevada, and Pennsylvania. The intent of these studies was to enhance local leaders' understanding of the positive contribution the health sector provides to the economic well-being of a county. In fact, the studies conducted to date have shown that the health sector directly accounts for 10-15 percent of the economic activity of a locality, with secondary impacts approaching 20 percent.

The success of the research team's efforts have been further rewarded with a recent grant from the Federal Office of Rural Health to expand the project to any state wishing to systematically assess the economic impact of the health care sector on counties within their states, with 25 states taking part.

Gulf Coast television stations conducted interviews with keynote speaker, the Honorable William F. Winter. Papers and presentations from the conference are available on the SRDC web site.

Priority 4 Activities

Stimulate the creation of new partnerships that enhance the capacity of rural communities to address key health issues

- ♦ Southern Extension and Research Activity, Information Exchange Group (SERA-IEG 19)—Rural Health
- ♦ Participation in the National Network for Health
- ♦ Building Rural Health Partnerships in the Rural South Mini-Grant Program

Serve as a conduit for informing individuals and communities of critical environmental quality issues

- ♦ Working Toward Solutions: Southern Region Extension Water Quality Conference
- ♦ Southern Extension and Research Activity, Information Exchange Group (SERA-IEG 16)—Rural Infrastructure

Priority 4—Improve rural Southerners' access to vital community services.

The limited economic and fiscal resources available in many rural communities have presented major challenges to local leaders as they seek to provide important community services to their citizens. While most rural areas seek to expand job and income opportunities for their residents, the capacity to do so is often impeded by the lack of quality local services available to complement the economic development activities of these localities. Quality water and waste management systems, access to decent health care, and the availability of emergency services (such as fire and police protection), constitute vital services that make rural areas attractive places in which to live and work.

PRIORITY 4

Stimulate the creation of new partnerships that enhance the capacity of rural communities to address key health issues

Southern Extension and Research Activity, Information Exchange Group (SERA-IEG 19)—Rural Health. The SRDC collaborates with this regional committee to build public-private coalitions for health education and research. The committee exchanges information on the status of new research findings and Extension programs related to rural health and safety issues to help members gain a regional perspective on current rural health problems and to formulate joint activities of mutual benefit. This past year, the Center facilitated two meetings of the group, and Center staff currently are planning a meeting for October 1999.

Participation in the National Network for Health. Bonnie Teater, Assistant to the Director, is serving as part of the Consumer and Community Health Policy Work Group of the National Network for Health. Currently, the SRDC has submitted a proposal to NNH and the Mississippi State University Extension Service to fund a health video to be produced at Mississippi State University.

Building Rural Health Partnerships in the Rural South Mini-Grant Program. As part of a conference sponsored by the SRDC in October 1998, the Center, along with the Farm Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, provided funds for mini-grants to six state rural health teams. In April 1999, the SRDC published the results of the following projects to encourage replication by other communities.

- ♦ In Alabama, the Coosa Action Network was formed, and utilizing an interdisciplinary team approach, initiated a Coosa County-wide festival focusing on family health, parenting, and the particular needs of children. (Project coordinator Dr. Randall Weavers, Coosa Action Network)
- ♦ Arkansas team members participated in an intensive workshop in writing/adapting health-related materials for low literacy individuals and now are assisting in writing/adapting health-related materials. The team continues to work towards full implementation of an Arkansas Medical Literacy Center. (Project coordinator Mike Hedges, Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service)





- ♦ A state resource team in Kentucky helped Floyd County implement several health activities including development of a local resource book of health services, addressing cultural awareness issues, and development of a clearinghouse of issues relating to health education. (Project coordinator Steve Fricker, University of Kentucky Center for Rural Health)
- ♦ A Mississippi team established a mentoring program for at-risk teenagers and adolescents in a county with an unusually high incidence of teenage pregnancy. The mentors provided peer educational activities to enhance self-esteem of youth and to educate them on the dangers of teenage sexual activity. (Project coordinator Rachel Wellborn, Mississippi State University Extension Service)
- ♦ An Oklahoma state resource team guided one county through a health decision-making process to maintain and improve the health environment in that community. The team developed a plan of action based on the planning results. (Project coordinator Gerald Doekson, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service)
- ♦ In Texas, a state team helped with an assessment of a county's health issues and educational needs with the idea of addressing these on a priority basis. Institutionalizing the local committee and its task forces ensured continuation of the effort until all needs are addressed. (Project coordinator Steven Shwiff, Center for Regional and Economic Development Studies)

Serve as a conduit for informing individuals and communities of critical environmental quality issues

Working Toward Solutions: Southern Region Extension Water Quality Conference. Held in Raleigh, N.C., in April, this conference was designed to strengthen Extension's capacity to develop and deliver successful water quality, waste management, and natural resource programs. Nearly 250 Extension personnel and public officials with an interest in water quality attended sessions on community water quality education programs, landowner and policy maker education programs, community decision-making and public policy, youth education, and Extension education. For the conference, the SRDC published 700 copies of *What Works!*, the final report from the seven water quality mini-grant projects funded in 1997. The Center, along with Farm Foundation and CSREES, also funded the following new projects at \$1,000 each:

- ♦ **Bank stabilization and erosion control using old-fashioned nursery technology in Alabama.** Native and exotic plants would be used to demonstrate the establishment of landscaped banks. Project leaders Ken Tilt, Larry Quick, and Jim Hairston, Alabama Cooperative Extension Service.
- ♦ **Enhancing nutrient management of land-applied animal manure utilizing spatial technology on the Cassatot River in Southwestern Arkansas.** The project will use digital geographic positioning equipment to coordinate soil samples and track phosphorus levels. Project leader Ralph Taylor, Sevier County, Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.
- ♦ **Litter testing of poultry producers in Lumpkin County, Ga.** Organizers hope to use their findings to begin establishing national management practices for nutrient management in the poultry industry as it relates to application of poultry litter. Project leader Greg Sheppard, Lumpkin County.
- ♦ **Resource materials to support an educational program to help youth in Okfuskee County, Okla., learn about the health and ecology of streams.** The project will provide four-day camps for 9- to 14-year-olds and for 4-H Water Quality Projects at seven elementary and six middle schools. Project leaders Ron Vick, Mitch Fram, and Billie Chambers, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.

- ♦ **Composting in landscapes and gardens in Texas, the Amarillo-Canyon-Hereford area.** After establishing a high-visibility composting site, organizers plan to ask Master Gardeners to help publicize the benefits of composting and to evaluate these educational events. Project leaders Brent Auvermann, John Pipkin, and Robert Devin, Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

Southern Extension and Research Activity, Information Exchange Group (SERA-IEG 16)—Rural Infrastructure. This group offers a forum for researchers and Extension personnel to exchange information on rural infrastructure issues and to discuss how Extension and research can best address these issues. The groups has identified eight areas for future focus:

- ♦ Safe drinking water
- ♦ Pork production facilities
- ♦ Rural transportation systems (roads)
- ♦ Health insurance (Medicare and Medicaid)
- ♦ Housing
- ♦ Workforce Reinvestment Act
- ♦ Community Resourcing (to get people out of the welfare system and into self-supporting employment)
- ♦ Child care

Priority 5 Activities

Assess the impacts of welfare reform on individuals, families, and communities in the rural South

- ♦ Information Brief
- ♦ Welfare Reform Southern Research Development Committee (SRDC 98-04)
- ♦ Rural Welfare-to-Work in Mississippi: The Challenges of Urban Influence
- ♦ Access to Opportunities: A Systems Approach to Welfare Reform and Job Retention: A Multi-Site Assessment

Examine the food assistance needs of the South's vulnerable populations

- ♦ Food Assistance Research Task Force
- ♦ Economic Research Service Food Assistance Grant
- ♦ Economic Research Service Food Assistance Grant for 1890 Institutions

Priority 5—Enhance the capacity of rural people and communities to carry out their expanded responsibilities in the design, management, and financing of government programs.

Changes to welfare reform legislation are but a new phase of an ongoing effort by the federal government to give state and local jurisdictions a greater voice in shaping, managing, and assessing federally-supported programs. Many states today find themselves central players in designing programs and setting policies associated with social services, health, telecommunications, infrastructure, and workforce training. Increasingly, states are transferring such responsibilities to local governments, believing that those closest to the people are best positioned to design programs that effectively address local needs and circumstances. The SRDC has sought to be a

catalyst in bringing the research and outreach education resources of the land-grant system to bear on the challenges and opportunities that await rural people and communities in this new era of governance in America.

Assess the impacts of welfare reform on individuals, families, and communities in the rural South

Information Brief. The SRDC, in partnership with the land-grant institutions in the region, has sought to shed light on the host of challenges and opportunities that face governments, communities, and people as a result of “welfare reform” legislation by continuing its Information Brief series. These documents are





available in electronic format (both pdf and html) for downloading and in hard copy. Twenty-four hundred copies each of four briefs have been distributed through a state land-grant contact person who sends copies to colleagues, state leaders, policy makers, and other interested individuals. Partial support for the publication of these reports has been provided by the Farm Foundation. Information Briefs published this year include:

- ♦ **The Drive to Work: Transportation Issues and Welfare Reform in Rural Areas** (November 1998)—Sarah Dewees, Rural Policy Research Institute.
- ♦ **Electronic Benefits Transfer: New Strategies for Improving Public Assistance Programs** (December 1998)—Katherine L. Cason, Clemson University.
- ♦ **Counting Cases: Changes in Welfare Reciprocity Since 1993** (January 1999)—Julie N. Zimmerman, University of Kentucky.
- ♦ **Improving Job Opportunities for Low-Income People: The Hope of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998** (July 1999)—Lionel J. Beaulieu, Southern Rural Development Center.

Welfare Reform Southern Research Development Committee (SRDC 98-04). The SRDC served as a major catalyst for securing approval for the establishment of this committee by the Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors. Over the past year, the SRDC has worked with a team of scientists in the preparation of a regional research proposal. A regional research proposal was completed, was subsequently subjected to a peer review, and was revised in accordance with the recommendations of these reviewers. The proposal is being submitted to the Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors for review and approval in early Fall 1999.

Rural Welfare-to-Work in Mississippi: The Challenges of Urban Influence. The major revamping of the welfare reform system in 1996 has created significant challenges for many rural areas. The one area in which problems have been especially apparent has been in the capacity of welfare recipients to secure decent employment in their local communities. In some cases, job availability has been plentiful. In other areas, the number of persons transitioning off welfare has exceeded the number of jobs available locally for them to move into.

The SRDC project, funded by the Administration for Children and Families/U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Mississippi Department of Human Services, and Millsaps College, is designed to explore how welfare-to-work programs may play out across rural areas of Mississippi, particularly when examined in the context of various labor market areas in Mississippi and their physical proximity to metropolitan economies.

Over the course of the past year, the research team (Frank Howell, Lynn Reinschmiedt, Bo Beaulieu, Melissa Barfield, and Kathy Stone, all at Mississippi State University) has carried out the following:

- ♦ Examined the nature of job changes projected to occur in Mississippi's labor market areas and assessed the extent to which these shifts are linked to proximity to urbanized areas.
- ♦ Analyzed the composition of jobs being created in the state's labor market areas.
- ♦ Examined the human resource endowments of welfare recipients and explored the extent to which these endowments matched with the type of jobs being created in each labor market area.
- ♦ Selected three labor market areas to study in greater depth. These sites were chosen because of the different forces at play in these areas with regard to level of urban influence, characteristics of their labor markets, and their capacity to absorb TANF participants into the workforce. In addition, the SRDC research team: (1) prepared and administered a questionnaire titled, "Identifying Your Skills and Talents" that was intended to uncover the full set of skills of welfare recipients in the targeted county sites. Completed forms were received from 94 welfare recipients and (2) developed and field tested a survey instrument that is scheduled to be administered in the Fall of 1999 to a subset of employers

located in the three study sites. The instrument is patterned after one developed by Regenstein et al., in a national study conducted by the Urban Institute. It examines the nature to which employers have hired welfare recipients, and the set of skills welfare recipients will need to qualify for available jobs with these firms.

- ♦ Examined the availability of licensed child care facilities and transportation alternatives for welfare recipients living in various labor market areas of the state.

Access to Opportunities: A Systems Approach to Welfare Reform and Job Retention: A Multi-Site Assessment. The SRDC has joined forces with researchers at Emory University, MIT, Case Western University, and UCLA, in the investigation the spatial distribution of welfare recipients, job opportunities, and support services in selected sites in the U.S. The SRDC effort represents the only component of this joint project that is seeking to understand these issues within a rural setting. One Mississippi Delta county is serving as the site of the SRDC research. Funding to support this effort is being provided by the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation.

To date, the SRDC has completed the following activities on the project: (1) collected cross-sectional data on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the county study site; (2) located and secured key reports that describe the Mississippi’s welfare system; and are preparing a table that highlights the important components of the state’s WorkFirst program; (3) generated information on projected job growth between 1997-2003 for the broader labor market area in which the study site is located; (4) contacted people at the County Department of Human Services, as well as key informants in the community, to explore issues of child care, transportation, and training centers; and (5) initiated contacts with local representatives to explore institutional arrangements. So far, the qualitative data generated have been rich in information concerning partnerships and collaborations that have been undertaken in the local site to address the needs of welfare participants.



Community Development Institute reaches 62 professionals region-wide in two years

Participants in the Southern Region Community Development Institute attend sessions on a variety of topics, including:

- ♦ understanding community
- ♦ social infrastructure
- ♦ sustainable development
- ♦ strategic planning
- ♦ problem-solving
- ♦ local government
- ♦ asset-mapping
- ♦ economic development
- ♦ leadership skills

“The SRDC is the only organization that has even brought the program leaders from the Southern states together for Community Development programming. Being included in this effort broadened my knowledge and my options for programming. Having the SRDC’s expertise in securing speakers for the Institute was critical to its success.”

–North Carolina area Extension specialist in community development

“The Community Development Institute is extraordinary and is respected and appreciated by the participants. The program has been very effective because it provides an overview, some theory, and much in the way of practical skills and tools.”

–South Carolina Extension agricultural economist in community development

Examine the food assistance needs of the South’s vulnerable populations

Food Assistance Research Task Force. This group met in Spring 1999 to review the progress of work in food assistance and to outline new priority initiatives for the proposal request sent out by the SRDC in June 1999 where funds were award to the recipients listed below. The task force is charged with overseeing ongoing work and making recommendations for future priorities in food assistance research.





Economic Research Service Food Assistance Grant. The SRDC has again been chosen by the Economic Research Service to serve as one of five centers in the country (along with the Joint Center for Poverty Research at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University, the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin, the University of Arizona American Indian Studies Program, and the Nutrition Education Research Group at the Department of Nutrition—University of California at Davis) that is involved in a small grants program on food assistance research. The SRDC program focuses on the food assistance needs of the South's vulnerable populations. Projects funded as part of the Center's 1998 small grants program will present their findings at a national conference sponsored by the Food and Nutrition Research Program of ERS in October. They include:

- ♦ **From Welfare Reliance to Wage Work: Food Security, Health, and Well-Being Among Louisiana's Rural Welfare Population**
Pamela A. Monroe, Louisiana State University
- ♦ **Assessing the Benefits and Problems Associated with the use of Electronic Benefits Transfer for Food Stamps in Macon County, Alabama**
Andrew A. Zekeri, Tuskegee University
- ♦ **Economic Downturns and Welfare Reform: An Exploratory County-Level Analysis**
Stephan J. Goetz, Julie N. Zimmerman and David L. Debertin, University of Kentucky; Fisseha Tegegne and S.P. Singh, Tennessee State University
- ♦ **Private Food Assistance in East Alabama: Issues of Access and Need**
Patricia A. Duffy, L. Conner Bailey, and Joseph J. Molnar, Auburn University
- ♦ **The Impact of Food Stamp Reforms on Elderly in Mississippi**
Sheri L. Lokken, Mississippi State University
- ♦ **Understanding Hunger and Food Insecurity in Kentucky: A Guide to Cooperative Extension Service Programming for Limited-Resource Audiences**
Janet S. Kurzynske, University of Kentucky

Projects funded in 1999 as part of the second year of the SRDC's mini-grant program are:

- ♦ **Linked TANF and Food Stamp Program Participation Decisions: Understanding the Direct and Indirect Impacts of Welfare Reform**
Bradford Mills, Gautam Hazarika, and Everett B. Peterson, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

The most significant change associated with the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) is the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF) requirement that able-bodied recipients work or face the loss of program income assistance benefits. The major non-cash assistance component of the welfare program, Food Stamps, was also reauthorized under PRWORA with additional eligibility restrictions. The proposed research will examine the potential impact of TANF Program reforms on the participation of single female headed families with children (SFHFwC) in the Food Stamps program in the nonmetropolitan South. SFHFwC in the nonmetropolitan South are a particularly vulnerable group. Rates of poverty for SFHFwC exceed those for other family types. Poverty rates for SFHFwC in the nonmetropolitan South are also higher than rates for SFHFwC in other regions. SFHFwC are also particularly reliant on income and non-cash welfare benefits.

While not directly affected by new Food Stamp Program eligibility requirements, SFHFwC participation in the Food Stamp Program may still be substantially influenced by welfare reform initiatives if households link TANF Program and Food Stamp Program participation decisions. The project will

examine the strength and nature of this linked program participation decision. Specifically, recent trends in cash and non-cash welfare program assistance will be documented. A conceptual model of joint household participation in TANF and Food Stamp Programs will be developed and empirically tested using household level data from the Current Population Survey. The findings will then be used to stimulate the impact of TANF Program reforms on Food Stamp Program participation. The results will provide a more complete picture of welfare reform program impacts on poor and near-poor SFHFwC in the nonmetropolitan South.

- ♦ **A Comparison of Food and Nutrient Intakes, Food Purchase Patterns, Level of Food Security and Selected Demographic Variables Among Food Stamp Program Recipients and Non-Recipients in South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia**

Katherine Cason and Rama Radhakrishna, Clemson University; Janie Burney, Wayne Moore, Richard Poling, and Sandra Shivers, University of Tennessee; Ruby H. Cox, Judith L. Midkiff, and Kathleen Poole, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Changes in federal welfare law have resulted in large declines in welfare rolls. For families unable to secure and maintain jobs that pay above poverty wages, there is little data on how welfare reform affects their ability to obtain enough food that is nutritionally adequate, safe and acceptable. An estimated 30 million Americans, including 11 million children, currently experience hunger and food insecurity.

This research will provide information on the effects of food assistance programs on the level of food security and malnutrition of low income populations in South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. The research questions to be addressed are (1) Does a relationship exist between the receipt of food stamps and the food security, dietary practices, food purchasing patterns, and nutritional status of low income adults? and (2) Do differences in race, educational attainment, household composition, and place of residence impact level of food security, dietary practices, food purchasing patterns, and nutritional status of low income adults receiving food stamps?

Data will be obtained from a demographic survey, 24-hour dietary recall, food resource management and security survey, and Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) system. Subjects will be a random sample of participants in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and food stamp nutrition education programs. Survey data will be used to explore the relationships between participation in the Food Stamp Program and food and nutrient intake, food purchasing patterns, and food security. Other variables, such as place of residence and family composition, also will be examined.

Information obtained from this study will contribute to the understanding of how welfare reform and the Food Stamp Program impact nutritional well-being. It will help policy makers allocate resources that benefit families with food insecurity and help nutrition educators deliver programs that meet the needs of these families.

- ♦ **Can Religious Congregations Satisfy Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Justice? An Assessment of Faith-Based Food Assistance Programs in Rural Mississippi**

John P. Bartkowski, Helen A. Regis, and Neil R. White, Mississippi State University; Melinda N. Chow, University of Memphis

In the wake of welfare reform, many states have considered utilizing local religious communities as a point of social service delivery for relief previously offered through state entitlement programs. "Charitable Choice," Section 104 of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, mandates that states which explore routing social services through local voluntary associations must consider religious congregations as prospective providers of such relief. In light of growing support for charitable choice initiatives among Mississippi policymakers, this study will (1) examine the food assistance strategies currently employed by a heterogeneous sample of religious communities in Mississippi's Golden Triangle Region; (2) situate faith-based food assistance efforts within the broader





context of congregational relief programs; (3) compare these faith-based relief initiatives with the service delivery mechanisms utilized in public assistance programs; and (4) explore the prospect for expanding faith-based food assistance and aid programs via the infusion of block grant monies into local religious congregations.

This triangulated study will draw on primary survey data and over six hundred pages of transcribed in-depth interview data recently culled from religious leaders representing thirty-five local congregations. This investigation will also utilize a voluminous body of ethnographic data on food and relief programs collected from four key religious congregations and from various parachurch relief efforts. These primary survey and qualitative data will be analyzed in light of contextual-level Census data gauging regional patterns of poverty, stratification, and public assistance use. The study will reveal the distinctive and diverse means by which local congregations seek to address a range of food-based needs among vulnerable populations, including food pantries, hot meal programs, the assisted purchase of foodstuffs, and other faith-based initiatives. At the same time, the study will explore how various types of social hierarchies (e.g., congregational authority structures, community-level patterns of racial segregation) sometimes negatively impact food disbursement by local religious communities.

In short, this study will help ascertain the strengths and limitations of utilizing religious congregations as a food provision outlet to vulnerable populations in rural Mississippi. The findings generated from this research will benefit Mississippi policymakers as they consider implementing charitable choice initiatives jointly with local religious communities in the Golden Triangle Area and throughout the state. This study will also illuminate the prospects of charitable choice initiatives currently under consideration for rural areas and in other parts of the South and the United States.

- ◆ **Food Stamp Utilization Patterns in Rural Counties in Texas: A Multilevel Analysis of the Micro- and Macro-Level Determinants of Caseload Dynamics**
Steve H. Murdock, Tami Swenson, and Steve White, Texas A&M University

The recent declines in the size of the public assistance caseloads in Texas have been cited as indicating the success of Achieving Change for Texans, the state's welfare reform waiver. Key reform measures have been the introduction of variable benefit time limits and work requirements for receipt of cash assistance and a diversion program that emphasizes the importance of work when families apply for benefits. Reform measures affecting the Food Stamp program were implemented at the federal level and restrict benefits for adults without children to three months within a 36-month period. Within Texas, counties with an unemployment rate above 10 percent during the previous quarter are allowed to exempt clients from this Food Stamp benefit restriction. The central question to be examined in this post-reform period is the degree to which participation declines are determined by individual level characteristics, programmatic characteristics, and economic and county level characteristics.

Within the 195 nonmetropolitan counties in Texas, there has been a 16.7 percent decline in the Food Stamp caseload from September 1995 through December 1998. This research will explore the static/dynamic components of the Food Stamp caseload in the nonmetropolitan counties in Texas for the period from September 1995 through August 1999, thus including both pre- and post-reform periods. Individual-level variables examined include demographic, human capital and household characteristics. Contextual variables examined include economic conditions and migration rates in the county. Using a multi-level analysis framework, the extent to which the Food Stamp caseload decline can be decomposed into the variance attributed to micro-level and macro-level components will be determined.

- ◆ **Nutrient Intakes of Food Insufficient and Food Sufficient Adults in the Southern Region of the United States and the Impact of Federal Food Assistance Programs**
Agnes W. Hinton, Carol L. Connell, and M. Kathleen Yadrick, The University of Southern Mississippi; L. Joseph Su, Louisiana State University Medical Center

Food insecurity is the target of federal food assistance programs such as the Food Stamp Program, the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children and Child Nutrition Programs. Little has been done to date to try to define the food insecurity-related nutritional problems of the South or its sub-regions with high-risk populations such as the lower Mississippi Delta. Surveys such as National Health and Nutrition Examination survey (NHANES) are rich sources of information that could be utilized to examine the effects of food insecurity/insufficiency on diets of individuals in the Southern region in general in order to clarify direction for more specific studies of sub-regions within the South. In addition, these data sets provide a unique opportunity to assess the effects of federal food assistance programs on the diets of individuals from food insufficient households. Therefore, the goal of this research is to examine the nature of food insecurity and hunger among a Southern adult population using NHANES III data and the impact of food assistance programs on this phenomenon.

This research will examine differences in nutrient intakes between adults reporting food insufficiency and those reporting food deficiency. In addition, racial/ethnic differences and age-related differences will be explored. Finally, nutrient intakes among those reporting food insufficiency or food sufficiency will be examined based on participation/non-participation in federal food assistance programs. In particular, the contribution of participation in multiple food assistance programs will be examined. Nutrient intakes will be expressed both as an absolute mean and as a ration per 1000 calories of energy intake for food sufficient and food insufficient males and females. Analysis of variance adjusted for potential confounding factors such as education, smoking status, age, gender, body weight, family size, and income will be performed to test the difference in intakes between food sufficient and insufficient groups. Dietary data will also be stratified by ethnicity to explore whether there are different patterns among ethnic groups. Finally, regression analyses will be used to identify possible contributing factors and the magnitudes of these factors.

Economic Research Service Food Assistance Grant for 1890 Institutions. In addition to the projects listed previously, the SRDC and ERS also have funded six 1890 institutions in the South to work jointly on food assistance research. The research team and project description are provided below.

♦ **Access to and Use of Non-profit Food Assistance Programs by Vulnerable Populations in Selected Urban-Rural Areas in the South**

Robert Zabawa and Nyanza Duplessis, Tuskegee University; Earline Strickland, Alcorn State University; Odili Onianwa, Alabama A&M University; Mabel Dianna Edlow, Florida A&M University; Edith Neal, University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff; Fisseha Tegegne, Tennessee State University

Approximately 16 percent of requests for food assistance agencies in the Second Harvest network went unmet (Second Harvest, 1997). Recent studies have reported that they had experienced food shortages within the last year as a result of increase demand for food. Catholic Charities USA reported that the number of families receiving emergency food assistance through their program rose from five million in 1995 to 5.7 million in 1996 and that the number of meals served in their soup kitchens rose from 12.8 million in 1995 to 13.5 million in 1996. The purpose of this study is to determine and compare access and usage of non-profit food assistance programs by vulnerable populations in selected rural and urban areas of the South. The specific objectives of this project are to: (1) identify and classify the types of non-profit food assistance programs available in selected counties in urban and rural areas of the South; (2) determine the extent of change in demand for food assistance programs by vulnerable populations in selected urban and rural areas of the South; (3) identify the socioeconomic characteristics and factors that affect use of non-profit food assistance programs by vulnerable populations in selected urban and rural areas of the South; (4) determine the extent of food security and hunger among vulnerable populations in selected urban and rural areas of the South; and (5) derive implications for food assistance policy-making. Data for this study will be generated by means of primary and secondary sources. The data collected through surveys will be analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, chi-squares, and cross tabulations. These statistical measures will provide general information on the characteristics of participants and the unique factors pertaining to the participants that affect their participation.





The following is a list of conferences, workshops, and task force meetings that the SRDC coordinated over the past year:

Southern Rural Labor Force Conference, October 1-2, 1998—Fourteen participants from eight Southern states.

SERA-IEG 19 Health, October 8-9, 1998—Twenty-four participants from eight Southern states, and two participants from other states.

Welfare Reform Task Force Meeting, October 15-16, 1998—Twenty-five participants from 10 Southern states, and four participants from other states.

SERA-16 Rural Infrastructure, January 30-February 1, 1998—Fourteen participants from 10 Southern states, and one participant from a state outside the region.

Southern Region Extension Middle Management Conference, March 1-4, 1999—One hundred, twenty-four participants from 12 Southern states, and one participant from a state outside the region.

Thriving During Periods of Change, March 8-11, 1999—Forty-two participants from 11 Southern states, and one participant from a state outside the region.

Southern Region Extension Accountability Workshop, April 12-14, 1999—One hundred, seventeen participants from 13 Southern states.

Southern Region Extension Water Quality Conference, April 17-21, 1999—Two hundred, thirty-one participants from 13 Southern states, and 12 participants from other states.

Southern Region Community Development Institute, May 17-21, 1999—Fifty participants from 10 Southern states, and one participant from a state outside the region.

Building a Quality Workforce in the Rural South, July 26-28, 1999—One hundred, forty-nine participants from 12 Southern states, and seven participants from other states.

Mid-South Delta Community Development Institute, August 19-20, 1999—Ninety participants from Mississippi, and one participant from a state outside the region.

Southern Region Program Leaders Conference, August 29-September 1, 1999—One hundred, sixty-seven participants from 13 Southern states, and nine participants from other states.

CONFERENCES, etc.

The SRDC director and staff were involved in the formal presentations at the following conferences or meetings

- ♦ Southern Rural Labor Force Conference, October 1-2, 1998
- ♦ SERA-IEG Health Workshop, October 8-9, 1998
- ♦ Southern Research Development Committee 98-04 Meeting, October 15-16, 1998
- ♦ Association of Southern Region Extension Directors Meeting, October 11-14, 1998
- ♦ Southern Rural Development Institute, November 2, 1998
- ♦ North Carolina State University Annual Extension Conference, November 17, 1998
- ♦ National Program Leaders Committee Meeting, January 20-22, 1999
- ♦ Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists Annual Meeting, January 30-February 3, 1999
- ♦ Mississippi Forestry Commission Conference, March 1, 1999
- ♦ Southern Region Middle Managers Conference, March 1-4, 1999
- ♦ Southern ANR Program Leaders Regional Conference, March 7-10, 1999
- ♦ National Rural Development Partnership Meeting, March 21-24, 1999
- ♦ Food Assistance Research Advisory Task Force, April 6-7, 1999
- ♦ Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors Meeting, April 10-11, 1999
- ♦ Southern Regional Science Association, April 15-17, 1999
- ♦ Southern Region Extension Water Quality Conference, April 17-20, 1999
- ♦ SERA-IEG Health Workshop, April 21-22, 1999
- ♦ Association of Southern Region Extension Directors Meeting, April 26-27, 1999
- ♦ National Program Leaders Committee Meeting, May 10-12, 1999
- ♦ Southern Region Community Development Institute, May 17-22, 1999
- ♦ Administration for Children and Families Rural Welfare-to-Work Meeting, June 28-29, 1999
- ♦ Building a Quality Workforce in the Rural South Conference, July 26-28, 1999
- ♦ Rural Sociological Society Annual Meeting, August 5-8, 1999
- ♦ Southern Region Land-Grant Conference, August 14-17, 1999
- ♦ Mid-South Delta Community Development Institute, August 19-20, 1999
- ♦ Southern Program Leaders Conference, August 29-September 1, 1999
- ♦ Meeting with the Ilembe Regional Council of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, September 7-9, 1999
- ♦ National Program Leaders Committee Meeting, September 19-22, 1999

PRESENTATIONS





Southern Perspectives (quarterly newsletter)

Themes

- ♦ The Changing Complexion of the South's Rural Labor Markets, *Spring 1999*
- ♦ Economic Impact of Forestry and Forest Products in the Southern Region, *Summer 1999*
- ♦ Water Quality and Quantity Issues in the Southern Region, *Fall 1999*

Grant Connections (electronic newsletter)

- ♦ October 1998
- ♦ December 1998
- ♦ January 1999
- ♦ April 1999
- ♦ June 1999
- ♦ August 1999

Ca\$hing in on Business Opportunities: A Guide to Building a Home-Based and Micro-Business Program (two-volume, 22-chapter curriculum, reprint only)

Information Brief (welfare reform series)

- ♦ The Drive to Work: Transportation Issues and Welfare Reform in Rural Areas, *November 1998*
- ♦ Electronic Benefits Transfer: New Strategies for Improving Public Assistance Programs, *December 1998*
- ♦ Counting Cases: Changes in Welfare Reciprocity Since 1993, *January 1999*
- ♦ Improving Job Opportunities for Low-Income People: The Hope of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, *July 1999*

What Works! (1997 Southern Region Extension Water Quality Conference mini-grant reports, *April 1999*)

Building Rural Health Partnerships in the South (final report to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Farm Foundation, *April 1999*)

Rural Development Issues Impacting the South

- ♦ Linking Community Development with National Forest Planning and Management in the South, *June 1999*
- ♦ The Changing Nature of Work in the South: The Polarization of Tomorrow's Workforce, *July 1999*
- ♦ Land Prices and the Changing Geography of Southern Row Crop Agriculture, *July 1999*
- ♦ Great Expectations: From Welfare to Work in the South, *August 1999* (forthcoming)
- ♦ The Telecommunications Act of 1996: Its Implementation in the U.S. South, *September 1999* (forthcoming)

Implementation of Nonpoint Source Policies in Southern Agriculture (SRIEG 10 #212), *September 1999*

The following represents the host of organizations the SRDC has worked closely with over the past year:

- ♦ Administration for Children and Families/HHS
- ♦ Appalachian Regional Commission
- ♦ Community Development Society
- ♦ Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
- ♦ Corporation for Enterprise Development
- ♦ Delta State University
- ♦ Economic Research Service/USDA
- ♦ Emory University
- ♦ Farm Foundation
- ♦ Foundation for the Mid-South
- ♦ Heartland Center
- ♦ MDC, Inc.
- ♦ Mid-South Delta Consortium
- ♦ Mid-South Center for Rural Community Colleges
- ♦ Millsaps College
- ♦ Mississippi Department of Human Services
- ♦ National Association of Counties (NACo)
- ♦ National Association of Towns and Townships
- ♦ National Rural Development Partnership
- ♦ Nonprofit Resources, Inc.
- ♦ Offices of Rural Health (Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma)
- ♦ Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI)
- ♦ Small Business Administration
- ♦ Social Science Research Center, Mississippi State University
- ♦ Southeast Regional Director's Institute
- ♦ Southern Regional Office of the National Forest Service
- ♦ Southern Growth Policies Board
- ♦ Southern Legislative Conference
- ♦ State Rural Development Councils (Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina)
- ♦ TVA Rural Studies Center, University of Kentucky
- ♦ University of Alabama
- ♦ U.S. Department of Labor
- ♦ W. K. Kellogg Foundation

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