Disseminating Government Data Effectively in the Age of Open Data

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The Economic Research Service (ERS)

- One of the 13 principle Federal statistical agencies
- Over 30 data products covering various economic aspects of food and agriculture from the farm to retail level
Agenda

• Context
• Challenges
• Good/effective practices
A new and evolving context

• Open Data policy
• Increased demand for statistical information (quantity and quality)
• Rapidly changing technology and user expectations
Internal challenges

- Prevalence of data silos
- Understanding (and keeping up with) user needs
- Communicating uncertainty
Objective

• **Objective**: Make the *Right* data available to the *Right* users in the *Right* format

• **Right Data** Relevant (timely, topical), accurate, meet federal standards

• **Right Users** Data reach the intended users

• **Right Format** Data are available to users in a format that meet their needs
Effective practices at ERS

Right data

• Ensuring data quality: The ERS has formed a Data Product Review Council which assesses data using six measures: Purpose, utility, objectivity, integrity, accessibility, transparency

• Posting process checks

• Errata policy
Right users and right format

- More complete and granular data
- Information about methodology
- API, data query tools

Users need more complete and granular data and more information about methodology

- Briefs or visualizations showing trends or telling stories about data with relation to specific topic or policy
- One point estimates of key figures
- Visualizations with key messages

Academics
Data analysts
Media and policy makers
Lay audience
Right users and right format: Examples

• Vary format for data delivery
• Lay audience: visualizations, blogs
  https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/international-markets-trade/us-agricultural-trade/outlook-for-us-agricultural-trade/
• Data analysts and academics: Data analysts APIs, CSV, data documentation (standard errors)
Work underway

- Consolidation of some key data sets
- Data automation
Questions?

Thank you!

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