



What we do & Why it matters

Agricultural and Consumer Economics | ace.illinois.edu

The Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics is comprised of world-renowned faculty whose research and outreach programs influence national and international policymaking on issues ranging from how producers, consumers, and agribusinesses manage risk and adapt to climate change to the impacts of new technologies, environmental regulations, federal laws on profitability, and human well-being.

SARAH LOW (Dept head and professor)

Dr. Low is passionate about the land-grant mission's research, teaching and extension pillars, and she enjoys leading and mentoring others committed to serving this mission. Her research emphasizes how to support and facilitate regional economic development. Drawing on her experience in federal government, Dr. Low prioritizes policy-relevant issues. Her research interests include business dynamics, broadband impacts, rural household well-being, value-added agriculture, and entrepreneurial ecosystem building.

MARY ARENDTS-KUENNING (associate professor)

Dr. Arends-Kuennen studies the decisions that households make about fertility, schooling, and work. She examines the implications of these decisions for household members' present and future well-being.

SHADI S. ATALLAH (associate professor)

Dr. Atallah's research program generates recommendations to growers, landowners, and resource managers to manage their crops and natural resources in a way that balances economic and ecological objectives and constraints. Applications include the economics of sustainably managing damaging organisms such as pests, diseases, and invasive species and beneficial organisms such as pollinators, within and across farms and forestlands.

MEREDITH BLUMTHAL (instructor)

Meredith Blumthal is an instructor and the Director of the Food and Agribusiness Management Program. Students in her classes engage in real world project-based learning through business case studies and industry engagement in the classroom. Meredith is passionate about experiential learning, and helping students see the world through new perspectives by integrating international projects and students into her classroom.

DAVID S. BULLOCK (professor)

Dr. Bullock leads the Data Intensive Farm Management (DIFM) research team that generates and analyzes "Big" agronomic data to improve the way the world fertilizes its crops. DIFM works with participating farmers, using GPS-reliant precision agriculture technology to conduct large-scale agronomic field trials on farmers' own fields, to generate yield, input management, and field characteristics data in quantities and of quality only recently imaginable. DIFM's research also looks at the effects of fertilizer management practices on water quality, with the aim of discovering efficient means of reducing the loss of nitrogen fertilizer into the Mississippi River basin.

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PETER CHRISTENSEN (associate professor)

Dr. Christensen leads a team of economists and computer scientists who are integrating new forms of data, machine learning algorithms, and large-scale experiments into economic research in his role as a core faculty member at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA). He focuses on energy and environmental economics, particularly as related to public goods provision in cities around the world.

JONATHAN COPPESS (associate professor)

Mr. Coppess' experience in federal policymaking guides his research, extension, and teaching in agricultural policy and law. His work connects the history of federal agricultural policy development to current policy development, specifically applied to risk management and natural resource conservation.

SANDY DALL'ERBA (professor)

Dr. Dall'Erba advances our understanding of the impact of climate change and associated extreme weather events such as droughts and floods on our economy, agricultural productivity, and on water scarcity. He also improves regional economic development models and assesses the impact of regional development policies.

AILIE ELMORE (instructor)

Ms. Elmore not only encourages students to consider the world from a unique perspective but also dedicates herself to educating the next generation in the realms of food and agriculture. Her passion extends beyond traditional boundaries, as she is also deeply committed to equipping students with the skills to navigate the intricacies of financial management. She is particularly enthusiastic about imparting knowledge that prepares students for pivotal roles in financial planning, investment management, and corporate finance. Teaching a diverse array of courses, Ms. Elmore covers topics such as farm management, investment management, sales, and agriculture finance, ensuring a comprehensive and practical education for her students.

A. BRYAN ENDRES (professor)

Dr. Endres studies the impact of law throughout food and bio-products supply chains and develops solutions to improve regulatory outcomes. He explores a range of issues, including legal structures to support farms engaged in direct marketing, small farm regulatory compliance, liability issues relating to use of genetically engineered seed, and developing cooperative legal structures to better manage invasive plants.

RENATA ENDRES (teaching assistant professor)

Dr. Endres studies the adoption of renewable energy technologies and environmental support instruments. Her research informs policy decisions regarding the structure of incentives to improve firm productivity. Other research explores sustainable tourism initiatives as a form of economic development, especially in the context of agritourism and food-based tourism.

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PETER D. GOLDSMITH (professor)

Dr. Goldsmith brings new ideas about markets, commercial practices, and management to help small- and medium-scale farmers escape the trap of persistent poverty while helping small agribusinesses establish a vibrant private sector. He leads USAID's Feed the Future Lab for Soybean Value Chain Research bringing 50 researchers across 15 countries together to develop soybean as a technology to reduce poverty and malnutrition in the poorest countries of the world. He is using his soybean research and teaching experience over the past 15 years in Brazil and Argentina to make a difference in Africa and other developing countries.

LISA GUNDERSEN (lecturer)

Dr. Gundersen strives to help students understand and enjoy the fundamentals of economics and statistics. She employs a variety of teaching methods and hands-on experiences to make often complex material accessible to all. Her teaching philosophy has three main components: to develop student confidence by communicating meaningful support; to facilitate growth in higher-order thinking skills; and to help prepare students for their path in ACES and life after college.

CATALINA HERRERA ALMANZA (assistant professor)

Dr. Herrera studies issues at the intersection of demographic economics, gender, health, and education in developing countries. Her research examines i) whether fertility decisions affect women's human capital and economic outcomes, ii) what type of policy interventions can decrease women's barriers to health care access, iii) how childhood conditions can affect later economic outcomes in adulthood, and iv) whether public policies can mitigate the long-run effects of adverse shocks, such as natural disasters, on human capital.

ANDREW HULTGREN (assistant professor)

Dr. Hultgren studies the economics of environmental regulation, focusing on the economic impacts of climate change and on firms' strategic behavior under regulatory uncertainty. A faculty affiliate at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications, the Center for Digital Agriculture, and a member of the Climate Impact Lab, his research employs interdisciplinary methods to study economic problems.

JARED HUTCHINS (assistant professor)

Dr. Hutchins studies the economics of production decisions in agricultural enterprises using tools in data science and machine learning. His work focuses particularly on the role of genetic technology and dynamic decision making in production decisions. He also studies the role of cooperative business in the development of the rural economy.

SCOTT H. IRWIN (professor)

Dr. Irwin helps farmers in Illinois, the United States, and throughout the world make more informed production, marketing, and financial decisions by evaluating the economic factors that affect corn and soybean prices. He also leads *farmdoc*, a path-breaking Extension project that provides timely, useful, and relevant online information about Corn Belt farm economics.

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JOE JANZEN (assistant professor)

Dr. Janzen studies agricultural commodity price and trading dynamics. His research uncovers the sources of price changes, estimates their effect on government policy, asset values, and other important outcomes, and provides guidance for affected businesses and policymakers.

SARAH JANZEN (associate professor)

Dr. Janzen's research focuses on global poverty and international agricultural development. Her research spans three areas: theoretical modeling of poverty and asset dynamics, risk and agricultural finance in developing countries, and impact evaluation of anti-poverty programs. She currently has ongoing research projects in Kenya and Nepal.

MARIA KALAITZANDONAKES (assistant professor)

Dr. Kalaitzandonakes studies what we eat and why we eat it. In particular, she evaluates how food marketing and domestic food policy influence consumer preferences and demand for foods. She also loves applying this knowledge by working with producers and processors to create value-added opportunities in agriculture.

MADHU KHANNA (professor)

Dr. Khanna examines the motivations for producers to adopt innovative production technologies to meet demands for food and fuel, such as precision farming and biofuels, and to participate in conservation programs. Her work informs stakeholders and policy makers about the cost-effectiveness of various policy approaches to improve environmental quality and their implications for farm profitability, land use, and food and fuel production.

CRAIG LEMOINE (clinical associate professor)

Dr. Lemoine leads the Financial Planning Program in the College of ACES. He prepares students to enter a profession that can change the lives and financial outcomes of clients, families, and their businesses. He teaches students to become wealth managers, insurance professionals, and Certified Financial Planning™ professionals.

ANGELA LYONS (associate professor)

Dr. Lyons works closely with industry, education, and government to build practical, sustainable, and measurable models that offer innovative solutions for improving the financial stability of families and communities worldwide. She focuses on emerging issues in economic and financial inclusion, poverty and wealth inequality, financial education, and consumer financial protection.

GERALD MASHANGE (assistant professor)

Dr. Mashange researches the financial implications of economic factors on farmers and agribusinesses. The aim of his research is to provide actionable insights that empower these stakeholders, and others, to make informed decisions that support the resilience and sustainability of agriculture.

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PAUL McNAMARA (professor)

Dr. McNamara develops and strengthens extension services to help them meet the needs of some of the world's poorest smallholder farmers in places like Ghana, Kenya, and Malawi. Through his AgReach program, he assists organizations and programs that reach over 12 million smallholder farmers and helps them to improve their agricultural productivity, increase their incomes, and achieve better household food security.

HOPE MICHELSON (associate professor)

Dr. Michelson studies the dynamics of poverty and security in low-income countries where market failures are a fact of life. One of her key subjects is the interaction of international development efforts with local and large-scale agribusiness. She investigates how small farmers respond to the expansion of international supply chains, the sourcing of agricultural products, and the buying and selling of agricultural inputs.

CARL H. NELSON (associate professor)

Dr. Nelson's research impacts the evaluation of food policies by highlighting errors in impact measurements that fail to account for household budget constraints and substitution in response to relative price changes. He focuses on the economic impacts of market outcomes like commodity price spikes, economic development projects, and human health outcomes like child stunting from malnutrition.

NICK PAULSON (professor)

Dr. Paulson helps agricultural producers make the best farm- and risk-management decisions possible to optimize profitability and environmental sustainability. He analyzes government policies impacting agriculture, including crop insurance, commodity, and biofuels programs.

WILLIAM RIDLEY (assistant professor)

Dr. Ridley explores the effects of trade and investment policy, with a particular focus on analyzing the impacts of trade agreements and trade distortions. His work investigates the channels through which trade policies impact producers and consumers in global agricultural markets. He also assesses the ways in which international rules on intellectual property rights influence outcomes related to trade, innovation, and food security.

DONOVAN SANCHEZ (instructor)

Donovan Sanchez is an instructor in the Financial Planning Program in the College of ACES. Students in his classes are invited to engage with current issues, research material, and planning strategies that are immediately applicable to graduates seeking a career in financial services. Through instruction, mentorship, and extracurricular activities, Donovan helps Financial Planning Program students lift the profession to its higher potential.

GARY D. SCHNITKEY (professor)

Dr. Schnitkey uses Farm Business Farm Management (FBFM) data on revenue and costs to analyze profitability of major field crops and to assess impacts of farm programs and risk management strategies. His research informs farmers of the most profitable rotations and encourages long-term change to impact yield.

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TERESA SERRA-DEVESA (professor)

Dr. Serra studies agricultural commodity financial markets, including price discovery in agricultural futures markets, forecasting, risk management, and volatility spillovers. Her recent research focuses on market microstructure in the age of electronic and high frequency trading.

BRUCE J. SHERRICK (professor)

Dr. Sherrick helps make crop insurance programs work better for crop producers across the United States. Through Farmer Mac, he helps create and implement loan-funding programs that increase farmers' access to capital. As a member of the Farmland Technical Advisory Board, he coordinates the required calculations that support the use-value farmland assessment system in Illinois. He helps build information systems for agricultural asset markets that utilize big data and novel computational strategies to better understand farmland values.

TAPIWA SIGAUKE (teaching assistant professor)

Tapiwa Sigauke is a Teaching Assistant Professor in the Department of ACE. She uses her financial planning courses to effectively prepare students for careers in financial planning. She is passionate about teaching students about the financial planning industry and helping them navigate their career paths. Her current research analyzes the association between financial literacy and retirement income among different demographic groups. She is also interested in expanding her research into wealth-building strategies beyond retirement investments.

MARIN SKIDMORE (assistant professor)

Dr. Skidmore studies how market-based and public agricultural policy in the United States and the Brazilian Amazon influence farmer behavior. Her work highlights and quantifies unintended policy effects including agricultural productivity, deforestation, and water quality.

PAUL STODDARD (senior lecturer)

Mr. Stoddard challenges students to think about new things in different ways and old things in new ways to open new areas of study and exploration in agricultural economics. Every day, he strives to reduce knowledge to "that simple compound of the obvious and the wonderful", as H. L. Mencken put it, to help students become passionate ambassadors for agriculture, for the business of food, and for the department and college.

REBECCA TAYLOR (assistant professor)

Dr. Taylor studies how consumers respond to environmental and food policies. She is interested in the effectiveness of policies in changing consumer behavior, especially when there is debate over optimal policy design, how policies displace consumption in unintended ways, where the reduction of one problem causes the growth (or reduction) of another, and how policies interact with issues of equity, since environmental and nutritional issues often disproportionately affect disadvantaged populations.

MARK C. WHITE (clinical associate professor)

Dr. White conducts applied research on a wide variety of economic and workforce development topics. His research helps economic and workforce development practitioners—in states, regions, and communities—make more informed, data-driven decisions about how to move their economies forward and strengthen their area workforce.

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YILAN XU (associate professor)

Dr. Xu advances the knowledge of the financial decision-making process, the motivators and barriers to financial wellbeing, and the mechanisms of social mobility. She uses empirical economic methods to address policyrelevant issues related to financial behavior and consumer welfare. Her research provides policy implications on financial regulation, consumer financial protection, financial education, and neighborhood stability.