Costs and Returns Project Position

The USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) is looking to fill a research and data development position in the Market and Trade Economic Division, Animal Products and Cost-of-Production Branch. The incumbent would be a member of the commodity Costs and Returns (CAR) estimation project, responsible for contributing to the annual development and support of CAR estimates for 12 major field crop and livestock commodities. Annual CAR estimates are published in the CAR data product, one of the most active data products at ERS with tens of thousands of data views and downloads each year. Commodity CAR estimates are based on data collected for each commodity in special versions of the annual Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS), USDA’s primary source of economic information about the U.S. farm sector. The incumbent would have a role in supporting the annual ARMS commodity versions, including questionnaire development, enumerator training, and data summary and analysis.

In addition to data development from the ARMS, the incumbent is expected to leverage his/her in-depth knowledge of the ARMS data to conduct research about economic issues important to U.S. commodity producers. Examples of research opportunities presented by the ARMS commodity data include the farm adoption and impacts of new technologies, innovative production practices, and alternative business arrangements, such as genetically modified crops, precision farming techniques, rbST, production contracts, antibiotics, and organic farming. ARMS data also provide researchers the opportunity to study issues pertaining to the structure and productivity of commodity production and to investigate drivers of structural change. The incumbent will be given latitude to choose research topics from the ARMS data for which to study, will have the opportunity to add data items to the ARMS that support their research interests, and can take advantage of research collaboration opportunities with members of the ARMS team and other staff at ERS.

This position requires the incumbent to hold a graduate degree in agricultural economics or related discipline. The successful incumbent would benefit from having skills in data management and analysis using SAS and Excel, and other statistical software such as Stata. A basic knowledge of U.S. commodity production would also speed the assimilation of the incumbent into this position. The incumbent will be required to develop an in-depth understanding of the production practices and economics of assigned commodities.