Workshop on Food Prices and Forecasting Sponsored by ERS (PC52): Breakout Sessions
Thursday, August 1, 10:45 AM - 12:00 PM

The overall goal of the breakout sessions is to give workshop participants an opportunity to interact and learn from each other and to explore potential approaches to addressing research questions related to food price inflation evaluation and forecasting. Attendees will be divided into groups of 6 to 7 participants with a mix of university faculty, graduate students, government employees, and private sector professionals to discuss and identify stakeholders' needs, underutilized information, and potential improvements in evaluating and forecasting food prices. Only onsite attendees will be able to participate in the breakout sessions.

The groups and facilitators are as follows:

- Concentration (1): James MacDonald, USDA-ERS
- Concentration (2): Metin Çakır, University of Minnesota
- Forecasting (1): Aaron Smith, University of California, Berkeley
- Forecasting (2): Matthew MacLachlan, Cornell University
- Impacts of Price Changes (1): Anne Byrne, USDA-ERS
- Impacts of Price Changes (2): Abigail Okrent, USDA-ERS
- Input Price Pass-Through (1): Jude Bayham, Colorado State University
- Input Price Pass-Through (2): Kailin Kroetz, Arizona State University
- International (1): Simon Somogyi, Texas A&M
- International (2): John Baffes, World Bank
- Price Indexes (1): Chen Zhen, University of Georgia
- Price Indexes (2): Ana Aizcorbe, Bureau of Economic Analysis

As facilitators, please try to ensure that all members of the group are encouraged to and given an opportunity to speak. A suggested approach to facilitating the group is as follows:

- Each person introduces themselves and briefly describes their areas of research.

- Brainstorm potential research questions of interest related to the round table topic. Facilitators may want to have one or two hypothetical research questions in mind to get the discussion going.

- Suggestions of discussion topics:
    - Concentration and IO
        - What types of data and metrics can be used to assess market concentration in the food industry?
        - What are the known methodological challenges in measuring the impact of market concentration on food prices?
        - What potential solutions exist to address these methodological challenges?
        - How can findings about market concentration inform regulatory and policy decisions?

- Food Price Forecasting
  - What additional market conditions (e.g., energy costs, wages) should be incorporated into food price forecasting models?
  - What are the known challenges in integrating these additional market conditions into forecasting models?
  - What methods or approaches can be used to overcome these forecasting challenges?
  - How can improved forecasting models be used to inform government and industry policies?

- Impacts of Price Changes
  - What types of data can be used to analyze the impacts of food price changes on different population segments?
  - What methodological challenges exist in assessing the socio-economic impacts of food price changes?
  - What are some potential solutions to these methodological challenges?
  - How can the results of such impact analyses be used to develop effective support measures for affected populations?

- Input Price Pass-Through
  - What data sources can be used to study the pass-through of input prices to retail food prices?
  - What are the known methodological challenges in analyzing input price pass-through?
  - What potential solutions can be applied to address these challenges?
  - How can understanding input price pass-through help in formulating industry and government responses to price volatility?

- International Markets
  - What types of data can be used to analyze international food price volatility and its domestic effects?
  - What are the methodological challenges in linking international food prices with domestic price changes?
  - What potential solutions can mitigate these methodological challenges?
  - How can the results of international food price analyses inform trade policy and domestic market strategies?

- Price Indexes
  - What data and methods are most effective in constructing accurate and relevant food price indexes?
  - What are the known challenges in ensuring food price indexes reflect true consumer costs?
  - What potential solutions can improve the accuracy and relevance of food price indexes?
  - How can improved food price indexes be utilized to better inform economic and social policies?

Datasets

Public Data Resources

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI):
The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services. Indexes are available for the U.S. and various geographic areas, including for about 100 aggregate and disaggregate food categories at the national level.

USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) Food-at-Home Monthly Area Prices (F-MAP):
The Food-at-Home Monthly Area Prices (F-MAP) product provides retail food price data over time and across areas. The F-MAP includes monthly average unit prices and price indexes for 90 food groups across 15 geographic areas. The food groups in the F-MAP are based on the ERS Food Purchase Groups (EFPGs), a system for classifying foods based on characteristics such as ingredients, nutritional content, and convenience level.

Bureau of Economic Analysis Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index (PCE):
The Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) price index is a measure of the prices that people living in the United States, or those buying on their behalf, pay for goods and services. The PCE is known for capturing inflation (or deflation) across a wide range of consumer expenses and reflecting changes in consumer behavior.

ERS Fruit and Vegetable Prices:
Average retail price per pound and per cup for more than 150 commonly consumed fruits and vegetables.

ERS Purchase to Plate National Average Prices:
Price estimates for foods found in USDA dietary survey data.

ERS Price Spreads from Farm to Consumer:
Prices paid by consumers and prices received by farmers for corresponding commodities.

ERS Food Dollar Series:
Annual expenditures of U.S. consumers on domestically-produced food.

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Market News:
Data on supplies, demand, and prices for livestock, poultry, and grain, dairy, and specialty crops (produce).

Private Data Resources

Circana Scanner Data:
ERS acquires three types of scanner data from Circana (formerly IRI) for research purposes: (1) retail-based scanner data, (2) household-based scanner data, and (3) weekly retail and monthly household COVID-19 response data.

Commercial label data, including:

- Circana
- Mintel

- NielsenIQ Label Insight
- Nutritionix
- Syndigo (formerly Gladson)
- USDA Branded Foods

Numerator:
Data from large consumer panel including consumer demographics, trips, and receipts.

DecaData:
Point of sale data, grocery store transactions, retailer product deliveries, and retailer price promotions.