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Economic Research Service



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Workshop examines ag policy and new trends in farm ownership

OAK BROOK, IL May 5, 2016: The interaction of public policies and emerging trends in farmland ownership, finance and business structures will be examined at a workshop planned June 6 and 7, 2016, at the Brown Hotel, Louisville, KY.

The workshop, *Changing Dynamics of Farm Ownership and Agricultural Finance*, is being organized by Farm Foundation, NFP in collaboration with USDA's Economic Research Service, and Bank of America Merrill Lynch. The program is posted on the [Farm Foundation website](http://www.farmfoundation.org).

"The combination of strong non-farmer investor interest in agricultural resources—particularly land—and use of more diverse business organization tools by farmer landowners are changing the landscape of farmland ownership and tenure patterns," says Farm Foundation President Neil Conklin. "What those trends may mean to federal farm policies, business relationships, lending practices and rural communities are topics we want to explore in this workshop."

The relationship between changes in farm ownership and finance and the structure of federal farm policies will be the subject of a keynote address by Jonathan Coppess, Director of the Bock Agricultural Law and Policy Program at the University of Illinois. He will examine such issues as how a shift away from traditional owner/operator landowners may influence federal farm policy incentives and goals, eligibility for conservation programs or payment limitations.

Prior to joining the faculty at the University of Illinois, Coppess was Chief Counsel for the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, working with the Committee Chair on agricultural policy issues and omnibus authorizing legislation.

Joining Coppess on the program are Bruce Sherrick of the University of Illinois, discussing land ownership trends, and Jeffrey Hopkins of USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS). Hopkins will detail the Tenure, Ownership and Transition of Agricultural Lands (TOTAL) survey. This survey, a comprehensive study of all owners of agricultural land, including non-farm operators,

builds on data collected as part of the latest Census of Agriculture program. National Agricultural Statistics Service and ERS collaborated in conducting the TOTAL survey.

The workshop program will also feature a panel of farmer/landowners from across the nation. There will also be a panel discussion by representatives from large and regional commercial banks, Farm Credit, insurance companies and the investment community.

Investors outside the agricultural sector are buying farmland, including financial services firms and pension and mutual fund companies. Agriculture-only REITS are also now part of the farmland market. At the same time, other financial developments are at play in the agricultural finance sector. Farmers seeking to keep their land, invest in capital assets, adapt to changing supply chains or expand operations are turning to a wide array of organizational tools, such as C- and S-corporations.

The workshop is targeted to farmers, landowners, investors and members of the finance, agribusiness and public policy communities. “All are key players whose actions are shaping the trends in farmland ownership and agricultural finance which, in turn, has potential implications for the social and political environments in which they operate,” Conklin says.

There is no charge to participate in the workshop, but registration is requested and can be [completed online](#).

For more information:

[Sheldon Jones](#), Farm Foundation, NFP (630) 501-4151

[Mary Thompson](#), Farm Foundation, NFP (630) 501-4152

[Farm Foundation, NFP](#) serves as a catalyst for sound public policy by providing objective information to foster a deeper understanding of issues shaping the future for agriculture, food systems and rural regions. The Foundation does not lobby or advocate. The Foundation’s 83-year reputation for objectivity allows it to bring together diverse stakeholders for discussions on economic and public policy issues.