

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION	Number: DR 9800-001
SUBJECT: Publishing Reports at the Economic Research Service, a Federal Statistical Agency	DATE: January 4, 2017
	OPI: Economic Research Service

1. PURPOSE

This regulation outlines responsibilities, requirements, and procedures followed by the Economic Research Service (ERS), a Federal Statistical Agency, as it prepares and issues economic research, analysis, and statistical reports to meet its mission.

2. APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

ERS publications are issued to provide economic analysis and statistical information for use in public and private decision-making concerning agriculture, food, the environment, and rural development. The audience for ERS publications is broad, but the primary audience is decision-makers in Congress, USDA, and other Federal agencies, as well as State and County governments, industries related to agriculture, concerned public interest organizations, and academia.

This regulation applies to ERS reports including Economic Research Reports, Economic Information Bulletins, Economic Briefs, Technical Bulletins, Administrative Publications, and any future publication series ERS develops. The World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB) provides clearance for the newsletters, special reports, and data that ERS publishes to support the Agency's participation in WAOB activities; these publications are not covered by this directive.

3. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS/CANCELLATIONS

a. This regulation is effective immediately and remains in effect until superseded.

b. As applicable, this regulation should be used in conjunction with:

- (1) *Delegations of Authority to the Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics Related to Scientific Integrity*, [7 CFR 2.21\(a\)\(11\)](#), January 1, 2006

- (2) [Departmental Manual \(DM\) 1074-001](#), *Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Compromised Scientific Integrity*, November 18, 2016
- (3) [Departmental Regulation \(DR\) 1074-001](#), *Scientific Integrity*, November 18, 2016
- (4) *Departmental Regulations*, [5 United States Code \(U.S.C.\) 301](#), January 3, 2012
- (5) *The Information Quality Act*, [Public Law \(PL\) 106-554, Section 515](#)
- (6) The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Committee on National Statistics, [Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency](#), 2013
- (7) Office of Management and Budget (OMB), [Guidelines for Ensuring and Maximizing the Quality, Objectivity, Utility, and Integrity of Information Disseminated by Federal Agencies](#), October 1, 2001
- (8) OMB Memorandum M-05-03, [Issuance of OMB’s “Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review”](#), December 16, 2004
- (9) Statistical Policy Directive No. 1: [Fundamental Responsibilities of Federal Statistical Agencies and Recognized Statistical Units](#), December 2, 2014
- (10) Statistical Policy Directive No. 4: [Release and Dissemination of Statistical Products Produced by Federal Statistical Agencies](#), October 17, 2016 (as amended)

4. ABBREVIATIONS

ERS	Economic Research Service
OC	Office of Communications
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OSEC	Office of the Secretary
PRCC	Peer Review Coordinating Council
REE	Research, Education, and Economics Mission Area
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WAOB	World Agricultural Outlook Board

5. BACKGROUND

As a Federal Statistical Agency, ERS provides data and analyses that must satisfy standards established through Governmentwide and Departmental regulations and guidelines to preserve the public’s trust in the accuracy, objectivity, and integrity of information provided by the entire Federal statistical system.

ERS's data collection, research, and dissemination activities are guided by the *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency*, developed by the National Research Council's Committee on National Statistics, and are subject to directives and standards issued by OMB in its role as coordinator of the Federal statistical system. ERS is covered by OMB Statistical Policy Directive No. 1: *Fundamental Responsibilities of Federal Statistical Agencies and Recognized Statistical Units*, and OMB Statistical Policy Directive No. 4: *Release and Dissemination of Statistical Products Produced by Federal Statistical Agencies*, (as amended).

OMB's Statistical Policy Directive No. 4 states that statistical products are, generally, information dissemination products that are published or otherwise made available for public use that describe, estimate, forecast, or analyze the characteristics of groups, customarily without identifying the persons, organization, or individual data observations that compromise such groups. Statistical products include general-purpose tabulations, analyses, projections, forecasts, or other statistical reports.

In OMB's *Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review*, the term "scientific information" means factual inputs, data, models, analyses, technical information or scientific assessments related to such disciplines as the behavioral and social sciences. This definition does not include opinions where the agency's presentation makes clear that what is being offered is someone's opinion, rather than fact or the agency's views.

The *Information Quality Act* requires all Federal agencies to maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information provided to the public. OMB's related Governmentwide guidelines on information quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity require that ERS:

- a. Maintain its commitment to using the best available science and statistical methods;
- b. Subject information, models, and analytic results to independent peer review by qualified experts, when appropriate;
- c. Disseminate its data and analytic products with a high degree of transparency about the data and methods to facilitate its reproducibility by qualified third parties; and
- d. Ensure that the information presentation is comprehensive, informative, and understandable.

6. POLICY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The ERS Administrator shall provide final approval for release of all ERS publications and to that end has the following specific responsibilities:
 - (1) To administer directives, policies, and regulations governing publishing activities of ERS as a Federal Statistical Agency;

- (2) To establish policies and procedures that enable ERS to publish quality information quickly and economically;
 - (3) To review the research and analysis conducted by ERS economists to ensure accurate characterization of USDA programs, scientific quality of research, effectiveness of communication, and neutrality of language such that reports do not make policy recommendations or pronouncements;
 - (4) To establish and ensure compliance with pre-determined release dates for ERS publications; and
 - (5) To provide final approval for the release of ERS publications.
- b. The ERS Publications Control Officer shall be responsible for oversight of the publication process so that ERS complies with all USDA expectations regarding publications. To that end, the Publications Control Officer shall ensure that:
- (1) All manuscripts have been thoroughly edited and that each publication has been prepared to meet exacting standards of economy and effectiveness;
 - (2) Other USDA agencies have an opportunity to review ERS research report language that is closely related to the work, programs, or policies of the other agency in order to avoid misrepresentation or misunderstandings regarding their programs;
 - (3) ERS's [*Peer Review Agenda*](#) is posted on the ERS website and updated periodically;
 - (4) ERS holds regularly scheduled meetings with officials in the Office of Communications (OC) and the Office of the Secretary (OSEC), a representative from USDA's Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area, and the communications coordinators for other USDA mission areas in which an ERS publication plan document is distributed and discussed;
 - (5) Subcabinet officials and other USDA leadership receive regular updates to the ERS publication plan that includes actual release dates once the dates have been set;
 - (6) After a manuscript has been cleared for publication, but before it is released, ERS provides embargoed copies of reports to senior officials in relevant USDA agencies for information purposes only, to provide recipients the opportunity to request a briefing on the report's findings;
 - (7) ERS provides pre-release copies of each manuscript to USDA's Press Secretary and Director of Communications so they can evaluate newsworthiness and determine whether to prepare a Departmental reaction to the findings. These are embargoed copies of the report that shall not be shared or distributed beyond the initial recipient; and

- (8) All ERS publications are released on the agency website.
- c. The responsibility for overseeing and coordinating the research publication peer review process rests with ERS's Peer Review Coordinating Council (PRCC). The PRCC is a 7-person internal ERS committee comprised of ERS Deputy Directors of Research and Senior Economists charged with overseeing and managing the peer review process.

Since ERS reports inform public and/or private decision-making, they are subject to OMB's *Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review* requirements for scientific information. The *Bulletin* spells out the need for arms-length reviews by technical experts inside and outside Government, combined with transparent and publicly available peer review plans for each report and clear procedures for correcting errors in previously released reports—to maintain confidence in the agency's commitment to information quality.

The PRCC shall:

- (1) Establish criteria for publication of reports in each series; and
 - (2) Send all research manuscripts out for formal review and determine whether revised research reports sufficiently address the reviewer comments.
- d. The USDA Office of Communications Brand, Events, Exhibits, and Editorial Review Division shall:
 - (1) Ensure that ERS research manuscripts have been prepared in conformance with applicable USDA editorial, design, photography, and printing policies;
 - (2) Review all ERS research publications within 10 workdays; and
 - (3) Not share any ERS manuscripts beyond the OC editorial offices.

7. INQUIRIES

Questions and comments concerning the requirements of this regulation should be directed to the ERS Administrator at 202-694-5000.

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