STATE OF RURAL WISCONSIN

Status and Trends of our Rural Communities

2018

WISCONSIN RURAL PARTNERS

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About this Publication

Letter from Errin

Insert Errin's photo here

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OVERVIEW OF WISCONSIN'S RURAL COMMUNITIES

Topics:

- **Wisconsin's Rural Cities and Villages**
- **Defining Rural Wisconsin**
- **The Rural- Urban Divide in WI- Informing Economic Development**

Wisconsin's Rural Cities and Villages:

Introduction by Jerry Deschane, League of Wisconsin Municipalities.

"Creating a Bright Future for Rural Wisconsin"

In 1949 playwright George Bernard Shaw said, "You see things as they are and ask why? I dream things as they never were and ask, Why Not?" Wisconsin needs to dream some things and ask "Why not?"

For the first time in this state's history, we face a future of decline, rather than growth. Our enemy is the rocking chair. Our population is projected to grow substantially older in the next 22 years. Our workforce is projected to decline and so will job creation. Are we going to accept our fate, or are we going to do something about it?

In that 1949 play, Shaw writes, "Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire. You will what you imagine. And at last you create what you will." It is time to put our imaginations to work.

A large part of my job at the League of Wisconsin Municipalities is visiting the 601 cities and villages of Wisconsin and talking to the Mayors and Village Presidents about their worries of the day. They're worried about those rocking chairs. Over the next three decades, only 21 of Wisconsin's 72 counties will have any workforce increase at all, and only 4 of them would see a ten-percent or greater increase in the next 30 years. Four years ago, a news reporter said, "We see it off in the distance." It's not off in the distance. It's right here, right now.

Cities and villages are basic, bread-and-butter governments. We police streets, pick up trash and provide clean water. One of our most critical tasks is the ambulance service. Wisconsin has a statewide network of local EMS services. In the rural parts of the state, those services are in trouble.

We love to laugh about England's public health system. The National Health Service, which we are told is slow and bureaucratic, requires ambulances to respond to a call within 8 minutes. In certain parts of Northern Wisconsin the average wait time for an ambulance is 45 minutes. In some villages, ambulance services are closing down for lack of trained personnel. Our challenge is not off in the distance.

Not too long ago, I was talking to the president of a village in the Northeast corner of Wisconsin. They're looking to consolidate their fire department with surrounding communities. Not because they need to save money but because there simply is no one available to drive the trucks.

I hear these stories all over Wisconsin. Wisconsin has 601 amazing cities and villages. They're home to 70 percent of the population and about 90 percent of commerce. But when I listen to local leaders, I hear a steady refrain; most of them are struggling to attract economic development, and young families, and housing, and emergency personnel. Demographics are not our friend.

Within the next 22 years, the 65-and-over population of Wisconsin will grow by 72%. By the year 2040, in 18 counties, every third person will be over 65. In three counties in northern Wisconsin, 40% of the population will be over 65.

One of the symptoms of this demographic shift will be a decline in new business startups. Last year, for the third year in a row, Wisconsin ranked dead last among the states in new business startups. How do you start up new business without workers?

Demographers tell us that within the next seven years, Wisconsin will need 45,000 additional workers to fill jobs created by retiring Baby Boomers. Competitive Wisconsin says that the real gap lies between 100,000 and 200,000.

So, where do we begin? Governor Walker has proposed a multimillion dollar advertising campaign in Chicago. It's a good start; some argue whether it's the right thing to do, but it's a start. Right now we need more starts and less arguing.

Gays Mills is a tiny little town of about 500 people. It sits on the Kickapoo River in Southwest Wisconsin. Gays Mills' biggest claim to fame is that it floods. Gays Mills floods so often that the federal government finally paid the Village to move uphill about a quarter mile.

In Gays Mills there is a company called BAPI; Building Automation Products Incorporated. It's owned by Ritch and Vicki Stephenson. They manufacturer temperature sensing and control devices. In 1993 Ritch had an idea, worked out the details in his garage, and began selling hi-tech thermostats to buyers around the world. The company grew to about 100 employees in Cross Plains. But Ritch wanted to move home, so he built a new plant in tiny little Gays Mills. Twice as big as his facility in Cross Plains.

Most experts would look at Gays Mills, look at the twisty two-lane highway it takes to get there and move on. There's no way you can get products or people in and out of a town that small; it's too far off the beaten path. But not for the Stephensons, who knew that what drew them back to Gays Mills would draw others if they just told the story.

On BAPI's company web site is a video showing a pair of kayakers on the Kickapoo River; the crookedest river in the world, and one of the best kayaking rivers in the Midwest. What's the message? "Work at BAPI and bring your kayak." There are 12 videos, one for each month.

The Stephenson's didn't run away from Wisconsin; they ran deep into it. They embraced our schools, woods, and rivers and they knew that a lot of other people would too. They didn't apologize for it, they advertised it. Let's learn from their example.

I often think about my own children when I look at Wisconsin's economic challenges. My youngest son is a Captain in the Air Force. He works in downtown Los Angeles. My daughter works in downtown Phoenix. I went to visit her last August. Did you know they have dust storms in Phoenix? While we were there our cell phones went off with a civil defense warning; dust storm coming. Don't drive. Stay indoors. It happened to be raining when the dust storm hit. You haven't seen the dirt apocalypse until you have been in the middle of a mud storm. And did I mention scorpions?

This is our competition? I say send our high school seniors to Los Angeles at rush hour and Phoenix in August. And the Mall of America on black Friday.

Let's stop telling ourselves that we have nothing to offer. Late last year Dr. Randy Stoecker at the University of Wisconsin released new research identifying a dozen communities in Wisconsin that are winning the demographic game. They looked at villages and cities around the state that are keeping and attracting young people. Dr. Stoecker's team went to those villages and talked to the young people. They wanted to know what the Secret Sauce recipe is for attracting millennials.

Do you know what they found? There is no secret sauce. What attracts young people to small town Wisconsin is small town Wisconsin. They want good schools. We've got them. They want great amenities; beautiful woods, rivers, seasons and things to do outside. We've got them. They want good roads with easy access to the major cities of Wisconsin. We've got them too.

But they also want a variety of housing choices. They want a thriving downtown. And they need broadband. We need to get that done now.

So why isn't it working in your town? Maybe you should ask the Millennials. Dr. Stoecker's research includes a simple "tool kit" that cities and villages can use to do your own inventory, and conduct your own interviews. Try it. Do something with it.

Before he retired, Todd Berry, President of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, offered four specific suggestions on how we can take advantage of this new era in our history.

First, educate and GRADUATE smart students from our schools. Now is not the time to back off on our investment in Wisconsin education, or to give up on students who struggle.

Tip Number Two is tap the Baby Boomers. Their spouses want them out of the house anyway; let's find ways to keep them occupied. Benjamin Franklin was 70 when he signed the Declaration of Independence. Old ain't dead.

From my travels throughout Wisconsin, I can tell you that one of the greatest challenges local governments face, along with a critical shortage of EMTs and Firefighters, is a critical shortage of citizens willing to run for local office. So, Millennials, here is my challenge to you: Run for office…unless you want your dad to be the mayor.

Todd Berry's third idea is to lure the natives back home. Go to the dust storms, traffic jams, jammed malls, and pricey apartments and tell our children that things are better back home. Bring a friend.

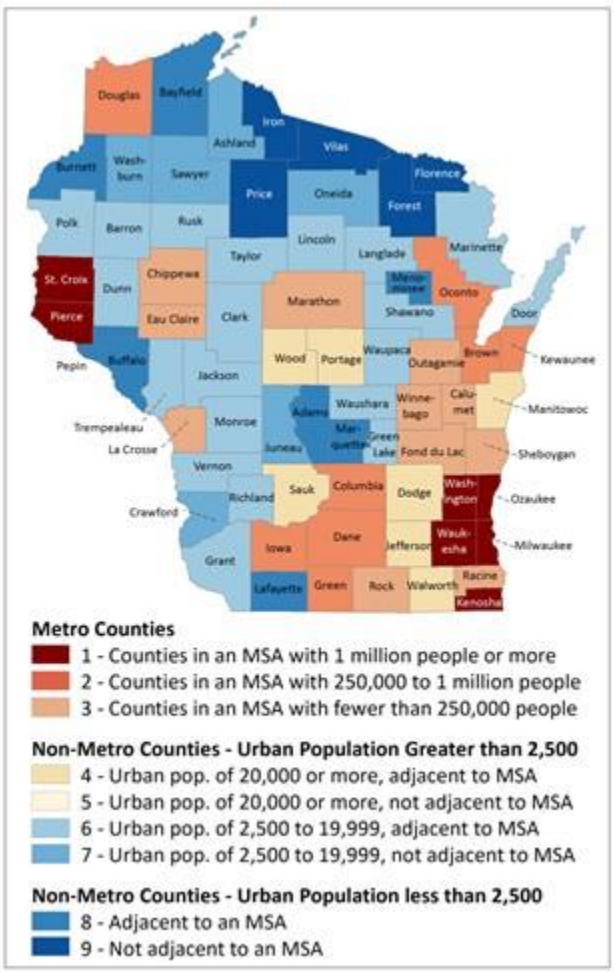
Finally, Todd says we have to start talking about the I-word. Governor Walker's talking about In-Migration; advertising at our borders to bring folks across. That's a good start. But we also need to start talking about immigration. Thoughtfully, respectfully, and recognizing the legitimate fears and concerns of our neighbors, at some point we need to move away from a conversation about illegal immigration to a conversation about legal immigration. If we can't have that conversation, down here at the grassroots, I guarantee you that our elected officials can never have it. And without robust immigration, the economic future of slow-growth states like Wisconsin is bleak.

Don't turn the page thinking that I am Wisconsin's chief naysayer. I am very bullish on Wisconsin. I was born here and I will live here all of my life. Dust storms? Scorpions? All day traffic? No thank you.

But we've seen the projections for the future. We can change that future, but only if we start with new ideas today. George Bernard Shaw told us that imagination is the beginning of creation. Let's start re-imagining Wisconsin.

Defining Rural Wisconsin

Federal agencies, researchers and policy makers have created a number of rural definitions, based on factors such as population density, urban influence and economic structure. These various definitions can be confusing and even conflicting in nature. However, the lack of consensus on a single definition reflects the complexity and variety of rural areas across Wisconsin and the United States.



The socio-economic measures in this snapshot of rural Wisconsin are based on 2013 Rural-Urban Continuum Codes (RUCCs) produced by the USDA's Economic Research Service. Rural-Urban Continuum Codes classify counties into nine categories that distinguish metropolitan counties by their total population and work-force commuting patterns, and nonmetropolitan counties by their degree of urbanization and adjacency to a metropolitan statistical area (MSA).

Counties located in metro areas are classified with an RUCC of 1, 2 or 3. Non-metro counties are categorized into RUCC codes of 4 through 9 as illustrated on the accompanying map.[1] Counties with RUCC codes of 4 through 7 have areas or communities with an urban population of at least 2,500 residents. Counties with codes of 8 and 9 have an urban population below 2,500.

Wisconsin's 72 counties are scattered across eight of the nine Rural-Urban Continuum Codes, with only RUCC 5 not present in the state. While the variety of RUCC codes found in Wisconsin suggests a diversity of urban and rural regions, counties within the same RUCC category also may vary considerably. For instance, Door County in northeast Wisconsin and Grant County in southwest Wisconsin both are classified as RUCC 6. However, these two counties differ in many ways. Consequently, this snapshot provides only broad perspectives on Wisconsin's rural areas.

Urban-Rural Classifications are not perfect. The Metro versus Non-Metro map illustrates the difficulty in defining rural. Several counties that may be considered rural are included in the metro category because 25% or more of their labor force works in the metro area. For example, the census designates Iowa County as urban and Walworth County as rural. This may seem counter intuitive because Iowa County has a smaller population and fewer people per square mile than Walworth County. However, over 3,300 Iowa County workers (25%) are employed in Dane County and Iowa County is therefore considered as urban.

The table that follows indicates whether a Wisconsin County is considered rural or urban for purposes of this report.

[1] For more on Rural-Urban Continuum Codes and rural definitions, see: http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications.aspx

Table 1: RUCC by Wisconsin County:

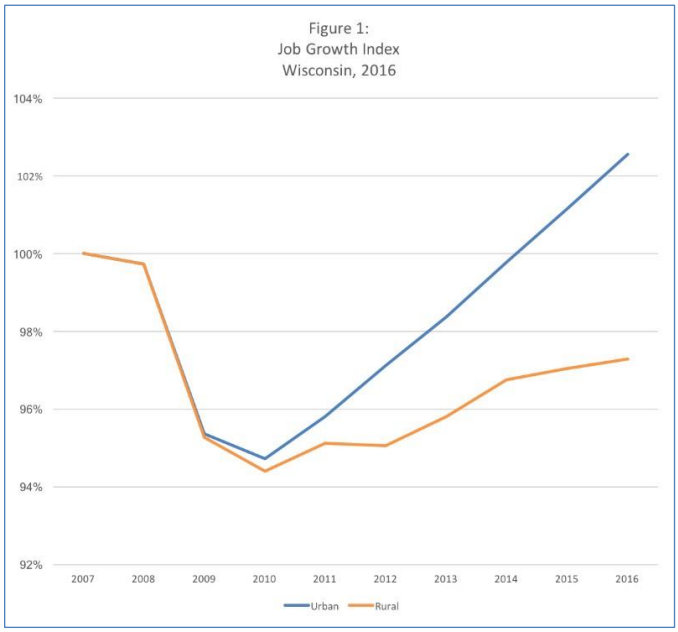
Wisconsin Counties-Urban:	RUCC Code
Kenosha County	1
Milwaukee County	1
Ozaukee County	1
Pierce County	1
St. Croix County	1
Washington County	1
Waukesha County	1
Brown County	2
Columbia County	2
Dane County	2
Douglas County	2
Green County	2
Iowa County	2
Kewaunee County	2
Oconto County	2
Calumet County	3
Chippewa County	3
Eau Claire County	3
Fond du Lac County	3
La Crosse County	3
Marathon County	3
Outagamie County	3
Racine County	3
Rock County	3
Sheboygan County	3
Winnebago County	3

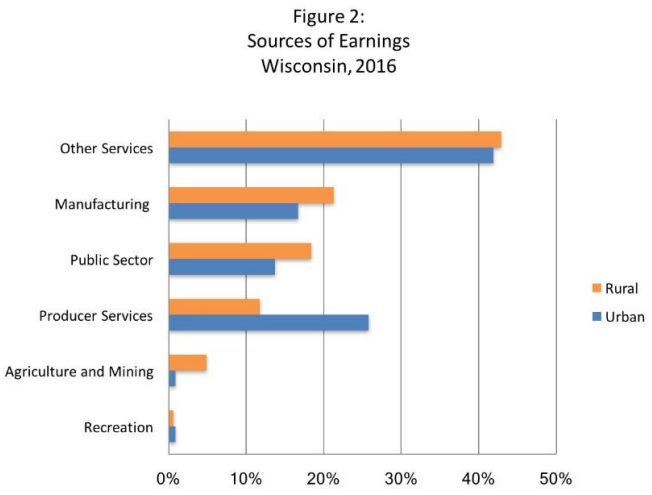
Wisconsin Counties-Rural:	RUCC Code
Dodge County	4
Jefferson County	4
Manitowoc County	4
Portage County	4
Sauk County	4
Walworth County	4
Wood County	4
Barron County	6
Clark County	6
Door County	6
Dunn County	6
Grant County	6
Green Lake County	6
Jackson County	6
Langlade County	6
Lincoln County	6
Marinette County	6
Monroe County	6
Polk County	6
Richland County	6
Rusk County	6
Shawano County	6
Taylor County	6
Trempealeau County	6
Vernon County	6
Waupaca County	6
Waushara County	6
Ashland County	7
Crawford County	7
Juneau County	7
Oneida County	7
Sawyer County	7
Washburn County	7
Adams County	8
Bayfield County	8
Buffalo County	8
Burnett County	8
Lafayette County	8
Marquette County	8
Menominee County	8
Pepin County	8
Florence County	9
Forest County	9
Iron County	9
Price County	9
Vilas County	9

The Rural-Urban Divide in Wisconsin-Informing Economic Development

UW-Extension, Center for Community and Economic Development

Tessa Conroy, Economic Development Specialist and Assistant Professor L/I, University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension





Recent focus on the rural-urban divide has highlighted real and important differences between metropolitan areas and the less

Recent focus on the rural-urban divide has highlighted real and important differences between metropolitan areas and the less populated surrounding communities. While much of the analysis has been at the national level, the rural-urban divide varies regionally across the U.S.. Rural areas in historically mining-dependent West Virginia are different from the wind-swept, isolated prairies of Texas, and different still from the agriculture- and tourism-intensive rural counties of Wisconsin. Similarly, the federal government driven city of Washington, D.C. is different from trade-, oil-, and immigrant-dependent Houston, TX, as well as from Madison which relies on the University of Wisconsin and capitol as key employers.

Given the regional variation, focusing on the rural-urban divide in Wisconsin is important for understanding local factors that characterize the divide. In particular, understanding the economic differences can lead to development strategies in rural areas where economic performance has been lagging compared to urban counties. Job growth in urban[2] compared to rural counties has been slow since the depth of the recession in 2009 (Figure 1).

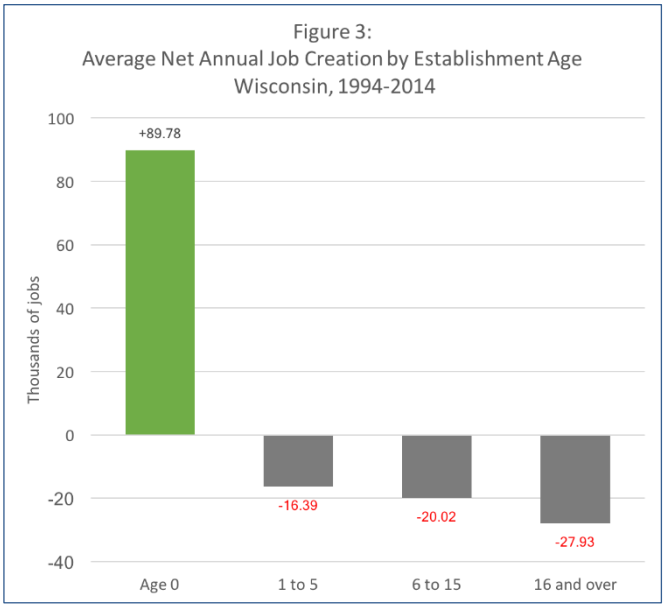
It may seem that focusing on historically dominant sectors, such as manufacturing and agriculture, is the most promising strategy for job growth in rural areas (Figure 2). In many ways, these sectors have been incredibly successful, as measured by productivity and

[2] Urban counties in this context refers to metro counties based on the 2013 rural-urban continuum code from the Office of Management and Budget. Similarly "rural" counties refer to non-metro counties.

output, but this growth is largely due to advances that have reduced the need for labor.

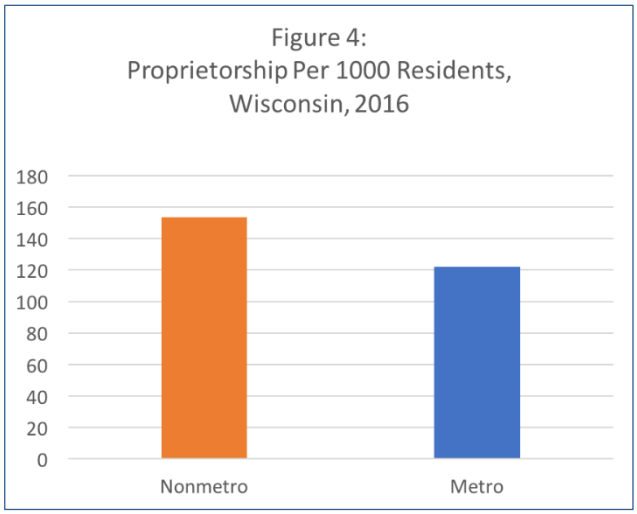
Consequently, these sectors have not been large sources of job growth. While these sectors are still an important component of the rural economy, agriculture and manufacturing alone are not likely the solution to balanced economic growth.

Regions across the country are diversifying beyond their historical industrial legacy to spur economic growth. A key driver of both diversification and economic growth is new businesses. Entrepreneurs, through their new businesses, have generated a large majority of net job growth in recent decades (Figure 3). Entrepreneurship seems an especially promising



strategy for development in rural communities which are surprisingly entrepreneurial. Rural counties have both more proprietors (Figure 4) and higher business survival rates compared to urban areas.

Some rural places may also have populations that are especially well-suited for entrepreneurship. College-educated adults are among the most entrepreneurially inclined. Parts

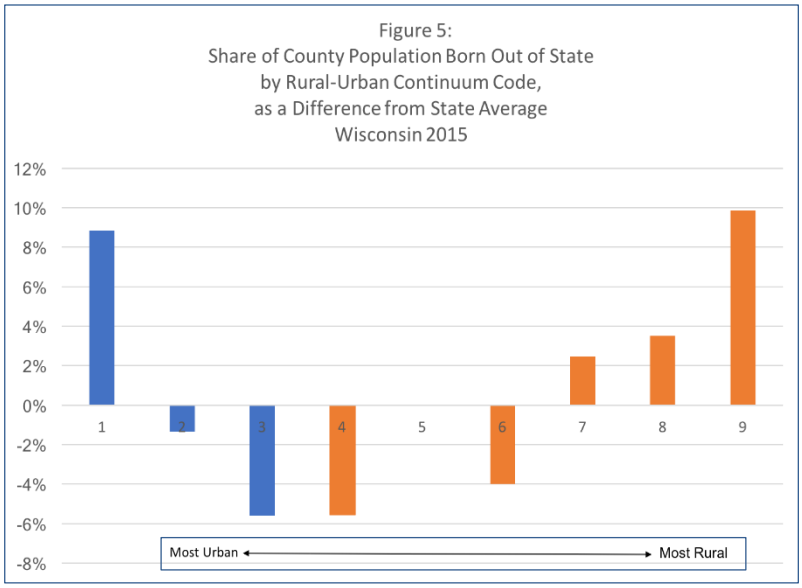


of rural Wisconsin, with their abundant natural amenities, attract these talented, footloose

populations. In fact, some populations are educated beyond the needs of the industries and occupational offerings in their county. These people, for whom their education exceeds local job requirements, may end up underemployed in a wage-and salary position. An attractive alternative may be to create jobs for themselves as entrepreneurs and thus boost local startup activity.

In addition to the underemployed, older populations, with years of work experience and accumulated financial capital, can be a source of entrepreneurial activity—both as consumers who are seeking local services, such as restaurants, and as entrepreneurs themselves. Some retirees, having left their professional lives, would still like to be productive and may choose part-time consulting, as an example, or become otherwise self-employed. In Wisconsin, the most urban and most rural counties have relatively large shares of populations born out of state (Figure 5). While in urban areas, this is likely a reflection of young, educated in-migration into job centers, in rural areas this is likely driven by retirees moving to high amenity locations. These new residents with their abundant human and financial capital could drive entrepreneurship in even the most rural corners of Wisconsin

The uniqueness of rural areas points to opportunities for economic development. Given their entrepreneurialism and potential to attract skilled populations with natural amenities, there is an opportunity to create jobs by starting and growing new and young businesses. Enhancing local entrepreneurship is thus a sustainable strategy for rural economic development that focuses on investing in local assets.



1 Metro - Counties in metro areas of 1 million population or more
2 Metro - Counties in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population
3 Metro - Counties in metro areas of fewer than 250,000 population
4 Nonmetro - Urban population of 20,000 or more, adjacent to a metro area
5 Nonmetro - Urban population of 20,000 or more, not adjacent to a metro area
6 Nonmetro - Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, adjacent to a metro area
7 Nonmetro - Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, not adjacent to a metro area
8 Nonmetro - Completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, adjacent to a metro area
9 Nonmetro - Completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, not adjacent to a metro area

ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Topics:

- **Population**
- **Employment Levels**
- **Employment by Category**
- **Income and Selected Expenditures**
- **Poverty**

Population

The population of Wisconsin's rural counties in 2016 was just over 1.5 million or 26 percent of the state. Rural population has been declining slightly while urban population has been increasing.

Population of Wisconsin

	Rural		Urban		Total	
	2016	2011	2016	2011	2016	2011
Population	1,502,834	1,508,234	4,251,964	4,156,659	5,754,798	5,664,893
Children <18 (%)	21.3%	22.4%	23.1%	24.1%	22.6%	23.6%
Seniors >65 (%)	18.7%	16.7%	14.0%	12.4%	15.2%	13.5%
Median Age	43.6		38.3		39.6	
Diversity Index	20.6		42.4		37.3	

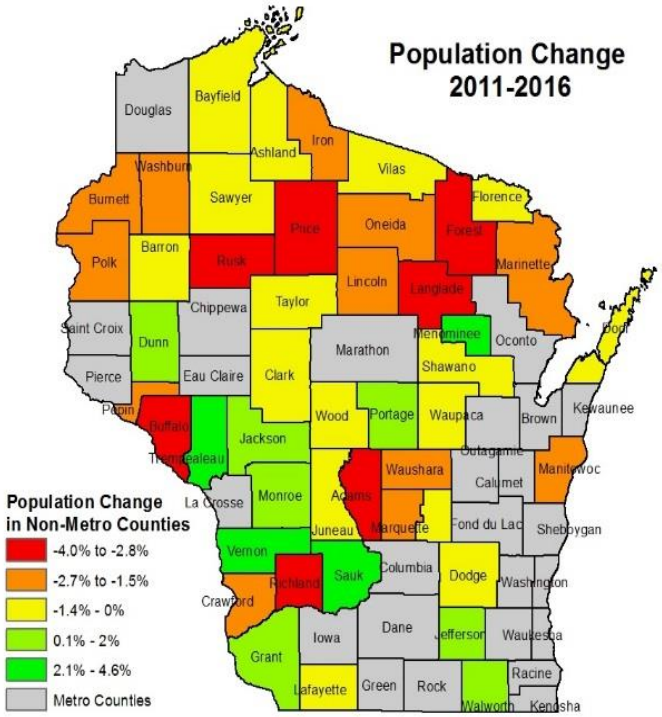
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Median age are 2017 estimates from ESRI. Diversity Index for 2017 are from ESRI and measures the probability that two people from the same area will be from different race/ethnic groups.

Between 2011 and 2016, the population of Wisconsin has increased by 1.6%. However, the population in rural Wisconsin decreased by 0.4%. For comparison, the U.S. population increased 3.9% during the same period. Relative to both urban Wisconsin and nationwide, there is a lower percentage of children and a higher percentage of seniors in rural compared to urban Wisconsin. The Diversity Index for 2017 are from ESRI and measures the probability that two people from the same area will be from different race/ethnic groups. The low index for rural Wisconsin of 20.6, reflects about one half of the diversity of urban areas.

Historic Change by County

The accompanying map illustrates 2011 to 2016 population growth rates in Wisconsin's rural counties. The lowest population growth counties were in central and northern Wisconsin, while the highest population growth rates tended to be in the southwest part of the state. Menominee County had the highest population growth rate among rural counties. Again, data is presented for "non-metro" counties and does not include rural areas within "metro" counties.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Employment Levels

Employment is a measure of economic well-being. The U.S. Census measures the nation's workforce by looking at the labor force, employment and unemployment.

Jobs in Wisconsin

	Rural		Urban		Total	
	2016	2011	2016	2011	2016	2011
Labor Force	787,871	799,581	2,332,365	2,280,186	3,120,236	3,079,767
Employed	778,491	731,905	2,212,544	2,109,097	2,991,035	2,841,002
Unemployed	36,221	67,676	92,980	171,089	129,201	238,765
Unemployment %	4.6%	8.5%	4.0%	7.5%	4.1%	7.8%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics - Labor Force Data by County, 2011 and 2016 Annual Averages. https://www.bls.gov/lau

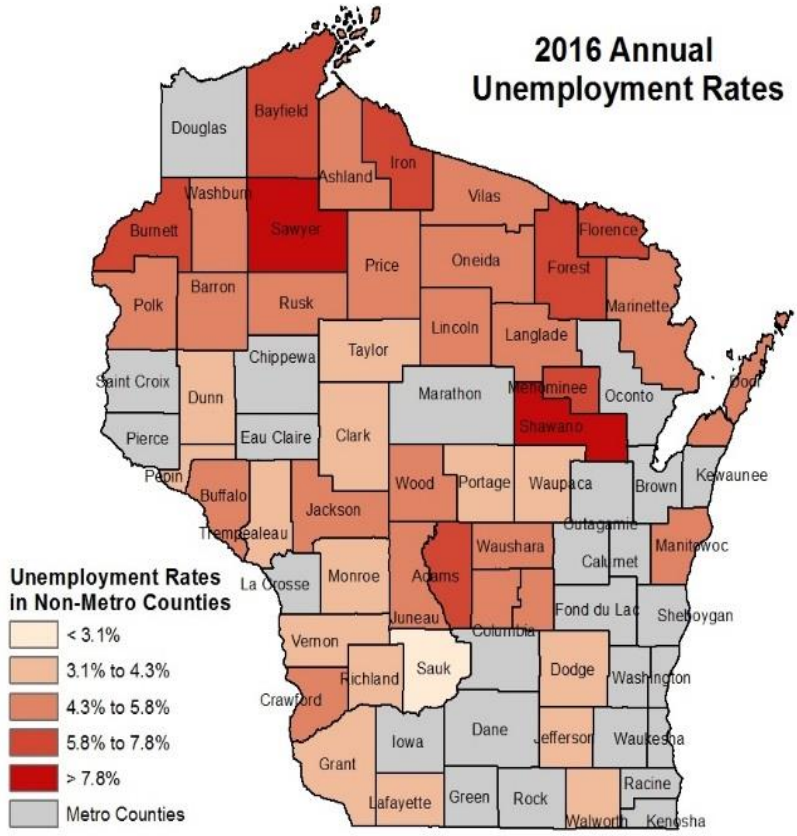
Between 2011 and 2016, the total labor force in Wisconsin increased by 1.3 percent while the rural labor force decreased by 1.5 percent. The urban labor force increased by 2.3 percent, which is higher than both the rural and Wisconsin average.

Unemployment Rate by County

The following map illustrates 2016 unemployment rate for non-metro counties in Wisconsin. While these rates vary throughout the state, higher rates are found in the rural area in the northern part of Wisconsin. Menominee County had the highest unemployment rate in the state at 11.7 percent.

Data is presented for "non-metro" designated counties and does not include rural parts of "metro" counties.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics - Labor Force Data by County, 2012 and 2016 Annual Averages. https://www.bls.gov/lau



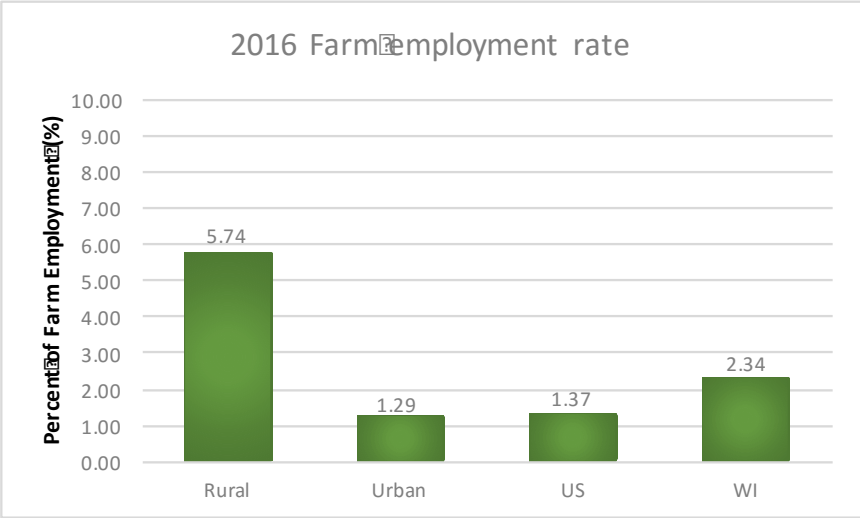
Employment by Category

While Wisconsin is still considered the "Dairy State," a closer look at the numbers indicates that only a small portion of the State's employment is in farming.

Farm Employment

In 2016, farm employment rates in rural areas was about 4.5 times higher than that of the urban areas. Overall, Wisconsin has a higher farm employment rate than that of the United States, though urban Wisconsin's farm employment rate was comparable to that of the overall national data.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis – Total Full-Time and Part-Time Employment by Industry (2016) https://www.bea.gov



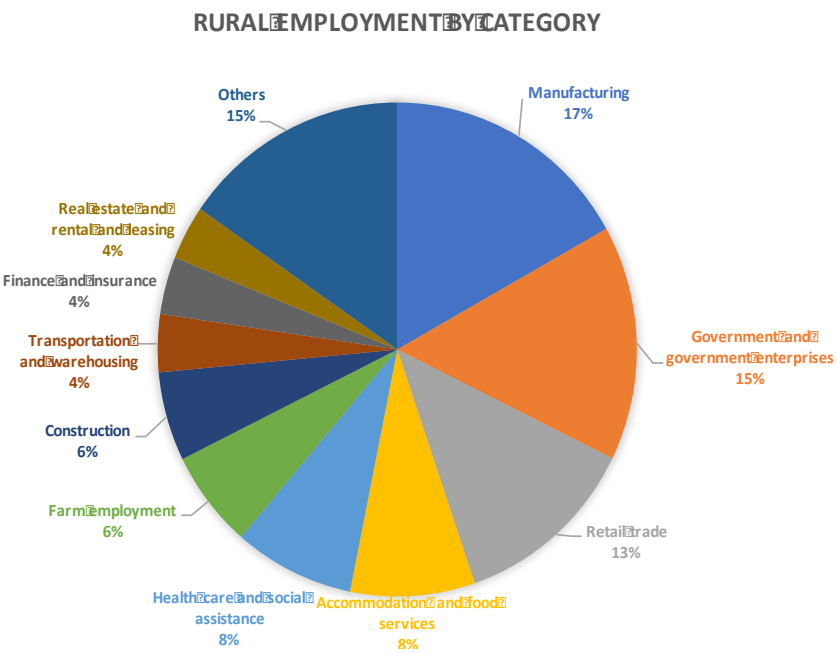
Total Employment in Wisconsin

Top 5 rural employment in Wisconsin by categories are:

1) Manufacturing
2) Government (including schools)
3) Retail trade
4) Accommodation and food services
5) Health care and social assistance

This is similar to that of overall Wisconsin employment.

Other employment categories that are not included in the charts which account for 3% or less of the employment includes: management of companies, education services, information, transportation and warehousing, and utilities, etc.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis – Total Full-Time and Part-Time Employment by Industry (2016) https://www.bea.gov

Income and Selected Expenditures

Wisconsin's per capita income and median household income were only slightly lower than those of the United States. However, Wisconsin's rural areas were below both urban counties and the U.S.

Rural vs Urban Income in Wisconsin

	Rural	Urban	Total Wisconsin	Total U.S.
Per capita income, 2011-2016 (2016 $)	$26,102	$30,366	$29,253	$29,82
Median household income, 2011-2016	$47,962	$58,891	$54,610	$55,32

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

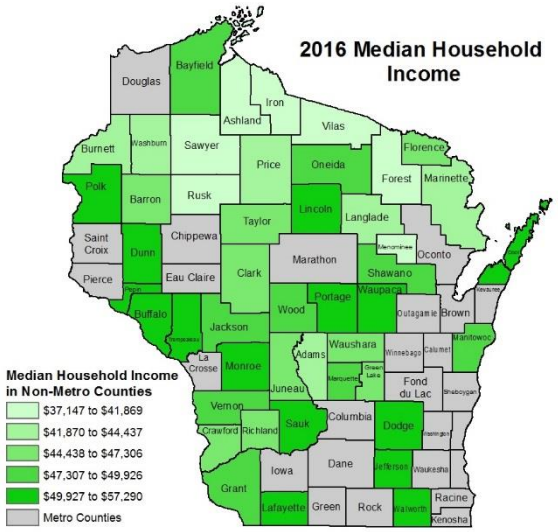
In both per capita income and median household income levels, rural Wisconsin had lower income levels than urban Wisconsin. Per capita income was 14% below urban, and median household income was 19% below. Rural Wisconsin is also below the United States average on both measures, while urban Wisconsin is above the United States average on both measures.

Income by County

The accompanied map illustrates 2016 median household income for Wisconsin's rural counties. The lowest incomes are generally in the northern parts of the state. The highest incomes are generally in counties that are adjacent to urban counties. These higher income rural counties reflect the regional nature of employment and commuting patterns in the state.

Data is presented for "non-metro" designated counties and does not include rural parts of "metro" counties.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

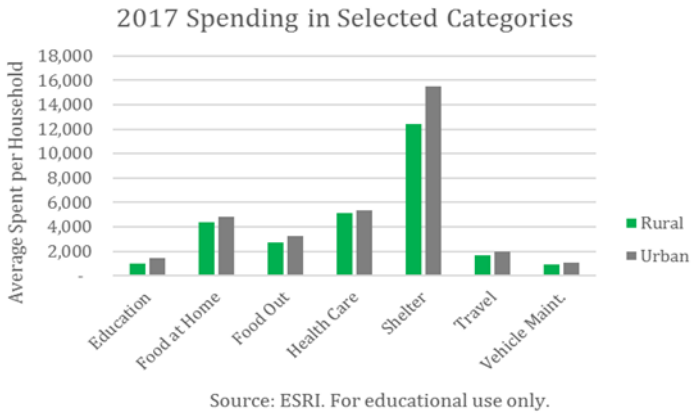


Spending in Rural Wisconsin

The accompanying chart compares estimated spending in seven major categories of goods and services. They were based on five year ACS data.

The chart indicates that spending is significantly lower for shelter in rural areas. For the other six categories, costs in rural areas are below those of urban areas, but to a lesser degree.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 Survey 5-Years-Estimates



Poverty

Poverty is a measure of economic well-being. The U.S. Census uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty.

Poverty in Wisconsin

	Rural		Urban		Total	
	2016	2011	2016	2011	2016	2011
All Ages	168,085	191,681	493,378	536,414	661,463	728,095
All Ages (%)	11.6%	13.1%	11.8%	13.1%	11.8%	13.1%
Children <18 (%)	16.2%	18.4%	15.6%	17.6%	15.7%	17.8%

Source: Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) – Data – State and County Estimates for 2016 and 2011 – U.S. Census Bureau https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/saipe/data/datasets.html

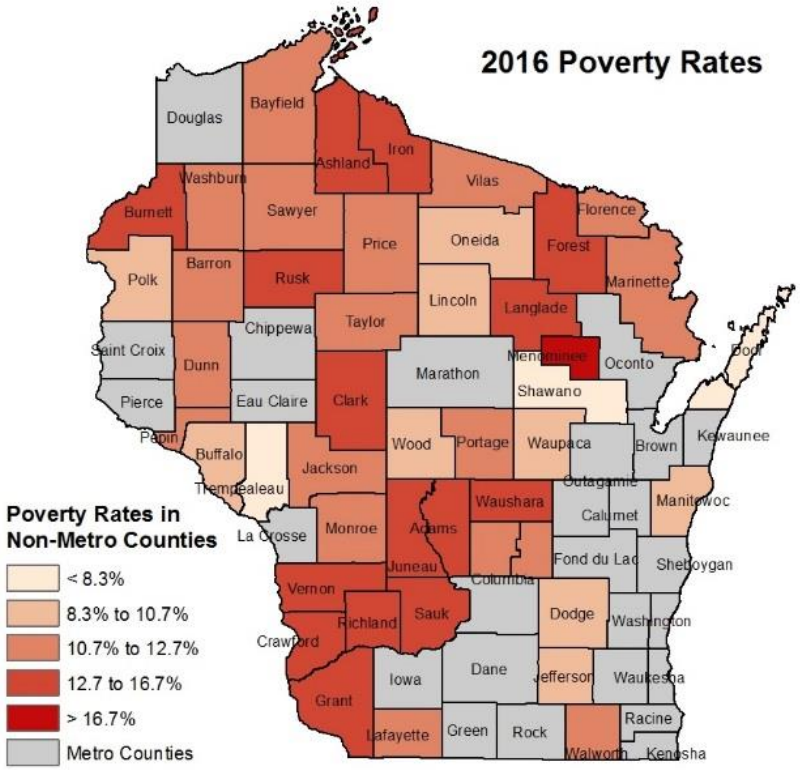
Between 2011 and 2016, poverty in Wisconsin has declined by 9.2% percent (1.3 point change). Rural poverty decreased by 12.3 percent (1.5 point change). For comparison, the U.S. poverty increased 8.6 percent. Similar to the U.S., there is an especially high poverty rate among children under age 18 in rural and urban Wisconsin.

Percent Poverty by County

The map on the right illustrates 2016 poverty rates by Wisconsin county. While these rates vary throughout the state, higher rates are found in the rural area between Grant and Forest Counties. Menominee County is in this corridor and has the highest poverty rate in the state at 27.2 percent.

Data is presented for "non-metro" designated counties and does not include rural parts of "metro" counties.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Additional Source: Population Estimates: Vintage 2007: County Totals: Annual Population Estimates: U.S. Census Bureau https://www.census.gov/popest/data/counties/totals/2007/CO-EST2007-01.html

2018 WISCONSIN RURAL SUMMIT- PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Photo by: Wisconsin Rural Partners

Topics:

- **General Comments**
- **Future of Health Care**
- **Future of Housing**
- **Future of Infrastructure**
- **Future of Agriculture**

General Comments

Frank Fassetto – Wisconsin States Director, USDA Rural Development

Focus Areas - eConnectivity

1. Infrastructure
2. Partnerships
3. Innovation

- There was additional funding in the last Omnibus funding bill for broadband, distance learning and telemedicine with a priority for opioid projects, and water and environmental projects. This bill also included Opportunity Zones. There are 122 zones identified in Wisconsin.
- Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant deadline is June 4.
- Wisconsin is a leader in using rural development dollars.

Rep. Nancy Vandermeer – Chair of the Rural WI Initiative with 24 other legislators.

Focus Areas

1. Education K-12 STEM education
2. Technology – broadband
3. Workforce Development
4. Healthcare

- Various new grant programs – teach grants for librarians to educate on broadband and stem. Apprenticeship programs expanded to help fill the 75% of rural jobs that can be accomplished with a technical degree. A funeral apprenticeship program is an example.
- While Wisconsin is ranked first in health care coverage, there are mental health needs in treatment and workforce/employer resources.

Barb LaMue – Wisconsin Economic Development Cooperation (WEDC)

Focus Areas

1. Access to capital
2. Workforce pipeline
3. Community development
4. Economic diversification

- Statewide talent assessment is underway with Manpower Group. Economic Diversification initiative in the 41 corridor to convert paper mills to additional production capacity (i.e. wovens).
- Kiva is a tool that has recently gone statewide and provides a rewarding social network framework to support local entrepreneurship.

The following pages captures some of the key comments shared by panelists of the summit. An attempt has been made to capture and summarize key points from the panelists' presentations. However, it is likely that we missed important elements of their discussions based on the difficulties of transcription.

Future of Health Care

State of Rural Healthcare – John Eich, Director, Wisconsin Office of Rural Health

Selected Points:

- Little has changed in recent past – still gaps in workforce.
- Physician shortage is also about physician distribution.
- EMS is in trouble in rural areas, 2 closed last year. Firefighters get coverage, but EMT crisis is more acute.
- Critical EMS issues include a drop-in volunteerism and lack of adequate funding. Some EMS actions are pooling of resources with other nearby services and use of professional billing services. EMS relationships with hospitals are of key importance.
- Oral health and mental health are also challenges.
- Small hospitals are doing well – rise in out of state owners.

The state of rural health in Wisconsin now (2017) looks the same as it has been since 2010. There are gaps in both the geographic distribution of healthcare providers and in the work force (both quantity and breadth of talent/specialization). There are various groups that are trying to fix this by training people in rural areas in hopes that they will stay in these rural areas. They are especially trying to get specialists in rural areas. For example, mental health is a huge issue in rural areas and the wait to visit the dentists is often up to 6 months.

Hospitals are doing quite well in Wisconsin. Although there are a lot of hospitals closing in the rural southeast, overall Wisconsin hospitals are doing well financially. More and more big-name hospitals are coming to Wisconsin and Minnesota and establishing themselves or buying out smaller hospitals. This buying out is not all bad as it can provide a lot of resources to the local area. However, it is something to keep an eye on in the future.

EMS is in rough shape. Many of us take 911 for granted, but volunteerism is dropping rapidly. Several EMS services are down to 1-2 people. Volunteers are burning out, leaving us in a dire situation. We have taken advantage of these volunteers for too long. We need to start paying for these volunteers to get trained, have supplies, etc. Municipalities are surprised at how much this costs, but we can't do without EMS and they need the funds to continue operating. This is especially important in rural areas due to the rural paradox – it takes longer to get to and from the emergency situation, wasting more time. As a result, we need providers who are better educated and trained to deal with the situation immediately before more support can get there. Currently we are asking more and more of our rural providers, with less and less training and supplies.

Mobile Health Care Delivery – Alex Sommers, CEO & Founder, Astia Health

Selected Points:

- Mobility healthcare delivery increasing due to new community paramedics legislation passed
- Astia is bringing the physician black bag into this century with low bandwidth video calls and have been partnering with employers to provide services.

Astia Health is a firm that gives access to patients using telemedicine. They recognize many of the same problems as the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health. One is the people problem (lack of physicians). The free market will help to overcome health care issues, but it is hard to attract physicians to rural areas.

Supporting technology, important for healthcare, will always use technology and people. Telemedicine has been around for 10-15 years. We need to focus on teaching people how to help-out every day – to notice a need and know how to fix it. People are tired of the cost of healthcare and their limited access to it. People often don't know what they will have to pay when they go into clinics. CMS and mobile healthcare delivery is a potential solution that would dispatch vehicles, house boats, etc. The service ranges from primary care all the way to emergency care. This would provide more direct care and cut time and cost for patients. They are hoping to continue to be involved with innovation in medicine, treatment, telepharmacies, etc. CMS would love to do more with communities, but regulation issues are preventing it currently. As a result, they have switched over to the employer market.

A surprising population that CMS has been focusing on is the Amish population. They have real challenges with finding healthcare, so they have a lot of interest. CMS has brought vehicles out and provided bandwidth via WIFI in communities that don't have access. This allows them to provide the community with various direct healthcare services all the way up to near emergency services. This can help to serve some of the problems we are seeing in rural healthcare.

In terms of some of the issues we are seeing in the rural healthcare system today, we need to remove the barriers and make it more about the provider-patient relationship and the benefits for them.

Telepharmacy – Greg Janes, Director of Marketing, Telepharm

Selected Points:

- There has been a 12% decrease in independent rural pharmacies over 10 years. Only 25% of prescriptions are refilled as prescribed due to limited access to facilities.
- A pharmacy desert is defined as no pharmacy access within 10 miles (20 miles round trip). There are 60 pharmacy deserts in WI. Of those, 13 have clinics.
- WI only allows telepharmacy in or next to a clinic. So far, 39 are open here, 12 more planned.
- In WI, 154 communities have no clinic or pharmacy and 142 have only 1 pharmacy.
- Telepharm provides remote dispensing and counseling but has a physical location with a pharmacy technician on site.

The idea of a telepharmacy is a grassroots concept. These telepharmacies would be allowed in or next to a home clinic and the pharmacist would not be onsite, but instead connected virtually. Through video calls, patients can be connected to the pharmacist and can ask and answer questions about prescriptions, etc. Additionally, patients typically will see the same pharmacist each time so that they can build a relationship. These telepharmacies would still be fully licensed, have inventory, be allowed to fill prescriptions, etc. However, very rural areas often can't support a full pharmacist salary and with the telepharmacy they only have to pay part of the salary and this brings a brick and mortal location to an area that is often otherwise not served. As a result, we are seeing more growth in the telepharmacy concept in lower access areas, especially in the Midwest due to the large amounts of people living in rural areas here. We have also seen a big problem with many prescriptions that are not filled, taken properly or refilled as directed. If patients are presented with more convenient options such as the telepharmacy, they are more likely to fill their prescriptions and stay on top of their medicines.

Sober Houses – Wally Orzechowski, Executive Director, Southwestern Wisc. Community Action Program

Selected Points:

- SW CAP received a grant for a recovery home that will include peer counseling, medication assistance and assisted treatment and wrap-around services such as transportation and permanent housing. They typically have 5-10 residents, single sex with counselor available. The residents pay rent and manage the building.
- 827 Wisconsin opioid deaths in 2016. Connection between poverty and addiction.
- Need to train doctors and nurses, and provide counseling services

The Southwest Wisconsin Community action program is a rural antipoverty agency that focuses on food production, reducing poverty, mental health, etc. Recently there has been an increasing problem with opioid addiction. There is also a lack of providers. SWACP has received a grant and will work in counseling for addiction and to help train practitioners in the medication system treatment. They will provide wrap around services to help people recover from opioid addiction and the other issues that go along with it such as housing, transportation, job training, etc. Often times people live in an environment that contributes to their addiction. This environment could include stress, being surrounded by other addicts, or people who think that addiction is okay. Many people need to be completely removed from this environment to fully recover. One solution is to move to multifamily housing where they are expected to pay rent and manage their own house. As recovery increases, the ability to get a job also increases, often solely because the addict was removed from their original environment.

Future of Housing

State of Rural Housing – Stuart Kuzik, Business and Community Engagement Manager, WHEDA

Selected Points:

- Housing units are not cycling to new owners because of lack of options. There is a shortage of rental options and senior housing is limited.
- In rural areas, housing stock is aging. Seniors on fixed incomes have difficulties with home maintenance.
- Affordable housing has a perception problem – for Rusk County, a 1-2 person household could make $83,000 and qualify for these units.
- Provide down payment and loan assistance for single family homes as well as assistance for maintenance. The WHEDA Foundation awards up to $500,000 annually. Applications in May.
- Multi-family homes receive state tax credits. Act 176 doubled affordable housing credits.

The new workforce can't afford a house making them less likely to stay in communities. There are not many apartments available and most of housing in the state of Wisconsin is single family. The upper income limit for loan for a single person or a couple is $83,160. This housing stress is not a Wisconsin specific problem. Many employers are having a hard time finding employees. One way to alleviate the stress of housing is in multi-family living. Additionally, there have been 7 million dollars of affordable housing tax cuts in Wisconsin. This will increase the number of affordable housing units we can build.

Rural Housing Demand – Terry Whipple, Exec. Dir., Juneau County Economic Development Corporation

Selected Points:

- NorthCentral WI Regional Plan Commission just completed a housing study.
- Income has decreased by 8% and housing costs have increased 12%. Housing is unaffordable at the median income in 70% of US counties.
- Available houses in $125 - $175K range are missing and there is a lack of affordable rents. New construction single family homes cost more than $200K.
- Affordability gap growing especially for fixed income homeowners.
- Juneau County has lost 50% of its builders since the recession – limited supply.
- Employees were surveyed and that information was compiled for meeting with builders.
- Next, seniors will be surveyed.

A recent housing study looked at how housing is affecting businesses. Employers identified housing as a big problem. Housing is also a quality of life issue. This housing study focuses on Juneau County. This county has 27,000 people and has seen slow and steady population growth. The segment of residents of older ages is growing while the younger population is declining. More people are leaving the county to work (4000 people live outside the county and come in to work). This all is changing the housing needs.

The county is trying to figure out why housing is declining besides the recent recession. The average worker can't afford to buy a home in 70% of all American counties. Housing prices have increased faster than wages (wages have increased by $2 per hour). Additionally, the supply mismatched and there is a demand for quality, affordable units. However, the cost of new construction is well about $200,000.

There are other trends that are also contributing to this issue. Seniors are staying put longer and some won't move because of pets. There are also a smaller number of area builders. They are building very expensive homes as these have a higher profit margin and present them with less risk. Housing requires a wide variety of skills for building, which has caused many counties to reach beyond their boundaries to fulfill the wide skill set. This inflow of workers only increases the need for more types of housing.

Cooperative Housing Development – Warren Kramer, Exec. Dir. Northcountry Cooperative Foundation

Selected Points:

- Wisconsin has approximately 1,000 mobile home parks, averaging 50 units per park. Infrastructure failure in older parks is a major issue. The infrastructure in parks is privately owned (water pipes, roads, sewer/septic system) and as they fail, the owners, mostly mom and pop owners, cannot keep up and close. Through innovation, there has been development of mobile home parks as cooperatives.
- There are different cooperative models. A project lead needs to be identified to arrange supports, find financing among other things. Average project is 50 units.
- MN is transitioning mobile home parks to Resident Owned Communities. In the ROC, the home owners also own the land.
- There is a Senior Housing Coop in Mt. Horeb and one in Adams-Friendship. Senior models value liquidity over profit/appreciation.
- Northcountry has educational toolkits for municipalities as well as cooperative owners at www.northcountryfoundation.org.

Northcountry Cooperative Foundation is a nonprofit that does a variety of services such as co-op food support and housing co-ops. They are part of a national network of nine non-profits who use a national system/process. They also provide support for other co-ops. Rural America is famous for co-ops which are share ownership programs. Northcountry works on redeveloping underutilized landmark areas in rural areas and turning them into co-ops. They also can turn these areas into rental housing.

Currently mobile home parks are misunderstood. There is a disconnect between homeowners and ownership of the land. Northcounty works to facilitate the sale of the park real estate to folks who live in the communities. This delivers economic benefits to those who live in the community as well as social and security benefits. Infrastructure in communities is almost always privately owned. We are seeing parks closing at an increasing rate. They are closing due to a failure of infrastructure and if the investor of the park is profit motivated they may close the park. This displaces all the people living in the park, who often represent the workforce. If residents of the park own the real estate, this is less likely to happen as they have their own interests in mind.

Northcountry helps to form co-ops into legal corporate entities. This changes the dynamics of people who live in the community. They own the space together and create a community. They work together and benefit together. They can be assured that there won't be increases in prices unless there is an increase in expenses. As of today, there are 10 of these co-ops so far, two of which are in Wisconsin.

Future of Infrastructure

State of Rural Transportation – Craig Thompson, Exec. Dir., Transportation Dev. Association of WI

Selected points:

- Top three energy sources in Wisconsin are 1) Coal 2) Petroleum and 3) Natural gas.
- Energy markets and policies affect the types of energy we use.
- Corn/Ethanol energy market is highly saturated.
- Solar and wind power is the next trend.

Where you are in the state of Wisconsin influences your access to energy infrastructures. The top three energy sources in Wisconsin are coal, petroleum and natural gas. Additional forms of energy include renewables such as wood, ethanol, hydro, biogas, nuclear (6% of all energy), wind (0.2%), solar (0.1) and 7% is shipped in-state. Change in energy markets and policies would allow changes in the types of energy we use.

We want to increase the use of renewable energy, primarily by increasing the use of wood. The corn/ethanol energy market is highly saturated, though the byproduct of this form of energy is frequently used for animal feed.

It is no longer economically attractive for dairy farmers to use biogas. The solar power industry is growing, and the price has come down considerably. Many recent projects are using this form of renewable energy. Renewable energy is almost always implement in rural areas. Wind power was hot for a while and is coming back to be hot again. Lastly, transmission lines are a critical problem. Nobody wants transmission lines in their backyard, which creates a difficult problem.

Energy Systems– Doug Reinemann, PhD, Associate Dean Agriculture and Life Sciences, UW Madison

Selected points:

- Renewable sources are currently at 4.5%. The largest renewable energy source increase is in wood, currently at 27% of all renewables.
- Wisconsin has the most anaerobic digesters of any state.
- Biogas has stalled because of low energy price and present energy policy.
- Solar and wind are growing because cost is decreasing.
- Renewables almost always are implemented in rural areas. 2 new solar farms opening.
- The key is market access which means transmission lines.

Autonomous and Connected Vehicles in Rural Wisconsin – John Reihl, Trans. Sys. Engineer UW-Madison

Selected points:

- UW Madison is designated a Federal Transit Administration Proving Ground for AV. 1 of 10 states nationally, several testing ground areas in state.
- There are 6 levels of automation.
- Agriculture has many applications of AV.
- There was some funding in the spending bill for automated and connected technology.

Vehicle automation began in farming units. They used GPS and location tools in large combine units. The automation tasks were used to track the vehicles' locations. More autonomous tracker prototypes are coming out.

Autonomous vehicles can also help with safety. However, recent events in the news are conflicting with this safety argument. Once technology is perfected it will help to increase safety. Currently 40,000 fatal deaths a year happen on roadways from distracted driving. Many of these incidents happen in rural areas and smartphones are not helping this issue.

Autonomous vehicles will incorporate both hardware and software. The hardware technology may include things such as lidar (light radar) to map the area when you are driving despite weather conditions, radar, sonar, GPS and location services. The software for autonomous vehicles is currently not perfected or ready, which is resulting in the crashes we have seen in the news lately.

Recent systems such as auto brake assist, lane drift warnings and speed control are steps towards fully autonomous vehicles. Many companies such as Tesla are currently working on creating these vehicles as well as autonomous trucking and truck platooning. GM is focusing on connected vehicles which will be able to talk to each other or other vehicle infrastructure, pedestrians, motorcycles, apps, etc.

There are six levels of automation: no automation, driver assistance (ex. Lane assist), level two (ex. Tesla autopilot and auto piolet steering), level three (vehicle does most tasks on its own), level four (operate autonomously in certain conditions) and level five (no human intervention). Level five is where we want to get to increase the safety of vehicles. We won't see full automation for some time now. Even if automakers say they will have it in the next few years, it will likely be level four and mostly likely will be in urban areas. We likely won't see level five vehicles until 2040.

The news stories recently about Uber and Tesla crashes resulted from issues with technology. For example, Tesla marketed their vehicles as auto pilot, but told drivers to not take their hands off the wheel, which people did anyway. The Uber crash into a pedestrian in Arizona was also controversial. Some fault the engineers for not object detecting correctly, but others argue that a human driver wouldn't have been able to stop either.

With new technology comes a whole new issue of vehicle ethics. For example, what is ethical and how should a vehicle be programed if it has to choose between the life of a pedestrian and the life of its passengers. There is also the potential issue of vehicle cyber security and if people can track your location, information or even hack into your vehicle to cause a crash.

Broadband – Angie Dickison, WI State Broadband Dir., Public Service Commission – WI Broadband Office

Selected points:

- Public Service Commission administers the Broadband Expansion grants, which have doubled in size in WI. Broadband expansion grant program deadline is July 16th – there is an online Internet discount finder tool available online.
- 57% of rural areas have access to broadband.
- They have an online tool to find low cost broadband in your zipcode.
- Broadband Forward! is a WI initiative where communities can be recognized after they pass a resolution streamlining the permitting processes. 21 communities have been certified. A model local ordinance has been developed.

They are currently administering a broadband expansion grant program that is mapping and finding the coverage of the state. They have developed a tool to help folks find low cost internet options. One must simply put in their address and they will be served low or reduced cost broadband options. Many people still struggle to find broadband due to money or portability issues. Overall rural communities have 57% access. Wisconsin isn't alone, there are rural broadband issues across the nation. Some counties have no withstanding broadband and every county in Wisconsin except one said there was a need for better broadband. Luckily, there is an additionally 3.5 million dollars in the budget for broadband expansion.

Clean Water – Scott Laeser, Water Program Director, Clean Wisconsin

Selected points:

- Phosphorus Rules were passed in 2010. A watershed approach is the basis, as opposed to point-source enforcement.
- Compliance approaches include water quality trading, adaptive management, and temporary multi-discharge variances. Water quality trading requires less monitoring and oversight than adaptive management model.

Clean Wisconsin is an environmental and clean organization based in Madison. Clean water is a concern in rural areas, especially due to the phosphorous from farming. Many people want to bring new rivers to new quality standards with treatment plants. Water shed compliance options allow municipalities to go out into the broader communities to meet new requirements.

Adaptive water treatment is one proposed method that would involve various projects. It requires a lot of logistics and a comprehensive water shed approach. It also requires samples of water which must comply with the standards at the end of the projects.

Additionally, these communities would have water quality training. Credits could be generated from a whole suite of projects. Credits can generate facility upgrades, urban storm water management and infrastructure, conservation tillage practices, cover crops, repairing buffers or grass waterways, etc.

Most rural communities are in agriculturally dominated water sheds leading to many complicated compliance options.

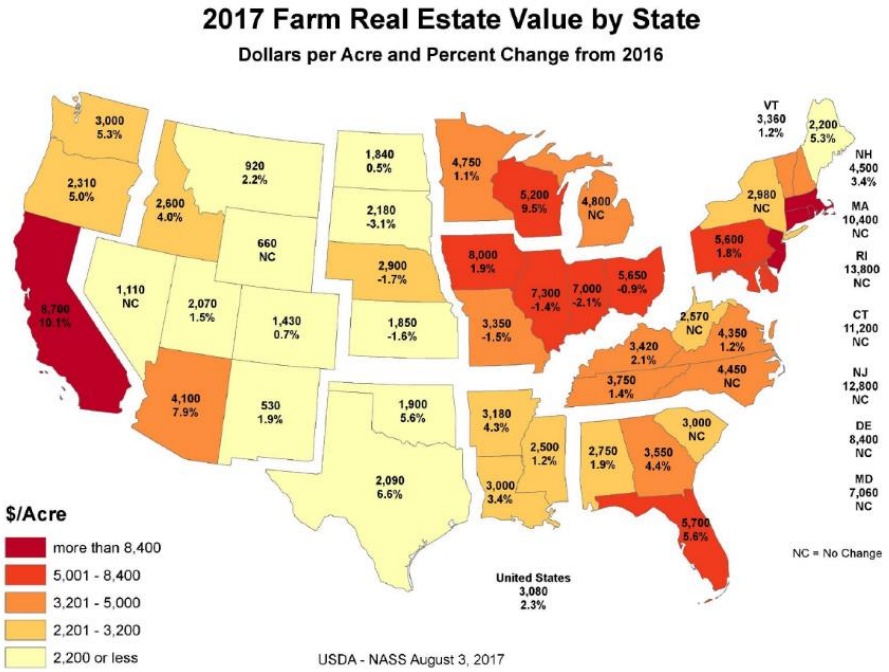
Future of Wisconsin Agriculture –Outlook 2018

RENK AGRIBUSINESS INSTITUTE
College of Agricultural & Life Sciences

Paul Mitchell and Jeremy Beach, Agricultural and Applied Economics, UW-Madison

Projected costs for 2018 remain high, with negative expected margins for many Wisconsin farmers, though margins for dairy and soybeans look better. The data suggest that most Wisconsin farmers are still stressed financially by continued low prices and high costs, but so far have been able to manage the problem, though these tight margins will continue into 2018.

The most recent land value data from USDA-NASS shows that farm real estate values in Wisconsin rose $300/A or 9.5% in 2017 compared to 2016. This increase is the largest percentage increase nationally except for California. What 2018 holds for land values is unclear. The continued tight margins for crops and dairy will put downward pressure on land prices. However, areas with strong growth in dairy herds will see land values hold steady or increase, while areas without these pressures will not, generating mixed results around the state.

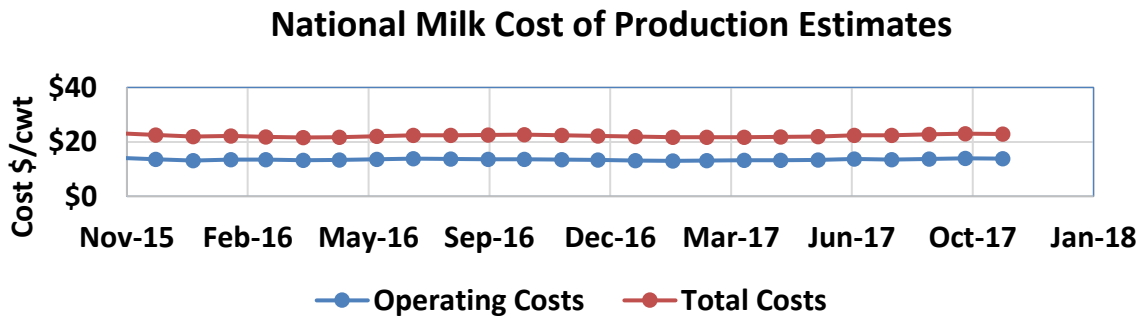


Dairy

Based on national USDA estimates, the average milk cost of production over the last year has shown no trend and ranged roughly between $21.70 and $23.00/cwt and averaged $22.22/cwt.[3] Note that this cost estimate includes unpaid labor, opportunity costs, capital recovery costs, and general farm overhead

[3] https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/milk-cost-of-production-estimates/

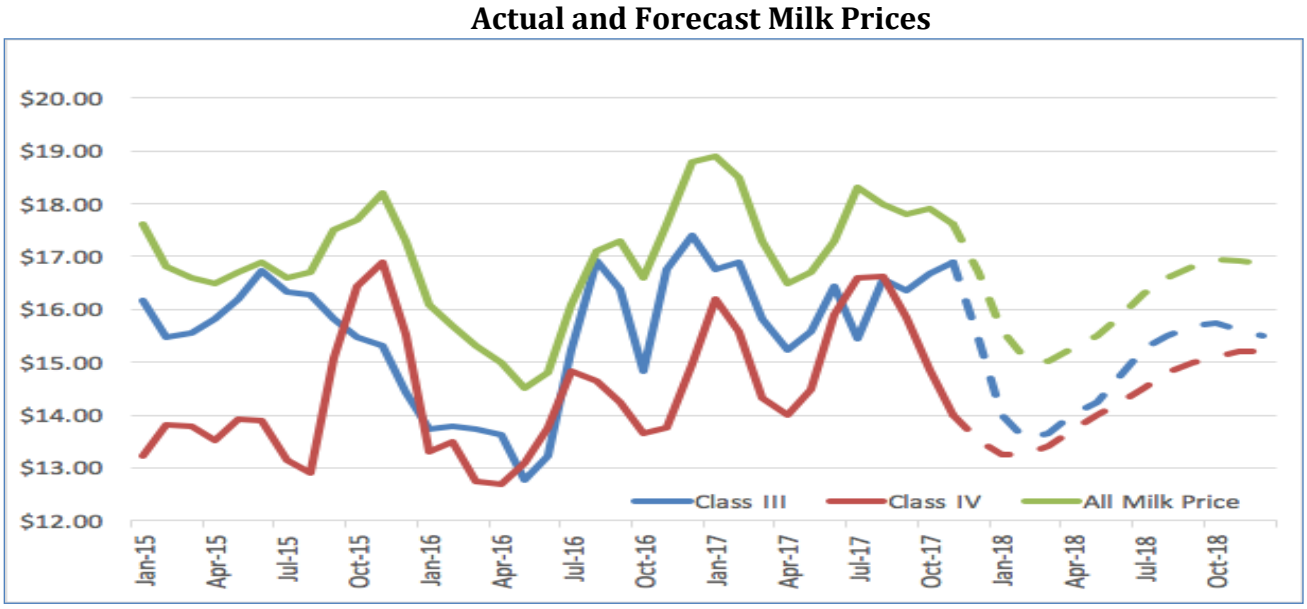
costs. This national estimate is likely similar to the Wisconsin estimated average cost as well, as the average cost in the state has converged to the US average in recent years, likely due to the increasing average herd size in the state. Into 2018, this cost will likely not
vary much from this range with continued favorable feed costs projected. Hence, for 2018, the projected Wisconsin milk cost likely ranges between $21-$24/cwt for most farmers, with higher costs for those with smaller herds and even lower costs for those with larger herds.



Source: https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/milk-cost-of-production-estimates/

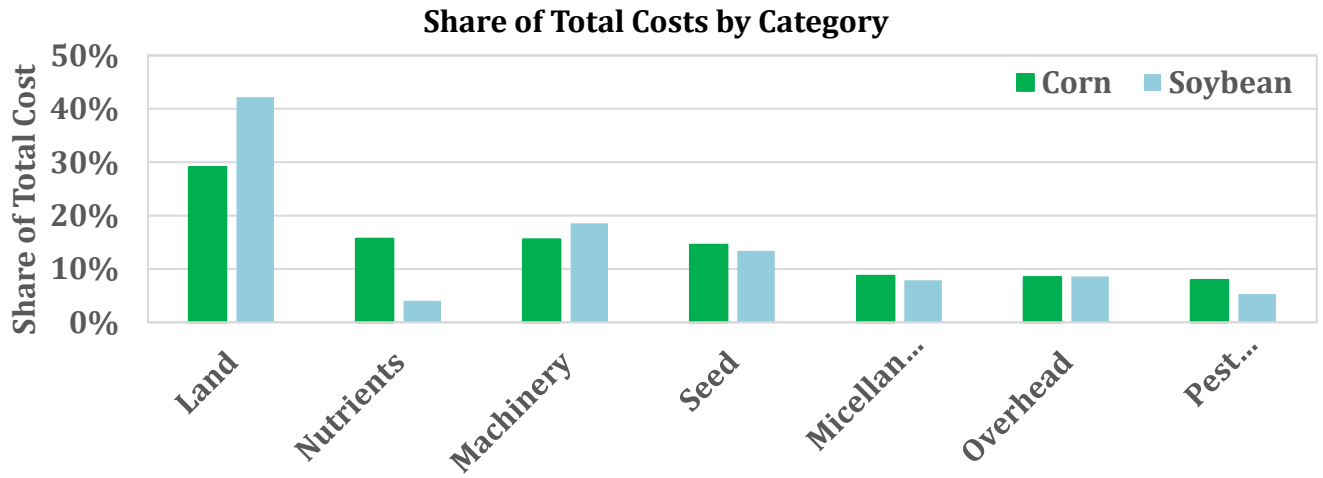
By mid-2017, milk prices felt as though they were on the way to recovery. We were about three years into price declines from the highs of 2014 and prices had clearly hit their bottom in May of 2016. But prices never really showed enthusiasm and as we finished 2017, it is clear that market sentiment is negative once again and farm milk prices will be declining as we begin 2018.

Price cycles have been seen to be about three years in length but they vary around that average. By the time that we experience new price highs, our current price cycle is likely to be the longest one that we have observed. We are now going into the fourth year of low prices and the forecasts do not show a high milk price yet in 2018. It is difficult to be optimistic about milk prices in the short-run, and milk prices are forecasted to continue to decline through the first quarter of 2018 and probably hit bottom in April or May. At that point, prices should begin to increase on through the rest of the year. With this forecast, milk prices will look a lot like 2016 prices and will give back the gains of 2017.



Corn & Soybeans

Data show that costs vary greatly among farmers and the break-even price is sensitive to changes in rental rates and projected yields. In 2018, break-even prices for most Wisconsin farmers are likely in the range of $3.90 to $4.40 per bushel for corn and $8.50 to $10.00 per bushel for soybeans. Those farmers paying relatively high rents will have higher break-even prices and those with higher average yields, especially for soybeans, and lower-cost management systems will have lower break-even prices. However, tremendous variation exists in farmer costs and so farmers are strongly encouraged to estimate their own costs of production and their own break-even prices,[4] as these estimates here are broad averages, not intended for individual farmer decision-making.



Source: http://www.farmdoc.illinois.edu/manage/2018_crop_budgets.pdf

Corn acreage in 2018 will be stable to slightly lower than 2017. The soybean to corn price ratio has been hovering just slightly above 2.5, slightly favoring soybean production, and indicating there will be only a small amount of switching of acres between those two crops. Although the market isn't rosy for corn prices, most of the bearish news has already been absorbed and the market will likely continue to trade sideways until early March when we have more concrete news regarding planting expectations. Higher prices will require a production shortfall in marketing year 2018/19. Baring that production shortfall, 2018 harvest prices should be similar to $0.10 lower than 2017 harvest prices. Basis will be variable throughout calendar year 2018 and even though futures prices have limited potential to increase, the spotty basis changes can provide some short-lived cash price strength.

Soybean exports are lagging this marketing year enough that the USDA reduced their export projections in the January World Agriculture Supply and Demand Estimate report on January 12, 2018 by 65 million bushels, to 2.160 billion. This was a 3% reduction in their forecast and would equate to a 0.6% reduction in soybean exports from last year. Exports continue to reflect lagging sales commitments and increased competition with higher Brazilian soybean production.

Planted soybean acreage for 2018 will likely be slightly higher, given the current pricing structure when compared to corn. 2018 may see more acres of soybeans than corn planted for the first time since 1983. Soybean prices are overpriced when considering the supply and demand situation and projections, and the downside price risk potential is significant. Marketing opportunities will exist in the first quarter of 2018, but barring a weather catastrophe, these opportunities will become even more limited after May.
Livestock

[4] http://fyi.uwex.edu/fieldcroppathology/files/2017/01/TeamGrainsFactSheet_FINAL.pdf

Per capita pork, poultry and beef production increased in 2017 and will continue to increase in 2018. Per capita production levels in pork and poultry will likely hit record levels for the fourth year in a row due to the expansion driven primarily from weak grain prices. Pork and poultry markets added processing capacity in 2017. This added capacity will increase production growth and assist production by providing greater bargaining power to producers.

Beef production in 2018 is expected to grow at a faster rate than either pork or poultry. Per capita beef consumption was up 2.4% in 2017 and will increase another 2.4% in 2018. 2018 will likely see increased beef features at the retail level.

Cattle supplies have been growing since 2014, and will continue to grow in 2018. The January 2018 beef cattle herd will be up a projected 650,000 head from 2017, and retention and culling rates remain at expansion levels. The large supply will bring cattle price pressure in 2018.

The cow-calf sector in 2018 will move from expansion to a stabilization phase of the cycle. La Nina may bring warmer and drier weather in some areas. If this happens, lower forage supplies may increase cattle on feed at a faster rate than otherwise would be experienced. Increased cattle on feed and slaughter in 2018 will bring large production that continues to increase through 2020. 27.4 billion pounds of beef production in 2018 will increase our reliance on exports to absorb additional supplies. Any decreases in current protein export levels will bring lower prices.

2018 Trade Negotiations

Although 2018 is a farm bill year, the first half of the year will likely see markets reacting to any news on vital trade negotiations. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) negotiations will be front and center in market news reports. Considering that roughly 20% of U.S. agricultural goods are exported, with 16% of poultry production, 20% of pork production, 11% of beef production, 49% of soybean production and 13% of corn production being exported, the U.S. agricultural sector has become increasingly dependent on foreign market for demand growth. This trend will continue due to increased production in all these industries.

There has been lots of speculation regarding different countries walking away from trade negotiations, yet to date this hasn't happened. Actions that are concerning though include Mexico and Canada having already signed free trade agreements with the EU. Should NAFTA talks disintegrate Mexico will likely quickly pursue agreements with other U.S. competitors.

A second trade agreement of concern is the resurrection of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), in which both Canada and Mexico are in discussions with nine other members. Should TPP be resurrected, both Canada and Mexico will have access to Asian markets.

Other 2018 trade negotiations to watch include the bilateral agreement between the U.S and South Korea that is being reconsidered and any changes to trade negotiations or trade actions with China. U.S. agricultural markets, especially the protein, grain and oilseed markets have significant interest in how all of these negotiations unfold in 2018.

The preceding summary was pulled directly from the *Status of Wisconsin Agriculture 2018* report published by the Renk Agribusiness Institute. The full report can be accessed here: https://renk.aae.wisc.edu/status-of-wisconsin-agriculture/

WISCONSIN RURAL PARTNERS

Wisconsin Rural Partners, Inc. (WRP) was created in 1992 under the National Initiative on Rural America which established a state-by-state network to improve the coordination of rural development programs and serve as a catalyst for future initiatives. During the ensuing 25 years, WRP has been a dynamic and non-partisan forum for identifying, discussing, and addressing issues affecting rural areas.

As Wisconsin's federally designated Rural Development council, WRP embraces a comprehensive approach to rural development through collaboration and cooperation among a wide array of partners including local, state, tribal, and federal governments, as well as for-profit businesses and nonprofit private sector organizations.

Simply stated, WRP strives to improve the quality of life in rural Wisconsin. WRP is uniquely positioned to sponsor and promote collaborative activities designed to address issues of rural importance. Since its inception, WRP has built a solid profile of rural leadership that is grounded by its work in local communities and extends to collaborative partnerships across a wide spectrum of communities and organizations.

Mission:

> "The mission of Wisconsin Rural Partners, Inc. (WRP) is to coordinate the identification, discussion and problem solving of issues impacting rural communities in Wisconsin."

Vision:

> *"Wisconsin Rural Partners, Inc. (WRP) will be Wisconsin's voice for collaborative action on issues to grow rural communities."*

Goals:

- Build Collaborative Partnerships
- Identify Critical Rural Needs
- Coordinate Private/Public Community Leadership
- Communicate Rural Policy Initiatives

WRP is an active advocate for locally-based solutions focused on core issues and opportunities. WRP encourages private/public partnerships for sustainable rural community development. We foster and celebrate local initiatives and projects that promote stewardship and expansion of community and natural resources including:

- Broadband Access and Adoption
- Community Infrastructure and Systems
- Child and Health Care Access
- Housing Financing and Construction
- Transportation Maintenance, Access and Use
- Agriculture and Natural Resource Use & Conservation

WRP is a neutral, nonprofit organization that brings together a cross section of residents, organizations and leaders that cross political affiliations and organizational boundaries to advance initiatives important to rural communities throughout the state. From community centered initiatives that build upon local citizen-based efforts, to an annual statewide Summit, WRP is focused on addressing issues and building collaboration between community, state, federal, nonprofit, and private sector leaders.

WRP has designed and implemented highly effective programming to identify and address key issues that impact rural life. The portfolio of events includes:

- 4 annual Small Community forums;
- Town-by-town community development listening and planning forums;
- Annual statewide Rural Summit conference;
- Top Rural Development Initiative awards; and
- State of Rural Wisconsin - a compendium of rural Wisconsin data.

WRP holds, as its central value, the integration of community based solutions that support Wisconsin's quality of life while promoting economic opportunity, social equality and environmental accountability. WRP is proud of its legacy of utilizing a strong network of thoughtful and effective leaders to analyze and make crucial recommendations on Wisconsin rural policy and implement construction community change.

Partnership Needed.

WRP welcomes anyone interested in joining our work on behalf of rural communities in Wisconsin. Partnership opportunities are extended to any individual, private-sector business, government agency, tribal entity, and other profit or non-profit organizations that:

- Reside in, have a physical office location in or work as an employee or volunteer within Wisconsin state boundaries;
- Endorses WRP's mission and vision for rural Wisconsin
- Commits to helping expand the partnership network; and
- Actively wants to participate in the work of WRP

WISCONSIN
RURAL PARTNERS

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