

# Food and Agricultural Policy Research



Since 1985, RTI International has been analyzing and evaluating the effects of policies and regulations affecting the food, agricultural, and forestry sectors using a variety of methods and tools.

At RTI, we combine in-depth understanding of the food, agricultural, and forestry sectors with a broad range of quantitative and qualitative capabilities. We provide independent, science-based research to help agencies and organizations achieve their missions and address analytical challenges. Our multidisciplinary staff of economists, program evaluators, policy analysts, statisticians, survey researchers, risk assessors, and epidemiologists conducts research for numerous agencies, including USDA, FDA, CDC, DHHS, and EPA, and other organizations.

## Highlights of Our Research Capabilities

RTI's research capabilities provide the foundation for addressing a wide range of policy issues in the food, agricultural, and forestry sectors. Examples of our research capabilities follow.

### Modeling and Analysis Capabilities

- Compliance cost estimation
- Demand system modeling
- Econometric analysis
- Economic modeling, including equilibrium displacement, partial equilibrium, and computable general equilibrium
- Probabilistic simulation
- Risk assessment
- Sensitivity analysis
- Statistical analysis
- Uncertainty characterization

### Data Collection Capabilities

- Consumer and industry surveys by telephone, mail, and Web
- Expert elicitation
- Focus groups
- In-depth interviews
- Industry interviews
- In-plant data collection
- Virtual-reality shopping simulator (*iSHOPPE*)

### Other Capabilities

- Database design and maintenance
- Education and training content development and delivery
- Scientific peer reviews

## Highlights of Our Research Experience

The range of issues RTI addresses, as well as the relevance of our work to policy making in the food, agricultural, and forestry sectors, is illustrated in the following sample of recent project topics.

### Regulatory Impact and Policy Analysis

- Economic effects of the BSE rules on beef markets
- Valuation of foodborne illness using quality-adjusted life years
- Analysis of the value to consumers of nutritional labeling statements
- Development of hazard coefficients for meat and poultry plants



- Analysis of food safety performance characteristics of meat and poultry plants
- Estimation of the effects of consumer preferences for beverages on obesity

### Consumer Behavior Research

- Characterization of consumer use and understanding of preparation instructions for prepared, not ready-to-eat foods
- Assessment of consumer response to emergencies and foodborne bioterrorism
- Evaluation of food safety booklet and delivery mechanisms for transplant recipients
- Development of educational materials on listeriosis prevention for older adults

### Program Evaluation

- Economic evaluation of the pork and cotton check-off programs
- Evaluation of the cultivated clam pilot crop insurance program
- Development and evaluation of food defense materials and activities
- Evaluation of the Pathogen Reduction and HACCP food safety regulation
- Evaluation of biological sample collection methods at hog slaughter plants

### Agricultural Market and Food Industry Studies

- Effects of alternative marketing arrangements in the livestock and meat industries



- Characteristics of household-based scanner data for food products
- Effects of media coverage of avian flu on meat and poultry consumption
- Estimation of consumer-level food loss
- Analysis of tobacco farmer interest and success in diversification

### Environmental and Climate Change Analyses

- Climate change mitigation opportunities in agriculture and forestry
- Hog farmer perceptions of alternative waste treatment technologies
- Potential impacts of climate change on agriculture, forests, and water resources
- Implications of large-scale bioenergy production for agriculture, forestry, and the environment

### Risk Analysis

- Farm-to-fork risk assessment for fresh produce
- Consumer phase risk assessment for *Listeria monocytogenes* in deli meats

- Risk factors and ranking for *E. coli* O157:H7 using expert elicitation
- Prioritization of *Salmonella* serotypes for PFGE analysis
- Improving hygienic and food preparation practices in child care centers

### Working Closely with Our Clients

RTI is a federally qualified vendor, preapproved to work with agencies under multiple contract mechanisms. RTI's contract mechanisms for food and agricultural policy research include

- USDA-FSIS Task Order Contract AG-3A94-B-08-0006
- USDA-ERS Task Order Contract 53-3K06-1300
- USDA-APHIS Task Order Contract AG-6395-C-07-0046
- DHHS-FDA Task Order Contracts HHSF-223-2007-10265G and GS10F0097L
- EPA-OAR Task Order Contract EP-W-07-069
- GSA MOBIS SIN 874-1 Consulting Services and 874-3 Survey Services, Contract GS-10F-0097L.

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