

How we work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Solutions to foster economic growth, food safety, and food security based on public policy, the best available science, and effective management approaches.

As a trusted partner to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), our team supports your mission to provide a safe, sustainable, affordable U.S. food and fiber system. We deliver research, analysis, and assistance programs to improve food and nutrition security throughout the U.S. and the world. With more than 60 years of experience, our researchers are at the forefront of improving the human condition and supporting America's farmers, ranchers, and growers.

Our Expertise



Agriculture and Trade

Providing insight to our partners to better manage resources and implement programs based on global trade policies. We use the RTI TradeSim model to perform scenario analyses that account for the interrelated nature of policy and markets.



Food Labeling and Marketing

Conducting analyses using a broad range of tools to understand the effects of labeling and marketing. We evaluate options and provide insights to improve nutrition, food safety, consumer practices, and to reduce food waste.



Food Safety

Increasing the safety of the food supply at all stages of the food supply chain through our unique application of expertise in policy research and analytics, combined with experience in epidemiology of foodborne diseases, risk analysis, consumer behavior, and implementation.



Nutrition, Education, and Food Security

Designing and implementing large-scale food assistance programs that also deliver education, nutrition, and health outcomes. We use evidence-based solutions and provide end-to-end services across research, technical assistance, and implementation.

Analysis & Modeling

- Consumer preference modeling
- Cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses
- Econometrics
- Economy-wide modeling
- Foodborne disease epidemiology
- Geospatial analyses and data visualizations
- Land use modeling
- Nutritional epidemiology
- Scanner data analyses
- Techno-economic analyses
- Vulnerability assessments

Other Capabilities

- Bioinformatics and machine learning/artificial intelligence
- Community-based participatory research
- Database design and maintenance
- Health and risk communication
- Intervention development
- Systematic and scoping reviews
- Scientific peer reviews
- Virtual reality and web-based training and education

Program & Policy Evaluation

- Formative research
- Process evaluation
- Outcome evaluation
- Impact evaluation

Data Collection

- Consumer, producer, and industry surveys
- Dietary recall and food frequencies
- Expert elicitations
- Focus groups
- In-depth interviews
- Observation studies

Capabilities

Experience

Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) Trade Model

RTI developed an Excel-based model of more than 700 food and agricultural products to allow USDA to quickly estimate the economic impacts of new trade policies and regulatory measures on trade flows, prices, and consumer and producer surplus.

Food for Progress - Ethiopia

RTI leads a public-private consortium designed to accelerate Ethiopia's edible oil self-sufficiency while expanding strategic trade opportunities for the U.S. The consortium strengthens Ethiopia's sunflower value chain by improving yields, expanding access to farm credit, and catalyzing local processing—tripling national production and increasing farmer incomes in a recovering post-conflict economy. By reducing dependence on imported oils and aligning policy reforms with U.S. technologies and products, the initiative opens new commercial pathways for American agribusiness and delivers a strong return on investment.

McGovern-Dole Program - Kyrgyz Republic

RTI served as the lead education partner on the McGovern-Dole program in the Kyrgyz Republic from 2021–2024. The program was implemented in 20% of all public schools in six provinces. RTI distributed children's books, trained teachers, librarians, and school administrators, and introduced formative assessments to improve classroom instruction. Outcomes included a 24% increase in students' oral reading fluency, among others.

McGovern-Dole Mozambique Impact Evaluation Design and Baseline Assessment

RTI designed an impact evaluation in the Nampula and Maputo provinces. The evaluation design included three groups of schools: 1) those receiving school feeding and literacy interventions, 2) those receiving only school feeding, and 3) comparison schools without any McGovern-Dole programs. RTI developed and conducted the baseline survey, including an early-grade reading assessment and measurement of child nutrition knowledge, dietary intake, and anthropometry. RTI also collected baseline qualitative data from parents, teachers, and school principals.



Developing Measures of the Food Price Environment

RTI supported USDA in assessing store and household scanner data, creating the Monthly Food-at-Home Price Database, and developing other data products that enhance researchers' ability to use the data for economic analyses.

Analyzing Consumers' Value of "Product of USA" Labeling Claims

The USDA FSIS received complaints and petitions that suggest that the "Product of USA" labeling claim may not accurately reflect consumer understanding about the origin of FSIS-regulated meat products. To help inform future rulemaking around this labeling, RTI conducted a nationally representative web-based survey and experiment to provide information on consumer awareness, understanding, and willingness to pay for the current "Product of USA" label versus other potential revised definitions. The survey used a limited-time exposure experiment to assess consumer awareness and a discrete choice experiment to measure consumer willingness to pay.

Scanner Capability of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – Authorized Small Retailers

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill) requires all SNAP-authorized retailers to use scanning technologies that can distinguish between SNAP-eligible items and ineligible items when redeeming SNAP benefits. RTI conducted interviews with vendors, a nationally representative survey of small SNAP-authorized retailers, and in-depth interviews with a subset of retailers. We analyzed the data to estimate adoption rates for scanning technology among small SNAP-authorized retailers to assess readiness for meeting the Farm Bill requirement, described the barriers and benefits to adopting scanning technologies, and provided cost estimates for nonadopting retailers to comply with this requirement.

Evaluation of the DC Healthy Tots Act (HTA) Policy Implementation

RTI assisted the National Farm to School Network in assessing the implementation and impacts of the HTA local food reimbursement incentive.

Expert Panel to Estimate the Costs of Food Safety

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) required data to implement food safety measures. RTI developed estimates of costs of capital equipment, labor, materials, and other costs associated with food safety investments made by meat and poultry slaughter and processing establishments under FSIS's jurisdiction.

USDA Agencies We Serve

- Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)
- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
- Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
- Economic Research Service (ERS)
- Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)
- Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
- Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)
- Forest Service (FS)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Contract Vehicles

- GSA Multiple Award Schedule
- One Acquisition Solution for Integrated Services Plus (OASIS+)

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