



# COPAFS

*Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics*

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## **Keep our National Data Infrastructure Strong – Keep ERS in Washington, D.C. Area**

Last week, the USDA announced its short list for potential new sites for the Economic Research Service, the research and analysis arm of the USDA and critical component of our national data infrastructure.

The USDA announced their plans to relocate ERS, as well as NIFA outside of the Washington, DC area and realign ERS to the Office of the Chief Economist on August 9<sup>th</sup>. The Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS) has been watching closely as this move has progressed and is troubled that the USDA is continuing to move forward with this plan without addressing the concerns of stakeholders.

“ERS maximizes the value of agriculture statistics by using them in combination with other official statistics and program data to objectively address critical social issues,” says Cynthia Clark, Executive Director of COPAFS. “Their work relies on collaboration with statistical and program agencies situated in the Washington, D.C. area.”

In addition to these valuable collaborations, ERS provides timely and relevant economic research and analysis to inform important policy decisions. Removing ERS from its proximity to policy makers means important policy decisions may be made without the best analysis available to the detriment of some of our nation’s most vulnerable communities.

“I hope the USDA will take the concerns of stakeholders from all over the country, including members of Congress, seriously by providing meaningful answers to our questions,” Clark continues. “Without addressing these concerns, the proposal puts a world-renowned research agency at risk, and could set back the federal statistical system during a time of innovation.”

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COPAFS was founded in 1980 to act as an advocate for the development and dissemination of high-quality Federal statistics, to increase the level and scope of knowledge about developments affecting Federal statistics, and to encourage dialogue between its member associations and organizations and the Federal statistical agencies. For further information, visit the COPAFS website at <http://www.copafs.org/>.