

**Programs, Value and Statistical
Integrity of USDA's
Economic Research Service**

Kitty Smith Evans

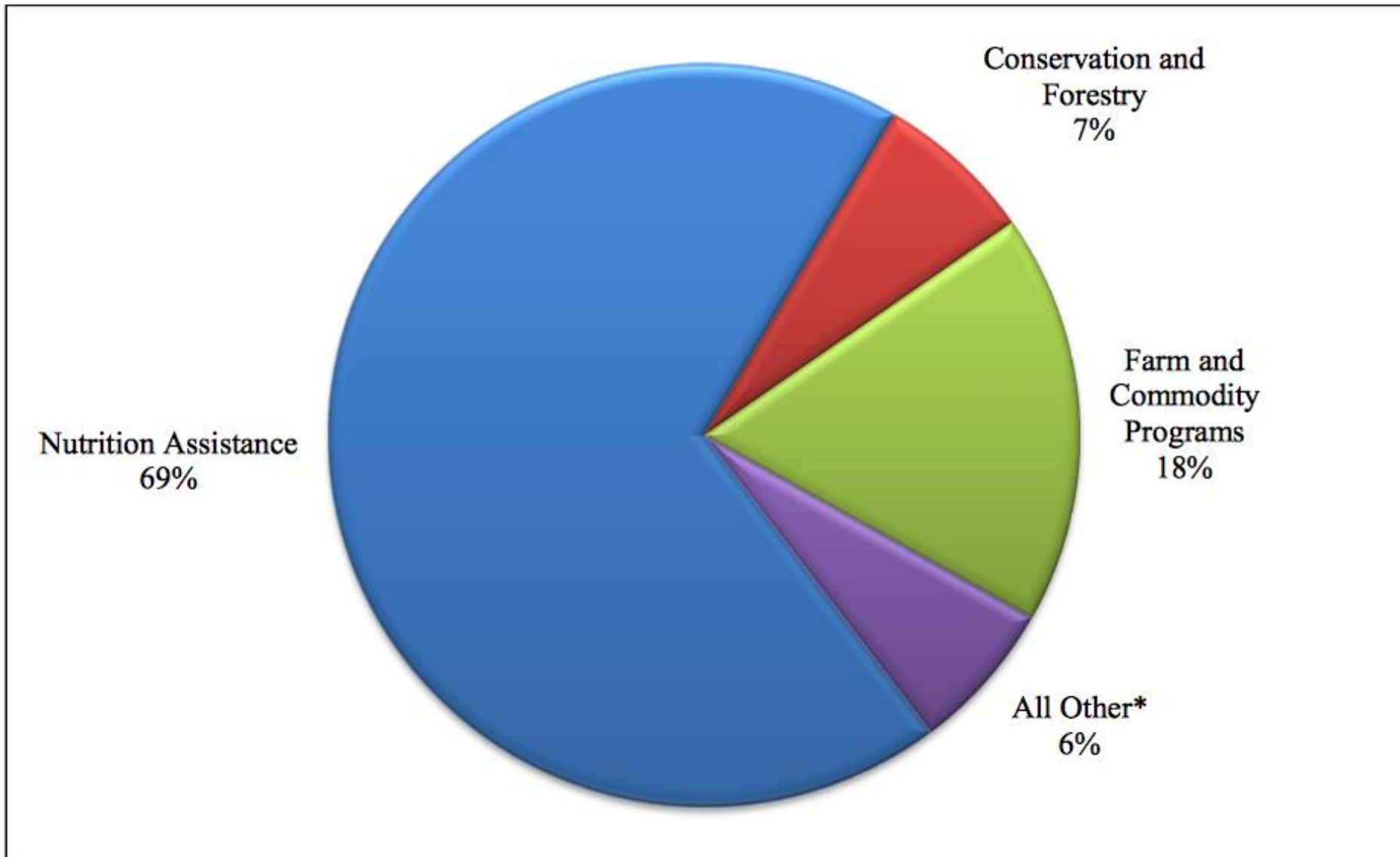


Figure OV-3. 2018 Outlays (All Other includes Rural Development, Research, Food Safety, Marketing and Regulatory, and Departmental Management.)

Major Functions of ERS

1. Principal Statistical Agency of the U.S.

- **Farm Financial and Crop Production Practices**
- **Survey based farm and farm household income estimation**
- **Agricultural Productivity, adjusted by quality**
- **National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey**
- **Multi-level county classifications to measure rurality**
- **Food Security Measures**

Major Functions of ERS

2. Evidence-Based Program/Policy Analysis

- Scenarios for Trade Negotiations
- Natural Resource/Conservation Programs
- Nutrition Assistance Programs
 - SNAP
 - WIC
 - Others
- Rural Development Program Options

The National Academies of
SCIENCES • ENGINEERING • MEDICINE

CONSENSUS STUDY REPORT



Principles
AND Practices
for a Federal Statistical Agency

SIXTH EDITION

American Economic Association
2014 Broadway, Suite 305 · Nashville, TN 37203 ·
Phone (615) 322-2595 · Fax (615) 343-7590

To fulfill their valuable role in our economy, economic measures must be:

- 1. Reliable.** Principal Economic Indicators and other economic statistics developed by statistical agencies must be trustworthy and free from bias or manipulation.
- 2. Accurate.** Measures must be based on sound science and reflect the best practices in survey and statistical methodology.

3. Relevant. An economic measure must be suited to its use. There can be multiple measures of a single phenomenon, with context determining which measure is relevant.

4. Transparent. The way in which an economic measure is calculated must be clear. The data and information used, steps taken, and algorithms employed in its calculation must be available so that the measure can be reproduced by others. The degree of uncertainty associated with a measure should be made available.

5. Consistent in a Changing World. Economic statistics must accommodate changes in technology and the types and quality of goods and services Americans buy and sell. At the same time, statistics must be comparably constructed over time to permit analyses of economic trends.

6. Timely and Accessible. Data must be available to policy makers and the public in a useable format and within a useful time frame.

Principles Challenged by USDA Plan for ERS

- 1. “Economic measurement is complicated and consequential. Statistical agencies require adequate resources to ensure the quality of economic statistics; to invest in new ways to measure our changing economy; and to protect the privacy and confidentiality of households and businesses, whose answers to government surveys and provision of administrative information are the basis of economic statistics.”**

Principles Challenged by USDA Plan for ERS

2. “...coordination and collaboration with other statistical agencies [is]critical for the effective, principled operation of a statistical agency.”
3. A credible statistical agency must have “an active research program” and “commit to quality and professional standards,” which includes leadership by individuals possessing, in this case, expertise in the economic and statistical disciplines practiced by ERS.

Principles Challenged by USDA Plan for ERS

4. CNSTAT Principle #4 states that

“to be credible, trustworthy, and unhindered in its mission, a statistical agency must maintain a position of independence from undue external influences...[and] avoid *even the appearance* that its collection, analysis, or dissemination processes might be manipulated for political or partisan purposes...” and that

“a Federal statistical agency [must] have the necessary authority to protect independence.”