

Video Transcript - Dr. Susan Offutt, ERS Administrator, 1996-2006

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Economic Research Service

Now that I've been away from the agency four years, and worked for Congress, I have almost an outsider's perspective on its work. What I find is that ERS is one of the few places in government that doesn't take, how shall I say, a supply-side view, which is, "we have programs and we want to deliver them to you." People aren't in the market for federal programs, they have problems that they want to solve. So the question of how people make decisions, what they need to make decisions, to allocate resources, is the strength of ERS. It tells the government something it doesn't already know. Everybody knows what they want to do, and they know what they think the effect will be, but they cannot see the unintended consequences, they cannot understand the complexity of the environment that people, a household or a farm business exists in, and ERS fills that gap in a way that many if not most executive agencies cannot, and certainly, and I work for the Congress, that lack of perspective on the problems that Americans face is a handicap to doing good policy work.