



Rural Futures Lab

The RUPRI Rural Futures Lab is a new initiative from the Rural Policy Research Institute. It seeks to create a new forward-looking narrative about rural America that recognizes the vital role rural people and places will continue to play in national well-being and prosperity.

The focus will be on a number of key economic drivers, such as regional and local food systems, alternative energy, rural health systems, ecosystem services, and adaptation to climate change. The Lab is particularly interested in looking at these drivers through the lens of regional collaboration, social equity, and innovation and entrepreneurship.

The Rural Futures Lab will become a hub of research and analysis, demonstration, investment, and communication on ways in which rural America can realize its full potential to be both partner and counterpoint to metropolitan America. It will reach out to rural people and institutions that are already working at the cutting edge in order to uplift promising ideas and practices, and to form partnerships and alliances so as to link research, policy and practice in new and creative ways.

The Lab will build upon RUPRI's 20 years of providing unbiased analysis and information on the challenges, needs and opportunities facing rural America, and of spurring public dialogue that helps policymakers understand the impacts of public policies and programs on rural people and places. In particular, the Lab will draw upon and contribute to RUPRI's ongoing work in rural health and human services, entrepreneurship, regional innovation, rural policy and analytics.

The concept for the Lab was first presented at a meeting of the RUPRI National Advisory Board in May 2010 and its development will be a work-in-progress for several months. There is an ongoing process of consultation with potential strategic partners across the country, together with research and information-gathering on the economic drivers. The preliminary workplan anticipates a series of working papers, beginning with regional and local food systems, over the next 12 months as well as a program of interactive communications, convenings and outreach. The eventual priorities and activities for the Lab over the next five years will become clear when this first year of activity is completed.

For further information, please contact:

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