USDA Data Resources

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Location

- Data and Statistics
- Because there's so much data buried in the USDA site, I recommend using "site:usda.gov *some keywords*" and/or "filetype:xxxx *some keywords*" searches for anything that you don't already know the address for.

What's in the Resource?

- USDA has four main portals for data:
  - Economic Research Service (ERS)
    - Food consumption
    - Farm labor, Income, et al
    - Organic food production & prices
    - SNAP & food security
    - Bio-feuls
    - Rural area statistics
    - International Macroeconomic Datasets, 1969-present includes per capita income, GDP and consumer price indices.

    - Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)
        - Commodity Data
        - Production, Supply & Demand Data
    - National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)
        - Census of Agriculture
            - Historical *.pdfs currently searchable to 1925
        - Publications
            - the *.zip version of many reports, like Quarterly Hogs & Pigs, will be packed full of *.csv files for use in spreadsheets
    - World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB)
        - Supply & Demand Estimates
            - Produced by and for US users; contains projections of about 20 years.
            - Doesn't appear to relate to FAO data directly. Each database uses different units and measures, although they sometimes use the same commodity categories like "coffee, green".
        - Climate
- Each portal has lots of data files - typically in MS Excel, statistical tables in html or pdf and multiple databases, as well as analytical material.
- Beware obsolete or nearly so file formats. For example, you can download a dataset of land use in the US in the 1960s that was produced in 1988, but it's in *.wk1 format. Excel 2010 doesn't support a number of formats in which federal datasets still reside. However, Apache OpenOffice works like a charm.
- Each portal also links to USDA's main databases and lots of smaller databases as well.

Databases

QuickStats

About agriculture in the US. Longest time series of all - 1800s-present. Covers crops, land area, farm characteristics.

- There are three different versions of “QuickStats”
    - QuickStats Lite
        - Exactly what it sounds like - a subset of QuickStats
    - QuickStats Data by Subject
        - a subset of QuickStats plus links to charts, graphs, flat files of data
    - QuickStats 2.0
        - the full data with, overall, statistics back to mid-1800s
    - iPad?
        - Yes. It’s a little clunky because the iOS method for handling the selection boxes requires a few extra taps (you select and then tap done; no equivalent on laptop).
        - The Save option gives you an xml page, but that’s not a particularly useful option anyway.
        - The Spreadsheet option gives you a new tab showing the CSV file. Depending on what you have installed, you should get a prompt to push to Evernote or Dropbox or Goodreader or similar.

Production, Supply and Distribution Online

- Some US, some international data since it covers both production/supply and distribution. Looks broken, but it functions just fine.
- http://www.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/psdHome.aspx
- Note: PSD Online doesn’t always make it easy to figure out which units are used for a given table. Use the files at http://www.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/psdDownload.aspx to find out as needed.
- When you download to Excel, the file gets the wrong extension; just

change it to .xls or .xlsx and you'll be fine.

- iPad?
    - Yes. Got a message indicating that blocked popups were a problem, but when I clicked on Custom Query, it worked just like normal.
    - Downloading was slow, so I backed out before it finished. I'm guessing it would push to the same software as QuickStats would.

Global Agricultural Trade System

- US trade with other countries. 1967-present. May hang after delivering data if you use Chrome.
- http://www.fas.usda.gov/gats/default.aspx
- iPad?
    - Sort of. Starts well enough, but then hangs. You can see the completed table, but because it's still running the screen is slightly greyed out and you can't do anything, like see if the charts work.
    - I just upgraded to Mountain Lion & that includes Safari 6.0 which is closer to Safari on the iPad. Currently testing it there too, but seems to be having the same issues.

Sources

- surveys, inc. the "census" of agriculture (scare quotes because it's really a survey)
- state agricultural offices
- Other national governments
- international organizations

Relevant for these Subject Areas / LCPs

(note: the specific terminology here relates to our subject guide software which we tie to UMN faculty, staff and student information using UMN

administrative information. That said, I think these are probably mostly general enough to be obvious and am leaving them here for whatever use they may be to librarians outside the UMN.)

Agriculture
Agronomy
Biotechnology
Economics, Agricultural and Applied
Environmental Health
Environmental Policy
Epidemiology
Family Social Science
Food Science
Forest Products
Forestry
Geography
Government Information
History
Immigration
Journalism
Liberal Studies
Politics, United States
Population Studies
Public Affairs
Public Health
Retail Merchandising
Social Work
Sociology
Soil Science
Sustainability
Transportation
Urban Housing
Urban Studies

Water Resources

Exercises