

**Summaries of presentations at CAIRN Workshop with the Rural Secretariat
January 25, 2008 – Ottawa, ON**

Innovations in Rural Policy: Building Stronger Rural Communities by Building Stronger Regions

Mark Partridge

This presentation traces the evolution of the Canadian economy from the 1950s when communities lived in isolation to the 21st Century where people now live, work, shop, and recreate over huge geographic expanses centered on large and small urban areas. Today, communities are interlinked in a web of connecting relationships that produces strong interdependencies between rural and urban alike. Unfortunately policy making and governance is often still stuck in the era when people lived and worked only in their community. Rather than region-based policies reflecting 21st Century realities, policies are often still tied to specific sectors that dominated the mid 20th Century landscape. Using mid 20th Century practices to define community development in the 21st Century will mean that Canada's regions will be less competitive internationally and it will lead to the needless decline of many rural and peri-urban communities. Partridge's discussion will include an evaluation of other policies that from time-to-time have been held up as saviors of rural Canada. Examples include sector-based policies, value-added strategies and clusters, immigration, recreation and tourism, and today's new savior, biofuels and the green economy.

Assessing Impacts of Agriculture and Food Innovations on Rural Communities

Rose Olfert

Innovations in agriculture, including primary production, processing and final demand may have rural implications to the extent that the innovations and their impacts are location-specific. Product and process manufacturing is likely to be urban-based, either in the urban centre or in the urban fringe. Over some area, relative to the urban centre, rural communities can benefit from these innovations in terms of either local/rural employment or access to urban-based employment. The future of more remote rural communities will be more affected by innovations in primary production or early-stage manufacturing that is well-suited to remote locations. Impacts on rural communities will depend on the extent to which innovations are labour saving, and the increased competitiveness (final and intermediate demand) following from the innovation. This presentation will examine the rural-urban distribution of employment growth in different segments of the agri-food chain and discuss the inter-dependencies between rural communities and urban-based employment growth.

Food Processing Innovations

Derek Brewin

Three studies have been done using a survey of food processors sponsored by CAIRN. The first study looked at links between education levels in a firm and product innovations that created new products and sought new demand. The study also examined links between education and process innovations that lowered costs. A second study looked at correlations between innovation and various firm characteristics including the age and size of the firm and firm location. A final study examined correlations between in-house research and development, and the flexibility to switch innovative activity between product or process innovation.

Slides used in these presentations are available for download at:

www.ag-innovation.usask.ca