Exploring Child Care in Farm Families at the Rural-Urban Interface

USDA and state level policies and programs address the issues of building the next generation of farmers and a stronger agricultural economy; however, examining how household level issues such as the cost and availability of childcare impact the persistence and growth of small and medium farms is also critical for supporting young farming families. It is increasingly important to understand how childcare influences farm management in light of the increasing number of women farmers and beginning farmers who may move to areas with little social and family support. The complex relationship between affordable, quality childcare and economic development has been established from a regional economic and urban perspective; however, child care policy and its impacts on the farm sector have been absent from this discussion. The current system of child care subsidies available only to low-income families and tax credits available to employed parents using employer-sponsored care options often do not suit the financial needs of farm families, who run their own businesses and often have nontraditional hours. Using data from a national survey of farm families, this study examines child care challenges faced by farm families and explores possible solutions to these challenges.