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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Duke Examines Farmland in Important Land Use Issue of *Choices* Magazine

Leading economists analyze what can be done to improve public policy decisions that impact land use changes in vol. 23 (4) of *Choices*, a policy-oriented magazine published by the Agricultural & Applied Economics Association (www.aaea.org).

Land use policy directly affects some of the most critical issues to be addressed in meeting growing demand for food, feed, and fuels. Policy makers need clear information on how new legislation will impact land use changes. *Choices* investigates this topic in five articles, which cover a broad range of issues in land use policy, including the economic, social, and environmental impacts of land use change; farmland preservation policy; improving policy decisions using estimated amenity values of agricultural land; and using market-based approaches to dealing with water quality.

The land use theme issue is guest edited by Stephan Goetz, professor of agricultural and regional economics at Pennsylvania State University, and the Director of the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development. "It is critical for U.S. policy makers to have sound information on how their policy decisions affect land use changes and how urbanization interacts with agricultural production," Goetz said.

Joshua Duke—a University of Delaware professor in the Department of Food and Resource Economics, the Legal Studies Program, and the Department of Economics—wrote the second paper in the series. Duke examines the types of environmental amenities that are provided by one important category of land use—that of farmland—but that are not normally included in benefit–cost analyses. This is form of market failure.

Two contributions of Duke's paper are that he presents estimated per acre values of farmland amenities and that he outlines how policymakers should use such values. In particular, he cautions that amenity values should not be viewed as "indisputably objective" even though they are sometimes presented as such. Any decision to use such values should include input from local stakeholders and political bodies.

Duke elaborated, "Billions of public dollars are being spent on conservation easements to preserve agricultural and natural lands. Research on amenity values will help ensure that the public gets the best 'bang' for its 'buck'—in terms of the most desirable acres being preserved."

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Choices Editor Walter J. Armbruster said of this theme, “I commend these articles to those interested in the impacts and challenges of changing use of agricultural lands in a time of concerns about the need to meet increasing world demands for food, feed and fuel.”

Choices is an online peer-reviewed magazine published by AAEEA for readers interested in the economic and policy issues which impact agriculture, the food industry, natural resources, rural communities, and the environment. *Choices* is published quarterly and is available free online at www.ChoicesMagazine.org.

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