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For Immediate Release

**OFFICE OF ECONOMICS AND ANALYTICS
RELEASES WORKING PAPER SHOWING POSITIVE IMPACT OF
RURAL BROADBAND ON FARM PRODUCTIVITY**

WASHINGTON, December 15, 2020—The FCC’s Office of Economics and Analytics today released a new paper titled “Impact of Broadband Penetration on U.S. Farm Productivity.” This novel report finds that broadband availability has significant positive impacts on crop yields and other farm production metrics.

The working paper analyzes the impact of increased broadband availability in rural areas on the productivity of U.S. farms, drawing on both FCC data on broadband availability by census tract and U.S. Department of Agriculture data on agricultural productivity by county, for key row crops like corn, cotton, hay, and soybeans. The working paper finds statistically significant effects of increased broadband service, both in terms of lower costs (fertilizer, fuel, seed, etc.) and higher production (yield). To cite one striking result, the analysis finds that a 1% increase in the number of 25 Mbps/3 Mbps or better broadband connections per 1,000 households is associated with a 3.6% increase in corn yields, as measured in bushels per acre.

“I’ve had the chance to visit many farms and ranches during my time as Chairman, from Renwood Farms in Charles City, Virginia to Crane Farms in King Hill, Idaho. A constant theme I’ve heard is the boost in productivity that comes with the use of precision agriculture and other broadband-based technologies,” said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. “This paper confirms these anecdotes, and underscores the importance of the Commission’s top priority of expanding broadband access in rural and underserved areas. It shows how the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund and other universal service programs that help deliver broadband to rural America can benefit us all—in particular, helping America’s farmers produce more and better food for the rest of us.”

The working paper was written by economist Katherine LoPiccalo, who after many years at the FCC recently moved to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. “Kat’s contributions to economic analysis across the Commission have been enormous,” remarked OEA Chief Giulia McHenry. “Her ability to combine different data sets to better understand the important area of farm productivity has made a huge difference to the FCC’s body of knowledge.”

The paper is available at <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-368773A1.pdf>. For more information about the Office of Economics and Analytics, see <https://www.fcc.gov/economics-and-analytics>.

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