Lisa Mancino is an economist with the USDA’s Economic Research Service. She conducts research on food consumption, diet, and health outcomes with a focus on the behavioral economics of food choice. Her research has examined the use of behavioral economic concepts to improve diet quality among food assistance program participants, the influence of dietary guidelines on food choice, and the effect of food away from home on diet quality. She has published in peer-reviewed journals, such as AEPP and Food Policy, and has authored numerous USDA reports. She is a two-time recipient of the USDA’s Secretary Honor Awards for her work on behavioral economics and for her involvement in helping to develop the USDA’s the National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey. She has served on AAEA committees for both the Food Safety and Nutrition Section and the Institutional and Behavioral Economics Section. She received her M.S. (2000) and Ph.D. (2003) from the University of Minnesota.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities for AAEA?
As AAEA continues to evolve and diversify in terms of membership base and areas of research, we face increased competition from organizations that are focused on just a subset of topics. This means existing and potential members have multiple options in terms of which professional societies to join, which conferences to attend, and which journals to target for publications. A key strength of AAEA is its members and the high quality work they do. One of the biggest opportunities AAEA has is to continue highlighting this work, both outside AAEA and within. The rising interest in issues related to food and agriculture expands the potential stakeholders for whom our research is valuable and also allows us to draw from a broad pool of new members. Providing value to our new and existing members by bolstering their professional development is crucial for this association to remain relevant.

What actions would you initiate to address the challenges and opportunities described in your response to the previous question?
Given the increased submission rate among AAEA publications, it seems demand for journal space has far outpaced supply. I would like to explore the efficacy of increasing the supply of journal space within AAEA, through existing outlets, such as special issues, or adding another outlet. It is also important to find ways to increase the impact of member’s research. Through its partnership with C-FARE, the association has been highlighting AAEA research to federal agencies, congressional staff and various funding agencies. We should also increase our efforts to reach out to non-government entities, such as environmental interest groups and hunger relief agencies, and ensure that our research findings are understandable and usable for their needs. I also think we need to improve the level of engagement at our annual meetings. A downside of having a relatively large association with several concurrent sessions is it can be difficult to network and get useful feedback on early research. Increased engagement may be particularly helpful to students and those early in their careers to build connections and get value from meeting attendance.

At the end of your three-year term, what changes/new initiatives would you have helped create?
I would like to see more interaction and discussion at the annual meetings—perhaps by adding more networking opportunities or finding new ways to highlight the value of section membership. I would also like to explore additional ways to quickly and effectively disseminate AAEA research findings, for example, bye-mailing charts and graphics from recent publications.