



**Marc F. Bellemare** is Associate Professor of Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota, where he also directs the Center for International Food and Agricultural Policy. His research lies at the intersection of agricultural economics, food policy, and international development. For his research, he has won the AAEA's 2007 Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award, the AAEA's 2011 Outstanding AJAE Article award, and the AAEA's 2014 Quality of Research Discovery awards. That same year, he also won the European Association of Agricultural Economists' Quality of Research Discovery Award for the same article.

Marc currently serves as one of two co-editors of *Food Policy*. In the past, he has served as associate editor of the *AJAE* and on several AAEA committees. His work has so far been featured in media outlets such as the *New York Times*, *The Economist*, *National Public Radio*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

### **What are the biggest challenges and opportunities facing AAEA?**

Given the stability of our membership at around 2,500 members these past few years, I see communications and outreach as both our biggest challenge and our biggest opportunity. Perception is reality; this means that our communication strategy feeds into the perceived policy relevance of the excellent work done by agricultural and applied economists. As a profession, we are at the forefront of some of the most important issues of our time, yet our work cannot seem to get the attention it deserves from the press, the public and, ultimately, policy makers. Having spent the first half of my career outside of the land-grant system, I have realized that our scholarship also does not always get the recognition we deserve from members of the economics profession. I see these two problems as intertwined, but also as solvable with an effective communication and outreach strategy.

### **What actions would you initiate to address the challenges and opportunities described in your response to the previous question?**

As a member of the AAEA's communication committee, I have witnessed the association's communications and outreach strategy closely for a few years now. I would begin by reviewing the communications strategy to focus on bringing national and international media attention to the high-quality, highly policy-relevant work done by AAEA members. A handful of our members have managed to get their work that kind of recognition entirely based upon their own efforts. There is no reason why we cannot collectively bring our members' best work the same kind of attention. Regarding recognition from the economics profession, I would work toward (i) having more dedicated AAEA sessions at the January meetings, and (ii) instigating a formal conversation between the USDA and the leadership of the National Bureau of Economic Research so the latter recognizes agricultural and food economics as a distinct program with its own set activities.

### **At the end of your three-year term, what changes/new initiatives would you have helped create?**

Consistent with my response to the previous questions, at the end of my three-year term, I first want to come up with a communications strategy that will generate consistent attention for our members' best work from the national and international media, whether this means newspapers, television, radio, or newer media. Second, I want to argue for more AAEA sessions at the January meetings. Finally, instead of one-off conferences on agriculture-related topics, I want to see a distinct NBER program on agricultural and food economics—there is no reason why they should have programs on aging or children, but nothing on agriculture or food. There is just too much good work being done by agricultural and applied economists for our light to be hidden under a bushel.