



WAEA Officer Elections Information

Candidate for President



Anton Bekkerman

*University of New
Hampshire*

Background

Anton Bekkerman joined the University of New Hampshire in 2020, after spending 11 years as faculty at Montana State University. He has been an active member of the WAEA since 2008 and has served in

multiple leadership positions including on the Association's Council in 2010–2012, as its Secretary in 2011 and 2012, and as a member of the Executive Council in 2018–2021. Bekkerman has also served on the WAEA Distinguished Scholars and Outstanding Publication committees in multiple years and recently completed a three-year term as one of the editors for the Association's flagship publication, the *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*. As a member of the Executive Committee and *JARE* editor, Bekkerman was part of the leadership groups that redesigned the Association's and *Journal's* websites, increased the *Journal's* recognition within the Open Access community, established regular communication about the *Journal* with WAEA members, among others.

At Montana State University, Bekkerman served as the chair of his department's undergraduate instruction committee, helped lead the effort to launch AgEconMT.com—a modern outreach platform that won the 2017 WAEA Outstanding Extension Project Award—and served as the associate director of the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station. In his current role as the director of the New Hampshire Agricultural Experiment Station, he is charged with leading agricultural, food, natural resource, and environmental research endeavors at the University of New Hampshire. In those few hours each week when things feel particularly slow, Bekkerman continues to work on research projects that are rooted in Western agricultural issues: small grains marketing and transportation issues, policy analysis, and production and management economics of dryland cropping systems.

WAEA Vision Statement

It has been exciting to see continued growth in the number and the diversity of young professionals and graduate students at the WAEA annual meetings over the thirteen years that I've been a member. This trend reflects the continued relevance and value of the WAEA as a forum for sharing and discussing

high-quality research, collaborating on and improving instructional programming in traditional classroom and Extension settings, and strengthening professional networks among agricultural and natural resource economists in the Western United States. This was particularly reflected in the continued interest to participate in the WAEA during the COVID-19 disruptions. It has been rewarding to be a consistent part of the Association's leadership group, helping steer and implement ideas and see the added value that those collective efforts bring to our colleagues.

While I have recently transitioned to a new role at the University of New Hampshire (an institution that geographically may not fall in the traditional interpretation of the western United States but nonetheless remains west of Maine), I remain a WAEA member and see an opportunity to continue contributing to the Association's long-term resiliency and success. There are two specific efforts that I would lead during my term as WAEA president.

First, I would help initiate and develop a collectively established five-year strategic vision for the Association and associated set of actionable goals that would provide direction for how our Association will continue adding value for its members. The WAEA's major strength is and will continue to be the organic facilitation of idea exchange and generation at annual meetings. However, I see an opportunity for a smaller, tight-knit association such as the WAEA to use a shared ideation process for generating well-defined goals that will result in greater recognition of regional strengths and ability for our members to leverage those strengths for their professional advancements. I envision engaging the entire membership in seeking feedback about strengths and opportunities, working with the Executive Council and WAEA Council members to synthesize the feedback and define strategic five-year goals, and developing a roadmap that future WAEA leaders can follow to work toward those goals.

Second, as part of the strategic vision process, I would focus on moving the WAEA toward formalizing and celebrating the diversity, inclusion, and accessibility that are already strengths within our Association. Additionally, I would facilitate efforts to identify tangible, achievable ways that we can further build on these strengths, with a vision of becoming a recognized leader in the agricultural and natural resource economics profession to whom individuals, institutions, and other associations look to.

My professional career has benefited greatly from the opportunities afforded to me by the WAEA, and I am excited to "pay it forward" by leading a planning process that would steer the Association toward continued excellence.

Candidate for President

Karina Schoengold



University of Nebraska

Background

Karina Schoengold is an Associate Professor and chair of the Graduate Committee in the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Nebraska (UNL). She is also a Faculty Fellow of the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska. She earned her B.S. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Ph.D. from the University of California-Berkeley.

Dr. Schoengold's research interests are in the fields of environmental and natural resource economics, water resource economics, technology adoption, and ecosystem service valuation. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in natural resource and environmental economics.

Dr. Schoengold has been involved with the WAEA for over a decade. She has experience as Director of the WAEA Executive Council where she helped to plan annual meetings, and she has also reviewed submissions for JARE and the annual meeting and been a member of various annual WAEA award committees.

WAEA Vision Statement

The WAEA has been an important professional association in my career, and I appreciate the opportunities provided by the annual meeting and the various WAEA publications. I am honored to have the chance to be considered for the position of President. The timing is unique as the world starts to recover from a pandemic that has disrupted travel and many other activities, and I think it is important that WAEA move forward strategically to ensure that the association remains vibrant for the future. Most of us missed having an in-person annual meeting, which provides professional opportunities, a chance to learn about new research, and to connect with past friends and colleagues. While reestablishing the in-person annual WAEA meeting is essential, I think that the WAEA would be wise to consider some of the things we have learned from the last 18 months. For example, the proliferation of online webinars and seminars suggests that properly targeted activities and social media outreach could reach a much larger audience than the annual WAEA meeting. This might warrant investment in the WAEA webpage and communication capabilities to increase the effectiveness and impact of the high-quality work of our members. I would look carefully at how the WAEA could use such tools to strengthen its future and reach new audiences who would not typically attend the annual meeting.

Another aspect that I would focus on is graduate student involvement in the WAEA. I have been a member and/or chair of the Graduate Committee in the Department of Agricultural Economics at UNL for many years and have been a strong advocate for its graduate students. I would like to extend that advocacy to issues related to graduate student participation and success in the WAEA. The WAEA Annual Meeting is a supportive venue for graduate student research. The WAEA Graduate Student Paper Competition is an excellent addition to the annual meeting, and I have served on the judging committee in the past. But there are other actions we could take to include graduate students in a meaningful way. For example, two of the actions that I would like to explore are establishing formal mechanisms to mentor graduate students and using resources to provide travel funding for graduate students. These types of actions directly benefit graduate students but also ensure the future viability and vibrance of the profession and the WAEA.

Thank you for your consideration.

Candidate for Director



Amy Hagerman

Oklahoma State University

Background

Amy D. Hagerman is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Oklahoma State University working on issues related to Agriculture and Food Policy. Amy completed Agricultural Economics degrees at Oklahoma State University (B.S. 2004) and Texas A&M University (M.S. 2005 and PhD 2009) as well as a post-doctoral program in animal health economics. She joined the United States Department of Agriculture, spending two years with the Economic Research Service in Washington, DC, and then 5 years with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service in Fort Collins, Colorado, working on economic consequence assessments of trade and animal disease policies on US agricultural industries. She joined the faculty at Oklahoma State University in June 2018 (75% Extension/25%

Research). Amy focuses her integrated extension and research program on the understanding and management of the risks of agriculture, including animal health, extreme weather, and market fluctuations. Amy has served the profession as a reviewer, a guest editor for special journal issues, a grant panelist, and helped launch the AAEA Health Economics Section. Amy has been involved in WAEA since 2009 as a member and participated in Western Extension Committee activities since 2018. In 2020, Amy served on the Outstanding Published Research Award committee.

Vision

I am honored to have the opportunity to serve as a WAEA Director. This organization has a unique role in fostering collaboration, generating new energy and ideas in research/teaching/extension, and enhancing professional development. This role is even more critical given the stressors we all faced in 2020-2021, and the expanding breadth and scope of the challenges faced by our profession in North America and in the rest of the world. In addition to the continuation of an engaging annual meeting and successful publication outlets, I would seek possible opportunities in the following areas.

In emergency response, one of the most important steps after an incident is to evaluate what went well and where processes can be improved. Most of us experienced at least one instance of virtual or hybrid professional engagement in 2020 and 2021. We found some things that worked, some things that could work better, and some things we would like to never see again. I would seek ways to use collective lessons learned from virtual and hybrid events to develop avenues of reaching audiences that may not have the time or funds to travel to the WAEA Annual Meeting every year. For example, a virtual track session during the in-person meeting, livestreamed keynote presentations, or a virtual pre- or post-conference.

Economics has a great deal to contribute to cross disciplinary topic areas. I would like to explore the idea of highlighting a 'big picture' symposium each year, selected by the Executive Committee, beyond the typical tracks. This symposium could bring in speakers from within and outside of the agricultural and applied economics community to share innovations and information on key timely topics. Recent topics that could be examples include antimicrobial resistance, scientific communication, carbon markets, and forest management for wildfire prevention/response/recovery.

Finally, I would support continued enhancement of mentoring and awards activities that encourage and inspire WAEA members. This includes exploring opportunities for new awards that highlight contributions by members in industry, non-profit and governmental positions and highlighting service and mentoring by mid- and late-career members. It may also include highlighting exemplary examples of integrated extension-research-teaching programs that have fully embraced the land grant mission.

It would be a pleasure to play a role in the continued development of WAEA as a Director. I believe our organization will continue to play a vital role in professional development and personal engagement among members, and that we will continue to bring in new members interested in topics facing the West.

Candidate for Director



Vardges Hovhannisyan

University of Wyoming

Background

Vardges Hovhannisyan is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Wyoming. Vardges received his PhD in Agricultural Economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His research focuses on empirical industrial organization, consumer behavior and price analysis, and applied econometric modeling. Recently, he has been researching about tobacco use, addiction, and health outcomes.

Vardges attended his first WAEA in 2010 as a graduate student. Soon thereafter, Vardges began his academic career at the University of Minnesota as a research fellow. He has been presenting papers at the WAEA annual meetings, reviewing selected papers and JARE submissions, and publishing in JARE on a regular basis. His graduate advisee received the WAEA Outstanding Master's Thesis Award in 2018. Vardges has also served on the WAEA outstanding journal article committee.

WAEA Vision Statement

I am very pleased to be nominated for the position of a WAEA Director. This association has played a tremendous role in my professional growth and development by expanding my network, allowing me to engage with colleagues and mentors, present at the meetings, and publish in the association's flagship journal. Through this role, I will have an opportunity to give back to the association and help students, junior faculty, and the academic community in general.

Specifically, as a Director, I would like to

- Bring more visibility to JARE by taking advantage of recent trends in social media and advances in technology
- Expand the membership through the following means
 - ❖ Contact graduate students in various departments and ask them to become a member, attend the meetings, and present their papers
 - ❖ Contact new faculty members and encourage them to become a member
 - ❖ Contact department heads and faculty representatives to encourage their graduate students and new faculty to join the WAEA

In the future, I will continue to support the WAEA by serving on various committees. With these experiences, hopefully, one day I can also serve as a WAEA president.

Candidate for Director

Deepthi Kolady

South Dakota State University



Background

Deepthi Kolady is an Associate Professor in the Ness School of Management and Economics at South Dakota State University (SDSU). She obtained her Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from Cornell University. Prior to joining SDSU, she worked at the International Food Policy Research Institute, the World Bank, and Cornell University. Dr. Kolady's research focuses on understanding producers' and consumers' decision-making in the context of farming and food systems. Her recent works include estimating consumers' willingness to pay for credence attributes such as antibiotic-free meat, raised carbon-friendly beef, and gene-edited foods. On the production side, Dr. Kolady is interested in understanding the determinants of producers' adoption of technologies such as precision agriculture, biotechnology, and conservation practices. She teaches courses in the fields of agricultural economics, agribusiness, and natural resource economics.

WAEA Vision Statement

Thank you for considering me for the position of WAEA Director. I am a regular attendee and participant of the WAEA Meetings. The Meetings have provided me many opportunities for networking and for keeping me updated on the latest research that affects our farming and food systems and natural resources. WAEA meetings are a great platform for graduate students to present their research and for professional development. I have witnessed in my graduate students the positive impact of attending and presenting at the WAEA meetings, particularly in terms of building confidence and improving public speaking skills. As a WAEA Director, I would like to support and continue all the successful WAEA activities while tailoring the activities to attract more graduate students, extension field specialists, faculty, environmentalists, and industry stakeholders to become members. For example, organizing symposiums or track sessions that will be of interest to a broad audience and actively advertising these activities can attract non-members to attend annual meetings and become members. A large and diverse membership will foster networking opportunities and will further strengthen WAEA's already strong commitment to research, teaching, and outreach. I will work with the WAEA leadership team to ensure that WAEA provides opportunities for its members from academia, industry, and NGOs to do their best in research, teaching, outreach, and policy advocacy efforts and prepare them to address the myriad of challenges we face in our farming and food systems. Thank you again for your consideration.

Candidate for Director



Jeff Luckstead
Washington State University

Background

Jeff Luckstead is an Associate Professor in the School of Economic Sciences at Washington State University. Jeff received his PhD in Economics from Washington State University and an MS in Applied Economics and BS in Economics from the University of Idaho. Jeff started his career in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Arkansas in 2013, before returning to WSU to join the SES faculty in 2020. His research focuses on policy analysis in international and domestic markets with a focus in agricultural commodities and agricultural labor markets. Recently, his research has been focused on applying structural gravity models to conduct international agricultural policy analysis and examining the impact of the Farm Bill on the dairy industry with a focus on economies of scale and the survivability of individual dairies.

Jeff's first experience with the WAEA was as an MS student when he attended the annual meeting in Big Sky Montana in 2008. Jeff has actively participated in the WAEA by presenting 11 papers and three posters at WAEA meetings. In addition, he has published seven papers in the *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*, the flagship journal of the WAEA. He has maintained active membership in the WAEA throughout his career and served as chair of the WAEA Outstanding MS Thesis committee in 2015 and 2021.

WAEA Vision Statement

I am honored to be nominated as a WAEA Director. WAEA fosters an environment such that its members can make important contributions in the areas of research, extension, and teaching on key agricultural and resource economic issues specific to the western United States and Canada. By encouraging engagement in key areas, such as climate change through rising temperatures and droughts or labor issues in fruit and vegetable production, the association will remain relevant and impactful into the future. As a Director, I would continue to support the primary WAEA goals of hosting dynamic annual meetings, publishing high-quality research through JARE and WEF, continuing cooperative relationships with other organizations and related institutions, maintaining sound fiscal management of the association, recognizing high-quality work and outstanding achievements by faculty and graduate and undergraduate students through the awards program, supporting professional enrichment opportunities for existing members and students, and recruiting new members. Furthermore, as a director, going forward, I would seek new ideas to improve the association. For example, I would support new workshops to bring attention and enhance all members' research by utilizing new tools such as big data. Enhance graduate students' career paths through workshops focused on reviewing job-market papers, providing practice interviews for the job market, and providing insight in private and public sector employment opportunities in the western United States and Canada. Enhance students' participation through travel scholarships, undergraduate paper presentations, and early-career development programs