

Meet the Staff: Lyubov Kurkalova

Recently promoted from post-doctoral research associate to associate scientist this past November, Lyubov Kurkalova (or Luba as her colleagues, friends, and family call her) is busy with collaborative efforts as well as her individual research program within the Resource and Environmental Policy Division of CARD.

Luba joined CARD as a research assistant in 1993, applying her considerable mathematical expertise to the data processing, analysis, and computer programming requirements of the ongoing research. Luba came to Iowa State with a B.S. in applied mathematics from Tajik State University in Tajikistan, then a republic of the former Soviet Union, and a Candidate of Sciences degree in mathematics from Kazakh State University in the former USSR. She received her doctorate in agricultural economics at Iowa State in 1999, with a dissertation on productivity in post-Soviet primary agriculture. She credits former CARD director Stanley Johnson with helping her to choose agricultural economics, specifically production and labor economics and econometrics, as her field of specialization. "He was an enormous influence," she says.

Luba has found the practical application of her research experience and education particularly satisfying. "I am doing something very much related to real life," she says,

"to what people think about, to the decisions that people make every day. This is the attraction that I had been missing in pure mathematics—the focus of economics on real-life problems."

She is coauthor of a forthcoming journal paper, "The Efficiency of Sequestering Carbon in Agricultural Soils." Greenhouse gas emissions, and the value of nitrogen testing are two other recent projects that probe how farming practices affect environmental quality. Another is conservation tillage adoption. "The problem we are working on now is why some farmers choose conservation tillage while others do not," she says. "One hypothesis we're testing is that new adopters don't do as well as adopters who started 10 years ago because of the learning curve involved. I want to measure and communicate to farmers how much time on average they can expect the process of adoption to take before they are better off, and how much they can expect to lose in that timeframe until they're doing as well as everybody else."

Luba says the years she has spent at CARD have been very positive. "I like the commitment to high-quality research and the continuous discovery associated with my job. I not only get to apply my knowledge and training but I also learn many new things, ranging from an understanding of how farm practice



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choices are made to new qualitative and quantitative economics and econometrics techniques."

Luba's husband, Alexander, is a student in the College of Business where he studies management information systems. The couple has two daughters, "two 'T's,'" says Luba, "a teenager, Anna, and a toddler, Svetlana." Together the family enjoys jigsaw puzzles and Russian movies. "We probably have one of the biggest collections of Russian videos in Ames," she says. "We really enjoy the movies, but we also want to do this for our daughters because we don't want them to lose the [Russian] language. It's important to us that they know the language and the culture." Luba is also a big fan of mystery novels and loves to do some pleasure reading when she can. "I was impressed with the Agatha Christie books," she says. "I've probably read almost all of them now." ♦

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Christopher D. Azevedo, Joseph A. Herriges, and Catherine L. Kling. "Ask a Hypothetical Questions, Get a Valuable Answer?" CARD Working Paper 00-WP 260 (ON-LINE ONLY), December 2000.

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BRIEFING PAPER

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TECHNICAL REPORT

JunJie Wu. "The Resource and Agricultural Policy System (RAPS): Upgrade and Documentation." CARD Technical Report 00-TR 45, November 2000.

JOURNAL ARTICLE

Frank Fuller, Dermot Hayes, Darnell Smith. "Reconciling Chinese Meat Production and Consumption Data." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 49 (October 2000): 23-43.

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