

## Faculty Profile: Tim Beatty



Tim Beatty  
Associate Professor  
Agricultural and Resource Economics  
UC Davis

Tim Beatty recently joined the faculty at the University of California, Davis as an associate professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics. His research looks at consumption behavior, in particular as it relates to poverty and health. His research has focused on food consumption and the demand for nutrition and health, at both the household and aggregate levels.

Tim was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. He did his undergraduate degree in Economics at Université Laval in Quebec City, his M.Sc. in Applied Economics at the École des Hautes Études Commerciales de Montréal, followed by a Ph.D. in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at UC Berkeley. He started his career as a Canada Research Chair

in the Food and Resource Economics Group at the University of British Columbia (Vancouver, Canada), followed by tenured faculty positions at the University of York (U.K.), and the University of Minnesota. Over the years, he has held visiting positions at the Statistics Norway, BI Norwegian Business School, and the University of Bologna.

Much of Tim's research has focused on issues broadly related to poverty and specifically related to the consumption behaviors of low-income households. The consumption decisions of the poor are often of interest to and the target of government policy; providing research on these interventions goes to the heart of the kind of work an engaged academic at a land-grant institution should be involved in. Work in this area has looked at the prices low-income households pay for food and whether or not low-income households face a "Heat or Eat" trade-off.

A major interest has been the study of information provision as a tool of public policy. In principle, decision makers should optimally adjust behavior in response to new information, thereby increasing welfare; in practice, results vary. Work in this area has looked at consumer response to FDA warnings concerning high levels of mercury in fish, consumer responses to hurricane advisories, and response to air quality warnings.

A related area of work is the study of "labeled transfers." Labeled transfers are another way by which policymakers attempt to influence the consumption choices of social program participants, giving descriptive names to the resources provided. In work with co-authors, Tim has found that these descriptive labels are more effective than economic theory would predict.

For example, elderly households in the U.K. receive an unconditional cash transfer called the "Winter Fuel Payment"—these transfers are spent on fuel at a much higher rate than theory predicts. Recent work has found that increases in benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (called CalFresh in California) result in a greater increase in food spending than we would expect if households had simply been provided with cash.

Tim has a long involvement with the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, serving in leadership roles in the Food Safety and Nutrition section and the Econometrics section. He was recently appointed as one of the four co-editors of the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*.

Tim and his wife Josephine used to have hobbies but now have three children: Max (10), Finn (8), and Hazel (6) who have quickly acclimated to life in balmy Northern California.

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