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#### Weakness Predicted for Rural Economy

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) - A new survey suggests the economy will remain weak in rural parts of 10 Western and Plains states because the strong U.S. dollar is hurting exports and the bird flu is hitting poultry farms hard.

The overall Rural Mainstreet index improved to 49 in May from April's 46, but the index remained in negative territory below 50.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss says agriculture and energy exports are suffering.

The survey indexes range from 0 to 100. Any score below 50 suggests decline in that factor in the months ahead.

Sales of farmland and farm equipment are slowing, and the bankers surveyed are less confident about the next few months.

Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

Associated Press