

# GRADUATE AG RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT



## Jinho Jung

*"Public policies often fail to achieve their stated objectives or, worse, result in serious unintended consequences. Predicting the effectiveness of public policies requires an understanding of how producers and consumers would react to them. That is what interests me."*

*Jinho Jung, PhD candidate, Agricultural Economics*

**THE STUDENT:** When Jinho Jung was 16, he traveled from his home in Seoul, South Korea to visit his older brother, then a graduate student in Minnesota. "I fell in love with the U.S.," Jung recalls. "I started thinking of studying or living in the United States someday in my life." In the meantime, he earned a bachelor's degree in material science engineering at Yonsei University in Seoul. As he prepared his final paper, on solar technology, he found himself more interested in its related policies and economics than its engineering. He landed a position with a major Korean tech firm, but as he looked to graduate study, "I tried to find out which major dealt with renewable things," he says. "Interestingly, agricultural economics had a huge component of natural resources, alternative sources of energy, and related public policies." His discussions with faculty and reading of academic papers led him to Purdue's master's program in resource economics in August 2012 and into the PhD program to focus on policy in August 2014.

**THE RESEARCH:** Jung's research focuses on policy design related to corn procurement markets in Indiana and the Midwest. He is examining the market structure and market power of large entities like ethanol plants and its implications for biofuel policies. For example, policies that aim to increase profits for farmers will not be successful if ethanol plants exercise their power to push corn prices down. The applicability of his economic modelling appeals to Jung. "We do not

develop new economic theory, but apply existent economic theories to empirically examine these important questions," he says. "We gather real data, develop an economic model incorporating the data, and our economic analysis shows what is going on in the real world. This application of economic theory to the real world interests me a lot."

**FINDING COMMUNITY:** Jung credits his advisor, Associate Professor Juan Sesmero, not only with academic guidance but also with individual support. Jung's son was born two days before he started his PhD, and family members were unable to travel from Korea to help the family for those early months. "My advisor understood everything," Jung says. "For academic work, he lets me have enough time to read and think; productivity is important, but I have to learn thing by thing." Purdue, he adds, also offers valued opportunities to interact with other graduate students from around the world who offer a listening ear and feedback.

**FUTURE PLANS:** Jung has contributed to several articles published in peer-reviewed publications on the way to completing his program, likely next May. He intends to pursue a position at a U.S. university or company, whichever provides the best environment in which to conduct research. In his spare time, Jung enjoys music, but since his son is now 4, jazz has given way to wrestling, superheroes and Legos.