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Economic Indicators Have Conflicting Messages

(KLZA) An index of economic conditions in 10 Midwest and Western states has jumped for a third straight month. But the looming "fiscal cliff" and other factors have shaken confidence in the region's economy for the coming months.

The overall Rural Mainstreet index released Thursday rose to 57.5 in November from October's 56.6.

Any score above 50 on the 100-point scale suggests a growing economy.

The survey of bankers covers rural areas of the Dakotas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming.

The confidence index, which reflects expectations for the economy six months out, sank to 45.6 from October's 50.7.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss attributes the lack of confidence to the looming "fiscal cliff," and the lack of a federal farm and energy bills.

Associated Press