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Seasonal Stochastic Volatility: Implications for the Pricing of Commodity Options

Juan C. Arismendi,^{*} Janis Back,[†] Marcel Prokopczuk,[‡] Raphael Paschke,[§] and Markus Rudolf[¶]

Abstract

Many commodity markets contain a strong seasonal component not only at the price level, but also in volatility. In this paper, the importance of seasonal behavior in the volatility for the pricing of commodity options is analyzed. We propose a seasonally varying long-run mean variance process that is capable of capturing empirically observed patterns. Semi-closedform option valuation formulas are derived. We then empirically study the impact of the proposed seasonal stochastic volatility model on the pricing accuracy of natural gas futures options traded at the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) and corn futures options traded at the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT). Our results demonstrate that allowing stochastic volatility to fluctuate seasonally significantly reduces pricing errors for these contracts.

JEL classification: G13

Keywords: Commodities, Seasonality, Stochastic volatility, Options pricing, Natural gas, Corn

^{*}Faculty of Economics, Federal University of Bahia, R. Barão de Jeremoabo, 668-1154 - Ondina, Salvador - BA, 40170-115, Brasil

[†]Department of Finance, WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management, 56179 Vallendar, Germany. e-mail: janis.back@whu.edu

[‡]School of Economics and Management, Leibniz University Hannover, Koenigsworther Platz 1, 30167 Hannover, Germany

[§]University of Mannheim, L5-2, 68131 Mannheim, Germany. e-mail: paschke@unimannheim.de

[¶]Department of Finance, WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management, 56179 Vallendar, Germany. e-mail: markus.rudolf@whu.edu

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