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Staff Paper

CORE MONOGRAPHS IN AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS: SURVEY REPORT

Pauline Sondag; Grace Dote and Louise Letnes

Staff Paper No.1991-49

September, 1991



Department of Agricultural Economics
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

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Core Monographs In Agricultural Economics: Survey Report

Pauline Sondag; Grace Dote and Louise Letnes
dote@are.berkeley.edu lletnes@dept.agecon.umn.edu

16 pages

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CORE MONOGRAPHS IN AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS: SURVEY REPORT

Pauline Sondag
Grace Dote
Louise Letnes*

Department of Agricultural Economics
Michigan State University

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*Pauline Sondag was Agricultural Economics librarian at Michigan State University until November 1990; Grace Dote is librarian in charge of the Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics Library, University of California--Berkeley; Louise Letnes is librarian in charge of the Waite Library, Dept. of Agricultural and Applied Economics, University of Minnesota.

In 1990 the Agricultural Economics Reference Organization (AERO) used a survey of Agricultural Economics faculty to try to identify core monographs in the subject field. Departments at ten universities were chosen. Selection was made on the basis of the top fifteen departments of agricultural economics cited in two issues of the American Journal of Agricultural Economics: May, 1984 (V. 66:2, p. 191) and August 1986 (V. 68:3, p. 598). From this list of 15, the ten with AERO members were chosen for the survey. Seventy-seven responses came from nine universities: University of California, Berkeley; University of California, Davis; Clemson University; Iowa State University; Michigan State University; University of Minnesota; Purdue University; Texas A & M University and University of Wisconsin. These 77 individuals cited 160 different titles.

No scientific methodology was used in preparing the survey document. It stated that the aim was to compile a list of "core monographs," but then, further along asked the respondent to note those titles that are "classic, core, basic, must-have." Also, the space for titles was preceded by the heading "My List of Classics:" The intention was to discover those titles that came to the fore without any "prompting list" or similar device.

Although the aim was to identify "core" monographs there was a tendency both in the survey form and in the comments from respondents to use the terms "classic" and "core" interchangeably. The two are not necessarily synonymous. For instance, one professor remarked that the titles he had listed were not ones he would consider essential for a small library today. They were seminal treatises (classic) upon which others have built and published monographs that should rather be first choices (core) in a limited collection. Another person noted "I could not get along without these books" (core but not always classic).

To further explore how others decide what constitutes a classic, the introductory preface of Modern Economic Classics--Evaluation Through Time edited by Bernard S. Katz and Ronald E. Robbins (Farland, 1988) was examined. The explanation there is "...each of our choices have (sic) significantly contributed in shaping our current knowledge and perspectives." (Preface, p.xiii). Again, this seems to describe titles that might not be part of a core collection.

The New Palgrave: A Dictionary of Economics includes a section on agricultural economics written by Karl Fox. The bibliography with the article lists 37 different authors. Sixteen of these individuals appeared in the survey citations. Authors appearing in Fox's bibliography but not included in survey responses are the following: L. H. Bean, J. B. Clark, J. H. Davis, J. S. Davis, R. H. Day, J. M. Gregory, G. C. Haas, A. C. Hoffman, B. R. Holdren, J. N. Keynes, R. S. Kirkendall, W. W. Leontief, H. L. Moore, E. D. Ross, V. E. Smith, J. R. Tolley, F. A. Walker, H. A. Wallace, O. V. Wells, E. J. Working, and S. Wright. Authors included in the Palgrave list and also cited by AERO respondents were J.D. Black, G.E. Brandow, M. Ezekiel, R.J. Foote, K.A. Fox, E.O. Heady, B.H. Hibbard, G.L. Johnson, L.R. Martin, W.H. Nicholls, E.G. Nourse, T.W. Schultz, H.C Taylor, G.F. Warren, F.V. Waugh and H. Working.

At the time of the AERO survey the American Journal of Agricultural Economics had begun including reviews of classic books from a list created in 1987 by Dr. Dale A. Adams, book review editor of the journal. The methodology for compiling that list consisted of asking for nominations from the elected Fellows of the American Agricultural Economics Association. Titles mentioned with the greatest frequency were re-submitted to the Fellows for another vote. The final list was composed of thirteen titles with a comment that these were "closely followed by 40 additional titles." Five of these thirteen titles that had already been reviewed by AJAE when the AERO survey was distributed were cited in the document as not to be repeated by the respondents in their lists.

Of the remaining eight titles on the AJAE list, all but one was mentioned at least once in the AERO responses. Two AJAE classics--Agricultural Development: An International Perspective by Yujiro Hayami and Vernon W Ruttan and Economics of Agricultural Production and Resource Use by Earl O. Heady--were cited more frequently in the AERO survey than any other titles.

The AJAE classics listed on the survey document and therefore eliminated from inclusion in the responses were the following:

- Benedict, M. R. Farm Policies of the United States, 1790-1950.
- Cochrane, Willard W. Farm Prices. Myth and Reality.
- Schultz, T. W. Agriculture in an Unstable Economy.
- Schultz, T. W. Transforming Traditional Agriculture.
- Waugh, F. V. Demand and Price Analysis. USDA Technical Bulletin 1316.

The list that follows is composed of the remaining AJAE classics in order of the frequency with which they were cited in the AERO survey. The first number following the title is the times mentioned followed by percentage of total responses in parentheses.

- Hayami, Yujiro and V. W. Ruttan. Agricultural Development: An International Perspective. 18 (23%)
- Heady, Earl O. Economics of Agricultural Production and Resource Use. 17 (22%)
- Ciriacy-Wantrup, S. V. Resource Conservation: Economics and Policies. 10 (13%)
- Johnson, D. Gale. Forward Prices for Agriculture. 5 (6%)
- Nicholls, W. H. A Theoretical Analysis of Imperfect Competition with Special Applications in the Agricultural Industries. 4 (5%)
- Salter, Leonard A., Jr. A Critical Review of Research in Land Economics. 2 (2%)
- Ezekiel, Mordecai and Karl A. Fox. Methods of Correlation and Regression Analysis, Linear and Curvilinear. 1 (1%)
- Galbraith, John K. The New Industrial State. 0

Comparison of the dates of publication between the AJAE list and the AERO survey are interesting. The period with the greatest number of titles for AERO was 1970-1979 (31%). Not one of the 13 AJAE titles was published originally in the 70's. Both groups reacted similarly to the 60's with AERO at 20% and AJAE at 23%. Only 13% of AERO's titles came from the 50's whereas 38% of the AJAE titles were from that period. A significant variable that may account for the preponderance of 1950 and 1960 publication dates in the

AJAE list is that the majority of Fellows are probably at least 50 years old. AERO surveys were distributed to all current agricultural economics faculty members at the ten institutions providing a sample with a broader age range. Of course, the AERO percentages are based on the substantially larger total of 160 titles rather than 13. None of the AJAE classics were originally published in the 1980's but 24% from the AERO survey had that imprint.

Of the 160 titles cited in the Aero survey, only 17 received 4 or more mentions. Another 18 appeared two or three times. The remainder (125) were mentioned only once. This wide variety undoubtedly reflects the broad range of subject interests of members of departments of agricultural economics.

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS “CLASSICS” SURVEY
(Titles Cited More than Once in Order of Frequency of Citation)

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