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From the Editors

Last August in Toronto, Canada the Research Committee on Food and Agriculture (RC 40) held a mini-conference on food commodity systems and globalization. A wide range of stimulating papers were presented, serving to assess the state of the art of research in this field.

In this issue of the journal we have included five papers that we hope will generate further debate. Unfortunately we cannot include the many other excellent papers that contributed to the success of this mini-conference. The debate, energetic and sometimes polarised, demonstrated the maturity of an approach initiated by Bill Friedland and those associated with him. It was an honour for the members of RC40 to have him present in person in full intellectual flow. Especially, we may add, when he is starting to take more seriously the significance of culture as part of the commodity system approach. This is refreshing and opens up the possibility of new encounters between scholars working across economic, cul-

tural, technological and political fields. In short, the sociology of agriculture is thriving within a changing world which provides ever new challenges for research.

The publication of this issue provides us with an opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you to the outgoing Executive Committee, especially to Bill and Ray for putting so much time and energy into the consolidation of RC40. This leads us to welcome the new officers: Phil McMichael (President), Mustafa Koc (Secretary-Treasure), Monica Bendini, Doug Constance, Laura Reynolds and David Myhre and we look forward to their contributions.

We hope to see all our readers in Montreal.