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In This Issue

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As a "house journal" the *Journal of Agricultural Economics Research* (JAER) is a mirror of both agency and profession. The mirror is multi-faceted, each issue reflecting a new problem, new method, or simply a new angle on an old problem or method. This issue, in particular, reveals the methodological diversity in the Economic Research Service. The articles contain elements of the pragmatism, positivism, and normativism described in Glenn Johnson's new book on methodology (see Paul's review). Articles range from an analysis of the effects of an agricultural program on a specific input to a fairly esoteric comparison of three types of quantitative procedures.

In the first article, Kuchler and Vroomen examine the impact of the 1983 Payment-in-Kind (PIK) program of agricultural supports on farm inputs, specifically farm tractors. Their intervention analysis produced the interesting result that the PIK program discriminated against sales of large tractors, in favor of mid-sized tractors. If Kuchler and Vroomen's analysis is correct, the program would then also have discriminated against U.S. manufacturers who produce large tractors and favored, say, European manufacturers who produce smaller tractors.

Another form of domestic-foreign interaction of food policy is analyzed by Kim, Bolling, and Wainio in their article on feed grain imports in Venezuela. Efforts to increase domestic production of sorghum through subsidies were not so strong as the foreign exchange rate inducements to import sorghum. Kim, Bolling, and Wainio employ a fairly sophisticated model accounting for welfare of both meat consumers and feed grain producers, but they add caveats about the consistency of data and government policy.

But for analysis of models *per se* we turn to Huang, Eswaramoorthy, and Johnson. Out of a problem in formulating a welfare function when cross-price effects are not the same over all commodities, they develop a strategy for selecting modeling and computational procedures.

JAER reflects not only what we write, but what we read. In some ways, reading may be more important

than writing because writing reveals current or past research, whereas reading suggests an investment in future ideas and inquiries.

In this issue, Paul reviews Johnson's *Research Methodology for Economists*. He nicely summarizes Johnson's interpretation of positivism, normativism, and pragmatism as methodological bases for research. Although textbookish in style, Johnson's book provides useful perspectives for practicing researchers. To complement Paul on Johnson, I have included a mini-review of Ladd's new book, *Imagination in Research*.

In the far corner of pragmatism, Doyle's *Altered Harvest*, reviewed by Schor, is far from a methodological piece, but does provide a thorough, stimulating basis for challenging social science research. On the other hand, Walter's *Adaptive Management of Renewable Resources* is methodologically oriented. According to reviewer Crutchfield, Walters exhorts his colleagues to examine larger resource issues rather than many of the detailed investigations oriented toward "analytical methods they learned in the university or find popular among colleagues."

Global perspective is added to the book reviews by Dommen and Vollrath. Dommen reviews *Accelerating Food Production in Sub-Saharan Africa* by Mellor and others. The core of the book, says Dommen, are the chapters on development and adoption of suitable technology. Anthropologists have shown better aptitudes than economists in describing the obstacles to technology adoption, according to the authors. Vollrath has deftly reviewed the mammoth proceedings of the International Agricultural Economics Association, *Agriculture in a Turbulent World Economy*. By concentrating on the keynote address by Amartya Sen, Vollrath provides a sweeping view of food, hunger, and the possible role of economists in dealing with problems such as famine.

Gene Wunderlich