In This Issue

Swamy, Conway, and LeBlanc return with the third and final article in their series on stochastic coefficients Building on the critique of fixed coefficients in the first article, and the specification of stochastic coefficients models in the second, they now extend their stochastic coefficients arguments into the realm of forecasting They examine the sources of forecast errors and, employing a stochastic coefficients model designed by Swamy and Tinsley, account for most of the sources of forecast errors inherent in the fixed coefficients models A section called "applications" contains some tables comparing the performance of stochastic and fixed coefficients models The authors conclude that forecasts can be improved by allowing all coefficients in economic relationships to vary over time They also note that the predictive capability of a model is not necessarily improved by complexity

Swamy, Conway, and LeBlanc cite Oakes in declaring that universal forecasting algorithms are doomed to failure because the future is not like the past They anticipate our plans for an article in a forthcoming issue of the Journal to address the larger issue of nonlinear dynamics and prediction where systems of equations produce solutions so complex they appear to be random—in a word, chaos

And what of the data we put into our models? Boxley examines the way we represent the structure of agriculture and the rural economy in our definitions and data management He notes that the American Agricultural Economics Association has been struggling with definitions and concepts since at least 1972 Still, we overdescribe commercial agriculture and fail to provide adequate information on other aspects of rural life Boxley concludes that information should be based on two distinct paradigms, one for production agriculture and another for rural resources

Larson, in his brief article on intertemporal duality, reviews several types of problems for which this approach can be used, then states equations useful for planning problems with an important time dimension In his comment on contemporaneous correlation, Babula shows that estimates of parameters pertaining to U S /Canadian crops trade were sensitive to econometric procedure Reining comments on another estimation problem, namely, measuring structural change in agriculture, and recommends an inexpensive, flexible regression procedure

Several books receive sharp reviews in this issue Schluter examines the collection on agricultural and food marketing edited by Kilmer and Armbruster and finds it less than it might have been Hauver disagrees with Dovring's pessimism about multifactor productivity indexing by citing advances in duality theory and Tornqvist indexing

Ribaudo, however, favorably reviews the Resources for the Future book on agricultural policy by supporting its argument that traditional commodity-based policy is inadequate to cope with today's agricultural and food problems Tripaldi and Schor give qualified support to the Murdock-Leistritz book on the farm financial crisis

Breimyer's appraisal of the anniversary tome from the American Agricultural Economics Association is mixed Not surprising A book with four editors and 57 authors is unlikely to be all good or all bad Its chief deficiency, according to Breimyer, is that the subject of the book, the 21st century, was scarcely touched

In this issue, we inaugurate a series of invited essays on professional issues in applied economics and related social sciences It is fitting, I believe, that we begin with an essay on publishing in professional journals Author of this thoughtful, upbeat essay is Peter Barry, editor of the American Journal of Agricultural Economics There is much in his essay with which I readily concur, yet I do not share all his views For example, while I agree that journal publication does figure substantially in the reward structure of the profession, I am concerned that it may do so by neglecting other vital professional responsibilities such as teaching and learning A professional literature is a public good We need to attend to the needs of readers as well as authors The size and variety of a literature and its access should be professional assets, not liabilities An expanding and specializing literature is a mark of professional achievement, but it does have its down side also Barry's essay, whether you agree or disagree, contains much to think about I urge you to read it, and comment on it

Gene Wunderlich

Best Article Award

The ERS Administrator's Award for the best article in the Journal during fiscal year 1988 went to Fred Kuchler and Harry Vroomen for "Impacts of the PIK Program on the Farm Machinery Market," which appeared in the Summer 1987 issue