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***Agricultural Policy Reform: Politics and Process in the EC and USA.*** Edited by H Wayne Moyer and Timothy E Josling Ames Iowa State University Press, 1990, 221 pages \$27.95

*Reviewed by David Kelch*

The authors of *Agricultural Policy Reform* unveil, for professional and layman alike, the layered and complex political process of agricultural policymaking in the pluralistic democratic societies of the United States and the European Community. Not content to stop there, the authors relate these political processes (and their implications) to the current Uruguay Round negotiations as well as to the GATT in general. No other book analyzes and compares the policymaking process in the United States and the EC and relates these processes to the GATT. It could not have come at a better time.

The four main parts of the book consist of the analytical framework, agricultural reform in the EC, agricultural reform in the United States, and international aspects of agricultural trade policy reform. Each of the four main parts of the book can be read independently, as can some of the nine chapters that make up the book, which considerably broadens its appeal. For example, readers uninterested in methodology can proceed to another section, while scholars can enjoy a critical examination of methodological choices.

The authors present the material in a very straightforward and readable style that allows the story to unfold with methodology enhancing the telling of it. The adoption of the public choice paradigm as their analytical instrument provides both analytical structure and intellectual legitimacy. Compared with other methodological choices, the public choice paradigm is appropriate in this study because it allows the authors to analyze the decisionmaking process when the decisionmaker is faced with simultaneous, multiple problems.

The breadth and depth of the coverage of the EC and the United States is exemplary despite limited space. The charts and figures are very useful for both casual readers and professional analysts. The analytical treatment of the U.S. legislative process and the role of the executive branch in using the public choice paradigm is of practical use to all readers because it clearly outlines the institutional forces that must be accommodated and provides the economic and political background to the policy process. The treatment of the

EC policymaking process is the most concise and useful available to date. Invaluable insights reveal the complicated consensus-building required to make agricultural policy "common" in the EC. An excellent bibliography and useful footnotes are conveniently placed at the end of the chapters.

The incorporation of interview information leaves the reader with the impression of getting the inside story in addition to analyses based on theory. While the information derived from interviews is part of the raw material to be processed by the application of the public choice paradigm, the interviews clearly allowed the authors to arrive at conclusions that a purely technical analysis based on theory would not have permitted. The complementary nature of information derived from interviews and analysis based on public choice theory provides a compelling logical explanation to the policy processes when integrated by authors as knowledgeable as these.

The principle that the authors rely upon to explain the slow and incremental nature of agricultural policy reform in both the United States and the EC is partisan mutual adjustment developed by Charles E. Lindblom in the 1950's. This approach most frequently examines the actions of groups interacting to limit potential damage from the threat of reform. Partisan mutual adjustment also helps explain the importance of legitimacy over efficiency in political decisionmaking and assesses why rapid change can occur only when a serious crisis impinges on the process. Even so, the authors point to political timing and weather as variables which frequently dictate what can be done in agricultural policy. At other times it could be the force of individual personalities such as Andriessen in the EC, who succeeded a more passive EC farm commissioner, or Yeutter in the United States, who may yet reform both EC and U.S. farm policy.

An important point made in *Agricultural Policy Reform* is that outsiders find the agricultural political process incomprehensible and are effectively excluded as participants. More important, the authors say the political and economic complexity surrounding the shaping of the policymaking processes in the EC and the United States has increased the uncertainty of proposed reforms, created large bureaucracies that favor the *status quo*, and required an enormous amount of will and resources to effect change. The result is compartmentalization of the policymaking process which fosters parochialism in both the EC and the United States.

Chapter nine, which compares the United States and the EC, is particularly useful for analysts who wish to

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understand some of the fundamental historical, political, and economic differences between the two players. A good example of these differences according to the authors, and one which significantly complicates the Uruguay Round, is that small farms in the United States have relatively good soil compared with large farms while the converse holds in the EC. The goal of both U S and EC policies is to maintain family farm income and family farms. The EC thus faces a more difficult task because its family farms have poorer soil and are considerably smaller than those in the United States (U S farms are, on average, 13 times larger than EC farms). This helps explain why the EC is reluctant to let the market determine farm income.

The authors conclude that budget pressures are the most forceful for agricultural policy reform in both the EC and the United States, not the heat of congressional debate nor the noisy public protests by farmers. The authors argue that one of the principal reasons that agricultural policy reform is so slow is that the budget process and the agricultural policy process have not been sufficiently integrated.

Some may challenge the authors' conclusions, such as the role of USDA's Economic Research Service as a partisan in the 1981 and 1985 farm bill processes and the contributions of former Assistant Secretaries Leshner and Thompson to the 1985 farm bill. The list of the 24 interviewees in the United States and the EC is published in the Acknowledgments section, and a reader familiar with U S agricultural policymaking might be able to attribute some of the passages in the book to certain individuals.

The only disappointing section is in "Lessons for Policy-makers." The authors present a list of five reminders for agricultural policymakers that would be apparent to most interested observers, somewhat of a disappointment after so many important insights and useful conclusions. The authors and editors may have rushed to press in order to be timely. Other examples of a rush to deadline include identifying former U S Secretary of Agriculture John Block as William Block (p 154) and some spelling errors and editing laxity. A particularly egregious example occurs on p 148 when the struggle for originality when facing the mundane (a production increase) results in a flabby "engendered greatly enhanced domestic production." However, the authors can be easily forgiven these minor shortcomings of their collaborative effort because of the timeliness of the topic, the expertise they bring to the subject matter, and their capacity to enlighten the reader while making the topic accessible to a broad audience.

*Agricultural Policy Reform* is required reading for anyone interested in EC or U S agricultural policy, how and why agricultural policies are made, and how the processes behind EC and U S policies intersect in the GATT. Only the collaborative efforts of an experienced political scientist and agricultural economist could have given us a comprehensive and insightful analysis of such a complex topic. It will serve as a reference throughout what is likely to be a turbulent decade in agricultural policy reform around the globe and will be a valuable source in future works by policy analysts, academics, and even policymakers.