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Editorial

DOUGLAS D. HEDLEY
Editor-in-Chief

This issue represents the beginning of a new Journal: *Agricultural Economics: The Journal of the International Association of Agricultural Economists*. In starting a new Journal when professionals' desks are already piled high with both specialist and generalist literature, basic concepts of purpose, audience and content must be clearly in evidence. In general, this Journal is designed to serve the breadth of needs faced by the members of the International Association of Agricultural Economists and their professional colleagues.

The International Association of Agricultural Economists (IAAE), founded about 50 years ago by Leonard K. Elmhurst, has members in over 100 countries. It is the only organization of agricultural economists that spans the world. The IAAE members represent agricultural economist professionals working in universities, research institutions, governments, international organizations and private and public enterprises. A large share of the membership is in professional management positions with limited capacity and time for scholarly research within the narrowly defined limits usually set for university professionals. Yet it is this full range of professional interest and need that the Journal is attempting to meet. This is the first Journal to attempt a world-wide audience in the agricultural economics literature serving a diverse set of interests of IAAE members and their colleagues.

In attempting to serve this audience, the IAAE has identified a broader range of interest than the science of agricultural economics has generally represented in the existing literature. The policy statement of the Journal indicates three general areas for coverage in the Journal to define this scope of interest. First, the Journal will cover disciplinary topics in economics applied to problems in the agricultural and food sector. Second, the Journal will cover multi-disciplinary or subject matter topics that bring together relevant evidence and information about the food and agricultural sector. The policy statement cites examples of the disciplines from which information may be combined. Third, the Journal will publish articles dealing with problem solving in all aspects of the sector, from farm management, extension, marketing and market development and decision-making in farming, government, national or international organizations, private enterprise and research institutions. This last area of problem solving is a particularly difficult one from which to obtain well-documented research and endeavour since many professionals involved in this work, even though they may have considerable training in agricultural economics, have little encouragement to publish. Often the results of their work

are seen by few, are of a confidential nature (particularly in government) or are thought by some to be less than “scientific”, but in most cases they have brought to bear the full range of skills they possess from several disciplines on problems with which their colleagues in other parts of the world are also struggling. This aspect of the work of agricultural economists is just as important as the other areas covered by the Journal.

In promoting communication among agricultural economists, the Journal will also have a “News” section reporting on regional or national meetings, availability of conference proceedings, major research underway and questions that members may wish to address to their colleagues around the world. As well, the Journal will publish selected book reviews of interest to the profession.

The Journal is actively seeking articles on all of these areas to provide the readership with a balance across all major regions of the world and across the three general areas of interest. The Editorial Board has the task of assuring the balance in the Journal and achieving the communication objective among agricultural economists.

The diversity of concerns and professional interests of IAAE members, as well as the differences in methodology, style and approach to research around the world represent a major challenge for the Journal to record and report. The IAAE, meeting every three years, has been able to attract a large and growing number of agricultural economists concerned with sharing and learning from this diversified experience. This Journal is intended as another pillar to support this shared communication on a more continuous basis than the triennial meetings can achieve.

For three years, a large number of people have laboured to bring forward this first issue. The IAAE Executive, particularly the Past President, Glenn L. Johnson and the current President, Michel Petit, the Editorial Board made up of nearly thirty individuals from all regions of the world, the publisher, Elsevier, and most importantly the authors of the articles in this issue, together have been dedicated to starting the Journal for communication among us. With the triumph of a first issue, the really difficult work begins, to meet and exceed the vision and expectation that the Journal holds for all of us.