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Introduction

This issue launches the 25th volume of *Agricultural Economics*. Anniversaries are an opportunity to look both back and forward, to review what has been attained in the past and to define goals for the future.

The list of authors who have published in the first 24 volumes of *Agricultural Economics* (see our recent cumulative contents issue, Volume 23/2) reads like a Who's Who of our profession. But equally impressive is our journal's reach — the breadth of the topics that have been addressed and the diverse regional and national origins of those who have contributed. If one had to choose a single agricultural economic journal to be stored in a time capsule for posterity, it would have to be *Agricultural Economics*. No other journal reflects as many of the different hues that compose the spectrum of our profession.

This success is largely due to the hard work of the three Editors-in-Chief who have guided *Agricultural Economics* since Volume 1 appeared in 1986; Douglas Hedley, Bruce Greenshields and Stanley Johnson. It is a great pleasure to be able to honour these individuals in this anniversary issue (see the features on pages 3–7). This issue also provides a welcome opportunity to honour George Peters who, as we go to press, is working hard on his fourth 'Blue Book' of IAAE Conference Proceedings in succession, and who has been a great source of support to journal Editors past and present.

Last, and not least, our publisher has suggested that the new Editor-in-Chief also be featured in this anniversary issue. Which brings us to the present and beyond. What will the Editor-in-Chief be looking back upon in our 50th anniversary issue? Certainly a number of dramatic technical innovations. Electronic manuscript submission and processing (i.e. the review process,

checking proofs, etc.) are just around the corner, and it cannot be more than a matter of a few years before this technology is sufficiently de-bugged to completely replace paper and conventional mail. Electronic publication is also on the way, we are currently exploring the possibility of moving to publication on the web, whereby subscribers would be equipped with passwords that provide access to an on-line journal site. Of course, as we consider such options we must not lose sight of the diversity mentioned above. Not all members of our profession have dependable, low-cost access to internet and e-mail facilities, and we will ensure that new technologies are not exclusive.

As regards content, we can be sure that the coming years will continue to see changes in the state of our art — advances in conceptualisation, measurement, modelling and testing. And there will certainly be no shortage of important issues for agricultural economists to address. Underlying all and linking questions of sustainability, efficiency, distribution and policy, the dominant issue will continue to be the race between food needs and food production world-wide. As agricultural economists struggle to come to grips with these issues and questions, our journal will continue to be a forum for the best work that our profession produces.

I hope that you enjoy this anniversary issue and I look forward to your contributions and input to *Agricultural Economics* in the years to come.

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