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Vol XXXV
No. 3

ISSN 0019-5014

JULY-
SEPTEMBER
1980

INDIAN JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS



INDIAN SOCIETY OF
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS,
BOMBAY

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

Food Security Issues in the Arab Near East: A Report of the United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia, Edited by A. A. El-Sherbini, Pergamon Press Ltd., Oxford, England, 1979. Pp. xvii + 241. \$ 30.00.

In the countries of Western Asia, there is growing concern about the food situation inasmuch as agricultural production has not kept pace with rapidly rising demand for food induced by population and income effects. These developments also have adverse impact on the nutritional standards of the rural poor and lower income urban strata of the population in these countries. The extreme fluctuations in food production, coupled with heavy and increasing reliance on imports to satisfy food demand, and the uneven distribution and intake of food among the population in the Arab Near East prompted the Joint Economic Commission for Western Asia/FAO Agriculture Division to give considerable attention to various aspects of food security issues in the region, which form the main theme of this volume. It is divided into 15 chapters grouped under three parts and each part is followed by summary and conclusions. Part I discusses the short-term possibilities to increase food production in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen Arab Republic and Yemen People's Democratic Republic, which do not involve major structural changes in productive resources. They include technical and socio-economic measures, as for example, crop insurance, simple agronomic practices, economic incentives and price policies, which could have a favourable effect on agricultural production in the short run. Issues relating to food security planning are examined in Part II which is specifically concerned with the risks embodied in rainfed production. In particular, it considers the establishment of a warning system based on early knowledge of rainfall records in different ecological zones and discusses the development of stock-and-allocation models to hedge against production shortfalls. The analysis in this part is based on empirical studies drawn from Jordan and Syria. The coverage of the studies was limited to wheat and wheat production in the dry farming areas of East Jordan and in Syria relating to the period 1961-75 and 1957-58 to 1974-75 respectively. Part III analyses the trade in agricultural commodities and its implications for food security in the Arab region. It discusses the structure of Arab trade and related inherent weaknesses and the alternative strategies linked to these weaknesses with particular emphasis on measures to promote intra-regional trade, on the one hand, and approaches for the diversification of sources of supply, on the other.

It is noted that much of the emphasis on food and agricultural production in the region has been on long-term basis concerned with structural and institutional change, with little attention being paid to the short-term possibilities. It is suggested that a blend of economic and technical measures could boost production in the short-term. Some important measures suggested for consideration include (1) increased allocation of investment to the agricultural sector, (2) introduction of crop insurance, (3) reorientation of cropping pattern, (4) adoption of

improved practices, use of modern inputs and mechanization, with a selective approach, (5) provision of economic incentives to the farmers by reorienting marketing and pricing policies, (6) development and improvement of market intelligence and information, (7) elimination of various forms of price distortions and (8) regional co-operation for promoting specialisation in food and agricultural production. For ensuring food security in the region, action is called for in a number of directions which is designed to stabilise wheat production or at least to reduce its variability, to establish an early warning or yield forecast system, to formulate a policy of imports and/or exports to cover the difference between the demand and the average production and to devise a stock-and-allocation policy. Closely linked to the concept of regional food security is the structure of Arab trade in agricultural commodities. Intra-regional trade in agricultural commodities is less concentrated among Arab countries as compared to the extra-regional trade. The structure of trade is characterized by a relatively high concentration of foodstuffs in regional agricultural trade, particularly in Arab imports of agricultural commodities and a significant concentration of imports in a few extra-regional supply sources, and of agricultural exports to a small number of foreign markets. The most important weakness of Arab trade in agricultural commodities threatening the food security is its unilateral characteristic in that the countries deal with foreign markets invariably in individual capacities. The institutional framework for collective action at the regional or sub-regional levels is absent. It is suggested that the intensification of Arab agricultural trade through the diversion and redirection of trade flows, collective action for increasing the share of intra-regional trade and diversification of external food supply sources would help to enhance food security in the Arab region.

This volume makes an important contribution to the literature on the subject and will prove useful to students of agricultural economics and policy makers as well as to those interested in the study of problems of agricultural development in the Arab region.

FAO Agricultural Commodity Projections, 1975-1985, FAO Economic and Social Development Series No. 16, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy, 1979. Pp. viii + 128.

This report embodies the main findings of the fourth series of FAO Agricultural Commodity Projections. Its objectives were to project, on the basis of certain explicit assumptions, the world production of and demand for 21 major agricultural commodities or groups of commodities in 1985. The scope of the study has been enlarged to include for the first time two additional commodities of special interest to developing countries, viz., hides and skins, and cassava. The report presents two sets of projections for each commodity and each country. The 'basic' projection assumes continuation of current trends in areas, livestock numbers and crop and animal yields, recent technological advances and develop-

ments in competing non-agricultural products. A 'supplementary' projection is also made, which assumes a more rapid economic growth and a greater degree of success in the implementation of national agricultural development plans. Two demand projections also are worked out based on alternative assumptions of income growth. Tests have been applied to check the reasonableness, in nutritional terms, of the dietary patterns which such demand projections would imply. The report has taken into account the recent trends in actual imports and exports and the influence on trade of international commodity agreements. Divided into six chapters, the first chapter presents the summary of findings and discusses a number of major, commodity policy issues arising from the trends in demand, production and trade in agricultural commodities. The other chapters discuss the output-demand-trade projections for basic food and feed commodities, beverages and tropical products, agricultural raw materials, and other agricultural commodities. The basic purpose of this study is to give advance warning of the commodity problems that could arise if current trends continue and to help indicate measures for resolving them.

Nutrition Planning: The State of the Art, Edited by Leonard Joy, with the assistance of Christina Wood, A Food Policy Special, IPC Science and Technology Press Ltd. for the United States Agency for International Development, Guildford, Surrey, England, 1979. Pp. 154. £ 11.50.

This volume incorporates the proceedings of two conferences which were sponsored by the US Agency for International Development: (i) food and nutrition policy analysis workshop held on September 20-24, 1976 and (ii) an international study symposium on policy making and planning to reduce malnutrition held on March 29-April 1, 1977 at University of California, Berkeley. The first section includes 9 papers, each of which is followed by summary discussions and the second part contains 5 plenary papers and discussions of the symposium together with the review of post-symposium reflections of the participants. These papers reflect the state of the art relating to nutrition planning and constitute major analyses of both the theoretical and specific aspects of planning to ensure adequate food supplies. In the first part, Lance Taylor in his paper outlines research topics regarding income distribution, food consumption and nutrition which should be pursued to improve the basis of planning designed to raise nutrition status, and focuses on the problems amenable to policy intervention. Pranab Bardhan's paper concerns itself with redistributive planning with reference to the approaches and controversies related to investment allocation to reduce poverty. The central theme of the paper by Carl Taylor is that health and nutrition concerns should be integrated with family planning and population control which would in turn improve the effectiveness of the programme. J. P. Hrabovszky in his paper attempts a partial survey of some of the situations in which food and nutrition

planning and policy making are practised and reviews and appraises the state of the art relating to agricultural sector analysis and food and nutrition planning. Other papers in this section deal respectively with community approaches to food and nutrition policy analysis (Dean Wilson), strategies for the reduction of malnutrition (Bruce Johnston), systems approach to nutrition planning (S. Venkita-ramanan), intersectoral food and nutrition planning (Leonard Joy), and data requirements for food and nutrition planning and policy analysis (Philip Payne). Three plenary papers in the second section discuss respectively with the nature of the nutrition problem, the concept of nutrition planning, and the politics of food and nutrition planning. The discussion notes on each paper enhances the utility of the volume.

Development Goals and Strategies: The Next Decade, Report of a National Conference on Alternative Development Strategies for India, Society for International Development, Delhi, Indian Council of Social Science Research and National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi, 1979. Pp. iii + 84. Rs. 10.00.

The report contains the proceedings of a national conference held in 1979 to consider development goals and strategies for the next decade with particular reference to India. It examines the fundamental questions bearing on goals and strategies, approach, perspective and priorities, alternative paths to the achievement of rapid and equitable development in agriculture and in industry, and technology and towards assuring basic needs and employment and human resources development, and regional and international co-operation. It includes a review of the reports of the four panels set up to discuss the above aspects. The discussions in the conference have highlighted its concern over the problems of poverty, employment, social justice and provision of basic needs and the challenge of change and reorganization in the social and economic and other institutions.