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FOOD SECURITY, DIVERSIFICATION AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: REFOCUSING THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE?

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
TWENTY-THIRD
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS

*Held at Sacramento, California
10–16 August 1997*

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS
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PREFACE

This volume reports the bulk of the Proceedings of the 23rd International Conference of Agricultural Economists held at Sacramento, California, USA, during August 1997. The gathering was attended by 780 participants from 81 countries. It was the first time that the Association had met in the United States in many years, the last occasion being in East Lansing, Michigan, in 1955.

The theme of the conference was 'Food Security, Diversification and Resource Management: Refocusing the Role of Agriculture?'. The global food and agriculture system is changing dramatically, hence the conference addressed a range of important research and policy issues likely to challenge that system well into the 21st century. These included the implications of rapidly expanding food demand in the presence of natural resource constraints and rapid urbanization; the likely adjustments of markets and trade due to the diversification of diets in quickly developing nations, and also recent and current trade liberalizations; the economic opportunities presented by development in biological and information technologies; and region-by-region examination of the interface between food security, diversification and resource management.

The 23rd conference had a number of new features. We shortened it to less than one week, starting after lunch on Sunday and ending at noon on Saturday, with there being fewer arranged papers and twice as many competitively selected contributed papers as in recent meetings. Computer-based presentations and software demonstrations supplemented poster sessions, while invited panels were an innovation that fostered open discussion and bringing a regional perspective to the themes that ran through the conference.

A meeting of this size would not be possible without the creativity and hard work of many people. Vice President Joachim von Braun (then of the University of Kiel, Germany) deserves high praise for the intellectual and organization leadership he brought to the programme. He also brought a number of well-received innovations to the conference. Peter Hazell (British, but a member of staff of the International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, DC) led the heroic task of peer review of the large number of contributed paper submissions and reducing them to the 111 selected for presentation at the conference. He was also responsible for editing the special issue of the IAAE journal, *Agricultural Economics*, which contains half the contributed papers selected for publication, and writing a masterly introduction to it. Arie Oskam (Wageningen Agricultural University, The Netherlands) organized the poster sessions. He was in charge of selection as well as being responsible for broadening the concept to include computer-based presentations. Larry Siverson (National Agricultural Statistics Service, United States Department of Agriculture) organized the workshops and symposia. The tireless efforts of these