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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
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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS
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CONTENTS

Preface	ix
<i>Robert L. Thompson</i>	
Introduction: The 23rd Conference and the Association	xi
<i>George H. Peters and Joachim von Braun</i>	
OPENING SESSION	
Presidential Address: Technology, policy and trade: the keys to food security and environmental protection	3
<i>Robert L. Thompson</i>	
Elmhirst Memorial Lecture: The dynamics of agriculture	18
<i>Yair Mundlak</i>	
SECTION I – SECURITY AND DEMAND CHALLENGES: GLOBAL LEVEL AND NATIONAL POLICY ISSUES, HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION IMPROVEMENT	
Food security: a global perspective	51
<i>Per Pinstrup-Andersen and Rajul Pandya-Lorch</i>	
National food security: a policy perspective for India	77
<i>C.H. Hanumantha Rao and R. Radhakrishna</i>	
Food security and the household	97
<i>Ben Senauer and Terry Roe</i>	
Discussion report Section I	108
SECTION II – AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGY	
Diversification and international trade	113
<i>Alex F. McCalla and Alberto Valdés</i>	
Rural economy and farm income diversification in developing countries	126
<i>Christopher L. Delgado and Ammar Siamwalla</i>	

Agricultural biotechnology: economic and international implications <i>David Zilberman, Cherisa Yarkin and Amir Heiman</i>	144
Discussion report Section II	162
SECTION III – RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURE: WATER AND LAND, BIODIVERSITY, AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE	
Water and land resources and global food supply <i>Mark W. Rosegrant, Claudia Ringler and Roberta V. Gerpacio</i>	167
Impacts of global warming on agriculture <i>Darwin C. Hall</i>	186
The management of genetic resources for agriculture: ecology and information, externalities and policies <i>Timothy Swanson</i>	212
Discussion report Section III	232
SECTION IV – ECONOMICS OF POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE	
Institutional and organizational forces shaping the agricultural transformation process: experiences, causes and implications <i>P. Michael Schmitz and Cornelia Noeth</i>	237
Policy and institutional change for agriculture in China: production, consumption and trade implications <i>Ke Bingsheng</i>	261
Regionalism in world food markets: implications for trade and welfare <i>Thomas W. Hertel, William A. Masters and Mark J. Gehlhar</i>	276
Discussion report Section IV	296
CONTRIBUTED PAPERS – HOUSEHOLDS, DIETS AND CREDIT	
Determinants of time spent in non-farm employment by farmers in Northern Ghana <i>Awudu Abdulai and Christopher L. Delgado</i>	301
Intra-household resource allocation in Ghana: the impact of the distribution of asset ownership within the household <i>Cheryl R. Doss</i>	309

Determinants of diversification of urban Sahel diets into maize: a contingent valuation study of processed maize demand in Mali <i>D. Boughton, T. Reardon and J. Wooldridge</i>	317
Will European diets be similar? A cointegration approach <i>A. Gracia, J.M. Gil and A.M. Angulo</i>	325
The effects of food aid on maize prices in Mozambique <i>Cynthia Donovan, Robert Myers, David Tschirley and Michael Weber</i>	337
Choices by poor households when the interest rate for deposits differs from the interest rate for loans <i>Mark Schreiner, Douglas H. Graham and Mario Miranda</i>	348
Factors affecting rural medium-term loan repayment: evidence from a South African development finance institution <i>Manfred E. Kuhn and Mark A. G. Darroch</i>	356
CONTRIBUTED PAPERS – METHODOLOGY	
The mixed-complementarity approach to specifying agricultural supply in computable general equilibrium models <i>Hans Löfgren and Sherman Robinson</i>	367
Explaining stocks and export subsidies in agriculture <i>Jesús Antón</i>	379
Sunk costs and resource mobility: Implications for economic and policy analysis <i>Bradford L. Barham and Jean-Paul Chavas</i>	391
External adjustment, production subsidies and agricultural growth in Brazil <i>Joaquim Bento de Souza Ferreira Filho</i>	401
CONTRIBUTED PAPERS – TRANSITION	
Agricultural decollectivization in Central and Eastern Europe <i>Erik Mathijs and Johan F.M. Swinnen</i>	413
Spatial food market integration in Russia <i>Jens-Peter Loy and Peter Wehrheim</i>	421
The place of agriculture in the development of Poland and Hungary: lessons from a computable general equilibrium model with risk considerations <i>Jean-Marc Boussard and Ane Kathrine Christensen</i>	432

CONTRIBUTED PAPERS – TRADE AND TRADE EFFECTS	
The trade restrictiveness index and its potential contribution to agricultural policy analysis <i>Luca Salvatici, Colin A. Carter and Daniel A. Sumner</i>	443
A first step in understanding technical barriers to agricultural trade <i>Suzanne Thornsbury, Donna Roberts, Kate DeRemer and David Orden</i>	453
Does China discriminate among origins in the pricing of its wheat imports? <i>Kevin Chen, Jianguo Hui and Peter Chen</i>	464
Income effects of alternative policy trade adjustments on Philippine rural households: a general equilibrium analysis <i>Romeo M. Bautista and Marcelle Thomas</i>	473
Post-GATT agricultural trade liberalization and growth in developing countries: the case of the Philippines <i>Alexander H. Sarris</i>	482
Evaluation of the impact of trade liberalization on food crop production and farm income in lowland Java, Indonesia <i>F. Gérard, Erwidodo and I. Marty</i>	491
PANEL DISCUSSION REPORTS	505
DISCUSSION GROUP AND MINI-SYMPOSIUM REPORTS	565
POSTER PAPER ABSTRACTS	643
CLOSING SESSION	
SYNOPTIC VIEW <i>Douglas D. Hedley</i>	681
INDEX	693

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