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Book Reviews

Australia's Role in Feeding the World, The Future of Australian Agriculture, edited by Tor Hundloe, Sarah Blagrove and Hannah Ditton (Eds). Published by CSIRO Publishing, Clayton, VIC, Australia, 2016, 288 pp, ISBN: 9781486305896, AU\$ 59.95.

This book is motivated by discussion in the Australian community about the role of Australian agriculture. It has been widely proposed that Australia is or should become a food bowl for the world in response to the projected future demand for food as global population grows and becomes more affluent. The book provides a good background on this challenge.

The book is a very useful compilation of views that address this compelling issue for all involved in agriculture and food production in Australia. It defines issues associated with specific agricultural industries and strongly delivers the message that Australia cannot realistically aspire to feed a very large part of the global population.

Grains, beef, horticulture, sugar, poultry, eggs, fish, dairy, wool, lamb and cotton production are covered by specific sections. The current status of these industries is described, but relatively little attention is given to critical analysis of their global competitive positions and potential for growth and renewal in response to changing international market opportunities. An examination of the potential responses of these industries to future shocks would have added value. For example, an exploration of the likely impact of developments in vertical farming, robotics or other more intensive farming technologies may have provided new insights. Consumer preference has largely been driven by price, convenience and attractiveness (e.g. taste) but health benefits of the food, sustainability of production and social impact of production are factors with potential to be more dominant in the future. The impact of these changes and the response of Australian agriculture will be critical in determining the shape and scale of food production in the future.

The book is written more from an environmental rather than a scientific or economic perspective. The potential of developing agriculture in the north is not a focus for this book. The book is convincing in demonstrating the limited role Australia has in feeding the world from domestic food production. Australia's role may be to use the limited available food production capacity to produce high value expensive food to sell to highly affluent populations in Asia. Our capacity in volume is low, so maybe we should focus on food for the top of the market. One conclusion that many have developed from this perspective is the need to focus on producing high value products in Australian agriculture. However, this theme could have been taken up more strongly in the contributions to this volume.

The book reflects on the limitations of Australian agriculture and approaches to advancement. Most chapters accurately describe industries that are aiming to survive by improving efficiencies and producing essentially the same products at lower costs. However, the book largely overlooks the role of new technologies in delivering productivity gains, and new or improved products in agriculture and the implications of those for the industries involved. Application of information technology, nanotechnology and biotechnology to agriculture continues at an ever accelerating pace and is delivering dramatic productivity gains globally. A focus on food technology could have allowed an exploration of how new technologies might improve the sustainability and economic contribution of agricultural production in Australia.

This book provides a useful background account of the current status of agriculture in Australia to support the next step, identifying where we want Australian agriculture to be in the future. What will Australian agriculture look like in 2050 or 2100? How sustainable can we make it? What types of products should be produced? How will food contribute to public health and how strong will demand be for healthier food products? How much can agriculture contribute to the economy and society? What technologies do we have that can make all this a reality?

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The Economics of Biofuel Policies: Impacts on Price Volatility in Grain and Oilseed Markets, edited by Harry de Gorter, Dusan Drabik and David R. Just. Published by Palgrave, New York, NY, USA, 2017, 282 pp, ISBN: 9781137414847, US\$ 115.

The review of this manuscript incorporates the viewpoints of three individuals: a master's student, a PhD student and a professor. These three individuals represent: a person new to the topic area; a student who has been involved in significant biofuel research during the past years; and a person who has been working in the bioenergy area for 48 years. The students read the book and discussed their review through written word with the professor. The book review below is a compilation of these discussions.

This book is an informative and insightful examination of three biofuel markets – Brazil, United States and Europe. The book illustrates how unintended consequences (high food prices) occur as an unexpected change in demand for agricultural commodities is fed with policy. It links that change in