

**Agriculture in the New Global Economy** by William Coleman, Wyn Grant and Tim Josling (2004). Edward Elgar, Cheltenham. pp. 201. ISBN 1 84376 678 7.

Defining globalisation in agriculture by its political, economic and cultural dimensions means that this text covers a wide range of issues regarding agri-food business in a global economy. The dexterity of the authors, on the whole, manage to present clear arguments that are peppered with examples from both developed and the 'global south'. However, its breath in subject coverage in this text is both its strength and its weakness. Covering issues such as genetically modified crops, organic farming, farming organisations, food retailing, intellectual property rights, and generally using balanced arguments brings together many of the issues that are important in agriculture and significant, to a greater or lesser extent, to the world's economy. However, with the necessary breath of issues and arguments, the book only tacitly covers many of them. Having said this, the authors do develop in greater depth four paradigms that they argue characterize the governance of agriculture: the dependent paradigm, the competitive paradigm, the multifunctional paradigm and the globalized production paradigm. These paradigms become the focus for the latter half of the book.

Generally, this book is well presented in context, argument and understanding and only rarely slips from this standard. An example where clarity is opaque is when futures options are described as "new financial instruments" yet on the following page it correctly argues that "Futures markets have a long history in agriculture" (p.36-37). A further example is that of 'fair trade' products that are described as "packaged in containers largely made out of recycled glass" (p.60). Clearly, a few fair trade products are packaged in recycled glass containers (instant coffee) but the vast majority are not (ground coffee, tea, rice, bananas, apricots, *etc.*). These slips aside, most arguments are logical and questions that arise in the readers mind are frequently answered further on in the text. Furthermore, the eloquent style of the authors generally keeps the reader engaged and often expresses excellent definitions, such as that given for genetic engineering (see p.65).

Turning to the structure of this book, the first half of the text explores economic and political globalisation issues whilst cultural aspects indicated in the introductory chapter are more subsumed as it journeys towards the four key paradigms regarding the governance of agriculture. With an agricultural economic start to chapter two, economic globalisation is discussed in terms of trade relative to manufacturing and supply chains, moving through inputs to food retailing and wholesaling. These latter sections rely heavily on authoritative texts such as Clarke *et al.* (2002) rather than adding new insight. Chapter three moves the narrative on to technological change and how this may be met with political resistance, particularly from consumer groups and non-governmental organisations. This, it is argued, may lead to "overlapping discourses that permit the construction of what may be termed a 'green' space in the food chain" (p.59), such as the production of organic food. Conversely, the relationship between biotechnology and agriculture is also considered illustrating the benefits and risks of genetically modified crops and how some countries readily adopt the technology while others resist. These issues are further developed by examining the political struggle over the emergence of biotechnology in agriculture and how scientific knowledge that was once accepted as authoritative is now contested.

While the first three chapters develop the arguments and dimensions of agriculture's place in a global economy, chapter four sets out the paradigmatic principles of the book, building upon the earlier work of one of the authors, Josling (2002). Briefly, the four competing paradigms are: (1) a dependent paradigm that is organized around the core belief that agriculture fulfils basic food

needs and national security; (2) a competitive paradigm, that emphasizes that agriculture can hold its own vis-à-vis other economic sectors; (3) a multifunctional paradigm that argues that agriculture is an integral part of the countryside by providing public goods; and (4) a globalized production paradigm that stimulates agriculture in potentially global food chains (p.94-99). Using these four paradigms, the ideational basis regarding the nature of the problem, policy objectives and instruments, and the world market are explored and helpfully summarized by way of tables. These paradigms are further developed in terms of international and regional trading rules and regimes in chapter five. Whilst the repeal of the UK corn laws 1846 are mentioned as a start, this section focuses on post-war trade initiatives, GATT and later WTO trade discussions before considering regional groupings such as free-trade areas and customs unions. Arguably, this is the most global part of the book since it is possible to incorporate many of the regional trade agreements and the discussions from participating nations around the world. For this chapter, it is worth pointing out that while a table of abbreviations is not given in this book, its index provides a useful reminder to some abbreviations.

Whilst chapters four and five provide the main thrust of the arguments, the final two chapters supply some useful adjuncts drawing on dimensions explored in the first few chapters that are related to the paradigms in the context of a transnational policy space of actors and structure. Chapter six details how various groups and networks influence the domestic to global policy space. It argues that long standing structures that have represented the interest of agricultural producers has been built around the dependent paradigm that in a global economy is weakening, while governmental fiscal and trade departments drew on neo-classical economists that supported the competitive paradigm. Thus this chapter explores how these concepts are changing as organisations and networks alter at a domestic through to a global level as biotechnology and global social movement organisations become part of the policy space. The final chapter brings together many of the issues discussed in the book into 'a transnational policy space in agriculture'. This space has competing concepts such as intellectual property, biological diversity and food security and safety, which drives the policy agenda asymmetrically forward. This uneven balance of power between the resource and information rich is clearly brought out in the books concluding pages, as are the difficulties in trying to balance a dynamic agri-food system in a socio-political order that is less than stable.

On balance this book provides an encompassing view of agriculture in the global economy, which is continuing to develop rather than being 'new'. Furthermore, what this book lacks in depth is more than compensated for by the breadth of arguments incorporated to illustrate the narrative. Therefore, the appeal of this book is clear for students and policy practitioners as well as providing a starting point for more seasoned academics.

Clarke, R., Davies, S., Dobson, S., and Waterson, M. (2002). *Buyer Power and Competition in European Retailing*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Josling, T. (2002). 'Competing Paradigms in the OECD and Their Impacts on the WTO Agricultural Talks', in *Agricultural Policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.

Allan Butler, University of Exeter.