

Book reviews

George W. Norton, Jeffrey Alwang and William A. Masters

The Economics of Agricultural Development. World Food Systems and Resource Use

Routledge, Abingdon, UK, 2006.

ISBN: 0-415-770046-7, 448 pp., Price: £22.99 (paperback).

Ever since I started teaching agricultural development classes, I have been looking for an undergraduate textbook that provides the basic facts of agricultural and economic development, is analytical in character and comprehensive with regard to the issues presented. After reading through the book by Norton, Alwang and Masters, I think I might have finally found it.

The book starts with a thorough discussion of the basic issues of agricultural development and world food security, including issues related to hunger and malnutrition, population growth and its determinants and the economics of food demand. A second part is devoted to development theories and the role of agriculture in the development process. Part 3 focuses on agricultural systems and resource use in the course of economic development. Part 4 deals with how the sources of agricultural growth typically change in the course of economic development, which role agricultural research and education play and how technological and institutional change is generated. Moreover, issues of markets and prices are analysed where particular emphasis is placed on land, labour, credit and other input markets. In addition, price formation in food markets is discussed, together with how pricing policies may affect the performance of these markets. In part 5, the international aspects of agricultural development are analysed, including trade, trade policy, macroeconomic and monetary policies, capital mobility and foreign development assistance.

The authors emphasise that this is a text for an undergraduate class in agricultural development. They claim that the only prerequisite is a course in *Principles of Economics*. This claim is correct.

Throughout the book, the reader is reminded that agricultural development is amenable to economic theory and that it can be dealt with analytically without the use of economic theory that goes beyond a *Principles* course. At the beginning of every chapter, the reader is provided with a review of the subject matter to be treated, while each chapter concludes with a list of relevant concepts, related terminology and questions for review. Both review and conclusion should greatly help students navigate through this textbook. The authors always relate development issues directly to economic theory. The analysis is graphical in character and is presented in such a way

that students who have mastered a *Principles* course should have no problem applying economic theory to relevant real-world issues in development economics and policies.

The book is well written and structured very systematically. It comprehensively covers all the aspects of modern development economics. Each chapter is supplemented by a most useful list of references. The authors make frequent use of case studies that help significantly to illustrate the topics at hand.

The reviewer expects this book to become a standard text in undergraduate classes on development economics around the world.

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Kathleen P. Bell, Kevin J. Boyle and Jonathan Rubin (eds)

Economics of Rural Land-Use Change

Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, Hampshire, UK, 2006.

ISBN: 0-7546-0983-9, 288 pp., Price: £55.00 (hardback).

This book analyses land use in the US. Far-reaching changes have affected rural areas over the last half century with the spread of cities and the growth in recreational and environmental uses of land. These changes have been effected mostly through the land market. The many failures of that market have led the authorities to intervene increasingly out of concern for the environment.

This book meets the need for an overview of the subject by drawing on economic theories and modern econometric methods. Thirteen US economists from among the leading specialists have contributed to the 16 chapters of *Economics of Rural Land-Use Change*. The result is both a handbook, summarising the state of knowledge, and a presentation of (as yet unpublished) empirical studies illustrating and expanding on these issues. It is aimed at academic economists and students as well as public-sector decision-makers and managers, with the authors providing straightforward and didactic explanations of what are often complex matters without sacrificing scientific rigour and precision.

One original feature of the book is that it places the consumption of space by urban households at the heart of rural land use. The authors defend this approach with factual, statistical and historical data occupying most of the opening chapters. Urban land use quadrupled in the US between 1945 and 1997 (three times the rate of population growth), it became more dispersed (urban sprawl, edge cities, 'string cities' along interstate highways, housing for senior citizens, etc.) and was compounded by land use for leisure or for wildlife (also a fourfold increase). Where land use has remained unchanged,