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IATRC

INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL
TRADE RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

Celebrating the First Thirty Years

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INTRODUCTION

At the December 2010 annual general meeting of the International Agricultural Trade Research Consortium (IATRC), the traditional Theme Day was organized as a celebration of the 30 year anniversary of that institution and was titled *Trade in Agriculture: So Much Done, So Much More to Do*. In the aftermath of that meeting a proposal was made that the 30 year history of the IATRC should be written while those who had lived through the full period were still available to provide the necessary institutional memory. The Executive Committee agreed and allocated \$2000 to the project as a token of their serious support, while Alex McCalla, Ed Rossmiller and Laura Bipes agreed to see it to fruition. It soon became clear that in the tight fiscal environment of the time, further funding would not be forthcoming. Thus the team decided that if they did most of the work themselves they would be able to publish the results of their efforts as an e-book on the internet, but would not have the resources to produce any paper copies.

They also determined that in addition to the three major papers (unfortunately, the fourth major presentation by Valeria Csukasi, *Future Challenges in Agricultural Trade Negotiations*, is not available to us for inclusion in this manuscript) and the panel presentations at the 30th anniversary theme day, several other documents were available that detailed much of the rationale for the creation of the IATRC, its evolution and its output over the period.

The first of these documents is IATRC Objectives, Organization, Operations and Origins, the so called 'Blue Book', the latest edition of which is Edition VI dated April 2010. The Blue Book is a rolling record of the decisions taken at the meetings of the membership and the Executive Committee and a listing of the various outputs of the Consortium since its beginning. Since the Blue Book is revised and updated periodically and is publically available on the IATRC website



(<http://iatrc.org/about/bluebook/BlueBook2010.pdf>) it will only be referenced here as needed rather than being reproduced in its entirety.

The second of the documents is *An Analytical History of the IATRC* by Tim Josling, Alex McCalla and T. Kelley White, as requested by the Executive Committee and published in October 1997. It is reproduced here in its entirety.

Another pair of documents that add to the historical picture are the report dated December 2004 to the Executive Committee and the membership as requested by the IATRC Chair, Tim Josling, by the Futures Steering Group consisting of Mike Gifford, Joe Glauber, Stefan Tangermann, Linda Young and Alex McCalla, Chair, and the January 2011 Status Report on IATRC: Progress on Recommendations of the Futures Steering Group by the 2010 Executive Committee.

These two documents are also reproduced in their entirety. ■

PART I

Theme Day

Trade in Agriculture: Much Done, So Much More to Do

CHAPTER 3

Creating a Virtual Think Tank: IATRC 1980–1995

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RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE

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REFLECTIONS BY MAURY E. BREDAHL

The challenge: making (ancient) history interesting and a review useful. What happened? A synergistic, and very productive, relationship developed with North American academics and technocrats of the Economic Research Service and of the Foreign Agricultural Service as the key actors. Add in a handful of economists from outside North America and even fewer private sector economists.

View Maury E. Bredahl's full presentation online:

http://iatrc.org/activities/annualmeetings/themedays/pdfs2010/2010Dec-Bredahl_remarks.pdf

REFLECTIONS BY ED ROSSMILLER

Since the inception of the IATRC, if I were only able to attend one professional meeting a year, it would be the Trade Consortium general meeting. If I were allowed two, I would add the IATRC summer symposium. I have always come away from Trade Consortium meetings with increased understandings, broadened perspectives and clarified perceptions of the issues and problems we deal with as practitioners in the arena of agricultural trade research and policy analysis. I have also always come away with a renewed sense of camaraderie with the other members whose professional interests and work coincided with mine.



Apart from my view of the importance of the Trade Consortium to me personally, I would like to enumerate a few of the many important and unique attributes of the IATRC that have proven to be extremely useful to us as professional agricultural economists interested in trade and to government and international organization policy decision makers around the globe. First, we are truly international in our membership, and have been from the beginning, with two countries, the US and Canada represented. Our membership now comes from some 20 plus countries and 6 international organizations. This means that we can take a uniquely global perspective on those issues and problems where that is required. Our series on 'Bringing Agriculture into the GATT' as an example comes to mind. Such a global perspective is crucial when dealing with issues relating to international trade.

While we are interested in keeping up with the theoretical and methodological advances in the discipline that affect our work, most of us, as my old mentor and colleague, the late Glenn Johnson, would say, work at the subject matter and problem solving ends of the research spectrum.¹ Thus, we need the interactions with our international membership and with the policy decision makers that we routinely invite to our meetings. The Trade Consortium is an important forum for those crucial interactions with policy decision makers for any of us doing problem solving research.

Another area in which the IATRC excels is as a facilitator of team research and analysis. The prime example of this was when the Administrator of the Economic Research Service needed help he turned to the IATRC. The Trade Consortium, led by Alex McCalla was able to quickly field a team of academics from 14 universities, personnel from ERS itself and personnel from an independent think tank, The National Center for Food and Agriculture Policy (NCFAP) at Resources for the Future, to produce the congressionally mandated study, *Embargoes, Surplus Disposal and US Agriculture*. The first line of the Abstract² succinctly sums up the main conclusion of the study, "Embargoes did not cause the farm crisis of the 1980's, and an aggressive export subsidy program to reduce surplus commodity stocks would not have prevented it." Not what the US agricultural community wanted to hear! The factual base and rigor of the study was confirmed when the Washington representative of the American Soybean Association marched into the Agriculture Secretary's office, threw a copy of the study on the floor and stomped on it saying, "This is what we think of your study, Mister Secretary". But no one then or since has taken factual or conceptual issue with the study, its approach or the logic of its conclusions.

Finally, trade consortium members have made significant contributions to theoretical and methodological advances through their disciplinary research, to the knowledge base of agricultural trade through their subject matter research and to informing the policy decision process through their problem solving research.³ The single most important contribution by IATRC members in these past thirty years of the existence of the IATRC, for my money, has been in shaping the framework of the Uruguay Round negotiations on agriculture. It started with the methodological work by Josling, Pearson and Tangermann at FAO, then the adoption and adaptation of that methodology by OECD to carry out the Trade Mandate Study and finally the acceptance of the work of the OECD as the basis of the negotiations on agriculture toward lowering the national barriers to trade during the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations in the GATT. We are talking, of course, about what ultimately became known as the Aggregate Measure of Support (AMS) and the negotiations that finally brought agriculture into the GATT and subsequently into the WTO. The work of the IATRC throughout that process was key to that successful outcome.

Hats off to the IATRC and here's to the next 30!

1 Johnson, Glenn L., *Research Methodology for Economists: Philosophy and Practice*. McGraw-Hill, 1986.

2 *Embargoes, Surplus Disposal, and U.S. Agriculture: A Summary*. Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agriculture Information Bulletin Number 503. November 1986.

3 Johnson 1986 Op. cit.

REFLECTIONS BY ANDREW SCHMITZ

It is hard to believe thirty years have passed since the Trade Consortium group was founded. At that time, most agricultural economists had very little training in international economics, and little was known about agricultural trade and the impact on trade of tariff and non-tariff barriers. Among the first treatises from the consortium was the book by Hillman and Schmitz (1979) which provided a framework for the many studies that followed on related topics (e.g., gains from freer trade in agricultural products). Other studies included books by Schmitz et al. (1981; 1996). In this context, the work by Bredahl et al. (1987) on the “Great Tomato War” has been used as the basis for theoretical and empirical applications and resolution of real world border disputes. This article has been widely used in policy circles and courts to resolve border disputes between Mexico and the United States. An overview of the contributions of agricultural trade economists which fell out of the first trade consortium meeting and many of those afterwards is contained in Josling et al. (2010). The contributions of IATRC members have covered a wide range of topics and have had a significant policy impact both in the United States and worldwide.

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REFLECTIONS BY JIMMYE S. HILLMAN


The origins of institutions like that of ideas are often blurred, not only by time and circumstance but also by intentional neglect. Not so with our progressive and successful International Agricultural Trade Research Consortium (IATRC).

In the aftermath of World War II there was a deliberate intention among many political and economic statesman in the United States that the errors of World War 1 and its aftermath be not repeated. Hence, the Marshall Plan and Point IV of President Truman’s state of the union address.

The Research and Marketing Act of 1948 lent itself to Land Grant research projects related to international trade.

In academia there were individuals who chose international economics and agricultural trade as principal professional and career topics. I need but name Gale Johnson, Larry Witt and Robert Baldwin. My own study at Berkeley in the 1940’s was a major in trade. My Ph.D. thesis “Interstate Trade Barriers in the Western States” began with trade theory and foreign trade issues. My prop and pillar, “Non-tariff Trade Barriers,” was born of that experience.

It was after a sabbatical leave at Oxford University in 1973, that I returned to Arizona determined to convince colleagues and administrators to start a regional research project on international trade. Simultaneously, I was lucky to have the ears and strong arms of Alex McAlla then Dean at UC Davis, and my own Dean Gerald Stairs at Arizona State



University. As a primer, I was lucky to pull together about \$50,000 from regional Experiment Station Funds. With the help of Ford Foundation funds and a select few individuals, we built a program around the subject of international trade at Tucson in April 1977. As a result, Westview Press published a book entitled “International Trade and Agriculture: Theory and Policy”.

The seeds for the IATRC were sown there. In a series of meetings attended by a small number of Faculty from Arizona, UC Berkeley, UC Davis and Stanford held in California in 1978/79, a program for a wider audience was planned for Stanford in March of 1979.

It was but a matter of time until the original ideas and issues of universal consequence became the theme for a broad area of study.

The IATRC is not an organ that began as a fortuitous happenstance. It is today a world wide functioning group of professionals that evolved in response to public and private need. ■