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The Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture in Historical Perspective

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“The [...socio-economic...] problems [...in developing country agriculture...] are diverse, complex, and increasing ...” This insight featured prominently in the introduction to the first issue of the *Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture* (QJIA) – formerly “*Zeitschrift für ausländische Landwirtschaft*”, in 1962. The journal’s founding editors *Otto Schiller* and *Hans Wilbrandt*, both renowned German agricultural development scholars, played a major role in promoting and shaping German agricultural development cooperation after World War II. Both had lost their professional positions due to the Nazi regime and both became pioneers of agricultural and rural development economics later as professors in Heidelberg and Göttingen, establishing significant schools of thought. The journal was intended to contribute towards building a solid evidence base on developing country agriculture by combining theory and empirical methods with the courage to creatively overcome data and knowledge gaps.

The same motivation and challenges continued to drive and characterize agricultural research over 50 years later in our times. During these years, however, we have also witnessed a radical shift in the science publishing environment, including the emergence of a large number of competing journals on international agricultural sciences, and a trend towards the specialization of scientific outlets into various disciplinary categories. The QJIA has struggled to follow this trend and to keep up with international citation rankings of thematically related journals from major publishing houses.

Early in 2015, the DLG publisher and the journal’s editorial board have thus jointly decided with a heavy heart to close down the QJIA by the end of the year. All authors with submissions under review were informed and offered the opportunity to withdraw their contributions. While that is a sad development, we can point at a very strong and internationally well connected agricultural development economics profession in Germany and beyond, and it is also reassuring, that agricultural development is again high on the policy agenda. The journal has made a significant contribution to that.

On the occasion of the closure of the Journal we take the opportunity to look back at the first issue if the Journal dated 1962. That issue presented articles from the leading thinkers of agricultural development. We draw attention to just a few important examples with the hope that today’s students of development economics feel stimulated to read from those, on whose shoulders they stand.

Constantin von Dietze, who was a leading player in the International Association of Agricultural Economists (IAAE) at the time contributed an essay on travel reports of an agricultural policy maker. *Herbert Kötter*, the leading rural sociologist at the time and later professor in Bonn discussed economic development and socio-cultural change. *Fritjof Kuhnen*, who in later years became the successor of *Hans Wilbrandt* as head of the Institute for Rural Development in Göttingen, added a case study on the impacts of agricultural reforms in Syria. *Hans Ruthenberg*, the founding father of farming systems research and professor in Hohenheim, contributed actually three articles, one of which is on new insights in theory and planning of economic development.

Book reviews were always an important part of QJIA. In the first issue Theodor Dams, who later was Professor in Freiburg and president of IAAE, discussed a volume on “Europe’ s Needs and Resources – Trends and Prospects in Eighteen Countries”.

The first issue of the journal featured already leading international scholars. Among them was *N.A. Mujumdar* from Mumbai University, who was a leading advisor to the Reserve Bank of India and to the IMF. His article was on problems of underemployment.

Bruce Johnston and *John Mellor* (the former became Director of the Stanford Food Research Institute and the latter Director General of International Food Policy Research Institute – IFPRI) wrote about the role of agriculture in economic development. Variants of that theme by the two authors rank among the most influential writings in our profession in the 1970s.

Very much in the spirit of its founders, this final issue of QJIA covers research from three continents and diverse issues, such as welfare impacts of peanut production in China, dairy and rice production in eastern and western Africa, and marketing strategies of Bolivian potato farmers. Like all previous journal issues since 2010, this issue will become available open-access on the AgEcon Search platform shortly after publication.

We would like to thank the members of QJIA’s editorial and editorial advisory boards as well as all former managing and book review editors for their long-standing commitment. The biggest work load to run a journal is that of the managing editor. Our special thanks are therefore to all of them and their supporting teams, i.e. in historical order: Reinhold Sachs (1962-66 and 1977-89), Jürgen von Muralt (1967), Joachim Tschiersch (1968-70), Ernst-Günther Jentsch (1971-73), Peter von Blankenburg (1974-76), Dieter Elz (1990-2010), Franz Heidhues (2011-14).

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