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RESHAPING AGRICULTURE'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS

*Held at Durban, South Africa
16-22 August, 2003*

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Preface

As President of the IAAE until the end of its 25th conference, I wish to record my thanks to all who made this splendid event possible in Durban. South Africa provided a most stimulating environment for the IAAE Conference and we are grateful for the hospitality extended to the IAAE and its members. Up front, a very special thank you should be offered to the Government of South Africa, especially to the Minister of Agriculture, Thoko Didiza, and the Director General of the Ministry, Bongiwe Njobe for their unswerving support of the conference. This was not only delivered in terms of financial support, but very noticeably through their enthusiastic participation in the conference itself.

Organization

There are four principal groups centrally involved in an international event such as this, the Local Organizing Committee (LOC), the program organizing team drawn from officers and members of the IAAE, the sponsors, and the old and new members who made the commitment and raised the funds to attend the conference. Seven-hundred-thirty-five people from 75 countries registered for the conference, which was higher than expected.

The LOC, led by Professors Gerhard Coetzee and Johann Kirsten at the University of Pretoria did a magnificent job of coordinating all the many tasks to be undertaken in South Africa, and fronting the negotiations with IAAE about finance, facilities, travel advice, accommodation and all the myriad of matters entailed in bringing people from so many countries together. They arranged to enlist Event Dynamics, a professional conference management company to handle all of the many practical routine matters. That practical management led by Melanie Campbell and Helen du Toit at Event Dynamics, with David Goodwin in charge of lighting and visuals, produced facilities at the Durban International Conference Centre, which everybody who attended agreed were the

best experienced at any IAAE conference to-date. That, and the smooth organization and courteous handling of individual needs helped greatly in making this a memorable event. Generous sponsorship for the LOC by the Land Bank, ABSA, Santam, AFGRI, ECI-Africa and SAPPI enabled many extra services to be provided to delegates at the conference. A special word should also be added to thank Professor Johan van Zyl, who in his role as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Pretoria until 2002 had done so much of the preparatory work to bring IAAE to South Africa.

The very fact of this conference being in Africa, where agricultural economics has a particularly strong role to play, stimulated generous sponsorship from many sources, much of it to enable young professionals from Africa and other countries where professional salaries are too low to be able attend. Without the financial support of the Rockefeller Foundation, the United States Department of Agriculture, the UK Departments of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and of International Development, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and FAO and IFPRI, such high levels of participation from developing countries could not have been achieved. As it was, 124 delegates attended from African countries other than South Africa, and 131 from the host country itself. Another 88 came from other developing and transition countries, many with grant support.

The superb conference program was put together by a team coordinated by Vice-President Program David Colman, who chose the theme and was responsible for choosing the 15 plenary speakers, whose papers are published in this volume. Organizing other components of the program involves some very large jobs. We all owe David Colman a lot for his service to the IAAE. His contribution was central for making the conference a success.

The administration of selecting contributed papers was splendidly managed by Michele and Terry Veeman at the University of Alberta. A record 501 papers were submitted, of which 140 were selected

after thorough review for presentation as contributed papers, with a further 158 transferred to Professor Kei Otsuka and his team at FASID/Tokyo Metropolitan University who reviewed the poster paper submissions. In addition to the contributed papers transferred for consideration, a further 103 papers were submitted specifically as posters. Out of the number selected 123 posters were eventually presented in Durban, with the majority in a highly professional format. These are very demanding jobs and my sincere thanks goes to all of the above for their generous contribution of effort and time, and also to the 93 contributed paper and 55 poster paper reviewers for their essential input. Wally Tyner at the University of Purdue did a fine job of organizing the 16 invited panels, and the numerous discussion groups and mini-symposia, and Peter Wehrheim of the Universities of Bonn did likewise with the computer program presentations, which are a steadily growing element of these conferences, and of such interest that extra space had to be allocated in the program.

At the conference itself the production of the daily news-sheet, Cowbell, is a pressurised job; thanks go to the joint editors, Nick Vink and Ruvimbo Chimedza-Mabeza, for their expert management.

Pre-conferences and learning workshops

A remarkable development of our conference structure has been the addition of extra or related events. For the Durban conference three learning workshops were organized for the day before the conference proper. One of these on *Water Reform, Institutions' Performance, Pricing and Resource Accounting*, was presented and planned by members of the International Water Consortium, who organized their own conference in South Africa to coincide with ours so that they could also present the learning workshop. 56 people, including presenters, attended this workshop and nearly all remained for the conference.

A second workshop was organized under the guidance of Susan Offutt and the Economic Research Service of the USDA, which provided additional financial support specifically for attendance at this. The workshop, which was attended by 95 participants, concerned *Food Security Measurement in a Developing World Context with a Focus on Africa*.

The third learning workshop on *Analytical and Empirical Tools for Poverty Research*, organized by Christopher Barrett from Cornell University, again attracted over 90 participants. As with the other workshops there were a large number of lecturers involved, and by general consent the workshops were all a great success, which have established the learning workshops as a key element of future conferences. My warm thanks goes to the organizers.

The conference

The opening ceremony was marked in dramatic and entertaining style by the Zulu group African Frenzy, with a generous greeting to the delegates and some stirring stories of local history and dancing. That warm, enthusiastically-received welcome, was then followed by a sincere and well-targeted address by the Minister of Agriculture, Thoko Didiza, in which she adjured the conference to address a whole range of pressing issues, and to support African countries developing policies to accelerate agricultural and rural development. The Minister's commitment to the conference was underlined by a second visit to meet some of the senior IAAE members present to discuss possible areas of collaboration with her staff.

Following this stirring opening it was down to the intense business of the conference. In my own address I underlined the continuing tendencies of farming populations (internationally and within countries) to divide into a mainstream group forging ahead and a very significant group who are left behind. More must be done to reduce the divergence in order to meet the reasonable and proper targets for poverty reduction set out at the beginning of this Millennium. Professor Bruce Gardner presented in the Elmhirst Lecture his innovative research on the extent to which agricultural growth might itself significantly be a crucial factor in reducing rural poverty. Both papers are published below, and are briefly reviewed by the editors of this volume.

Possibly 75% of all participants in the conference played an active role in either presenting papers, leading discussions and chairing sessions. The number of parallel contributed papers, discussion and panel group sessions was larger than at previous conferences, and it was impossible for anybody to attend all the papers that were of key interest. In part this was overcome

Preface

by issuing all participants with a CD containing all plenary and contributed papers plus poster paper abstracts. That means that those with restricted access to libraries, but with access to a reasonable computer have readily available permanent copies. The full program is published as an annex in this volume, as a permanent record of the conference, and as an acknowledgement of all who had an assigned role. I would personally like to thank them all.

There were several other innovations at the conference. The Theodore W. Schultz Prize (for the best contributed paper by, as senior author, a young member of the profession) was jointly awarded to two papers (i) Flora Nankhuni and Jill Findeis and (ii) Arnab K. Basu, Nancy H. Chau, and Ulrike Grote. They and the papers of the two excellent runners-up, Timothy Dalton and Ran Tao, were presented in plenary session to great acclaim, and all four will be published in the IAAE journal "Agricultural Economics." In parallel, the Nils Westermarck prize for the best poster paper was inaugurated at this conference and awarded to Martin Qaim. A powerpoint version of that poster and of the two runner-up posters, by (i) M. M. Waithaka, P. K., B. D. Salasya, K. D. Shepherd, S. J. Staal, and N. N. Ndiwa, and (ii) R. J. Armour and M. F. Viljoen, were also presented in plenary session. More computer displays were presented than ever before. These provide valuable opportunities to see new software applications and to meet their designers; they have proved to be particularly stimulating and attractive to new members of the IAAE attending their first conference. There were also changes made to the way in which the proceedings were wound up. Instead of the traditional large numbers of reports, a number of senior IAAE members were asked to summarize their assessment of the conference. Three of these synoptic reviews are published in this volume along with that

of my successor as IAAE President, Prabhu Pingali. I wish him and all the colleagues on the Executive as enjoyable and interesting a tenure as I have had.

Honorary Life Memberships were voted to seven members who have given dedicated and distinguished service to IAAE over many years. They are Jock Anderson (Australia), Ian Behrman (South Africa), Ruvimbo Chimedza-Mabeza (Zimbabwe), Csaba Csaki (Hungary), Carl Eicher (USA), Laurent Martens (Belgium), and Kirit Parkikh (India).

It is also noteworthy that the agricultural economics community of Africa came together at the conference and established the foundations of an African Agricultural Economists Association. This may be the most significant impact of the IAAE Conference for years to come. The IAAE has made a commitment to support the African colleagues in the process of the building of this important organization.

It is impossible to complete this brief summary of events without commenting on the exceptionally friendly and informal atmosphere which pervaded this conference. That was highlighted by the way people let their hair down and danced at the superb conference dinner, with excellent bands and entertainers. Many participants, in their formally recorded assessments, and also informally, stated how much they value these opportunities to meet and have access to international colleagues from all across the spectrum. In addition to the many academics and students present, there were large numbers of agricultural economists and development specialists from government, international agencies, NGOs, and commercial companies. It is this mix which makes the IAAE conferences so highly-valued by its members, and it is an attribute I am sure will continue.

Joachim von Braun