

African Development Bank, FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Water Management Institute and the World Bank – agreed to review agricultural water development in the region to assist preparation of future strategies and programmes. This report addresses ‘Regional demand for products of irrigation agriculture’, one of nine defined areas proposed for specialist study.

Through tables and diagrams, a very valuable compendium of data is provided – covering agricultural productivity and irrigation (both existing and potential) across the region. The FAO typology for areas under agricultural water management (presented in an annexe) allows different types of irrigation to be defined as a basis for summing areas under varying forms of water management.

The text covers a wide range of topics, with chapters including ‘The impacts of irrigated agriculture’, ‘Getting to 2030: the yield question and natural resources constraints’, and ‘Trends and opportunities’. The last of these includes comments on market prospects for a range of major crops, from cereals, via livestock and dairy, to beverage and industrial crops. Of particular interest is the conclusion that – despite worldwide concern over competition for limited water resources – irrigation still only requires a small proportion of available water in the broader sub-Saharan context. A valuable report to read, and to keep ready ‘on the shelf’ for later consultation of the data.

Henry Gunston

Developing Countries: Evaluation of Land Potential. The Work of LRD, 1956–2001. Edited by J. Makin, J. Bennett, M. Brunt and C. Griffin. Bucknell, UK: LRD Publishers (2006), pp.167, £15.00. ISBN 978-0-9555479-0-4. doi:10.1017/S0014479707005492

From small beginnings the Land Resources Division (LRD) rose to become the leading world institution for resource surveys of developing countries, with the series of *Land Resource Studies* appearing in 1966–1987. Then from 1990 onwards it suffered successive cuts in funding. Former staff felt its achievements should be put on record, and the present book is the result. There are three elements: institutional developments, descriptions of projects and personal reminiscences. Accounts of 38 projects form the core, with varied proportions of descriptive analysis and ‘tales from the bush/desert/jungle’. The reminiscences increase readability although they can be distracting.

LRD projects were not the start of land appraisal. I was sorry to see so little recognition of the work of Colonial soil surveyors which, when detailed surveys are taken into account, matched the achievements of LRD (Young, 2007)[†]. The final chapter, ‘Retrospective’ is disappointing. One might have expected an analysis of how these surveys contributed to development planning. The conclusion, ‘LRD can claim . . . it had some impact on decision-making for rural development planning’, is tentative.

It is to be hoped that the current emphasis on a sociological basis for development gives place to an approach in which the potential and hazards of the natural resource base are accorded equal weight. The vast amount of data from LRD’s work remains as a major source of reference on land properties. This book should be widely read as a contribution to a more balanced approach to rural development.

Anthony Young

Food Security and Agricultural Development in sub-Saharan Africa. Building a Case for more Public Support. Policy Assistance Series 2. By W. Kidane, M. Maetz and P. Dardel. Rome: FAO (2006), pp.104, free. ISBN 92-5-105544-0. doi:10.1017/S0014479707005509

The important role of agriculture in the growth of the economies of most sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) countries and the alleviation of poverty and malnutrition is clearly stated upfront. Subsequently, the book not only provides a detailed analysis of the food situation in SSA based on case studies of 11 countries in the region, but also outlines constraints to agricultural production such as physical, economic, political and socio-cultural. Selected success stories in and out of Africa are also provided as a basis for advancing strategic options for addressing food insecurity in SSA.

The summaries and conclusions at the end of each chapter provide ease of reference to readers. These, together with numerous tables, graphs and appendices, help to bring out clearly a case for more public support for the agricultural industry in SSA by governments and development partners, the former in accordance with

[†]Young, A. (2007) *Thin on the ground: land resource in British overseas territories*. Stanhope, UK: The Memoir Club.