

change' – each composed of five sparsely illustrated and densely but clearly written scientific chapters that could be read independently. Coherence could have benefited from a general introductory and a concluding chapter, highlighting and linking the most important points. With this book, the editors nevertheless delivered a valuable contribution to the existing literature on this topic that could serve a range of professionals and students with a broad interest in plant ecology and ecosystem management.

Jonne Rodenburg

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What is the Matter with African Agriculture? Veterans' Visions between Past and Future. Edited by J. W. Mutsaers and W. M. Kleene. Amsterdam: KIT (2012), pp. 383, £24.50 (paperback). ISBN 978-94-6022-178-1.

With rising world population, climate change and ongoing land degradation, there is growing disquiet about the future adequacy and security of food and water supplies. From the title, some may assume that in Africa its smallholder farmers are 'the problem'. The editors are to be congratulated on producing this relevant, timely, informative book which shows that, in contrast, Africa's family farmers should be acknowledged as the core of 'the solution': but they have seldom been served well by the institutions – both national and international – which have presumed to be improving African farming.

To 40 willing authors – African and European, with a wide variety of technical backgrounds and with long and varied experience within the last 50 years in both Francophone and Anglophone countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) – the editors posed three questions:

'If it is true that agricultural development in Sub-Saharan Africa since 1960 has largely failed,

- *What has gone wrong?*
- *Can we identify the causes of failure, as well as the factors responsible for the fewer successes?*
- *What is needed to help African agriculture move forward in coming years?'*

Part I provides the historical and contemporary context, Part II presents the veterans' contributions and Part III provides the editors' synthesis and analysis of the writings.

The book not only exposes uncomfortable truths but also indicates how governments and other agencies – by learning from past mistakes, and by collaborating effectively with farmers to address their real concerns – should better assist African agriculturists in raising and realizing their potentials.

Francis Shaxson

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Agricultural Development in China and Africa. By L. Xiaoyun, Q. Gubo, T. Lixia, Z. Lixia, J. Leshan, G. Zhanfeng and W. Jin. Abingdon, UK and New York, USA: Routledge (2012), pp. 310, £60.00. ISBN978-1-84971-388-7.

This book examines agricultural development from a Chinese perspective and aims to aid the process in Africa. Comparing one centrally planned economy with 54 diverse African countries gives an insight into the Chinese developmental mindset. While China from the 1950s has deliberately developed its agriculture and extracted surplus from it to fuel its industries, Africa has generally failed to feed its population or to stimulate industrial growth.

Africa is now determined to stimulate agricultural growth and can learn from the Chinese experience, which feeds 20% of the world's population from 9% of the world's arable land. The Green Revolution resulted in rapid development in China but largely by-passed Africa. Other disparities include the slave trade, HIV/AIDS and colonisation, which have had negative impacts on Africa's ability to feed itself despite the abundance of land. Chinese national development policies emphasise food security and have invested to achieve that. Africa