

BOOK REVIEWS

Agricultural Research, Livelihoods, and Poverty. Studies of Economic and Social Impacts in Six Countries. Edited by M. Adatao and R. Meinzen-Dick. Washington DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (2007), pp. 388, US\$60.00. ISBN 13: 978-0-8018-8721-5. doi:10.1017/S0014479708006182

This interesting book is a study implemented by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), guided by the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment of the Science Council of the CGIAR, a panel responding to donor demands for evidence of the efficacy of international agricultural research.

Seven case studies make up the core of the book. Two at the national level, from India and China, illustrate impact through diverse pathways on a variety of constituencies. Five at the household and community levels, two from Asia, two from Africa and one from Mexico, used a sustainable livelihoods framework to aid comparability.

The discussions on methods in Chapters 1 and 2, especially on the balance of quantitative and qualitative approaches in assessing impact, are particularly valuable. The synthesis of findings and implications for future directions in studying the impact of agricultural research on poverty in the Chapter 10 is also well done. The editors contributed these three chapters and they deserve credit for the clarity and depth of discussion.

For me the book has two weaknesses: first, the study was compromised by budget limitations, in some cases existing quantitative studies were supplemented by new qualitative studies. Quantitative studies are best designed around the understanding gained from ex-ante qualitative work. Second, it would have added value to the book if the final chapter had addressed the design and costing of an impact assessment programme within an institutional budget, weighing the trade-off between the number of studies, the intensity of primary data collection in each and the lag time before impact assessments are made.

Mike Collinson

Agricultural Research at the Crossroads. Revisited Resource-Poor Farmers and the Millennium Development Goals. By B. M. I. Bengtsson. Enfield, NH, USA: Science Publishers (2007), pp. 339, £33.90. ISBN 978-1-57808-514-9. doi:10.1017/S0014479708006194

The author traces agricultural research and development (R&D) among resource-poor farmers over a period of three decades, from mid-1960's, not only in selected study sites in Ethiopia, Sweden and Trinidad and Tobago but also citing numerous examples from around the world based on his vast experience in international agricultural R&D and education. A detailed analysis of technological changes that have shaped agricultural production trends over the period is also given.

Challenges that impact heavily on vulnerable resource-poor farmers such as biodiversity, climate change, water scarcity, change of land use, biological control of weeds and pests, effective extension services (involving farmers in the testing of new technologies under 'real life' situations), are highlighted from both the long-term productivity of natural resources standpoint and as means of achieving food security and safety. Since the majority of people in most developing countries are rural-based, increased investments in agriculture, forestry and aquaculture are called for if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved, especially the elimination of poverty, by 2015.

The complementary role of universities in producing graduates with relevant knowledge and that of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research Centers and the transnational corporations in aligning their research priorities in consultation with the National Agricultural Research Systems, in order to achieve maximum synergy, is emphasized.

The book provides several annexes that complement the main text very well. It is therefore strongly recommended not only to policy makers in agricultural research, extension and education but also to the general public.

Richard S. Musangi