

then by major shifts in the structure of agriculture to give greater incentives to farmers. The government then promoted low-input, sustainable systems and the development of urban farming. Wright traces the rapid moves to organic methods such as biological pest control, organic manures and the partial replacement of tractors with draught oxen. By the late 1990s, Cuba had achieved food self-sufficiency. More recently, as trade in oil and oil-related inputs has increased, there is evidence of some return to a less sustainable agriculture.

This important, well-referenced book sheds light on how agri-food systems may have to adapt to long-term oil shortages.

Michael E. Daw

*Sustainable Rural Systems. Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Communities.* Edited by G. M. Robinson. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing (2008), pp. 210, £55.00. ISBN 978-0-7546-4715-7. doi:10.1017/S0014479709007753

The book, most originating from a conference in 2004, consists of ten chapters on a range of topics in sustainable agriculture, mostly written from the standpoints of the social and geographical disciplines. The biophysical factors in sustainability – for example how a farmed soil might be defined as sustainable in terms of its organisms and processes – are not covered. Chapter 1 sets the scene, comparing definitions and contrasting, with examples, what are termed sustainable and industrialized agriculture. I would have welcomed more critical dissection here and elsewhere of the various definitions, possibly by reference to agricultural systems that have already collapsed, and to the likely reasons for their unsustainable behaviour. Some of the remaining chapters deal with general issues, such as farm animals and rural sustainability (which I found informative as a non-specialist in this area), while others are highly specific, presenting cases from mostly England, but also Ireland and Canada. The cases include alternative food networks, reasons why farmers quit organic schemes, and the link between farming and landscape where the aesthetic by-products of farming may be more valuable than the products. In general, the writing is clear, though admittedly jargon in Chapter 2, for instance, might discourage some readers. As a whole, the book provides useful reference material, and will be valuable for this as an addition to a library, but in this reader's opinion, the geographical and social aspects of sustainable agriculture would benefit from a much more quantitative and less anecdotal approach than is generally given here.

G. R. Squire

*Temperate Fruit Breeding. Germplasm to Genomics.* Edited by J. F. Hancock. Heidelberg: Springer (2008), pp. 445, £123.00. ISBN 978-1-4020-6906-2. doi:10.1017/S0014479709007765

This is not a book intended for light reading or for those only casually concerned with the culture of fruit. However, for anyone interested in the genetics, improvement through plant breeding or other scientific aspects of a wide range of temperate fruit crops this book is a must. It will be of serious interest to plant breeding students and those from a wide range of disciplines involving the improvement of virtually any crop. The editor has skilfully and logically directed his co-authors in a stepwise description of their crop speciality, from evolutionary biology to biotechnology and breeding techniques. The referencing is both extensive and up-to-date with each chapter giving the key botanical traits and origin of species for each crop. What is fascinating and extremely educational is that a similar story of crop improvement has been applied to all of the 15 different types of crop. Crops covered are: apple, apricot, blackberry, blueberry, cranberry, cherry, currants, gooseberry, grape, kiwifruit, peach, pear, plum, raspberry and strawberry. For most of these fruit crops, extensive use has been made of closely, and sometimes distantly, related species of often widely differing ploidy level for the incorporation of a specific character. This book is an essential reference for those involved in temperate fruit research.

Ronnie McNicol

*The Peach: Botany, Production and Uses.* Edited by D. R. Layne and D. Bassi. Wallingford, UK: CABI (2008), pp. 615, £135.00. ISBN 978-1-84593-386-9. doi:10.1017/S0014479709007777

As befits one of the most common and popular tree fruits, the peach has in this volume been accorded a comprehensive and detailed coverage of the various aspects of its botany, breeding and cultivation.