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Rice Biofortification. Lessons for Global Science and Development. By S. Brooks. London: Earthscan (2010), pp. 178, US\$34.95. ISBN 978-1-84971-100-5.

Biofortification is the enrichment of staple food crops with essential micronutrients. Focusing on the case of rice biofortification, this elegantly written book argues that increasing concerns over food security are pushing policy-makers towards taking top-down approaches to science and research policy. According to the author, involvement of developing country governments and research institutions has been minimized and important factors associated with the diversity of local needs and contexts have been overlooked.

The book is critical of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) as the world's main proponent of biofortification research efforts. The author relates her concerns to a belief that international crop research organizations need to raise funds and prove their legitimacy to an international community of policy-makers. To counterbalance such perceptions, this reviewer points out that the work of CGIAR centres is inextricably linked with that of national and regional organizations across the developing world. In that context, it seems inconceivable that major CGIAR biofortification initiatives would lack inputs that address local concerns.

The author questions whether rice biofortification should be accorded such high priority. Indeed, as emphasized by HarvestPlus, no single intervention will solve the micronutrient malnutrition problem but, by providing some of the recommended daily allowance for micronutrients, biofortified crops might be effective in reducing malnutrition. Such a possibility is dismissed by the author as a 'silver bullet' approach that negates more 'incremental' solutions. The book would have been strengthened by a more detailed description of alternative possibilities and how they could be implemented.

Peter Gregory

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The Rice Crisis – Markets, Policies and Food Security. Edited by D. Dawe. Rome and London: FAO and Earthscan (2010), pp. 392, £60.00, ISBN 978-1-84971-134-0.

Rice being the most important source of calories for the world's poor, the spiralling prices of rice in world markets in 2007/08 dealt a major shock to food security in developing countries. Based on a FAO workshop in 2009 that brought together a very wide range of expertise on rice markets, this book explores the origins of the world rice crisis, the nature of domestic policy responses and the prospects of preventing cyclical crises in the future. It provides a detailed empirical analysis of the rice crisis through a series of overview papers and country studies of major actors in the world rice markets. The key insight from the book is that rice market fundamentals were not the cause of the rice crisis. The dynamics of rice markets were fundamentally different from those of other cereals like wheat and maize that also experienced large price spikes. Government policy decisions, ostensibly aimed at protecting domestic consumers, were decisive in sparking and sustaining the crisis. The country studies are very useful in understanding the crisis as a culmination of underlying trends in the major producing, exporting and importing economies. An empirical examination of the debate surrounding the role of financial speculation in the rice crisis is also attempted. The prospects of future stability are also considered in the context of agricultural commodity market linkages to volatile energy markets through biofuel expansion and climate change induced instability of production and yields. The key message from this book is that thinly traded world rice markets continue to remain vulnerable to periodic crisis given the dominant role of governments in international trade in rice.

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