

GIOVANNI ANANIA, MARY E. BOHMAN, COLIN A. CARTER, ALEX F. McCALLA (editors), **Agricultural Policy Reform and the WTO: Where Are We Heading?**

Cheltenham (UK) and Northampton, Massachusetts (USA), Edward Elgar, 2004, xi + 648 p.

This book is a selection from the many papers presented at the 2003 conference of the same title, held in Capri, Italy (to access the full conference program and papers: [www.ecostat.unicat.it/2003agtradeconf/](http://www.ecostat.unicat.it/2003agtradeconf/), or follow a link at [www.iatrcweb.org](http://www.iatrcweb.org)). The editors, authors, and publisher can only be commended for having been able to produce a complete high-quality volume so quickly that it was published less than one year after the conference itself. The 23 selected papers represent the forefront of the analytical efforts and findings in seeking a path towards agricultural trade liberalization in the context of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Most of the analysis is grounded in agricultural economics. Part One assesses agricultural policy changes since the conclusion of the Uruguay Round, while part Two goes into more depth on each of the three pillars of the Agreement on Agriculture: Market access, export competition, and domestic support. About one third of the book's papers are explicitly devoted to issues concerning developing countries, compiled under a common heading in part Three. This does not preclude that the analysis reported in many of the other papers also addresses explicitly the particular concerns of different kinds of developing countries. For example, Swinnen looks at formerly centrally planned countries, Gifford discusses the role of the Cairns Group, Anderson reports on China and India, and Pingali and Stringer focus on low-income food deficit countries. Part Four delves into particular agricultural trade-related issues arising outside of the Agreement on Agriculture, such as intellectual property rights (Moschini), food safety and quality (Unnevehr and Roberts), and regional trade agreements (Burfisher, Robinson and Thierfelder).

The summarizing chapter authored by the editors is particularly valuable. Most of the individual papers fall short of answering the question "where are we heading?" and focus instead on answering the easier question "where are we?". The summary chapter, however, actually does try to outline a path forward. As do some of the other papers, it incorporates the experience of the 2003 WTO Ministerial meeting, which was held a couple of months after the Capri conference. With the benefit of that hindsight the authors of the summary chapter were able to articulate some of the issues that have since proven to be significant hurdles. With the benefit of the additional hindsight available in writing a review about three years after the Capri conference, a puzzled observation can be made. This is that so much of the analytical effort reported in the book skirts around the real world problem of making the demonstrated benefits of agricultural trade liberalization count for more than it does in the calculus that political advisors and decision makers carry out. The extreme nature of some of the scenarios being examined may explain part of the gap between results and relevance.

This is a big book, extending to almost 650 pages. While the writing is uniformly of good technical quality, the size of the volume seems to indicate more of a desire to produce a reference work than an easily communicated synopsis of the lay of the land and the possible ways forward. The early part of each paper tries with a varying degree of success to summarize the contents but a brief abstract of each paper would in addition have been

useful. Many of the papers are long and some of them seem designed to document modeling results in some detail rather than summarizing and conveying the most important points. Indeed, the primary audience for many of the papers would seem to be other agricultural economists and analysts, not necessarily the same as the audience of policymakers identified on the book's dust jacket. The tables and graphs could have been fewer and more to the point and the text itself could have been significantly shorter, all in the interest of more succinctly conveying a message rather than reporting on nearly all dimensions of a particular analysis. As befits a reference tome, the index is detailed and thorough, with entries such as G20+, Oman, overgrazing, blue box measures, and green box measures. In that context it is strange that there are no entries for, *e.g.*, Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS), or *de minimis*. This absence is even more intriguing given the relative prominence the book accords to domestic support. Minor glitches are apparent: For example, the entry for Cyprus refers to the same five pages to which the entry for the Canadian Wheat Board correctly refers, and the entry for Moldova appears as Moldavia.

Altogether this book is a valuable reference to the analytical underpinnings of the ongoing WTO negotiations on agriculture in the Doha Round. While some of the issues have since been bypassed in the negotiations, most of the analysis has a timeless and enduring quality that makes the book useful for ongoing consultations. As the negotiations proceed, sometimes smoothly and sometimes apparently in distress, it can be rewarding occasionally to review what detached analysis may have to say about the contentious issues.

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