

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the second issue of the new International Journal of Agricultural Management. We are getting well into our stride now, and I am very pleased to be able to bring you a varied and fascinating selection of articles.

Setting the scene for us, Sir John Beddington's essay on the future of food and farming takes a broad sweep, alerting us to developments in the global economy, society and environment which will have a profound impact on the wellbeing of the agricultural industry (as well as raising profound moral issues). Coupled with this, Carl Atkin brings us up to date on the latest proposals for reform of the European Common Agricultural policy and their implications. It is quite sobering to test the likely outcome of this policy development against Sir John's assessment of the actions needed to avert ecological and humanitarian crisis.

Our refereed papers address three key concerns in Western rural enterprise. Brian Jacobsen considers the opportunities and costs arising from slurry separation, particularly important in his native Denmark, but with resonance wherever intensive livestock production is prevalent. Graham Tate and Aurelian Mbzibain take a look at the ways in which bioenergy enterprises could boost the rural economy in the United Kingdom, and Eric Micheels and Hamish Gow take a close look at the relationships between 'value discipline', market orientation and firm performance using a study of the Illinois beef sector in the United States.

We continue our showcasing of papers from the International Farm Management Association's Congress in New Zealand in June 2011. Those with concerns about irrigation and water use (likely to be a rapidly growing band if Sir John is right) will enjoy the paper by Caroline Hedley and colleagues, and will want to follow their research as it unfolds in the future. At the other end of the technological scale, Philip Nyangweso and colleagues give a fascinating insight into farm cost structures and decision-making in a very disadvantage district of Kenya. Whether you are from a rich or poor country, there is much to learn here. The real value of training is always a hot topic, especially in small workforces where the opportunity cost of a day spent in training can be particularly high. Jeremy Neild and Dennis Radford use an approach developed in other industries to assess the benefit/cost ratio of training in various types of agriculture, based on a study in New Zealand. It would be interesting to see a parallel approach being taken in other parts of the world, to generate some comparative data.

As I write, the Eurozone creaks and groans, threatening to bring down the world's financial system in its own collapse. Whereas at one time I might have been looking back over this Editorial and wondering how many of the papers would still be valid in ten years' time, I now find myself wondering whether they will still hold good in ten weeks. A cheery thought – but then adversity breeds opportunity, for journals as well as for farmers...

Martyn Warren