

EDITORIAL

My biggest worry, in setting up this new journal in 2011, was whether we would be able to attract authors in sufficient numbers to be able to provide both volume and quality consistently in each issue. As it has turned out, my main concern now – and it is a good one to have – is how to cope with the quantity of material submitted. Thanks to the efforts of both authors and reviewers, we have been able to make up some time on each issue and to soften the impact of the prolonged set-up time of the Journal's systems last summer and autumn. Keep them coming!

As for the reader, we can't hope to please everyone all the time – but we will keep trying. In this issue we have a rich mixture of articles of different types. Professor Sir John Marsh, in his acceptance speech to the Royal Agricultural Society of England for his National Agricultural Award 2011, examines the issue of maintaining food security in the face of population growth and pressure on natural resources. Always readable, always thought-provoking, Sir John is clear that increasing productivity by application of new technology is critical to the task, requiring greater commitment of governments to funding applied science, and a more relaxed attitude in society to change and its potential consequences.

Four peer-reviewed papers follow. Thia Hennessy, Doris Läßle, Laurence Shalloo and Michael Wallace examine the economic efficiency of the Irish milk quota exchange scheme using an optimisation framework, finding evidence of a 'wedge' between estimated economic value of milk quota and its traded price. While the system under study is specific to Ireland, the authors' method of analysis may well have applications to conditions in other parts of the European Union, or further afield.

Nicola Shadbolt is well-known to readers of IJAM's progenitors, the *Journal of Farm Management* and *The Journal of International Farm Management*. In this article, developed from a paper to the 2011 International Farm Management Congress, she takes a comparative look at five different dairy systems through the medium of the DuPont model. Particularly interesting to me, and I am sure to managers and consultants, is that this approach works in terms of business financial measures rather than using a complex econometric model (the weapon of choice for many academic analysts). While this may appear to have less explanatory power than the latter, it does mean that the results are couched in terms that are immediately and directly applicable to the farm business. As with Hennessy *et al*, it would be good to see this approach being adopted outside the specific contexts of New Zealand and dairy farming.

In a world that is increasingly subject to uncertainty, whether arising from climate change and other natural events or from human activities as reflected in political, social and economic disturbance, all farmers are having to pay more attention to risk. As in rich countries, so in poor, but in the latter the consequences of mismanaging risk are so much greater, leading to hunger, misery and often death for many. Those of us from the Western world have much to learn from reading the article by Maggie Kisaka-Lwayo and Ajuruchukwu Obi, concerning a study of risk management behaviour of smallholders in South Africa: an essential precursor to design and implementation of agricultural and food policy.

The topic that is usually most popular in farmers' online chat rooms and forums is that of machinery, so I hope that the article by Swiss authors Markus Lips and Frank Burose will have a wide readership amongst practitioners. A popular conclusion will be that 'high annual utilisation coupled with a short length of service life is beneficial', which I read as giving licence to farmers to buy new tractors more often. Flippancy aside, this is a thorough and analytical investigation which makes a valuable addition to the literature on machinery costs and their estimation.

One of the highlights of this year's Oxford Farming Conference was a paper by Martin Harper and Ellie Crane of the UK's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, on the hot topic of reconciling the needs of agriculture and conservation. This is a thoughtful and well-balanced analysis, and I am very happy that the Conference has given its permission for us to present it here. In this area of debate, those at the extreme on both 'sides' make the most noise, and are easily taken to be representative, leading to caricatures of the rabidly productivist, nature-hating farmer and the deep-green environmentalist longing for a return to some pre-industrial utopia. In my experience, there is often precious little distinction between one camp and the other, and I hope that this honest and constructive paper will play a role in finding mutually agreeable and beneficial ways of operating.

Finally, Philip Nyangweso reviews a book edited by Herman D. van Schalkwyk, Gavin C.G. Fraser, Ajuruchukwu Obi and Aad van Tilburg, addressing the various constraints on market development for smallholders in South Africa, and ways in which those constraints can be addressed. As the reviewer points out, the theoretical underpinning of this book and the illustrative case studies make it of value throughout Africa and other emerging markets where sectors of the farmer population are excluded from full and free participation in economic activity.

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