

## International Journal of Agricultural Management Articles for final issue

What I didn't expect, when Matt Lobley asked that I select some articles for the final and celebratory issue of 'The Journal', was the strong emotional tug I felt when browsing those early issues. It reminded me of the long struggle to keep the old Journal of Farm Management alive; of the hard graft involved in establishing a model for its replacement; of seeking the collaboration between the UK's Institute of Agricultural Management and the International Farm Management Association (with huge credit to Richard Cooksley and Tony King respectively); of securing publishers and online providers, and so on. But most of all it reminded me of the sheer pleasure of working with a large number of authors and reviewers across the world, most of whom I never met, linked by a common interest in the theory and practice of agricultural management.

I have chosen three authors who represent my ideal of engaged, down-to-earth academics: Thia Musgrave, Nicola Shadbolt and Ivy Drafor. All three are women, reflecting a welcome rise in the influence of female professionals in the industry: there is plenty more to be done in this regard, but a glance at the Journal of Farm Management of twenty years ago will show how far we have come. All are from countries which place a high value on the study of agricultural management, and where there is an expectation that researchers and teachers will work hand in hand with advisers and practitioners. Their writing is readable and relevant – not everyone will want to engage in the details of data analysis, but an intelligent, properly professional reader will have no problem absorbing the message of each article and applying it in context, where appropriate.

The three articles I have selected will not meet everyone's criteria for 'the best' – even the authors may wonder why I have chosen those and not 'better' examples of their own work – but they are significant to me, not least because they were all published in the first volume of IJAM and are still tinged with the excitement of a new venture. The article by Thia Musgrave, an impressive force in agricultural education, is in the best tradition of a team effort, with young talent nurtured by senior principals, and a government agency working closely with a university. Ireland has become a truly

influential player in the world of farm management, contributing more articles to the journal than any other nation.

Another country in the forefront of agricultural management policy and practice is New Zealand:

Nicola Shadbolt (English in origin) has thrived in this environment, and her article reflects her excellence as a senior academic while also being informed by her experience as farmer, consultant, and director of a huge dairy cooperative. Both Thea and Nicola are from two of the richer countries of the world, with similar temperate-climate agriculture: in contrast Ivy Drafor is from Ghana, a nation with very different challenges with regard to climate, culture, incomes, education and policy. Ivy has written other more extensive refereed articles (we published one in Volume 2, for example), but this short conference paper is particularly effective at reminding us that sometimes it is the simplest skills, or their lack, which have the most profound impact on the lives of others, and how, as professionals, we need constantly to be using our imagination, thinking out of the box, and not shying away from approaches that, while apparently unsophisticated, can have enormous power. I have long held that those of us in the richer countries can learn a great deal from extension approaches developed in poorer ones, so for me this paper has symbolic as well as practical value.

Thia Hennessy, Doris Läßle, Laurence Shaloo and Michael Wallace. 2012. *An economic analysis of the Irish Milk quota exchange scheme*. Vol 1, issue 3, pp10-18

Nicola M. Shadbolt. 2012. *Competitive strategy analysis of NZ pastoral dairy farming systems*. Vol 1, issue 3, pp19-27

Ivy Drafor. 2011. *Rural household capacity building: innovative approaches to ensure adoption of record keeping by farm households*. Vol 1, issue 1, pp24-28

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