

In this issue

Richard Strange · Peter Scott

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On behalf of the International Society for Plant Pathology (ISPP), we are delighted to begin the first issue of *Food Security* with a Foreword by the Nobel Peace Laureate, Norman Borlaug. In this, he describes how the idea of a journal devoted to Food Security was born from initiatives taken at the International Congress of Plant Pathology in 1998. Further impetus came from an invitation to us to write a paper for the *Annual Review of Phytopathology* (43:83-116:2005) with the title “Plant disease: a threat to global food security”. In writing this we discovered that papers addressing the issue of food security extended into a multiplicity of disciplines and were widely scattered in the literature. Realising that a journal of Food Security would have to encompass all these disciplines and that its strength would lie in their synthesis we approached, through ISPP, a distinguished group of people concerned with the subject and were fortunate in being able to enlist their support as an Advisory Board (see inside front cover and http://www.ispp.org/about_fs_flyer.asp#7). On behalf of ISPP, armed with the Advisory Board’s input and our literature survey, we approached the publisher, Springer, who were as enthusiastic about the project as we were. Now, a year on from our first meeting with Springer, the result is in your hands or on your screen!

R. Strange (✉)
School of Biological and Chemical Sciences,
Birkbeck College, University of London,
Malet Street,
London WC1E 7HX, UK
e-mail: r.strange@sbcb.bbk.ac.uk

P. Scott
CAB International,
Wallingford,
Oxfordshire OX10 8DE, UK

Definition of food security and the means by which it can be measured are fundamental to the aims of the journal and these are the subjects of the first paper by Per Pinstrup-Andersen. There follows a series of six review papers. The first of these deals with the current food crisis from the perspective of governance, market functioning and investment in public goods. In the next two, the role of politics is developed: they are concerned with the political issues surrounding plants, the primary producers of food, and why famine persists in Africa. Despite the persistence of famine on that continent the next paper presents an optimistic view of agricultural development in Africa. The final two reviews deal with the conservation and provision of soil and water, two essentials for the growth of crop plants. In order to feed the planet’s human population, projected by some to stabilize at the end of this century at around 10 billion, can a sufficiently large area of soil be conserved and nurtured to provide a medium conducive to the growth of appropriate plants and will there be enough water to satisfy their needs as well as ours?

Three original papers follow in which food security issues in the Lower Mekong Basin, Ethiopia and Bangladesh are discussed. The first of these examines the spatial and temporal variability and trends of agricultural productivity in the riparian countries of the Lower Mekong Basin. Based upon data examined for the period 1993 to 2004, during which productivity increased, the authors draw the upbeat conclusion that there is considerable scope for further increases and that these countries will be able to maintain their current level of rice export despite the population growth projected for 2030. The second paper addresses concerns about sustainability and loss of agro-biodiversity in Developing Countries with work in Tigray, Ethiopia providing the data. The final paper describes a “bottom up” approach by which seed of a recently-released and higher

yielding wheat variety, with increased heat and disease-tolerance, was stored, distributed and grown by poor and ultra poor farmers. The result was the dissemination of seed to more than 1,400 farmers and increases in income and food security for those participating in the scheme.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this first issue of *Food Security* and will be keen to delve into the next one which will include papers on the relationship between desertification and food security, assessment of food insecurity in low income food deficit countries and the role of the potato as a food security crop.



Richard Strange, Editor-in-Chief of Food Security

Richard Strange's background is in Plant Pathology, a subject to which he was attracted by its relevance to food security and in which he has published over 90 papers and two books. He currently holds an Honorary Chair at University College London and an Honorary Fellowship at Birkbeck College, University of London. He has been involved with numerous overseas projects, several of which

were located in different African countries, and has supervised Ph.D. students from these and other countries of the Developing World in topics directly concerned with plant disease problems affecting their food security.



Peter Scott, Chairman of the International Society for Plant Pathology's Task Force on Global Food Security

Peter Scott's background is also in Plant Pathology, originally working at the Plant Breeding Institute, Cambridge and at the Crop Research Division, DSIR, New Zealand on facultative fungal parasites of cereals. Subsequently, he became Managing Editor and then Director of Programme Development of CAB International, Wallingford, UK. He is a medallist of the British Crop Protection Council and was Chairman of the 7th International Congress of Plant Pathology, Edinburgh 1998. From 1998 to 2003 he was President of the International Society for Plant Pathology and is currently Chairman of the Society's Task Force on Global Food Security.