
Agroecology deals with the application of ecological principles in agroecosystems, and represents a logical response to shortcomings of conventional agriculture. The book by Clements and Shrestha elaborates on several aspects of this ‘new’ approach, focusing on soil-related issues, pest, disease and weed problems, and their integrated management, the integration of livestock in agriculture, the potential role of transgenic plants in such systems, and future research and teaching challenges. Each chapter is written by different contributors mostly based in the US. The presentation is rather dull, and the reader has to know his/her ropes: a lot of terms are used without introduction or further explanation. This might limit the number of potential readers.

The book hesitates between being a text book that could be used in class (but then it is not complete nor didactic enough), and being a collection of papers dealing with all or most issues that are still pending, and here also I am afraid the book is not complete. The big question of whether and how agroecology will feed the world is not addressed: economic and financial cost/benefit and the economics of agroecology are nowhere discussed. If agroecology has to become the guiding principle of international agriculture for the near future, then it should also be able to address such issues as drought and salinity stress, or depleted soils—these themes, however, are only touched upon very superficially when dealing with other subjects. Moreover, Third World agriculture only receives marginal attention, whereas rice, which is by far the most important (tropical) crop, is only dealt with in relation with soil microbiology, and not as a crop.

The conclusion is that the book is quite incomplete, and sometimes even too superficial to be a good introduction to the theme of agroecology. Some capita selecta are interesting reads, but the overall impression remains that this theme deserved better.

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No aspect of migration and its impact on biological resources is left unexplored in this pithy collection of 31 cutting-edge research reports. Not just plants, but humans, animals, microorganisms, ecosystems, and even knowledge as an entity are considered as critical elements in the continuous, complex, multi-level process that is biological migration. What sets this offering apart is that the migration theme is explored through almost as many lenses as there are papers. Scholars from disciplines as diverse as virology, soil science, geography, agronomy, and economy interface with those traditionally associated with this research area such as ecology, zoology, and botany. Most readers will initially note one or two chapters of particular relevance to their own interests, but to stop there would be to miss the point of this book. It is only by ruminating on ideas outside one’s individual field that one reaps the benefits of this volume. Readers are challenged to think outside of their favorite paradigms to consider the web of relationships and forces, natural and anthropogenic, which impact the nature, distribution, and availability of biological resources. We are cautioned to examine our presumptions concerning migration, to reject simplistic models, and to consider both current and future resource availability on an intercontinental scale.

This compilation proceeds from an international conference and workshop convened by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Minutes from the discussion sessions, including notes and a diagram, provide a starting point for the synthesis of this voluminous body of fact and theory. While the final summarizing chapter raises important questions and issues, it begs for more details. It is only in these final three pages that these wide-ranging perspectives are integrated by the conference’s diverse international researchers. A more complete accounting of the debate among natural scientists and socioeconomists who participated in these discussions would be far superior to the bullet outline that is provided. A directory of contact information for contributors allows readers to initiate their own discussions with the authors.

Unfortunately, at US $279 this volume will find its way only onto the shelves of the most committed and best-endowed individuals and institutions. Like all Springer-Verlag offerings, it is built to last, crafted in Germany. However, those who read it cover-to-cover will be disappointed by imperfect editing. At least fourteen editorial oversights pepper the book, ranging