

DOI: 10.1355/ae24-2k

***China's Domestic Grain and Marketing Reform and Integration.* Edited by Chunlai Chen and Christopher Findlay.** Australia: Asia Pacific Press, 2004. Pp. 279.

This topic is of paramount importance. Food security or grain shortages have been a frequent problem in China over the past five decades. The problem is aggravated by China's huge and growing population and its dependence on ineffective and counterproductive policies such as production subsidies and forced supply quotas. Since the open-door policy, attempts have been made by the central and regional governments to introduce policies that provide production incentives to producers and minimize the barriers to trade.

The book analyses this process of change or reform and identifies policy measures that would liberalize China's grain market. These are important challenges for China given that many characteristics of a centrally planned economy remain and government intervention is still common. Hence, any advance made in the direction of reducing food security problem in China is a critical issue.

Overall, the book has been well written. It presents a balanced view or argument on the topic. First, the book is compiled not just by academics in the field but also government officials in China as well as advisers to the policy-making process in China. It presents the views of different groups in the debate on grain production and marketing policies in China. Second, it covers different areas of investigations, including the review on the development of the domestic grain marketing system, successes and failures of recent experiments, assessments of farmers' responses to the twists and turns in various reform measures, promotion or streamlining of inter-regional trade and regional comparative advantages and the extent and implications of grain market integration in China. Third, several simulations and empirical studies have been presented across provinces and across various grains and agricultural products.

Though the book as a whole is well presented, the overall conclusions appear to be too general. For example, it concludes that China's grain marketing system has undergone significant liberalization and marketization over the last twenty years but fails to elaborate on how the market structure has changed and how private enterprises could play an active role in the grain business which could contribute to increased competition and efficiency in grain production and marketing. The book also falls short on elaborating the pros and cons of the various policy measures and giving specific details on policy recommendations. Future directions in research on this area has also not been suggested. While the econometric methods used are plausible, the data used were obsolete and not updated, and consequently, future forecasts or simulations could not be credibly provided. Despite this shortcoming, the book constitutes an important addition to the literature and provides an important channel for debate on this critical issue.

JAN P. VOON
Lingnan University, Hong Kong

DOI: 10.1355/ae24-2l

***Third ASEAN State of the Environment Report 2006: Towards an Environmentally Sustainable ASEAN Community.* By ASEAN Secretariat.** Indonesia: ASEAN Secretariat, 2006. Pp. 159.

***Asian Aspirations for Climate Regime Beyond 2012: Energy Security and Development Needs, Clean Development Mechanism, Technology Development and Transfer, Adaptation to Climate Change.* Edited by Ancha Srinivisan.** Japan: Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, 2006. Pp. 115.

Both publications echo the necessity of protecting the environment and natural resources for sustaining economic development and long-term economic growth. They also provide interested readers (especially environmental economists,

environmentalists, and policy-makers) with hands-on information on the practical complexities involved in understanding the management of environmental resources. In addition, environmental degradation issues often transcend national barriers and has impacts on the economy within and outside a country. As such, both volumes deal with issues from a local, regional, and global perspective.

The first publication, *Third ASEAN State of the Environment Report 2006: Towards an Environmentally Sustainable ASEAN Community*, by the ASEAN Secretariat, focuses on the ten Southeast Asian countries, and the environmental challenges ahead in setting up an ASEAN Community. The second, *Asian Aspirations for Climate Regime Beyond 2012*, covers a wider region but narrows the focus to just one environmental concern, that of the dynamic processes of climate change, its impact on the Asia-Pacific region, and the effective engagement of Asian countries in shaping the future of the global climate change regime.

Third ASEAN State of the Environment Report 2006: Towards an Environmentally Sustainable ASEAN Community by the ASEAN Secretariat

Preventing the degradation of the environment has been a recurring factor that has not been given a high priority in the development goals of some countries in ASEAN. In recent years, ASEAN leaders have come to an agreement that prosperity in the region can only be fuelled if natural resources are used on a more sustainable basis. ASEAN leaders have also agreed that a balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental integrity shall be the guiding principle in order to establish an ASEAN Community by the year 2020. This is because ASEAN faces enormous challenges towards achieving an environmentally sustainable and economically prosperous community given the socio-economic divide among the more and less developed member countries in ASEAN.

This book is the third in the series where a description of environmental conditions and

analyses of recent economic, social, and environmental data and indicators is provided in sufficient detail for the interested reader. Developments in key emerging environmental issues in the years to come have also been identified. This publication also highlights ASEAN's initiatives in the field of environmental management and sustainable development, providing at times a candid discussion of ASEAN's achievements and the challenges still remaining.

The first four chapters provide background information on the ASEAN region covering its geographical setting, people, demography, social, and economic development. The next six chapters, which form the crux of the book, cover important environmental concerns like freshwater and marine ecosystems (Chapter 5), terrestrial ecosystems (Chapter 6), the atmosphere (Chapter 7), global environmental issues (Chapter 8), the ASEAN Environmental Management Framework (Chapter 9) and the establishment of an environmentally sustainable ASEAN Community (Chapter 10).

Important issues like the ASEAN strategic plan of action on water resources management, the protection of wetland sites in ASEAN (consisting of twenty-six Ramsar Convention-listed wetlands), the management of fishery resources, the issue of deforestation and land degradation, endemic species in ASEAN and the challenges involved in protecting endangered species (tiger and *orang utan*) and preserving biodiversity, waste management, the issue of air pollution and air quality, transboundary haze pollution, ASEAN's participation in multilateral environmental agreements, and climate change are examined in a succinct, interesting (case studies are provided where relevant) and informative manner.

However, more could have been said about the issue of implementing and enforcing environmental regulations or the lack of it in some ASEAN countries. Are the set of property rights comprehensive enough for handling environmental challenges? Are clear and enforceable dispute settlement mechanisms present? Are the concerns of all environmental stakeholders given enough weight in environmental decision-making? Why is environmental

degradation more evident in some resources, not others?

The issue of a lack of property rights implementation and enforcement would be one reason why environmental degradation has been rampant. The transaction costs of monitoring and enforcing regulations effectively could have been barriers, this arising because of the characteristics of these resources. Governance issues should be given a more extensive treatment in order to make an already excellent publication even better. In addition, the construction of dams and its impact on the environment is not accorded any treatment in this publication.

On the whole, the book has highlighted challenges faced by ASEAN countries in terms of the problems encountered in managing environmental resources. Facts have also been presented objectively allowing the reader to make their own evaluation of ASEAN's track record. This represents one of the major strengths of the publication. The book also provides the busy reader with a quick sweep of pertinent information relevant for understanding the processes involved in environmental decision-making, and progress and hindrances faced by ASEAN countries in managing the various environmental resources, and the information sources so necessary before a researcher can embark on a serious study of environmental issues in ASEAN.

Asian Aspirations for Climate Regime Beyond 2012

Why has the issue of climate change gained more prominence in recent years? A lot of the groundwork has already been undertaken by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to point to the gravity of the situation. Before going into a more detailed review of the second book, *Asian Aspirations for Climate Regime Beyond 2012*, some salient facts on climate change should first be highlighted as background on why the issue of climate change has gained so much prominence recently.

In a report published by the IPCC in 2007 (Working Group I Report, Climate Change 2007:

The Physical Science Basis), the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) highlighted that greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide) have increased markedly as a result of human activities since 1750 and they now far exceed pre-industrial values. Also that eleven of the last twelve years (1995–2006) rank among the twelve warmest years in the instrumental record of global surface temperature since 1850.

Observations since 1961 also indicate that average temperatures of the global oceans have increased with the ocean has been absorbing more than 80 per cent of the heat added globally. This has caused seawater to expand contributing to rising sea levels. More intense and longer droughts have been observed over wider areas since the 1970s, particularly in the tropics and sub-tropics. The IPCC has estimated that if atmospheric CO₂ concentrations were to double from pre-industrial levels, developing countries would suffer economic costs of between 5 to 9 per cent decline in their GDP (cited in *East Asia Update, Solid Growth New Challenges*, World Bank: March 2006). If emissions continue at its present rate, it is expected that by 2100, carbon dioxide would have doubled from that of pre-industrial times.

Along this vein that global emissions need to be constrained and effectively controlled, *Asian Aspirations for Climate Regime Beyond 2012*, edited by Ancha Srinivasan of the Institute of Global Environmental Strategies, emphasizes the importance of placing greater consideration and priority on Asian interests on the design of the post-2012 climate regime when the current Kyoto Protocol expires.

Why the focus on the Asia-Pacific region? First, this is in view of the region's growing influence on energy demands and greenhouse gas emissions due to the rapid economic development and population growth in the region. The importance of maintaining the continuity of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) post Kyoto and ensuring the value of Certified Emission Reductions (CERs) after 2012 are vital, because CDM activities had just started gaining momentum in the region with many of these projects requiring a long gestation time and high set-up costs.

The CDM allows developing countries to develop marketable credits by setting up projects within their confines to reduce emissions (for example, local reforestation projects). Such credits are then sold to developed countries which are unable to meet their Kyoto reduction targets. In addition, developed countries are also encouraged to invest in greenhouse reduction projects in developing countries where the developed countries would acquire carbon credits while enabling technology transfer and the promotion of sustainable development in developing countries.

Second, the Asia-Pacific region has a high dependence on climate sensitive sectors such as agriculture and water resources, making it highly vulnerable to climate change. Serious impacts are already evident, a questionnaire submitted by Asia-Pacific respondents indicate that 90 per cent of the participants report that climate change impacts have been serious (37 per cent), very serious (41 per cent), and extremely serious (12 per cent). These impacts were manifested in the form of “increased frequency and intensity of extreme climate events such as floods, droughts, tropical cyclones, tidal surges, and gradual sea level rise leading to salt-water intrusion, salinity and drainage congestion” (p. 5).

The publication highlights many salient facts. Asian countries who have ratified the Kyoto Protocol have been serious in addressing climate change issues “domestically because of the strong negative implications of climate change on sustainable development efforts” (p. 8). On the whole, the Protocol has served as one of the major drivers for policy formulation on climate and energy issues in several countries, especially in the establishment of new regulations and institutions.

National perspectives on climate change is presented in Chapter 2 of the volume. The link between energy security, development needs and climate change is then discussed in Chapter 3. Energy is a major driving force for the economy but it is also the cause of climate change, which has in turn affected the health and livelihood of the poor. Chapter 4 discusses the CDM in detail and summarizes the concerns of Asian

countries concerning its implementation. The various barriers to implementation are identified (institutional, technical, technological, financial and legal). The development of technology, its transfer and deployment to Asian countries is discussed in Chapter 5. The aspirations and concerns of Asian countries over climate change technologies are also discussed in this chapter. Chapter 6 then identifies the various Asian countries’ adaptation measures for the post-2012 climate regime. Notably, the limited experience of some Asian countries pose challenges in implementing adaptation measures.

This is a useful publication for readers wanting to understand climate change issues and the complexities involved in implementing policies from the perspective of selected Asian countries. The need to consider the interests of Asian countries is one important aspect that developed countries would have to take into account to ensure the success of the new climate change treaty post-2102; the effectiveness of the new treaty will be dependent on the co-operation of as many countries, developed and developing, as possible. This has been very well discussed in the volume.

Future projects emanating from this publication should also involve detailed case studies on the successes of and challenges faced by specific countries in the Asia-Pacific in implementing climate change policies within their domains. In addition, the challenges they have faced in implementing CDM activities, formulating a well-rounded energy utilization framework, and overcoming implementation barriers should be some of the research topics that could provide an interesting complement to this dynamic topic of climate change.

What matters most is whether there will be sufficient economic incentives for countries to mitigate the impacts of climate change, and whether governments across countries can work together to marshal the co-operation needed to ensure the success of future treaties and generate the efforts needed to sustain such an endeavour.

LEE POH ONN

Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore