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Review of *Canadian Agricultural Trade-Disputes, Actions and Prospects* by G. Lermer and K. K. Klein

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Canadian Agricultural Trade-Disputes, Actions and Prospects. G. Lerner and K. K. Klein, eds. Calgary, Alberta, Canada: University of Calgary Press, 1990. vii + 250 pp. \$18.95 paper (ISBN 0-918813-90-9).

This book of edited conference papers addresses Canadian agricultural trade in the context of “an era of trade liberalization” which includes the

signing of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the anticipated conclusion of the Uruguay Round of the GATT negotiations, both of which receive considerable attention. The book's 13 chapters are divided into three sections; the first describes the context of agricultural trade dispute, with emphasis on the mechanics of resolution in the FTA and GATT; the second examines some specific trade actions, with the emphasis on disputes over dumping and which resulted in applications of countervailing duties; and the third section takes a more speculative look at the prospects for trade in what the authors hope will be a less distorted trading environment.

The 20 authors are virtually all agricultural economists, the majority of whom share a strong attachment to free market capitalism which gives the book, like its cover picture, a definite slant. Although the text is less technical than many economic treatises, it is, nevertheless, somewhat narrow and specialized in both its subject matter and conclusions. In part one, while there is some generally useful information on the FTA and GATT, attention is focussed on the somewhat arcane dispute mechanisms. The six case studies in part two while they involve several different commodities (hogs, beef, potatoes and corn) and different protagonists (Canada, the U.S. and European Community) they become repetitious for the non-specialist reader. In the third part, while two chapters examine prospects for the major Canadian commodities of grain and red meat under changing trade conditions, two others seem distinctly peripheral, including the final chapter which deals exclusively with the New Zealand experience of relaxation of domestic trade interventions.

Of course the New Zealand example is included to demonstrate what can happen when the switch from "highly distorted" to "liberalized" trade is effected, something that it is suggested is required, but not yet realized in the Canadian context. Indeed, a number of authors, and especially the book's editors, echo this theme and conclude their chapters with "if only" paragraphs. While this viewpoint is surely their prerogative, it serves to continually highlight that this is very much a one-sided view of the Canadian agricultural system, including the conditions of trade. Trade is not, as might be implied from this book, divorced from the rest of the system; it is of concern to individual producers and it may be judged in other than an economic context. The book largely ignores these aspects and yet is very critical of situations, the explanation of which goes beyond the present infatuation with free market economics. Supply management, for example, which is a frequent "whipping boy," emerged as an acceptable solution to a mixture of social and economic structural problems in the domestic supply sectors and can be

justified from a number of standpoints, including efficient supply to domestic processors and consumers and national self-sufficiency and control. It is by no means clear, and the book provides no compelling evidence, that the demise of supply management would be of net benefit to the Canadian agricultural system. Thus, while the majority of the information presented in the individual studies in the book is generally objective, much of the editorial comment and conclusions, and the overall structure contribute to create a rather biased picture of where Canadian agricultural trade should be oriented. **Michael Troughton**, *Department of Geography, University of Western Ontario, Canada.*