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Review of *Policy for American Agriculture: Choices and Consequences* by M. C. Hallberg

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Policy for American Agriculture: Choices and Consequences. M. C. Hallberg. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1992. xii+374 pages. Figures, tables and references. \$36.95 cloth (ISBN 0-8138-1368-9).

M. C. Hallberg is a professor of agricultural economics at Pennsylvania State University and this book treats agricultural policy almost exclusively from that disciplinary perspective. For Hallberg, agricultural policy is largely confined to the various market interventions of national governments, particularly those programs that have been put in place to regulate farm production, prices and incomes. The book is organized into four parts. The first section includes three chapters dealing with the nature of agricultural policy and the legislative and political processes that produce U.S. farm programs. The second section includes two chapters designed to provide an analytical framework for the study of the effects of agricultural policies. This framework amounts to a slightly modified version of the economist's preferred analytical tool of benefit-cost analysis. The third section is the longest, containing six chapters in which the analytical framework is used to discuss various policy mechanisms, international trade, and the environment. The final section consists of one chapter setting out Hallberg's thoughts on the future of agricultural policy in the United States. The book also includes a useful appendix chronicling the history of U.S. farm policy and a glossary of the technical terms used in policy discussions.

In the preface to the book, Hallberg suggests that it is intended for a wide audience including farm leaders, urban residents, students, government officials and so on. In fact, the book is likely to miss most of these audiences because of the way it is written. For those without specialized training in agricultural economics, the discussions contain too much unexplained economic jargon to be followed easily. For policymakers and academic agricultural economists (including graduate students), there is little new in the book and there are better analytical treatments of the topic available. The most appropriate use of this book would be as a text in undergraduate courses on the economics of agricultural policy. In general, the book is not very well written, contains some mild plagiarism in chapter nine as well as inaccuracies and grammatical errors throughout, treats several topics (e.g., international trade and environmental protection) in a superficial manner, and focuses much too exclusively on the United States to provide a satisfactory account of the global policy issues that are of such importance today. In addition, the focus on national policies means that those interested in policy issues at the state or local level (e.g., solid waste disposal) will find little of interest in this book.

Despite the overall failure of the book, there are some parts that should prove useful to specialists in agricultural policy. In particular, the appendix outlining the legislative history of farm programs in the United States is useful as a reference. In addition, Hallberg offers a great many tables that contain extensive statistical data on economic variables related to agriculture and agricultural policies. Finally, some of the chapters and chapter summaries are well done although they will be of greatest interest to those with some training in agricultural economics. For example, the chapter on the costs of government policy includes some interesting observations as well as a lot of statistical information. In general, however, I did not find this book to be particularly innovative in its treatment of agricultural policy and doubt that it will be of much interest to the broad audience targeted by Hallberg in his preface. **E. Wesley F. Peterson**, *Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.