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Fall 1999

Review of *Encyclopedia of Rural America: The Land and People*

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Baker, Maurice, "Review of *Encyclopedia of Rural America: The Land and People*" (1999). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 481.
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Encyclopedia of Rural America: The Land and People. 2 volumes. Edited by Gary A. Goreham. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1997. xv+861 pp. Illustrations, references, bibliography, index. \$175.00 cloth (ISBN 0-87436-842-1).

A two-volume encyclopedia obviously cannot cover either the breadth or depth of topics available in much larger works. The more than 250 entries here range from "addiction" to "workers' compensation." All relate to rural America, though some fail to provide distinctly rural views because of the narrowing of the nation's rural and urban cultures.

The entries can be categorized as agricultural, human, socioeconomic, resource, technological, and institutional. Some fit more than one category. Examples of agricultural entries include "hydroponics," "apiculture," "dairy farming," "dryland farming," and "livestock production." "Ethnicity," "African Americans," "health care," "literacy," and "values of residents" represent human entries. Socioeconomic topics include "culture," "entrepreneurship," "family," "inequality," and "religion." The many resource entries cover such areas as "conservation, soil"; "conservation, water"; "drought"; "labor force"; "parks"; "trees"; and "wildlife." "Computers," "agrochemical use," "irrigation," and "mechanization" represent technological entries. And among the institutional topics are "churches," "community," "cooperatives," "educational curriculum," "homelessness," "labor unions," "markets," and "organic farming."

The quality of the entries varies widely. Some draw heavily on relevant research, clearly cited. Others appear to be based heavily on their authors' opinions or undocumented research. Some are rather extensive in coverage,

including historical setting along with current views. Others are very limited.

Some entries seem more grounded on stereotypes of rural America than on late twentieth-century reality. This may reflect how different disciplines view the same situation, however. The "consumerism" entry, for instance, contains an anthropological view of the topic quite different from that of an economist or marketing professional.

Detail and balance of view also vary widely. "Community" is discussed from several viewpoints; "inequality" is not. "Agrochemical use," clearly a controversial topic, lacks the balanced consideration it deserves. Lack of current information on several topics makes one question the validity of the information that *is* provided. Likewise, shortage of data specific to rural settings leads to generalized statements based largely on urban research. Much of the "Asian Pacific Americans" entry, for example, deals with data on ethnic groups as a whole and not specifically on rural areas.

The editor identifies a broad list of intended audiences, and the entries reflect authors' attempts to relate to these various groups which range, presumably, from university and college faculty to unspecified government officials and others working with rural people or in rural areas. The "agricultural and resource economics" entry addresses the school counselor as well as the Professor of Agricultural Economics.

References at the conclusions of entries as well as an eighteen-page bibliography offer readers ways of pursuing their individual interests. The *Encyclopedia's* level of writing and its content make it appropriate for secondary school and public libraries. The contents would be of limited value, however, to most undergraduate and graduate students engaged in serious specialized research. **Maurice Baker**, *Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.