

## So They Say

*What agricultural and resource economists are finding about food, farm, and resource issues*

■ **GLOBALIZATION IS GOOD:** Amartya Sen talks about a popular theme by saying, “[Globalization] is, in fact, neither new nor necessarily Western; and it is not a curse. Over thousands of years, globalization has contributed to the progress of the world through travel, trade, migration, spread of cultural influences, and dissemination of knowledge and understanding (including that of science and technology). These global interrelations have often been very productive in the advancement of different countries. They have not necessarily taken the form of increased Western influence. Indeed, the active agents of globalization have often been located far from the West.” Sen, A. “Global interchange is good; but the present set of global rules needlessly hurts the poor.” *The American Prospect*, Special Supplement, Winter 2002, pp. 2-6.

■ **WHOSE PROPERTY RIGHTS?** Cole and Grossman get right to the point by saying, “Law & Economics has become a highly successful interdisciplinary field for several reasons, including the fact that public policy issues invariably arise at the intersection of law and economics. Those issues can only be fully understood by scholars willing to cross disciplinary boundaries. To facilitate interdisciplinary contact, the economists and legal scholars who comprise Law & Economics have endeavored to construct a common conceptual apparatus and vocabulary. The endeavor has not been completely successful, however. Economists have not been able to agree among themselves, let alone with legal scholars, on a common, consistent definition of property rights.” Cole, Daniel H., and Peter Z. Grossman. “The Meaning of Property Rights: Law vs. Economics.” *Land Economics*, in press.

■ **DISTANCE STUDENTS ONLINE:** Kazmer and Haythornwaite say, “Increasing involvement in an online environment is more complicated than a simple, unconscious transfer of attention from offline time. Students actively prioritiz[e] what and who needs to be dealt with first.... Children get high priority, but spouses, parents and friends have to wait. Personal entertainment [is] dropped and household chores are left until later. ... Work — paid work — fades to the background....” Kazmer, M.M. and C. Haythornwaite. “Judging Multiple Social Worlds: Distance Students Online and Offline.” *American Behavioral Scientist*. 45(November, 2001):510-530.

■ **IMMIGRANTS VOTE WITH THEIR FEET:** Borjas says, “Migration costs prevent many native-born workers from moving

to those states that offer the best economic opportunities. Immigrant workers, in contrast, form a self-selected sample of persons who have chosen to incur those migration costs. As long as migration costs are mainly fixed costs, newly arrived immigrants in the United States will choose to live in those states that offer them the best economic opportunities. As a result, new immigrants should be clustered in those states that offer them the highest wages, and the location decisions of immigrant workers should be much more responsive to interstate wage differentials than those of natives.” Borjas, G.J. “Does Immigration Grease the Wheels of the Labor Market?” *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, William C. Brainard and George L. Perry, ed., 1(2001), p. 69.

■ **AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS IN AUSTRALIA:** After 35 pages of narrative on the recent history of Agricultural Economics in Australia, Godden closes by saying, “Writing history (like doing economics) reveals as much about the writer as it does about the subject. While some of the limitations of the preceding story stem from the lack of readily available information, others stem from the limitations, perspectives and prejudices of the writer. Some, perhaps many, readers will disagree with part — or perhaps much — of the account. Unlike neoclassical economics, where the conclusions are mere logical consequences of the assumptions chosen, there is no unique historical narrative or analysis, especially within the confines of a single journal article.” Godden, D. “Elegy, ode or panegyric? Practicing agricultural economics in Australia.” *The Australian J. of Agricultural and Resource Economics* 45(March 2001):5-38.

■ **TAXING THE LAND:** Netzer revives an old theme by saying, “[Henry] George attracted many followers with the proposition that land value taxation would alleviate poverty and the unequal access to economic resources. Economic theory and even superficial observation suggest that this must be so.... But how much is this so, in our world, where two-thirds of households are owners of the urban land under their houses and people of moderate means have substantial ownership ... of corporate assets, including land and other natural opportunities? To the extent that the proposition is true (that the poor own few assets), a shift from a relatively proportional national tax system to land value taxation ... would make the distribution of tax burdens by income class more progressive.” Netzer, D. “What Do We Need to Know about Land Value Taxation?” *The American J. of Economics and Sociology*. 60(Supplement 2001):97-120.