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## Review of Developing and Extending Sustainable Agriculture: A New Social Contract.

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**Developing and Extending Sustainable Agriculture: A New Social Contract.** Edited by Charles A. Francis, Raymond P. Poincelot, and George W. Bird. New York: Haworth Food & Agricultural Product Press, 2006. xxii + 367 pp. Tables, figures, references, index. \$69.95 cloth, \$49.95 paper.

In the last two decades, sustainable agriculture has grown from a purely academic curiosity into a widely accepted approach to producing food, fiber, and energy. Since its creation in 1988, the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE) has been instrumental in the process of bringing sustainable agriculture forward by helping professional agriculturists across the United States advance farming systems that are profitable, environmentally sound, and good to communities. Almost 20 years later, *Developing and Extending Sustainable Agriculture: A New Social Contract* provides a timely review of the many contributions of the SARE program, land grant universities, and the nonprofit sector to research, education, and outreach programs.

Organized into 16 chapters, the volume is a timely review of the many biological, environmental, social, and economic challenges facing sustainable farm systems. Unfortunately, despite the wide array of topics covered, chapters are not clearly organized in sections, and the flow of ideas and concepts across the book is not always clear. The first chapter reviews the history of industrialized and alternative farming practices. Chapters 2 through 5 discuss strategies to enhance the ecological base of sustainable farms by assessing pest, pasture, and soils management issues. Although entomological concepts are provided, these chapters do not include enough information on sustainable approaches for weed and disease management. Chapter 6, in my opinion the book's most comprehensive component, assesses how a sustainable farming enterprise could be economically viable, socially responsive, and environmentally sound.

Chapters 7 and 12 describe the sustainable agriculture movement currently occurring in Iowa and its relationship with the SARE program. Approaches to the development of outreach and education programs that enhance the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices are the focus of chapters 8 and 9. The multifunctional reality of agriculture, the importance of healthy rural communities, and the necessary motivations to foster sustainable practices are discussed in chapters 10 and 14. In Chapter 11 the book moves back into the biological and environmental realms by analyzing the use of “eco-belts” as tools to solve the conflicts that could arise in the rural-urban interface. Unconnected with previous or subsequent chapters, chapter 13 evaluates the role that private foundations have played in the development and adoption of sustainable farming practices. Chapter 15 provides a provocative evaluation of the many challenges that organic agriculture faces in the process of becoming a component of the mainstream agricultural production system. Finally, chapter 16 explores future challenges facing the sustainable agriculture movement.

The book’s exhaustive literature review could be helpful to farmers, ranchers, extension specialists, graduate students, and researchers interested in sustainable farming systems. With its heavy emphasis on the north central U.S., the volume provides insufficient examples of sustainable farming systems developed in other regions. It is often left up to the reader, therefore, to figure out how the principles and concepts developed in the book relate to the reality encountered in the northern Great Plains. **Fabian D. Menalled**, *Department of Land Resources and Environmental Sciences, Montana State University.*