

# Reviews

*Food and Development* by E.M. Young  
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*Measuring and Improving Social, Environmental and Economic Productivity: Getting it Done*  
by Mike Dillon and John Heap  
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## Food and Development

E.M. Young

2012, Routledge, 412 pages, ISBN 978-0-415-49800-5, £27 paperback

This book is the latest title in the Routledge 'Perspectives on Development' series. Aimed at undergraduates in human geography and development, it provides a thought-provoking introduction to the global problems of under- and over-nutrition, principally through a critique of the current global food system.

The introductory chapter outlines the 'global food crisis' and introduces key concepts such as 'entitlements', 'food security', and 'food sovereignty'. This chapter offers a broad overview of the current global food system and lays the blame for current inequity in nutrition and access to food largely at the door of global corporate agriculture. The role of the corporate food system in these negative nutritional outcomes is examined, first by considering how large agri-businesses grew to their current size and dominance, and subsequently examining their influence on national and international policy. These themes are explored further in Chapter 4 on Globalization.

Chapter 2 looks more closely at the problems of under- and over-nutrition. These symptoms of the poor functioning of the current system are subsequently examined in Chapter 3 by considering first the proximate and then the structural factors underlying current patterns of malnutrition – encouraging readers to consider that 'the hungry are not hungry simply because there is not enough food, and neither are the obese simply victims of their own greed' (p. 71).

The second half of the book then uses these tools to explore the structural factors leading to hunger and obesity at global, national, and sub-national scales, as well as considering the case of women and the role of conflict.

The chapters are very helpfully organized with learning outcomes and a summary, plus discussion questions, further reading, useful websites, and 'follow up' suggestions, which makes this book a very useful teaching resource.

A primary target of the book is the notion that under-nutrition is a consequence of lack of food and therefore what is needed to tackle malnutrition is more food. The book argues that this Malthusian narrative perpetuates an industrial agriculture model (the root of our current problems). It is argued that multinationals point to current food security problems in support of a 'productionist' approach to agricultural policy, including the need for biotech solutions. However, I would argue that most commentators are aware that current food production per capita has kept up with growing populations and the persistence of hunger is not related to an absolute deficiency of calories. Rather, the argument put forward usually states that if agricultural output is going to continue to match growing populations then more production is required. Hence, the argument for increased production and intensive agriculture is not one of meeting existing need – but of anticipating future need in a world of increasing demand and reduced resource (land and water) availability. I feel this question – the capacity of food systems to meet future needs is underemphasized in this text. Perhaps a consequence of the focus on the concept of 'entitlements' to explain hunger is that, having rejected a productionist discourse, the discussion of agriculture is quite limited, which is a surprise given that the book takes as its starting point the global food system as the cause of nutrition problems. This analysis works well in the case of obesity, yet the links between the rise of global agribusiness and hunger is a partial explanation of hunger. The globalized corporate food system may contribute to problems of rural poverty and hunger through processes of dispossession, dumping, and volatility in food prices. However, there is little analysis of how alternative food systems would impact on under-nutrition and how wide this impact would be.

The case for a sustainable agriculture that meets social and environmental needs does not receive as much space here as I might have expected, apart from a discussion of urban agriculture (which perhaps is over-emphasized, and claims to its role in environmental protection, e.g. stabilizing hill slopes and river banks (p. 260), go unsupported).

Also missing is the UNICEF framework in the discussion of malnutrition. This has been instrumental in developing an understanding of malnutrition as more than lack of access to food.

Some of the commentary is unclear, and recourse to quotes from international agencies and advocacy organizations rather than evidence to support points is sometimes frustrating. There are numerous references in the text to websites that could be referred to for further information; I think this would be better located at the end of the chapters. Although recent events make this book very current, the reliance on websites plus frequent references to recent events, for example 'Until this week, the crisis in the Horn of Africa was in the headlines' (p. 365), risk making

the text feel dated in the short term. However, the issues dealt with are of enormous ongoing relevance and will have a place on degree syllabi for a long time to come. Hopefully a second edition will pick up some of these issues and other minor errors in referencing and labelling.

That said, one book can't cover everything and I think this book represents an excellent resource for teaching (I have already used it!), asking students to consider the structural problems underlying our current food system and examining the role of policy in its creation. An emphasis on theoretical perspectives and the prominent discussion of historical factors in explaining current distributions of power and deprivation make this a valuable resource for students of development and geography. Nevertheless its accessible and engaging style and use of numerous examples and case studies make it a good read for anyone interested in the future of food.

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### **Measuring and Improving Social, Environmental and Economic Productivity: Getting it Done**

Mike Dillon and John Heap

2012, Institute of Productivity, 168 pages, ISBN 978-0-9572726-0-6, US\$25

This is one of a series of three publications from the Institute of Productivity, which describes the concept of 'social, environmental and economic productivity' (SEE-Productivity). The three books are aimed at policymakers, facilitators, project officers, and especially practitioners (those responsible for 'getting it done' in the title) and can be read as stand-alone books or preferably together to apply the concepts across the series. They are all written by the same authors, who among many other positions are, respectively, Vice-President of the World Network of Productivity Organisations, and Managing Director of the Institute of Productivity and President of the World Confederation of Productivity Science.

The first section of this book consists of six chapters that describe and explain the different concepts involved in SEE-Productivity. The second section, chapters 7–9, is 'Getting it Done', a template and checklist of how to implement a SEE-Productivity programme. The book starts by explaining the difference between 'productivity' and 'production': production is the output from a process or a country, whereas productivity is the ratio of the output to the inputs that are needed to make the output. This is important because increasing productivity is the only way to increase the long-term profitability of a company or make a country more competitive in world markets. The productivity concept is illustrated well using an example of a small business, which shows how changes to the business can complicate an initially simple definition of economic productivity.

The authors then introduce the concepts of environmental and social productivity: environmental productivity is not simply about reducing energy consumption or waste, but involves evaluation of the design of a product or service and a reduction in the amounts of natural resources that are used, and hence the environmental costs incurred over its lifetime. Social productivity is a concept that applies at a

number of levels, from improving conditions in the workplace to reducing societal gaps in wealth and well-being. This is the subject of the second book in the series: *Measuring Social Impact for Policies, Programmes and Projects*. A central theme of this book is that companies, organizations, and countries should not just take economic productivity into account, but consider equally all three types: economic, environmental, and social productivity. The authors emphasize that a SEE-Productivity programme should not be done for PR purposes or as a nod to green activists, but as a beneficial business strategy that will increase long-term profitability and a strategy for service providers to make the most from their budgets.

Chapter 2 focuses on social productivity, noting that this is a relatively new concept that does not yet have a general consensus on what it actually means. All stakeholders involved in the production of a product or delivery of a service are included in a social productivity assessment, including business owners, managers of organizations, employees, suppliers, and customers. The authors cite a number of examples, including: the Jordanian Social Productivity Program to address poverty and unemployment; social enterprises that have an explicit social mission and trade solely to fulfil that mission; a Canadian bank that in 2012 announced a \$20 m commitment to facilitate solutions to social and environmental problems; and the drug company Novartis, which changed its business model to make expensive drug treatments more readily available to relatively poor communities. Further examples are given in the preface, where Dr M. Prakash, Principle of Seshadripuram First Grade College in Bangalore, India, describes the increasing importance of social productivity in India, with examples of the Tata Swach water purifier that provides affordable clean water to households and funding for farmers by Jain irrigation. All of the examples emphasize that addressing social productivity as part of long-term business opportunities is a route to business success. The benefits of ethical practices that lead to improved business performance are demonstrated by information from the Supplier Ethical Data Exchange and by businesses interacting with local communities. The authors describe the minimum requirements of the Ethical Trading Initiative and social standards developed by Social Accountability International that can be used as a basis for improving social productivity.

Chapters 3–5 are concerned with the principles of measuring progress and performance towards improved SEE-Productivity. The importance of critical success factors (what the organization must do to achieve productivity improvements) is explained, together with the use of key performance indicators and critical performance indicators to assess whether progress on critical success factors is being made. This is the subject of the third book in the series: *Measuring Using Key and Critical Performance Indicators and Associated Benchmarking*. Chapter 4 describes the development of an overall SEE Index to assess the performance of individual countries in achieving improvements to SEE-Productivity. Chapter 5 describes measurement of performance on SEE factors for businesses and organizations. It uses case study information from Puma sports footwear, Toshiba, and Del Monte Foods, each of which has developed different methods to address environmental impacts of their businesses. Chapter 6 is devoted to benchmarking – either internal benchmarking

within a business or organization, or external benchmarking with other similar organizations – to compare progress towards productivity improvements.

Section 2, 'Getting it done', is concerned with how to establish an SEE-Productivity programme. It starts with a chapter on how to identify which critical success factors are relevant or important for a particular organization. This is followed by a description of how to select and prioritize the performance indicators that can be used to measure changes in these factors. There is a description of methods to establish data collection processes, set benchmarks and targets, and establish effective reporting and presentation of results. Once the systems have been put in place, the authors suggest doing a 'reality check': has anything been omitted; are the tools and training in place to achieve accurate measurements; do the measures improve customer and supplier relationships? Finally, the authors conclude with a short section looking forward to possible implementation of SEE-Productivity in the wake of the current economic crisis.

Overall, the book is a good introduction to SEE-Productivity for the stated target readership of policymakers, facilitators, and practitioners. In food processing, it is more relevant to larger-scale processors, but SMEs that are involved in value chains to supply larger retailers or processors would also benefit from reading the book. Given the wide target readership, with the inherent variability of different industries, organizations, and countries, the authors have of necessity created a template for implementation, rather than a step-by-step guide. It is likely that some practitioners who wish to implement a SEE-Productivity programme in a food business would need further assistance and guidance. However, the book is clearly written in a conversational style using simple language that is accessible by people who have English as a second language. There are plenty of relevant case study examples to illustrate the concepts under discussion and the lack of jargon makes even the more complex parts readily understood. Additional case studies to illustrate the differences between key and critical performance indicators would have been useful. The book's accessibility is enhanced by the design and layout, using short paragraphs, wider line spacing, and simple 'clip-art' style images to reinforce or break up the text. The main topics are covered in a short index. My only criticisms concern the almost random use of parentheses and quotation marks, which became irritating, and some inconsistencies in layout style. But neither of these detracted from the book's ability to deliver its message and the information needed for SEE-Productivity implementation in an interesting and thoroughly readable way.

Further information can be obtained from the Institute of Productivity at <[www.instituteofproductivity.com](http://www.instituteofproductivity.com)>.

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