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Review of Food's Frontier: The Next Green Revolution

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Agriculture


**Subjects:** Agricultural Innovations; Green Revolution; Food Supply.

**Reviewer:** Steve Brantley, Resident Librarian, University of Illinois at Chicago Library, jbrant1@uic.edu

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Richard Manning has written an enlightening work on the worldwide agriculture industry from a perspective that emphasizes the importance of the small farmer in the third world. The Green Revolution, a generation ago, averted massive malnutrition and starvation on the planet. It has come full
circle in that the planting methods and use of fertilizer, pesticides and chemicals of this first Green Revolution now threaten the yields of farmers the world over. Manning examines the indigenous techniques and philosophies of scientists and farmers in Africa, India, China, Mexico and South America who endlessly negotiate between scientific advancement, natural selection and cultural tradition to provide the greatest yields and economic stability for multitudes of people living at a subsistence level. **Food's Frontier** brings personal anecdote and a keen eye for social relationships to reporting on agricultural methods, allowing the reader to understand the complexity of social issues and pressures that affect whether or not new methods of planting or hybrid strains of grain will be successful. Throughout the book Manning stresses the importance of drawing on the local knowledge and age old practices for their level of comfort to the farmers, but also for their inherent and successful strategies for dealing with highly specific conditions in any given ecosystem. The book provides a high level of scientific detail for the layperson, though it is not overwhelming. The detail provides welcome documentation to the scientist and a better understanding to the casual reader. Manning, an Environmentalist and Ecology writer from Montana, presents a fair and challenging portrait of bioengineered foods to an audience who is more often than not likely to reject the issue out of hand. He sheds light on a very complicated and controversial issue placing it in a social and political context that does not allow a conscientious person to simply denounce.

**Food's Frontier** would be helpful in undergraduate courses in globalization, social policy, political science, underdeveloped nations, agricultural science, and environmentalism. Public libraries with strong collections in environmentalism or significant populations interested in agriculture will also find **Food's Frontier** useful. The selected bibliography serves as an excellent study guide to both bioengineering and the social development of agriculture from a cultural standpoint.

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