

Sustainable agriculture and the social sciences: Getting beyond best management practices and into food systems

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Sustainable Agriculture and the Social Sciences: Getting Beyond Best Management Practices and into Food Systems

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Abstract

This paper introduces the special issue of Southern Rural Sociology and lays the groundwork for the rest of the papers. The genesis of this special issue flows from the efforts of the Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (S-SARE) program to bring more social science research into its portfolio of projects. Our concern is that by providing best management practices (Band-Aids) to a fundamentally unsustainable agricultural system, the sustainable agriculture movement (and SARE's granting program) favors the environmental component at the expense of economic and social "legs" of the sustainable stool. While focusing on the history and work of the SARE program, we provided a social science perspective on sustainable agriculture.

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WRI report on Creating a Sustainable Food Future estimates that we need about 70% more food in 2050 than we have today in order to provide every one of the 9.6 billion world population with a daily intake of 3,000 calories. It's a huge challenge, but unlike other sustainability challenges, everyone can play a part in the solution.