

BOOK REVIEW**BENCHMARKING IN FOOD AND FARMING: CREATING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE**

Edited by Lisa Jack

This is a useful and topical book edited, and partly written, by Lisa Jack, with contributed chapters by five other benchmarking specialists. After an introduction which discusses the concept of benchmarking, the book has four main sections focussing on: Comparing Farm Performance; Improving Farming Practice; Environmental Benchmarking; and Innovative Practice and Future Developments.

Much of the early part of the Farm Performance section is concerned with historical development of the concept which, unfortunately, is partly repeated in later contributed chapters. However, there are good guidelines for the establishment of benchmarking activities, well underpinned by evidence from case studies of systems established in other countries – particularly New Zealand, Australia and the United States. The New Zealand example is the most detailed, providing actual examples of data analysis sheets. The various vehicles for benchmarking activities – Business Clubs and Groups – are well reviewed, and much useful anecdotal evidence provided. The treatment of environmental benchmarking techniques and structures is less specific.

While this book certainly sets the scene and provides a wealth of examples, there is still a gap in the sense that it is not possible to ‘lift’ sections of this book and apply them to specific food or farming situations. However, each chapter is very well referenced with sources of this more detailed information, making it a useful starting point.

Philip Cain, Senior Lecturer and Farms Director, Newcastle University.

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