

Preface

The Book Series Cooperative Management provides an invaluable forum for creative and scholarly work on cooperative management, policy, economics, organizational, financial and marketing aspects of cooperative communities throughout the Mediterranean region and worldwide. The main objectives of this series are to advance knowledge related to collective management processes and cooperative entrepreneurship as well as to generate theoretical knowledge with the aim of promoting research within various sectors wherein market communities operate (agriculture, banking, real estate, insurance and other forms). Scholarly papers appearing in this series should relate to one of these areas, should have a theoretical and/or empirical problem orientation and should demonstrate innovation in theoretical and empirical analyses, methodologies and applications. Analyses of market communities' problems and phenomena pertinent to managerial research, extension and teaching (e.g., case studies) regarding cooperative entrepreneurship are equally encouraged. Further, this series encourages interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research from a broad spectrum of business economics disciplines.

With the increasing globalization and liberalization of commodity markets, it becomes more and more important to account for various factors that influence and shape the economic, market, institutional and thus policy conditions. A crucial issue is to develop robust methods, analytical methodologies, techniques and methods for analysing the information regarding the behaviour of various stakeholders (e.g. consumers, producers, managers, policy-makers) that operate in cooperative management networks and market communities engaged in the primary sector. Therefore, this very first issue of the book in the series of cooperative management focuses exclusively on the utilization of micro- and macro-level agricultural data to the development of new coherent, reliable and comprehensive modelling tools for conducting policy analysis of the rapidly changing agricultural and environmental conditions and complex decision problems of various stakeholders.

Among these changing conditions, one can mention the drastically increased price volatility of farm outputs, macroeconomic instability, climate change and the new post-2013 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the European Union (EU). Throughout this unstable period, the impact of these changes on various stakeholders' income, profitability, efficient (sustainable) management of resources and

operations and safety are key issues to be addressed by policy-makers in the EU. Moreover, these new agricultural market and policy conditions certainly have an effect on the use of natural resources and hence on the environmental concerns of farming activities. That is, the establishment of ‘greening’ processes and criteria utilized in many agricultural and environmental operational systems is another practical research direction in policy studies that has been rapidly emerging.

The material presented in this book describes models, methodologies and techniques in diverse areas of agricultural and environmental management and policy, including risk management and pricing approaches, economic efficiency analysis, classification techniques and behavioural aspects of various stakeholders’ decisions, among others. We believe that this book will be of interest to both scholars and practitioners working in the fields of business economics, cooperative management, risk management and agricultural policy. EU policy-makers may gain useful insights on how to effectively monitor the changing environment and account for the rapidly changing patterns and their effects on farmers’ behaviour and performance, so as to fittingly adopt the policy measures.

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