

## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **Sahelian Droughts: A Partial Agronomic Solution**

**Author:** Anthony E. Hall (Department of Botany and Plant Sciences, University of California, Riverside, CA, USA)

Eminent University of California crop scientist Professor Anthony Hall's *'Sahelian Droughts, a Partial Agronomic Solution'* takes the reader on an enjoyable, decades-long personal journey to improve food security and rural livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa. Along the way, he faces diverse challenges and strives to apply scientific principles and practical approaches to develop workable solutions to declining productivity in the region. He provides vivid descriptions of the people populating the Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa, where most of the story unfolds, and describes the soil and water limitations that frame their lives and livelihood opportunities in a rich but non-technical manner suitable for generalists.

This book details the evolution of Professor Hall's thinking as he encounters new experiences. Unfortunately, there has been little progress in implementing the solutions proposed to date, even though as the book points out, these issues were recognized more than 30 years ago, including an unsustainable population growth rate. We can hope that policy makers will take the evidence and advice presented in this book under consideration.

One of the brilliant aspects of the book are the way the author relates key insights to specific personal experiences from the field, lending unique power to them. I am, and I believe many readers will be, thankful to the author for taking the time to share, in an engaging style, these powerful experiences and learnings.

Other great things about the book are its conversational style that is crisp and clear such that principles of biology and physics, plant breeding and agronomy, are conveyed through clear English, allowing non-experts in these fields to grasp its logic and content. Interwoven are the social and political aspects that affect the research and technology adoption agenda, and thus food security in this part of the world.

Beyond the specific solutions it presents to help boost livelihoods in the Sahel, its uplifting personal accounts of scientific discovery, by the author himself and his colleagues, offer a window into the crop scientists world that will hopefully stimulate young scientists to take up 'old' as well as emerging challenges such as climate change, with the foresight, logic and rigor of the author. Many of the experiences illustrate how 'development aid' works (or does not work well) in Africa. Thus, this volume is an important and engaging book that I would also recommend for development practitioners and policy makers, as well as researchers who care about the fate of this fragile region and its people.

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