

Craswell, E.T. 2007. *Book Review – Water: Global Common and Global Problems*. Ed. Velma I. Grover. Enfield, New Hampshire, USA: Science Publishers (2006), pp. 533. ISBN 1-578-409-1. *Experimental Agriculture* (2007) 43: 134.

*Water: Global Common and Global Problems* Edited by Velma I. Grover. Enfield, New Hampshire, USA: Science Publishers (2006), pp. 533, £47.60. ISBN 1-57808-409-1. doi:10.1017/S0014479706444537

Finding a focus within the vast literature on various aspects of water presents a major challenge to authors. Despite its all-encompassing title, a major clue to the focus of this volume lies in the first line of the Preface – ‘Water is the life-blood of the environment’. This book deals largely with the problems of urban water and its quality, and with related important issues including climate change, governance, best practices and human rights.

The 25 chapters cover a lot of territory in terms of topics and geography; a helpful introductory chapter by the editor summarizes the main thrusts of each chapter. However, considering the serious water problems facing China, a chapter specifically on this important country is a major omission. Individual chapters vary in quality, but they generally cover the key concepts and cite up-to-date references. The nine chapters on Governance, Institutions, Laws, and Policies are most instructive, particularly the comparative analysis of the Great Lakes and Murray-Darling Basins. Relatively neglected but important issues include: water allocation between agricultural and urban/industrial sectors; the concept of ‘virtual water’ in agricultural commodity trade; and the impact of water flows and quality on freshwater biodiversity and coastal zone ecology.

I found the titles of some chapters confusing and inconsistent between the Table of Contents and the introductory summary chapter. Considering its focus on urban water and related quality and governance issues, the book itself could have been given a better title. Nevertheless, it will be a useful conceptual source book for many workers in this field.

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