

*Buenos Aires, Iowa, y el Desarrollo Agropecuario en Las Pampas y Las Praderas* (Buenos Aires, Iowa, and agricultural development in the Pampas and the Prairies), by Eduardo Azcuy Ameghino. Cuadernos del Programa Interdisciplinario de Estudios Agrarios (PIEA). Buenos Aires, Argentina: University of Buenos Aires, 1997. 97 pp. Maps, notes, tables.

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This study describes the very different agricultural structures that have emerged in two regions with similar agricultural potential: Iowa and Pergamino, a county in the northern part of a Buenos Aires province in Argentina. To be able to compare similarly sized areas, the author created two Iowa samples composed of noncontiguous counties whose land values mirrored the state average and another based on general productivity, with an emphasis on permanent agriculture, specializing in corn and soybeans. Each area comprised approximately two million hectares (about five million acres).

Agricultural census data from Argentina in 1988 and from Iowa in 1987 revealed major differences in land ownership and land distribution. Buenos Aires has more small farms, but at the same time more than half of its land is in large farms. In Iowa, there are many more middle-sized farms, covering more than half of the land area. Difference in land distribution is related to the historic circumstances of the two areas: large land grants in Argentina compared to homesteading in Iowa.

Productivity in Iowa exceeds that of Buenos Aires counties, both in number of hectares cultivated and in total production of corn and soybeans. Further, the extensive cattle-based animal production in Buenos Aires contrasts with the more intensive animal feeding that goes on in Iowa with both cattle and pork. The Argentinean government's efforts in the 1990s to increase land concentration may, the author argues, further decrease the productivity and efficiency of Argentina's agricultural system.

It is fascinating to see how Iowa is viewed in this Argentinean study as the benchmark for agricultural production in temperate zones. Perhaps the most alarming implication for Iowa of this comparative study is that concentration of production is occurring very rapidly here as well. The implications for rural areas for long-term productivity of the soil and well-being of the ecosystem need to be considered further.

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