Agricultural produce

Leonard Broadbent

Crop Protection: An International Journal of Pest, Disease and Weed Control.

Editor G.E. Russell.
Butterworth. 4/yr. £68, \$136.

Crop Research.

Editors C.A. Wood, Pauline B. Topham, Jane Bryan-Jones and P.J. Dudney.
Scottish Academic Press.
2/yr. £13.50, \$30.

Biological Agriculture & Horticulture An International Journal.

Editor R.D. Hodges.
A B Academic Publishers, PO Box 97,
Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 2PX, UK.
4/yr. £19, \$33 (personal); £55, \$89.50
(institutional).

HORTICULTURE and, in historical terms, its offshoot agriculture, are multi-disciplinary technologies developed during the past 12,000 years. Much more recent is the science-based but energy-intensive production of plants and animals, to which are devoted so many journals. The three well-produced publications reviewed here add to this literature but do not fill gaps in it.

Crop Protection (CP), published since 1982, is attracting good papers from all over the world. An analysis of the four numbers available for review gives 15 papers from Britain, 12 from the United States and 20 from ten other countries, covering every aspect of protection science and practice, including biological, chemical and agronomic control, plant breeding, engineering and economics. It has six well-known and expert editors, and a distinguished advisory board of 15 members drawn from almost as many countries — presumably as bait, as possibly was the initial subscription of £45, which in two years has risen to £68. For this one gets about 48 scientific papers or reviews per volume, averaging ten pages in length, that is, a cost of about £0.14 per page of scientific paper (not counting book reviews). This is expensive: an old-established journal publishes similar papers, with more words per page, profitably at £0.07 per page.

Crop Research (CR) is not new but continues *Horticultural Research*, and remains a journal for the publication of research by the Scottish Crop Research Institute. About half of the papers originate there, and a few are from countries other than Britain. As one would expect from an institute with a good reputation, most of the papers are of high standard, but an editorial board of 17 and five associate editors seems over-weight for an average of ten papers per year; indeed, it has always been difficult to justify the existence of this publication when there are several long-established journals covering the same

areas. The advantage of CR is of quick publication, some papers taking only 6–8 weeks from receipt, although the average is nearer 28 weeks (about the same as for CP and for other refereed journals). The cost per page of scientific paper is £0.12 (1984 subscription rate) which again is expensive.

There are many who believe that “biological” or eco-agriculture is distinct from (and better than) “conventional” farming because of its holistic approach. The new journal *Biological Agriculture & Horticulture* (BAH) was started in 1982 by the then seven-year-old International Institute of Biological Husbandry, with the aim of publishing scientifically sound research and reviews “to raise the credibility of the biological system”. That this is necessary may reflect sadly upon the blinkered outlook of so many “academic” scientists; on the other hand, applied biologists in agricultural research have long realized the necessity for an ecological approach, and have been publishing sound epidemiological research results for decades.

Eco-agriculture has not, in general, had a good press, because of the tendency of some of its supporters to peddle prejudice as solid scientific fact. The editors of BAH will have to take care that their journal does

not follow the precedent, for 58% of the scientific content of the first five numbers consists of reviews and surveys. These, and the 14 papers reporting scientific results, come from ten countries, so the journal justifies its claim to be international. The cost of Vol.2 (1984) is not cheap at £0.16 per small page (if the size remains the

BIOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE & HORTICULTURE

same). Four editors are again “advised” by a prestigious board of 23 members, drawn from seven countries. Being a journal of a society it contains conference reports and news, as well as book reviews and notices.

There is no doubt that food and fibre production will remain man’s greatest challenge for many generations. So there should be ample opportunity for BAH to improve its standing amongst agronomists and scientists in the future. □

Leonard Broadbent is Emeritus Professor of Biology and Horticulture in the University of Bath.

Relative value

Julian Davies

Trends in Biotechnology.

Editor John Hodgson.
Elsevier (Cambridge, UK). 12/yr. £28,
\$49, Dfl. 130 (personal); \$165, Dfl. 430
(institutional).

Bio/Technology: The International Monthly for Industrial Biology.

Editor Douglas K. McCormick.
Nature Publishing. 12/yr. \$78, £70.

FOLLOWING the spate of four-page rumour sheets which accompanied the biotechnology industry in its headlong rush to establish a foothold in the world of commerce, publishers have decided to signal the consolidation of the industry by providing more substantial reading matter for the biotechnologist. In the spring of 1983 Macmillan launched *Bio/Technology* (BT) and Elsevier presented *Trends in Biotech-*

nology (TBT), both of them intended to create and to meet the need for reliable, intellectual presentations of modern biotechnology. A stablemate of *Nature*, BT will obviously benefit from the association, while TBT is fashioned along the same lines as the excellent *Trends in Biochemistry* (TIBS), a monthly collection of reviews that has a good following in academic circles. The nickname TIBS is well known

and a similar mnemonic for TBT would have been a definite advantage. What can we call it? TIBOTS? TOBS? TIBITS?

These newcomers to the biotechnology arena offer higher credibility and scientific acceptability than the other publications presently available in this field (with the exception of *Biofutur*; BT is actually more of an English cousin of this French biotechnology journal than a relative of *Nature*). But their serious approach apart, the two journals are quite different in format, presentation and goals.

TBT concentrates on up-to-date reviews of various aspects and developments in biotechnology and does not concern itself with commercial issues. It is essentially academic and pedagogical in character. By contrast, BT provides much information and comment on issues to do with the regulation, investment, business and international aspects of biotechnology and the products so eagerly anticipated. No other publication provides quite the same scope, though there is some overlap with *Nature* in the presentations of the health of the biotechnology industry. BT also includes a rather perfunctory and generally useless summary of new patents which seems to do nothing more than fill space; other patent review journals such as *Derwent Biotechnology Abstracts* and *Telegen Reporter* do the same thing much better.

Both BT and TBT carry substantial advertising. BT has more glossy advertisements than most journals whereas TBT tends to be more conservative. One infuriating aspect of BT is that the longer and better review articles are often interrupted by as many as six pages of advertising, and