

International organizations and agriculture, 1905 to 1945

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List of abbreviations

CEA	Confédération Européenne d'Agriculture
CEAg	Comité Économique Agricole
CIA	Commission Internationale d'Agriculture
CIBE	Commission International de Betteraviers Européens
CICA	Commission Internationale de Coordination Agricole
CIPA	Commission Internationale Permanente des Associations Agricoles
CISA	Conseil International Scientifique Agricole
EFO	Economic and Financial Organization
ETAP	Expanded Technical Assistance Program (United Nations)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (United Nations)
FITA	Fédération Internationale des Techniciens Agronomes
IAMCC	International Agricultural Mortgage Credit Company
IEB	International Education Board
IIA	International Institute of Agriculture
ILO	International Labour Organization
LoN	League of Nations
OIHP	Office International d'Hygiène Publique
OIV	Office International du Vin
LNHO	League of Nations Health Organization
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

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Introduction*

By Juan Pan-Montojo and Niccolò Mignemi

Abstract

The first international organizations such as the Commission Internationale d'Agriculture and the International Institute of Agriculture have been studied as historical phenomena since the 1990s. Historians have also analysed the economic projects of the League of Nations, the ambitious programmes of the International Labour Organisation and the economic conferences of the 1920s and 1930s. At the national level, these analyses focus on the transnational connections of the networks of experts, on model transfers, and on scientific controversies and debates on policies. A new field of research is emerging where rural history can find new insights into the challenges posed by global debates on the modernization of agriculture and its place in economic development. This essay reviews the historical literature produced on different international and transnational organizations and networks and, at the same time, introduces the articles on international organizations and agriculture that follow. It is structured along chronological lines, summing up the main traits of the institutions and the publications that have previously discussed them.

An interest in globalization and the processes of international integration has been a key factor in the upsurge of transnational history, global history, and world history since the 1990s. These and other approaches to the past respond to new social interests in processes that take place above or through frontiers, in communities that are not defined by national borders or in phenomena with continental or world dimensions. But they reveal, too, the preoccupations of the historians who choose these supranational spaces, and their ambition to construct post-national historical narratives, partly in response to the nationalizing nature of most modern historiographies, including their international and comparative elements, partly as a result of personal or collective commitments to supranational projects.

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I

As in nearly every other field of history, current debates on globalization and its results are encouraging rural historians to address similar processes in the past, and study connections, whether institutionalized or informal, that have often been neglected by national histories. The comparative approach, as it was described by Marc Bloch in the 1920s, has always been an instrument of agricultural historians, who have used it to analyse the similarities, the divergences, the interconnections and the mutual influences between synchronic dynamics in different contexts.¹ Despite the existence of some good books that covered larger regions and even the world,² most twentieth-century historical studies of rural societies have been framed as either local or national. However, their authors have often had other local or national spaces in mind (and in their bibliographic references), turning their studies into comparative studies, often with a clear supranational dimension.

Rural historians have much less frequently employed the perspective of international history, here understood as the history of the relations among national states and other political systems, in other words as history of international relations. No more conspicuous has been the perspective of transnational history, where transnational refers to 'sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders – businesses, non-government-organizations, and individuals sharing the same interests (by ways of criteria such as religious beliefs, common cultural and geographic origins)'.³ The works of transnational history are not numerous but not completely lacking either, since the history of the international trade in agricultural products has long been studied by agrarian historians. Studies of knowledge transfers have followed plants, animals, and techniques across the world, and migration has often been addressed by rural historians.

Since the late 1990s historians who work on rural societies and agricultural economies have become much more global in their readings, their meetings, and their research.⁴ More and more books on agricultural institutions, rural social relations, agro-systems, agrarian policies, and many other themes have combined national or regional chapters with comparative analyses. At the same time the regional and world trade of food and other

¹ M. Bloch, 'Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes', *Revue de Synthèse historique* 46 (1928), pp. 15–50.

² B. H. Slicher van Bath, *The agrarian history of Western Europe, AD 500–1850* (1963), first published in Dutch in 1960, is one of the best-known supranational books of the twentieth century. But there are many others such as M. Tracy, *Agriculture in Western Europe: challenge and response, 1880–1980* (sec. edn, 1982), M. Mazoyer and L. Roudart, *Histoire des agricultures du monde* (1997) (English translation in *A history of World agriculture: from the Neolithic age to the current crisis*, 2006) and more recently F. Giovanni, *Feeding the World. An economic history of agriculture, 1800–2000* (2005).

³ S. Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (2009), p. 3. For a nuanced consideration of the uses in historical and socio-scientific writing of the terms 'transnational' and 'transnationalism', see P. Clavin, 'Defining transnationalism', *Contemporary European Hist.* 14 (2005), pp. 421–39.

⁴ A good example of this turn is the project that has given birth to the Brepols series *Rural History in Europe*. Between 2005 and 2008, with the support of the European COST Action 35 Progressore, a large group of mainly European rural historians were involved in workshops held all over the continent. The result of this undertaking is the series that Brepols published from 2008 onwards.

primary commodities has been revisited in essays that add new and old sources to more complex econometric models. If a supranational perspective was launched in the 1980s to explore the role of the agrarian elites in the European development,⁵ in recent years transnational approaches have focused their attention on the networks of knowledge, the place of the experts, the transfers of theories and concepts, and the emergence of common policy issues, including the common agricultural policy.⁶

Despite this trend, international organizations and their role in relation to agriculture have remained a marginal object for historians, notwithstanding the fact that agriculture was the sole concern of one of the earliest international organizations, the International Institute of Agriculture (IIA), founded in 1905. The agricultural impact of transnational networks – many of them built around institutionalized exchanges – has not received sufficient attention either, even though we know that dense intellectual and social links were established among agricultural associations and academies and between agronomists, agricultural chemists and other technicians and scientists related to agriculture from the eighteenth century onwards.⁷

⁵ See the hypothesis proposed by A. J. Mayer, *The persistence of the Old Regime. Europe to the Great War* (1981); M. Malatesta, *I signori della terra. L'organizzazione degli interessi agraria padani (1860–1914)* (1989) [*The lords of the land. The organization of agricultural interests in the Po Valley (1860–1914)*] and id., *Le aristocrazie terriere nell'Europa contemporanea* (1999) [*The landowning aristocracy in Modern Europe*]; the special issue 'Les associations économiques et groupes de pression en Europe XIX^e–XX^e siècle', *Histoire, Économie et Société* 2 (1997), presenting the papers discussed in the session 'Economic Associations in late nineteenth-century Europe' at the 1994 World Economic History Congress, held in Milan.

⁶ See, for instance, N. Jas, *Au carrefour de la chimie et de l'agriculture. Les sciences agronomiques en France et en Allemagne, 1850–1914* (2001); R. Aldenhof-Hübinger, *Agrarpolitik und protektionismus. Deutschland und Frankreich im vergleich, 1879–1914* (2002) [*Agrarian policy and protectionism. Germany and France in comparison, 1879–1914*]; K. K. Patel (ed.), *Fertile ground for Europe? The history of European integration and the common agricultural policy since 1945* (2009); C. Knab and A. Ribi Forclaz (eds), 'Transnational co-operation in food, agriculture, environment and health in historical perspective', *Contemporary European Hist.* 20 (2011); P. Brassley, Y. Segers and L. Van Molle (eds), *War, agriculture, and food: rural Europe from the 1930s to the 1950s* (2012); P. Moser and T. Varley (eds), *Integration through subordination. The politics of agricultural modernisation in industrial Europe* (2013); L. Fernández Prieto, J. Pan-Montojo and M. Cabo (eds), *Agriculture in the age of Fascism. Authoritarian technocracy and rural modernization, 1922–1945* (2014);

N. Vivier (ed.), *The golden age of state enquiries. Rural enquiries in the nineteenth century. From fact gathering to political instrument* (2014); C. Martiin, J. Pan-Montojo and P. Brassley (eds), *Agriculture in capitalist Europe, 1945–1960. From food shortages to food surpluses* (2016). The most recent contributions are the special issue on 'Rural Development in the Twentieth Century. International Perspectives' edited by Marc Frey and Corinna R. Unger in *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 27 (2017) and L. van de Grift and A. Ribi Forclaz (eds), *Governing the Rural in Interwar Europe* (2017). We have also been able to refer to the workshops on the knowledge networks in rural Europe since 1700, organized by Yves Segers and Leen Van Molle in Bern (2013) and Leuven (2014).

⁷ The history of science and technology has paid especial attention to the role of the congress in the internationalization of the scientific networks and debates, as attested by the following special issues: 'La fabrique internationale de la science. Les congrès scientifiques de 1865 à 1945', *Revue germanique internationale* 12 (2010); 'Les congrès scientifiques internationaux', *Relations internationales* 62 (1990); 'Les congrès lieux de l'échange intellectuel 1850–1914', *Mil neuf cent* 1 (1989). For a general overview of the congresses in the second half of the nineteenth century see Anne Rasmussen, 'Jalons pour une histoire des congrès internationaux au XIX^e siècle. Régulation scientifique et propagande internationale', *Relations internationales* 62 (1990), pp. 115–33. On the specialized congresses connected to agricultural issues, see for instance: C. Fumian, 'I congressi degli scienziati e la cultura agronomica', in G. Biagioli and R. Pazzagli (eds), *Agricoltura come manifattura*.

Some of the networks that were established after 1850 did not just exchange information, techniques, and models for policies. According to Nützenadel, they gave shape to a 'global governance' of the food markets before the First World War, when national producers in Europe were 'trying to cope with the effects of a global market'.⁸ When we compare the aims of these networks and associations, and consider how food markets worked before the Great War, let alone the disarray of the agrarian markets after the conflict, it is too much to claim that these institutions achieved any kind of global governance. It might be more accurate to say that they managed to redefine and, at least for some periods, to regulate certain international food markets. The establishment of international arrangements to influence food production and distribution had been a constant aim of successive generations of agricultural leaders since the 1890s, and we should not overlook their first active steps after 1900, when national protectionist measures came to be seen as not sufficiently protective by agricultural lobbies in a number of countries.

In the essays that follow, we cannot completely unravel the role of international organizations and transnational networks in agriculture. Instead we want to persuade our readers of the importance of international institutions and their relevance for modern rural history, especially in the decades between the end of the nineteenth century and the Second World War, by which time the 'agrarian question', the approach to agriculture as a multidimensional problem for national progress, was included in most political agendas. Europe became a laboratory for debates on rural development. Combining the economic, social, and political contents of the agrarian question, as contemporary observers did, allows us to understand better the social demands and rural policies that in many Western countries preceded the deep agricultural transformation of the 1950s and 1960s, both at the national level, and in the capitalist world-economy as a whole. In European countries in particular, the modernization of the rural world had become a central issue in scientific debates and policy concerns before the First World War, even though the term 'modernization' itself was not commonly used. On the one hand, the programmes and proposals of economic reform aimed at increasing total production of agriculture, through 'rationalization', commodification, and specialization. On the other hand, turning rural society into a modern society was understood as a process that would enable the political and social integration of a population still largely engaged in farming and slow down or even stop the rural exodus towards urban areas and non-agricultural employment.

Going beyond the limits of both the macro-perspective and the traditional comparative approaches, these essays attempt to address the supranational institutional factors which played

Note 7 continued

Istruzione agraria, professionalizzazione e sviluppo agricolo nell'ottocento (2004), pp. 203–51 [*Agriculture as manufacture. Agricultural education, professionalization and agricultural development in the nineteenth century*], and M.-A. Gagnon, 'Les réseaux de l'internationalisme statistique (1885–1914)', in J.-G. Prévost and J.-P. Beaud (eds), *L'ère du chiffre/The age of numbers. Systèmes statistiques et traditions nationales/Statistical systems*

and national traditions (2000), pp. 189–219.

⁸ A. Nützenadel, 'A Green International? Food markets and transnational politics, c.1850–1914', in A. Nützenadel and F. Trentamann (eds), *Food and globalization. Consumption, markets and politics in the modern world* (2008), pp. 153–72. See also R. Jachertz and A. Nützenadel, 'Coping with hunger? Visions of a global food system, 1930–1960', *J. Global Hist.* 6 (2011), pp. 99–119.

a central role in the agrarian dynamics of the 1900s to the 1940s, searching for connections, interactions and bifurcations in the national and regional paths. We want to overcome both national views that underestimate foreign intellectual and institutional influences and international studies that just take into account market exchanges or comparative statistical data or the design and working mechanisms of international institutions. The aim of the essays is to offer some concrete studies that show how the intensive circulation of resources (capital, technologies, knowledge and so on), products (raw materials, staple foods) and persons (rural labour, social and political leaders, technicians) induced cross-fertilizations and facilitated the transfer of policies, techniques, discourses and representations, which eventually shaped or at least influenced new international institutions. At the same time, international debates, initiatives and agreements imposed technical standards and governing models on the approaches to national questions and stimulated and legitimized local strategies to address what were considered to be common or related problems. Thus, as Jasmien Van Daele has observed when analysing the labour issue in the Belgian case, we want to encourage an approach that should ‘follow a complete trajectory from the origins of international social policy until its implementation on the national level’.⁹

II

Starting with the least-studied institutions, we begin with the networks that animated the international congresses of agriculture. These congresses were organized for the first time in the 1870s, when international cereal prices were falling, and many agricultural voices in different countries were beginning to lobby actively for protection against the imports of agricultural goods from overseas. The congresses were for this reason conceived as tribunes for demands of representatives of the agrarian elites and, at the same time, for cooperation across borders among high civil servants, leaders of the agricultural organizations, agricultural engineers, and economists and lawyers who specialized in agriculture. In the Congrès international d’agriculture that took place in Paris in 1889, it was decided to create a permanent transnational institution, the Commission Internationale d’Agriculture (CIA), formally established two years later in a further congress at The Hague.¹⁰ From 1891 until 1923, the president of the CIA was Jules Méline, the French Republican politician who led the turn to protectionism in France in 1891. The members of the organizing commission of the Congress of 1889, both French and foreign, were appointed by the French Ministry of Agriculture. They were the ones that co-opted the members of the first CIA, which then existed under the indirect guidance of the French government.¹¹ The CIA was designed to guarantee the continuity of the interna-

⁹ J. van Daele, ‘Industrial States and transnational exchanges of social policies: Belgium and the ILO in the interwar period’, in S. Kott and J. Droux (eds), *Globalizing social rights. The International Labour Organization and beyond* (2013), p. 191.

¹⁰ Ministère du Commerce, de l’industrie et des colonies. Exposition universelle internationale de 1889. Direction générale de l’exploitation, *Congrès*

international d’agriculture tenu à Paris du 4 au 11 juillet 1889 sous la présidence de M. Jules Méline (1889) et *II^e Congrès international d’agriculture tenu à La Haye du 7 au 13 septembre 1891* (1892).

¹¹ On the French role in the international organization of agriculture, see G. Noël, ‘La participation de la France aux stratégies d’organisation internationale de l’agriculture’, *Économie rurale* 184–186 (1988), pp. 63–70.

tional congresses. Since they were the only regular international conferences on agriculture, the CIA secured a key position in defining of the agenda for international discussions in this field. Within the CIA, national representatives defended national interests while, at the same time, identifying common problems and solutions: as in other committees and conferences developed in the nineteenth century, 'nationalism and internationalism ... appeared as intricately interlinked'.¹²

The CIA changed its nature after the Great War. In March 1925, under the leadership of Louis de Vogüé, president of the Société des Agriculteurs de France, and Ernst Laur, president of the Schweizerische Bauernverband, it adopted new statutes in order to become 'the truthful and only organisation representing general interests of agriculture in the international field'.¹³ In 1927, coinciding with the announcement, by the League of Nations, of an International Economic Conference, its board accepted the transformation of the Commission Internationale into an international agricultural lobby, with its headquarters in Paris, and a large and heterogeneous membership, representing 71 agricultural organizations from 18 European countries.¹⁴ The transformation enabled the CIA to be recognized by the League of Nations and summoned to give evidence to expert committees. The CIA's leaders were very active in the economic debates of the 1930s.¹⁵ They played a central role in the creation of a new concept that tried to combine international trade, stability and protection of the farmers: *organization of agriculture*. It embodied an internationalist and pro-European point of view that was far away from the free-trade alignment of nineteenth-century internationalists. Moreover, the personal connections that were established in the CIA became a key element in the post-war food and agricultural policies of European countries.¹⁶ For instance the Swiss peasant leader, Ernst Laur, who had participated and delivered an aggressive pro-family agriculture speech to the Lausanne congress of 1898, sat almost permanently on the board of the CIA in the 1920s and 1930s, and was then president of the Confédération Européenne d'Agriculture (CEA) – one of the leading agrarian organizations in Europe in the 1950s – between 1948 and 1950.¹⁷ The head of the CEA between 1954 and 1958, when the Common Market came into life, was also Andreas Hermes, who had been another member

¹² V. Huber, 'The unification of the globe by disease? The international sanitary conferences on cholera, 1851–1894', *Historical J.* 49 (2006), p. 458.

¹³ Séance du 25 March 1926, in Société des Agriculteurs de France (SAF), 'Séances du Conseil, Comptes-rendus' (ms held by the Bibliothèque de la SAF, Paris).

¹⁴ Noël, 'La participation' and id., 'La solidarité agricole européenne. Des congrès d'agriculture à la politique agricole commune', in J. Canal, G. Pécout and M. Ridolfi (eds), *Sociétés rurales du XX^e siècle. France, Italie et Espagne* (2004), pp. 311–25; F. G. von Graevenitz, 'L'Europe comme modèle de l'Office du Blé? Les origines et les conséquences nationales de l'organisation internationale des marchés agricoles (1927–1939)', in A. Chatriot, E. Leblanc and É. Lynch (eds), *Organiser les marchés agricoles. Le temps des fondateurs, des années 1930 aux années 1950* (2012), p. 56.

¹⁵ M. Rieul-Paisant, *La Commission internationale d'agriculture (Union internationale des associations agricoles) et son rôle dans l'économie européenne* (1936).

¹⁶ J. Pan-Montojo, 'International institutions and European agriculture: from the IIA to the FAO', in Martiin, Pan-Montojo and Brassley (eds), *Agriculture in capitalist Europe*, pp. 23–43. Noël, 'La solidarité'.

¹⁷ W. Baumann, *Bauernstand und Bürgerblock: Ernst Laur und der Schweizerische Bauernverband, 1897–1918* (1993) [*Peasantry and Bourgeois Block: Ernst Laur and the Schweizerische Bauernverband, 1897–1918*], and W. Baumann and P. Moser, *Bauern im Industriestaat: Agrarpolitische Konzeptionen und bäuerliche Bewegungen in der Schweiz 1918–1968* (1999) [*Peasants in the industrial state: conceptions of agrarian policy and peasant movement in Switzerland, 1918–1968*].

of the board of the CIA in the 1920s. He was a Catholic politician from Germany who had been chief of the Bureau of Agricultural Intelligence and Plant Diseases of the IIA between 1910 and 1914 and minister of Agriculture in the Weimar Republic between 1921 and 1923. He would play a key role after the Second World War in the German agrarian organizations.¹⁸

Partly through the networks built in the congresses and in the CIA, as well as through bilateral relations between national organizations, came the first attempts in the twentieth century to reach multilateral commodity agreements. In 1900, there was a congress in Paris on the organization of farmers for the sale of cereals. As a result of this meeting, in 1901 a provisional international office to coordinate the wheat and flour trade – known as the Internationale landwirtschaftliche Vereinigung für Stand und Bildung der Getreidepreise (International Agricultural Union for Fixing the Price of Cereals) – was established. The following year, 1902, it became a permanent organization, based in Berlin and presided over by the economist and advisor of the powerful agricultural organization Bund der Landwirte Gustav Ruhland. At much the same time, there was a sugar conference in Brussels in 1902 that led to the first European sugar convention, fourteen years after the first international meeting in London, in 1888, that tried to eliminate export subsidies for beet-sugar. The Brussels Convention was a precedent for the first real international commodity agreement for sugar, the Chadbourne Agreement of 1931, itself the major outcome of the active and efficient transnational organization created in 1927, the Commission Internationale de Betteraviers Européens (CIBE) that conceived this international commodity agreement as a supplement to nationalist protectionist policies with regard to sugar beet.¹⁹

However, the most important organization before the Great War was the IIA, first conceived by the US citizen David Lubin and launched by an Italian diplomatic initiative in calling an international conference held in Rome in May–June 1905. Representatives of forty countries signed the final convention that created the IIA. The Institute's most significant purpose was to 'collect, study and publish as promptly as possible statistical, technical, or economic information [on agriculture, while] the economic interests, the legislation, and the administration of a particular nation shall be excluded from the consideration of the institute'.²⁰ In his contribution to these essays, Niccolò Mignemi evokes the fierce debates about the question of including delegates from the agrarian associations in the IIA although it finally took form as an intergovernmental organization. Mignemi refers to the creation in 1906 of the Internationaler Bund der landwirtschaftlichen Genossenschaften / Fédération Internationale des Coopératives Agricoles (International Federation of the Agricultural

¹⁸ R. Morsey, 'Andreas Hermes. Ein christlicher Demokrat in der ersten und zweiten deutschen Demokratie' ['Andreas Hermes. A christian-democrat in the first and the second German democracy'], *Historisch-Politisch Mitteilungen* 10 (2003), pp. 129–49.

¹⁹ F. G. von Graevenitz, 'Exogenous transnationalism: Java and "Europe" in an organised World sugar market (1927–37)', *Contemporary European Hist.* 20 (2011), pp. 257–80, and id., 'L'Europe'. See also id., *Argument Europa. Internationalismus in der globalen*

Agrarkrise der Zwischenkriegszeit (1927–1937) (2017) [*The argument of Europe. Internationalism in the global agricultural crisis of the interwar Period (1927–1937)*].

²⁰ Article 9 of the convention signed on 7 June 1905, in *Conférence Internationale d'Agriculture. Rome – MCMV. Procès-verbaux* (1905), p. 113, translated into English as 'Convention between the United States and other powers for the creation of an International Institute of Agriculture', signed at Rome, June 7, 1905, Treaty Series no. 489 (1908).

Cooperatives). This organization was joined by the most important national federations of agriculture cooperatives in Europe but it was handicapped by the mutual distrust of French and German leaders, and was unable to achieve a sufficiently strong position to negotiate with the new intergovernmental institution.

Officially inaugurated in 1908, the IIA was dominated by diplomats in its governing bodies, but as Federico D'Onofrio argues in his article, its technical services were able to build the main institutional framework for the exchange of knowledge on agriculture in the first half of the twentieth century. Dissolved in 1946 – a year after the foundation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in Quebec City – the IIA was able to bring together the most important agricultural countries of the world. At the request of the colonial powers, it accepted many colonies as members on the same conditions as the independent nations.²¹ During the interwar years, its influence was large and its membership more numerous than that of the League of Nations (LoN), despite the 'perceived inefficiencies and Fascist leanings' of the Institute, which had its headquarters in Rome and took something of the colour of Italian domestic politics.²² The IIA became a central place for all kinds of information exchange (statistics, legislation, scientific and technological innovations, social and economic agendas), as well as serving as the forum in which transnational networks could be developed, debates on international agricultural issues held, and common standards and agreements could be negotiated.

Apart from the large number of official publications produced by the IIA, a contemporary overview is available from the monograph published by the US delegate to the Institute, Asher Hobson, after he left the Institute. It contains a great deal of information although it is highly conditioned by the author's engagement in the internal strife in the organization.²³ Very few recent studies have been devoted to the IIA. In the 1990s, Luciano Tosi undertook the first historical study of the IIA from the point of view of the history of international relations.²⁴ From the very title of his book, Tosi underlined the relevance of the IIA as a precedent, the origin he claims, of the FAO, the agency of the United Nations that has played the major role in the formulation of international policies concerning agriculture since 1946.²⁵ In more recent years, a new generation of researchers have started exploring the largely unknown archives

²¹ Article 10 of the 1905 Convention in *Conférence Internationale d'Agriculture*.

²² P. Clavin, *Securing the world economy. The reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946* (2013), p. 85.

²³ A. Hobson, *The International Institute of Agriculture: an historical and critical analysis of its organization, activities and policies of administration* (1931).

²⁴ L. Tosi, *Alle origini della FAO. Le relazioni internazionali tra l'Istituto Internazionale di Agricoltura e la Società delle Nazioni* (1989) [*At the origins of the FAO. The international relation between the International Institute of Agriculture and the League of Nations*]. See also id., 'The contribution of the International Institute of Agriculture to the Study Commission of the European Union', in A. Fleury and L. Jilek (eds), *Le*

Plan Briand d'Union fédérale européenne. Perspectives nationales et transnationales, avec documents. Actes du colloque international tenu à Genève du 19 au 21 septembre 1991 (1998), pp. 257–69; and id., 'The League of Nations, the International Institute of Agriculture and the Food Question', in M. Petricioli and D. Cherubini (eds), *Pour la paix en Europe. Institutions et société civile dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (2007), pp. 117–38.

²⁵ We cannot refer to all the studies published on the FAO, its achievements and shortcomings. We shall just mention, for those interested, a recent general overview: R. Jachertz, 'To keep food out of politics: the UN Food and Agriculture Organization', in F. Marc, K. Sönke and C. R. Unger (eds), *International Organizations and Development, 1945–1990* (2014).

accumulated over the four decades of the IIA. This research has focused in particular on actors and relations with partner-organizations²⁶, or has examined specific projects and enquiries developed within the Institute.²⁷ Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the IIA was a key actor in the international arena and through it in national agricultures. The four papers presented here back this view. The IIA analysed the project of the International Agricultural Mortgage Credit Company (IAMCC), sponsored by the LoN and studied here by Madeleine Dungy. It collaborated with the International Labour Organization (ILO) on agricultural education, as Amalia Ribi Forclaz demonstrates.

Mignemi explores the origins of the IIA and looks at the expert missions that, in the spring of 1905, were sent by the Italian government to many European countries, to prepare and win support for the debates of the international conference scheduled for May 1905. In parallel with the official action of the Italian diplomacy, the idea was to overcome the hesitations of the different governments and secure the support of public opinion and the agricultural associations and unions for the new organization. It should provide the space where ‘the representatives of the various states adhering to the projects, and the representatives of the principal associations of the parties interested, should meet’,²⁸ as proposed in the initial letter circulated by the king of Italy. Focusing in particular on the mission of the agrarian economist Giovanni Lorenzoni to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and to Germany, Mignemi analyses the alternative models proposed for the organization of the IIA. He makes special reference to the proposals to include the representatives of the agricultural associations.

This solution was finally rejected, but did not disappear from the debates within the IIA, especially in the new international environment after the Great War and the Bolshevik Revolution, which was interpreted as a peasant revolution. The first debates on the IIA often made reference to the social conflicts between rural classes and the virtues of the union of agricultural interests. The article by D’Onofrio shows, however, to what extent agrarianism – the assumption that all agriculturalists shared common interests and the design of political devices to compensate for economic and social mechanisms that endangered the existence of the peasantry or the agricultural population as a social group – became hegemonic in the

²⁶ On the origins of the IIA at the beginning of the twentieth century, see N. Mignemi, ‘Une Chambre au service des agriculteurs? L’Italie et les origines de l’Institut international d’agriculture’ (unpublished memoir of the École française de Rome, 2016), and id., ‘Agriculteurs du monde entier, associez-vous! Robert de Rocquigny: du Musée social à l’Institut International d’Agriculture’, *Histoire et Sociétés Rurales* 45 (2016), pp. 43–67. Special attention has been given to Giuseppe De Michelis, a central figure of the Italian international movement during the first half of the twentieth century and president of the IIA between 1925 and 1933: see, for instance, S. Gallo, ‘Dictatorship and international organizations: the ILO as a “test ground” for Fascism’, in Kott and Droux, *Globalizing*, pp. 153–71.

²⁷ A. Ribi Forclaz, ‘Agriculture, American expertise,

and the quest for global data: Leon Estabrook and the First World Agricultural Census of 1930’, *J. Global Hist.* 11 (2016), pp. 44–65, and id., ‘A New target for international social reform: the International Labour Organization and working and living conditions in agriculture in the Inter-War years’, *Contemporary European Hist.* 20 (2011), pp. 307–29; and N. Mignemi, ‘L’enquête de l’IIA sur la réutilisation des déchets et des résidus (1920–22), ou qui gouverne l’agriculture?’, *J. Hist. Environment and Society* 2 (2017), pp. 127–53.

²⁸ See the English version of the letter of Victor Emanuel III to Prime Minister Giolitti, 24 Jan. 1905, in *Proclamation by H.M. Victor Emanuel III King of Italy proposing an International Chamber of Agriculture, and documents relating to the same* (1905), p. 4.

interwar period.²⁹ D'Onofrio examines in particular how the IIA gave voice to specific ideas within an 'international civil society', integrating in its analyses the data produced by the associations of agriculturalists. He looks at the involvement of the IIA in the world economic conferences at Genoa in 1922, Geneva in 1927 and London in 1933, but also at projects such as the Enquête agricole in 1928 or the World Agricultural Census in 1930, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.³⁰ Thus, he emphasizes the importance of the agrarian organizations in the production of an international expert knowledge of agriculture, and sustains the existence of a sort of conceptual legacy of the IIA onto the development debates of the second half of the twentieth century.

After the Great War, an international society came into existence, with the League of Nations at its core. Organized in various sections, the Economic and Financial Organization (EFO) developed in the 1920s into one of the most dynamic elements of the League.³¹ The Peace Treaties also recommended the establishment of an organization to secure 'social justice'. This was the global aim of the tasks allocated to the Bureau International du Travail that headed the ILO, which was established in the same year as the League, 1919, as an independent agency of the League's.³² Despite its limitations as a world security organization, the League ended up being a 'multiverse' of international organizations, around which a number of transnational communities came into being or were reinforced. Its 'open-ended and unlegalistic structure that undermined its political authority fostered the extension of League influence in other areas'.³³

Up until the 1930s, the involvement of the EFO in agriculture was limited by its difficult relationship with the IIA.³⁴ In preparation for the 1927 Conference, the EFO formed a sub-committee on agricultural questions to collect statistical data on agricultural production, prices, and consumption, and to tackle questions related to international cooperation and information. The ILO and the IIA participated in the sub-committee's work. In the World Economic Conference in Geneva, in 1927, the final resolution about agriculture included a paragraph on the need to foster the coordinated scientific struggle against animal diseases both to protect national livestock and to put an end to barriers to trade.³⁵ This plan, supported by the IIA and the recently established Office International des Épidémiologies (International Epizootic Office, today known as World Organisation for Animal Health), was undertaken by a veterinary sub-committee of the EFO that met between 1928 and 1930, and from 1935 onwards by three sub-commissions. This was one of the few undertakings of EFO in agriculture before 1929, since the IIA managed to keep a leading position in all international issues concerning the primary sector. The conference and the Convention for

²⁹ See, on the Italian case, F. D'Onofrio, 'The micro-foundations of Italian agrarianism: Italian agricultural economists and Fascism', *Agricultural Hist.* 91 (2017), pp. 369–96.

³⁰ On the census, see Ribi Forclaz, 'Agriculture'.

³¹ The best introduction to the Economic and Financial Organization is Clavin, *Securing*.

³² An updated vision of the various fields of work of

the ILO is in Kott and Droux, *Globalizing*.

³³ M. Mazower, *Governing the world. The history of an idea* (2012), p. 143.

³⁴ Clavin, *Securing*, pp. 167–8.

³⁵ C. Knab, 'Infectious rats and dangerous cows: transnational perspectives on animal diseases in the first half of the twentieth century', *Contemporary European Hist.* 20 (2011), pp. 281–306.

the protection of plants in 1929 and the organization of the world census of 1930 are good examples of the Institute's ambitious projects.³⁶

Nevertheless, after the start of the Great Depression, EFO began to be much more involved in agricultural questions. It began by launching a discussion on the international trade of agricultural products and the fall of prices. This initial concern expanded in the following years into a broader agenda: quality of life in the countryside within an ambitious programme of guaranteeing a balanced nutrition all over the world through a coordinated global agriculture. (We shall return to the question of nutrition.) In 1938, one of the leading politicians in EFO, the Australian Frank McDougall, signed a report on 'Living Standards in Eastern Europe'.³⁷ The report recommended that national states coordinated an aid policy to transfer capital and technology to the peasantry, in order to facilitate the diversification of production, promote better equipment in farms, and thus achieve more welfare in rural communities.³⁸ The analysis was not just socio-economic since the employees of the League were aware that the impoverishment of Eastern European rural economies could push the peasantry into the hands of Fascists or Communists. In this context, they came up with the idea of calling a conference on rural life to be held in the autumn of 1939.

Among the projects of EFO, well before the 1938 report on Eastern Europe, we must include the one of the IAMCC, described here by Madeleine Dungy. The IAMCC was the institutional response by some of the League's officials to a request for assistance submitted in 1930 by Central and East European leaders, who were alarmed by the consequences of the fall of agricultural prices among their farmers. Dungy shows the various obstacles that contributed to the failure of the IAMCC, including the complexities of decision making when national Governments, especially the French and the British, and various international institutions – in this case EFO and the IIA – were simultaneously involved. She delves into the debates around the possible uses of credit to fight the agricultural crisis as well as into the confrontation between European cooperation and British imperial projects. Her paper also reveals the potential of supranational and transnational networks to develop their own agendas, beyond national interests: the IAMCC was a highly innovative scheme and must be seen as a precedent for other international banking agencies in the post-Second World War period. Moreover, her text shows how disagreements concerning agricultural policy among British politicians and civil servants also shaped British diplomacy towards Europe.

As for the ILO, during the meeting of the International Labour Conference in Washington in 1919, it drafted the first conventions on working hours and unemployment, and decided at

³⁶ S. Castonguay, 'Creating an agricultural world order: regional plant protection problems and international phytopathology, 1878–1939', *Agricultural Hist.* 84 (2010), pp. 46–73; Ribi Forclaz, 'Agriculture'. See also the discussion of the conflict between the IIA and the ILO over agricultural workers, in Tosi, *Alle origini della FAO*, pp. 60–85.

³⁷ McDougall had a long career in different public bodies linked to agriculture in Australia and the United Kingdom and was an advisor in this field to Stanley Bruce, Australia's prime minister between

1923 and 1929, and Australian representative at the League of Nations between 1932 and 1939. McDougall gained prominence in Geneva and would eventually be a leading personality in the projects of the LoN in the 1930s and in the creation and development of the FAO in the 1940s and early 1950s. See the short biography by Alfred Stirling in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, X (1986) and J. B. O'Brien, 'F. L. McDougall and the origins of the FAO', *Australian J. Politics and History* 46 (2010), pp. 164–74.

³⁸ Clavin, *Securing*, p. 180.

its annual conference in 1921 to consider these issues in relation to agricultural labour.³⁹ A Service of Agriculture was set up in the ILO, in order to collect the information and prepare the guidelines for the possible conventions. This Service became a permanent office within the organization and undertook many of the inquiries that tried to find ways for the ILO to extend to agriculture a body of norms that could become the basis for an international labour law. The ILO collaborated with the IIA through the establishment of the Mixed Advisory Agricultural Committee, but this did not achieve much because of the opposed positions of the ILO and the IIA representatives. Once the 1929 crisis started, the ILO's Service of Agriculture tried to revitalize its field of competence: in 1933 the ILO's representatives on the Mixed Advisory Agricultural Committee became members of a sub-committee on agricultural work integrated into the ILO. The great change took place, however, in 1935, when the Permanent Agricultural Committee was created. Unlike the ILO's other agricultural committees, it was formed of 42 representatives from organizations of agricultural employers and agricultural workers, social agricultural experts, representatives of international institutions, and members of the Governing Body. The result of the activity of the Permanent Agricultural Committee was a study, *Social Problems in Agriculture* (1938) which made a substantial contribution to the political, social and economic literature produced on rural societies, agriculture and food in the late 1930s.⁴⁰

Health, a field in which international conferences and transnational private institutions and networks had played a pivotal role in the nineteenth century, was a growing concern of some interwar organizations, and in this framework too, agriculture became a relevant question. The first intergovernmental organization related to health was the Office International d'Hygiène Publique (OIHP), founded in 1907, but this did not deal directly with questions of nutrition and only touched on veterinary questions when they concerned the international trade in livestock. It was the League of Nations Health Organization (LNHO) that allowed the League to become involved in the question of nutrition. It was created in 1924 building on the League's Epidemic Commission, itself established in 1920 to fight the epidemics that appeared in Europe after the Great War.⁴¹ From its first steps, the LNHO stressed the relevance of public and social medicine even though it was only in the late 1920s that it developed socially oriented programmes that fostered preventive measures.⁴² At the same time, the ILO established its own Industrial Hygiene Section in 1920, backed by an advisory committee. Both organizations cooperated in the 1930s in a number of projects, among them two of great relevance for rural society: the rural hygiene conferences, and the projects on nutrition.⁴³

The rural hygiene conferences have scarcely been studied despite their role in launching research into the sanitary and economic conditions of the countryside. In 1931, at the

³⁹ On the ILO's activity in the field of agriculture, see Ribi Forclaz, 'A new target'.

⁴⁰ ILO, *Social problems in agriculture* (1938).

⁴¹ M. A. Balinska, 'Assistance and not mere relief: the Epidemic Commission of the League of Nations, 1920–1923', in P. Weindling (ed.), *International health organizations and movements, 1918–1939* (1995), pp. 81–108.

⁴² M. D. Dubin, 'The League of Nations Health Organisation', in Weindling (ed.), *International Health Organizations*, pp. 56–80.

⁴³ On the cooperation between the ILO and the LNHO see P. Weindling, 'Social medicine at the LNHO and ILO', in Weindling (ed.), *International health organizations*, pp. 134–53.

suggestion of the Spanish Government, the Council of the LoN convened a European Conference on Rural Hygiene. In August 1937, there was a League of Nations Conference on Rural Hygiene in the Far East, which took place in Bandung. It stressed in its final report that the fundamental problem of rural life was poverty, and made a connection between agricultural production, nutrition and development in its analysis of Asian rice.⁴⁴ However, the most important meeting was the one organized by the EFO's secretariat, which unfortunately did not take place: the European Conference on Rural Life of 1939. The preparatory committee produced a large quantity of material that revealed a systematic approach to socio-economic development in the countryside. It integrated all kinds of information on production, land property and exploitation, technology, demography, housing and other issues.⁴⁵ The EFO argued that any solution to the global problems of European rural societies lay in the hands of the European states, since most of the exports of the agricultural countries were intra-European. Europeanization of agriculture, the same kind of solution that was promoted by the CIA, although on different political bases, guided the reflections of the task forces.⁴⁶

Much more historical research has been undertaken on nutrition.⁴⁷ Food consumption allowed medical experts to advance, under the guise of technical recommendations, ambitious projects of socio-economic improvement on a national and international level. After the Great War, defining hunger and malnutrition in an objective way was the aim of many biomedical researchers and the League played a highly relevant role in this endeavour.⁴⁸ Edward Mellanby, the secretary of the British Medical Research Council and John Boyd Orr, the best-known British nutritionist in the 1920s and 1930s, were both members of the LNHO nutrition committee and used the standards and perspectives on nutrition developed by the international organization (which they formulated), to criticize their government, with the backing of the ILO. This latter organization, the LNHO, the IIA and the EFO collaborated in the launch of the Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition in 1935. It organized a conference in London in 1936 and in 1937 published the *Nutrition Report* that became an international reference work and propagated a new outlook on food that would have consequences for national agricultural policies.⁴⁹ Balanced nutrition demanded an increase in the consumption of 'protective' food (fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, fish and dairy products). Such an increase could both eliminate

⁴⁴ S. Amrith and P. Clavin, 'Feeding the World: connecting Europe and Asia, 1930–1945', in M. Hilton and R. Mitter (eds), *Transnationalism and contemporary global history (Past and Present, Supplement 8, 2013)*, pp. 29–50, makes some comments on the Bandung conference and its role in the spread of new international food security paradigms for the non-Western world. On these conferences, see also I. Borowy, *Coming to terms with World Health: the League of Nations Health Organization, 1921–1946* (2009).

⁴⁵ See, for instance: League of Nations European Conference on rural life. Report of the preparatory committee on the work of its first session (April 4th to 7th, 1938), available at biblio-archives.unog.ch/Dateien/

CouncilMSD/C-161-M-101-1938-II-B_EN.pdf.

⁴⁶ Clavin, *Securing*, pp. 193–7.

⁴⁷ See J. L. Barona, 'Nutrition and Health. The international context during the inter-war crisis', *Social Hist. of Medicine* 21 (2008), pp. 87–105; id., 'International Organisations and the development of a physiology of nutrition during the 1930s', *Food and Hist.* 6 (2008), pp. 129–62; id., *The problems of nutrition. Experimental science, public health and economy in Europe, 1914–1945* (2010). But see also Jachertz and Nützenadel, 'Coping with hunger?', and J. Vernon, *Hunger. A modern history* (2007).

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 96–125.

⁴⁹ Weindling, 'Social medicine', pp. 144–5.

malnutrition and fight the agricultural depression in Europe, and at the same time allow an expansion of 'energy' food (primarily cereals), to be grown in extra-European countries, so as to feed the local population and allow the growth of exports.⁵⁰ This was a global programme that would inspire many of the food aid projects in the decades to come.

Less well known is the work of international organizations in the field of agricultural education in the interwar years. In her paper, Amalia Ribi Forclaz examines the growing interest in the question of agricultural education in the interwar period. In 1921, there was a memorandum of the ILO to its members, asking them to develop technical agricultural education and to report on national institutions of agricultural education. At the end of the period, in 1938, a joint-expert commission was set up by the IIA and the ILO. Between these initiatives, Ribi Forclaz follows the public debates on how education should be organized to raise the technical knowledge of farmers and farm labour without encouraging emigration. She also looks at the positions of the CIA and the different voices at the IIA, and concludes that amongst ILO members, agricultural extension techniques, similar to the ones already applied in the USA, came to be seen as the best solution to diffuse 'progress in the countryside'. Again, there are continuities between the 1930s and the 1950s, when extension models were generalized in Europe.⁵¹ Similar continuities can be found at a different level. In 1930, a *Fédération Internationale des Techniciens Agronomes* (FITA) was created in Rome, whose aim was to defend the interests of high professionals in agriculture. FITA organized its first conference in Prague in 1931 so that it coincided with the fifteenth congress of the CIA (June 1931), and was deeply engaged with questions of agricultural education. Finally, Ribi Forclaz shows how in the meetings of FITA and other organizations in the 1930s, the Eurocentrism of approaches to education and other aspects of socio-economic change in the countryside gave away to an approach which was much more open to other realities. In other words, her article underlines how there was what we might term a proto-rural development approach being designed both for the European countryside and for the wider world, well before rural development became the central concept of a vast array of organizations in post-Second World War global contexts.

III

There were many other international and transnational organizations in this period, some of which still await the historian's attention. Few studies of scientific conferences or of the national and international associations that organized them have been published, despite the first four decades of the twentieth century having seen the multiplication and specialization of techno-scientific meetings and societies, accelerating a tendency that had started in the second half of the previous century.⁵² Many of these conferences included sessions on applied

⁵⁰ F. Trentmann, 'Coping with shortage: the problem of food security and global visions of coordination, c.1890s–1950', in F. Trentmann and J. Fleming (eds), *Food and conflict in Europe in the age of the Two World Wars* (2006), pp. 13–48.

⁵¹ Pan-Montojo, 'International institutions and agriculture'.

⁵² A general overview of international scientific societies in E. Schofer, 'Science associations in the international sphere, 1875–1990: the rationalization of

and technological questions related to agriculture: some were fully dedicated to them. In 1920, the IIA launched in Rome the Convention internationale pour l'organisation de la lutte contre les sauterelles (International Convention for Locust Control). The Rome conference gave continuity to previous conferences on the subject and set the bases for the international fight against the locust. There were also many conferences on individual agricultural and agro-industrial sectors, which combined sessions on economic, sanitary, and legal issues, with the diffusion of technical innovations: on wine-growing, olive-growing, tropical agriculture, agricultural engineering, dairy industries and so on. Some of these conferences were organized by product or sector: in other cases they were the occasions when trade organizations came together.

But even product or sector organizations have received little attention from agricultural historians, with the exception of sugar, which we have already mentioned. One of the earliest was the Fédération Internationale de Laiterie, which, in its first conference in 1903, approved a list of quality regulations for the production, storage and sale of milk and butter, tried to define butter against margarine, and listed measures that should be adopted for the education of dairy workers.⁵³ Quality standards, normalization of packaging, trade-mark regulations, sanitary rules, trade norms ... a long list of regulatory proposals were agreed upon in the meetings of product or sector organizations and then supplied in adequate formats to international and national institutions to obtain their endorsement and generalization. Studying these international networks and their associations might help in understanding the regulatory frameworks of agricultural and agro-industrial markets in the twentieth century. Moreover, these product and sector organizations were not always private endeavours. In June 1923 a conference of wine-exporting countries met in Paris, invited there by the French government. The shared view that something had to be done to fight overproduction, to counter anti-alcohol campaigns, and especially prohibition in the USA, encouraged the participants to plan the creation of an international wine organization. A second conference took place in 1924 and in its course an 'arrangement' to found a new international organization, the Office International du Vin (OIV, International Wine Office) was signed.⁵⁴ The Office was an intergovernmental institution with very heterogeneous delegates and an inadequate budget, but it proved to be influential. Its monthly publication, the *Bulletin International du Vin*, its *Annuaire* and its meetings every semester of politicians, diplomats and senior bureaucrats in wine-producing countries, were

Note 52 *continued*

science and the scientization of society', in J. Boli and G. Thomas (eds), *Constructing World culture: international non-governmental organizations since 1875* (1999), pp. 249–66, G. S. Drori, J. W. Meyer, F. O. Ramirez and E. Schofer (eds), *Science in the modern world polity. Institutionalization and globalization* (2002); and diverse articles in T. R. Davies, *History of transnational voluntary associations: a critical multidisciplinary review* (2016).

⁵³ On the Fédération Internationale de Laiterie, there are no specific historical studies. Gianpiero Fumi presented an introductory paper, 'The rise and impact of

an international network for the dairy sector (1878–1937)', at the Rural History 2017 conference at Leuven, 2017: kuleuvencongres.be/ruralhistory2017/abstract-file/6-7-2.pdf. There are some references to the Brussels meeting and its impact on regulation of milk in D. F. Smith and J. Phillips (eds), *Food, science, policy and regulation in the twentieth century: international and comparative perspectives* (2000).

⁵⁴ With regard to the origins and legal features of the OIV, and the meaning of the 'arrangement' as founding document, see J. Duffort, *L'organisation internationale du marché du vin* (1968).

to offer more than a forum for the discussion of new ideas and policies. The International Office was from the start focused on French wine policies. It dedicated hundreds of pages of its monthly publications to the review of policies to handle overproduction, firmly rejecting competition via prices and emphasizing the necessity of quality and supply controls to increase consumption: obviously a strategy for development which appealed to the winegrowers' associations in France. Cooperation among small viticulturists, self-regulation and state intervention were continuously advocated. Finally, the OIV became one of the most active ambassadors of the idea of the *appellation*. When the international wine trade shrank after 1929 and what was by then a very organized sector was placed under pressure in every European country, the OIV was there to offer a wide menu of regulations and a very concrete model of *appellations* with the strong backing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Quai d'Orsay.

All these international public and private organizations appeared to the public to be non-ideological organizations that aimed at the advocacy of general interests, even when they were fostering specific interests. However, they did have their own political discourses on society, rural society, agriculture, markets, labour relations and the desirability of state initiative. Their official positions were not overtly political: they did not totally coincide with any conventional political leanings and their internal ideological struggles were not simply between left and right.

That was not the case though with another type of international organization that came into existence in the interwar period. In the 1920s, peasant parties became important political actors in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, and in 1921 an Agrarian International Office or Green International was established in Prague.⁵⁵ Two years later, in 1923, the Third International created the Krestintern or Peasant International, through which Communists tried to extend their influence in rural societies.⁵⁶ Neither of them has been properly studied, even though these green and peasant internationals reveal that national political forces were well aware of the importance of the international arena for their projects. In the 1920s and in the 1930s, even agricultural projects on the edge of autarky like the Fascist ones had to dispense with international isolationism, since the first globalization had revealed the interdependence of rural societies.

⁵⁵ J. Eellend, 'Agrarianism and modernization in inter-war Eastern Europe', in P. Wawrzeniuk (ed.), *Societal change and ideological formation among the rural population of the Baltic area, 1880–1939* (2008), pp. 35–56 and see also B. Valota Cavallotti, 'L'Internazionale verde tra pace e Guerra' ['The Green International between peace and war'], in *Les Internationales et le problème de la guerre au XXe siècle* (1987), pp. 285–99; E. Kubu et al. (eds), *Agrarismus und Agrarreliten in Ostmitteleuropa* (2013) [Agrarianism and agrarian elites in Eastern Central Europe]; and S. M. Borrás, M. Edelman, and C. Kay, 'Transnational agrarian movements: origins and politics, campaigns and impacts', *J. Agrarian Change*, 8 (2008), pp. 169–204.

M. Cabo, 'Los partidos agrarios en Europa hasta 1945' ['Agrarian parties in Europe until 1945'], in J. M. Lana and D. Soto (eds), *Del pasado al futuro como problema. La historia agraria española en el siglo XXI* (forthcoming), presents a general overview of agrarian political organizations and their supranational cooperation.

⁵⁶ On the Krestintern, see the recent works published by J. Vigreux, *La faucille après le marteau. Le communisme aux champs dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (2012), and id., 'Les paysans communistes', in M. Dreyfus (ed.), *Le siècle des communismes* (2000), pp. 391–403. See also G. D. Jackson Jun., *Comintern and peasant in East Europe (1919–1930)* (1966).

IV

The eleventh Congrès international d'Agriculture, convened in Paris in 1923, dedicated a full session to 'The influence of agriculture on the international relations'. One of the speakers, Adrien Toussaint, who introduced himself as general secretary of the Confédération Internationale des Syndicats Agricoles, stated that 'nobody had foreseen that one of the most important consequences of the Great War was going to be the development of international relations'.⁵⁷ The First World War transformed the international arena but an international agricultural market had already been created in the second half of the nineteenth century and, for this reason, agrarian elites – technicians, leaders of the agricultural associations, agro-industrialists – had looked to international forums for answers to the problems of national agricultures from the 1880s onwards. In 1905, an inter-governmental institution for agriculture, the IIA, became one of the first permanent international organizations. By the 1930s, a dense grid of international and transnational institutions offered wide information, diverse discourses, and many political recipes and technical models to national agricultures, and beyond them to national societies. We know less about their influence on rural societies than about the influence of agriculture on international relations, the title of the session in Paris in 1923. Some potential answers are offered in these essays where the authors explain the power of international and transnational tribunals to develop discourses, mechanisms, and concepts that were then selectively applied at national levels, backed with the legitimacy that entailed their supranational or international origin, presented as a guarantee of technical neutrality and unbiased consensus. International organizations mediated the policies articulated by national delegates, and in so doing they were the instrument of national states, but they needed to employ technicians and bureaucrats who had a great deal of autonomy in their daily tasks. Furthermore, they found it necessary to integrate into their projects transnational institutions and networks and even to promote them. All these actors introduced new forces, first in the definition of international agricultural politics, through the construction of shared values, concepts, and beliefs, and then in the shaping of new solutions for the present and the future of rural societies.

⁵⁷ Commission Internationale d'Agriculture, *XI^e Congrès international d'Agriculture. Paris, 22 au 28 mai 1923. Tome I^{er}. Comité organisation. Règlement et programme du Congrès. Rapport et travaux préparatoires* (1923), p. 153 (authors' translation).