out the book, using a series of diseases, that intervention in its various forms ultimately benefitted producers and saved thousands of lives. Case studies illustrate the difficulty the federal government faced with not only understanding the nature and implications of various animal diseases, but also how intervention took shape in the face of stiff opposition from producers, manufacturers, and an apathetic or suspicious public.

Several diseases are highlighted throughout the book such as contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia (CBPP), hog cholera, trichinosis, foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), Texas fever, and bovine tuberculosis (BTB). Although each came with their own set of unique challenges for the BAI to address, Olmstead and Rhode take care to note that the experiences and lessons learned from many of these largely experimental and complex control efforts informed and contributed to the response to subsequent diseases. For example, the area eradication concept created to address CBPP influenced later campaigns for Texas fever, FMD, and BTB.

Olmstead and Rhode do an excellent job in exploring the more extreme opposition to the BAI’s efforts such as James Dorsey with BTB and southern cattle owners with Texas fever. Perhaps more from the farm press or farmers’ organizations on the less extreme but personal stories of livestock owners’ experiences with disease and the BAI would strengthen the volume. On the whole, however, this is an excellent piece of scholarship, highlighting a largely forgotten story of the trials of creating critical institutions that saved thousands of lives as well as ensured the health of animals and the livestock economy of the United States.

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Soybeans, navel oranges, avocados, mangoes—foods familiar to virtually all Americans today—were unknown to most Americans when the century began. Introduced through the efforts of adventurers and agricultural scientists, these and other food plants have become staples of American agriculture and commonplace in the American diet.

In Fruits of Eden, Amanda Harris has reconstructed the personal stories of
a core group of these adventurers and scientists. Her account centers around David Fairchild, a plant scientist trained in the US land-grant university system who joined the USDA’s plant pathology section in 1889 and later organized the plant introduction division within the USDA’s Bureau of Plant Industry in 1897. In the midst of his long government career, which lasted until 1935, Fairchild traveled in Asia, Europe, South America, and North Africa searching for new plants and improved varieties suited to American growing conditions.

Harris, a writer and journalist with a family link to David Fairchild (her father was the godson of Fairchild’s wife, Marian), intertwines the story of Fairchild with a cast of characters from his life. In the process of following these individuals, she creates a narrative that joins biographical detail with an account of the development and accomplishments of plant introduction in the United States.

Among the characters that make up Harris’s narrative are Fairchild’s scientific colleagues at university and the USDA, including long-time friend and plant scientist Walter Swingle and renowned plant explorer Frank Meyer; the wealthy private plant hunter Barbour Lathrop, who sponsored Fairchild as a scientific traveling companion; and Fairchild’s father-in-law Alexander Graham Bell and brother-in-law Gilbert Grosvenor, editor of National Geographic magazine. Harris also touches on the rise of the eugenics movement as an offshoot of scientific interest in the genetics of plant breeding and on the xenophobically tinged efforts to block entry of foreign plants into the United States, both led by colleagues who parted ways with Fairchild over these ideas.

The book is well documented, using personal papers, archival records, memoirs, contemporary newspaper and magazine articles, and published reports, as well as secondary studies of the individuals and incidents covered. But Fruits of Eden is at heart a collection of linked personal stories. Harris focuses on how these individuals and their experiences came together to affect each other and the world around them, not on the scientific and political/economic implications of their work. There remains much room for additional exploration by others of the agricultural, ecological, cultural, economic, political, and even culinary implications of plant exploration and introduction in the early twentieth century.

Still, most readers will find Harris’s narrative a warmly engaging look at a group of scientists and travelers who reached out to experience the wider world and sought to share it with their fellow citizens, however they defined them. Whatever our perspective on this work from the twenty-first century, Harris shows readers the individual humanity of the men, and a few women, who in-
fluenced this era in the globalization of food.

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The views expressed in this review are those of the author and should not be interpreted as representing the views of the Economic Research Service or the USDA.