...Establishes the core criteria for consideration as new policies and regulations are developed, including application-based principles that ensure practical, effective implementation of policy. From the economic contribution of nutrition on quality of life, to the costs of malnutrition on society from both an individual and governmental level, this book guides the reader through the factors that can determine the success or failure of a nutrition policy.—Academic Press

Sensing growing demand for curricula to prepare students and professionals to inform policy decisions, the authors of this text have responded with a collection that is impressive in its scope and applicability. Readers who have completed a nutrition degree can skip the first chapters on global nutrition issues seen through the eyes of an economist. Instead, spend time absorbing the economic principles underlying sound policy.

To get the most out the book, prerequisites should probably include courses in microeconomics and macroeconomics, or at least a basic econometrics class. With preparation, the text provides a good review of principles such as elasticity, Engel curves, and general equilibrium modeling. The section marrying economics to nutrition policies adds examples of socioeconomic factors, child care, safe water, and sanitation, as well as behavioral economics. Case studies illustrating economic principles make a thorough read of these chapters well worth the effort.

The text is impressive for both its breadth and depth, with sections on program evaluation and analysis of nutrition policies, crossover with agricultural policies, and future directions for nutrition policy making. Excellent examples are sprinkled throughout the book applying economic theories to domestic issues such as soda taxes, and global concerns including the rise of obesity and chronic disease in developing countries. Several examples are accompanied by output from STATA programs (StataCorp, College Station, TX); it is hoped that future additions will include programs in SAS (SAS Institute, Cary, NC), SPSS (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY), and R (R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria).

Each section is comprehensive and well organized, beginning with conceptual frameworks and ending with conclusions, discussion questions, and exercises. Some content is challenging even for people well grounded in quantitative analysis techniques. Take, for example, this discussion comparing evaluation designs:

Deaton (2010) criticizes the instrumental variable estimation methods, because according to him, it is not clear whether the chosen instruments in this line of research are orthogonal to the disturbance terms of the original equation.

Most of the writing is not as academic as this example; however, substantive details like this are a hallmark of the text. Overall, this is a welcome addition to graduate nutrition curricula and for anyone working in developing and evaluating evidence-based policies for public health.

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