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Harnessing Farms and Forests in the Low-Carbon Economy: How to Create, Measure, and Verify Greenhouse Gas Offsets.

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Peer reviewed

Review: Harnessing Farms and Forests in the Low-Carbon Economy: How to Create, Measure, and Verify Greenhouse Gas Offsets
Zach Willey and Bill Chameides (Eds.)

Reviewed by Tanaya Mohanty
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Willey, Zach and Chameides, Bill (Eds.) *Harnessing Farms and Forests in the Low-Carbon Economy: How to Create, Measure, and Verify Greenhouse Gas Offsets*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007. 229pp. ISBN 9780822341680. US\$60, paper.

This book opens up with an entirely new paradigm for the climate change debate. We have reached such a stage where we cannot give a welfare approach to environmentalism. It's no more an ethos that one should inculcate. It must become a way of life. In this post-industrial world, where commercialization has reached its heights, everything comes with a price tag. Thus, the idea of environmental concern needs a market. If risk can be manufactured (Ulrick Beck), it can very well be bought and sold.

Here carbon is taken as a commodity with a negative value that can be bought and sold, a characteristic feature of the post-industrial society, where commodities are intangible in nature –an economic system being run with the production and sale of such intangible commodities. This book is a detailed tale of an industry, the way it works, its workers, its target groups, and the services it provides. This book is a manual for setting up such an industry. The product to be sold and bought is carbon. This is a service providing industry. Service providers would be farmers and land owners, which marks the entry of the peasant community into the corporate sector, making them equal players in its bargaining power. In this age of outsourcing, carbon has become a commodity with a negative value. All those beautiful useful commodities in the modern age are accompanied with a by-product commodity, i.e. carbon. Civilization stands on the inevitable production of carbon, which must make an entry into the market as a commodity, a by-product commodity.

Since carbon has received the status of a commodity it has to find a market for itself (though it has a negative value). It is just like R.L. Stevenson's *Bottle Imp* where the Imp is able to fulfill all the material aspirations of its possessor, but one has to live with the risk of ending up in hell in case they possess it to your death bed. Therefore, the bottle has to be sold with a loss. And all the material prosperity that has been gained with the help of the imp comes with a price. Whoever has gained from this unholy evil power has paid up in some way or the other. That is the status of carbon on this planet. It has led to the creation of great civilizations but is soon leading us to the doomsday with global warming. The book is all about giving a new form and a new character to this Imp called carbon that has created modernity, and now we have to pay a price for it.

This book is built up in two parts. In the first part the authors introduce us to the cap and trade program which emerged during the Kyoto Protocol. It discusses why we should go for a low

carbon economy, and who the main participants in such an economy are. In what ways offsets for greenhouse gases can be created, and how land and forest covers are important in this economy. The second part of the book deals with various steps towards determining the offsets that include the ways for quantifying the carbon capped and stored in the trees, what could be the possible leakage of the capped carbon –and above all, it provides a guideline for implementing such a project. Beneath the technicalities of the book the true spirit of the work is silently lurking for academicians, environmental scientists to rise up to the call.

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