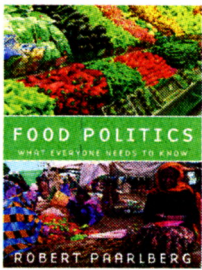


Food Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know, by Robert Paarlberg (OUP, £9.99)



According to Robert Paarlberg, “there are now twice as many seriously overfed people on Earth as there are underfed people”. In Europe, obesity has now become a bigger killer than smoking. A “political war” is raging over food, and Paarlberg provides a lucid and insightful primer on this vital subject, from defining basic concepts (“What is food aid?”) to casting light on the most contentious issues. For instance, on the claim that you can reduce your carbon footprint by buying locally produced food, he notes that “eating one less serving of red meat a week achieves the same reduction in emissions as switching to a 100% local diet”. He is also unimpressed by the current fashion for organic farming in the developed world: apparently, if Europe tried to feed itself organically it would need 28 million more hectares of cropland, equal to all the forests in France, Germany, Denmark and Britain. Paarlberg argues that with the world’s population set to rise to 9 billion by 2050, we need an agriculture based on hard science. It’s difficult to disagree.

PD Smith