

Editorial

Reflections and new directions: An editorial retrospective and the launch of our new Policy Paper section

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Over the past two years, *Bio-based and Applied Economics* (BAE) has consolidated the journal role as a platform for rigorous and innovative research at the intersection of economics, sustainability, agriculture, and bio-based systems. In a period marked by significant global transitions, ranging from climate change and biodiversity loss to disruptive technological shifts and geopolitical instabilities, our community of scholars has provided crucial insights into how bio-based economies can adapt, evolve, and contribute to sustainable development.

As a result of this commitment, we also received two important recognitions of the quality of the works published by the journal: BAE is now ranked Q1 in several subject categories and has been included in the list of “class A” journals for economics and political economy scientific sectors in Italy.

This editorial aims to offer both a retrospective overview of the journal’s main contributions over the last two years and a prospective look at new directions.

Since our appointment as Editors in Chief, BAE has hosted a rich variety of contributions, spanning theoretical analyses, empirical applications, and interdisciplinary approaches. Among the most recurring themes we want to mention:

1. **Sustainability and Agricultural Economics** – Numerous papers have examined how farming systems can balance productivity with ecological stewardship. Topics such as agroecological transitions, carbon farming, and sustainable business models have been central.
2. **Circular and Bio-based Economies** – Research has increasingly focused on the transition towards circular models, with attention to waste valorisation, renewable bio-resources, and innovations in supply chains.
3. **Technological Innovation and Agriculture 4.0** – Several studies have addressed the adoption and socio-economic impacts of precision agriculture, digitalisation, and smart farming technologies, especially in Mediterranean and European contexts.

4. **Food Systems and Consumer Behaviour** – The journal has published relevant work on the transformation of food systems, including consumer attitudes towards sustainability labels, alternative proteins, and value chain governance.
5. **Climate and Resource Economics** – Contributions have deepened our understanding of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, the economics of soil and water management, and policy instruments to support resilience.
6. **Trade and Food Security** – contribution on investigating how the evolving trade dynamics, supply chain vulnerabilities, and geopolitical tensions shape the capacity of agri-food systems to ensure availability, accessibility, and stability of food supplies, with particular attention to both global interdependencies and local resilience.
7. **Agricultural and Rural Development Policies** – contributions have emphasised the role of agricultural and rural development policies in balancing productivity and sustainability, and supporting farmers’ livelihoods within the broader transformation of rural areas.

Collectively, these research lines illustrate the breadth and relevance of BAE’s mission: fostering knowledge that bridges economic science with pressing societal challenges.

Beyond thematic contributions, BAE has also been a space for methodological innovation. Authors have employed diverse approaches, from advanced econometric models to participatory scenario building, from experimental economics to multi-criteria decision analyses. These methods have enriched our ability to capture the complexity of bio-based and agricultural systems.

Equally important has been the increasing internationalisation of the journal. In the past two years, BAE has attracted submissions from across Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa, reflecting the global relevance of bio-based transitions. The diversity of contexts—from European Union policy frameworks to local farm-

ing practices in emerging economies-has offered fertile ground for comparative analysis and cross-learning.

The growing engagement of early-career researchers has further expanded the vibrancy of our community. Their contributions, often interdisciplinary and problem-oriented, have underscored the evolving character of applied economics in addressing twenty-first-century challenges.

INTRODUCING THE NEW POLICY PAPER SECTION IN *BIO-BASED AND APPLIED ECONOMICS*

The global challenges surrounding climate change, biodiversity loss, food security, and sustainable rural development have increasingly highlighted the need for a stronger dialogue between academic research and policymaking. BAE has traditionally provided a platform for scholarly contributions that advance our understanding of agricultural, food, resource, and environmental economics. As these fields continue to expand and evolve, also the channels through which research is communicated, interpreted, and applied should.

With this issue, we are pleased to launch **a new section of the journal dedicated to Policy Papers**. This section is designed to bridge the gap between academic research and policy relevance, offering a space for concise, rigorous, and practice-oriented contributions that speak directly to current policy debates. The section will provide a venue for evidence-based, timely, and practice-oriented analyses with direct implications for decision-making.

While traditional research articles remain the backbone of scholarly communication, their structure and orientation often limit their accessibility to policymakers, practitioners, and wider stakeholders. Policy Papers provide a complementary format, explicitly tailored to highlight the implications of economic research for policy design and evaluation. They aim not only to report findings, but also to translate them into actionable insights that can inform real-world decision-making processes.

The agricultural and bio-based sectors are at the forefront of major societal transitions: the decarbonisation of economies, the digitalisation of production systems, the sustainable management of natural resources, and the pursuit of food system resilience. In all these areas, evidence-based policy support is indispensable. Policy Papers published in BAE will provide an opportunity for researchers to directly engage with these pressing challenges, while ensuring that scientific rigour remains the foundation of the journal's reputation.

Scope and characteristics

Policy Papers are expected to be shorter than research articles, typically ranging from 4,000 to 6,000

words, and should prioritise clarity, accessibility, and relevance over technical detail. While empirical evidence and methodological robustness are valued, the primary focus lies in the articulation of policy problems, the synthesis of available evidence, and the identification of feasible policy options.

Submissions may take different forms, including:

- Policy analyses, which assess the effectiveness of existing policies and highlight opportunities for reform.
- Evidence syntheses, which bring together insights from multiple studies to inform ongoing policy debates.
- Forward-looking perspectives, which explore new policy challenges emerging from technological, environmental, or social transitions.
- Comparative evaluations, which examine how different policy approaches perform across contexts and jurisdictions.

By launching the Policy Paper section, Bio-based and Applied Economics reinforces its mission of supporting both academic excellence and societal impact. We view this initiative as a contribution to a broader knowledge exchange ecosystem, in which researchers, decision-makers, and practitioners engage in a productive dialogue. Our aim is to stimulate a culture of evidence-informed policymaking, grounded in applied economics but open to interdisciplinary collaboration.

We hope that our readership will find in the Policy Paper section a source of inspiration, practical knowledge, and critical reflection on the directions of agricultural, environmental, and bio-based policy.

In establishing this new section, we reaffirm the belief that research must not remain confined to academic circles but must actively contribute to shaping a more sustainable, fair, and resilient future. The Policy Paper initiative represents a concrete step in this direction, and we look forward to the contributions and debates it will generate in the coming years.

The first paper of the section is published in this same issue and is the synthesis of the study day, which took place in Rome on 3rd April 2025, when more than twenty researchers have discussed the relevance and the implications of the Commission's Communication *A Vision for Agriculture and Food* for Italy (Arfini et al., 2025).

As we look back with pride at the journal's recent trajectory and forward with ambition, we remain grateful to our authors, reviewers, and readers. Their dedication and engagement are the pillars of BAE's success. We invite the community to embrace this new phase, contributing not only new research but also impactful policy insights for a sustainable bio-based future.