

Cameron Muir

The Broken Promise of Agricultural Progress: An Environmental History

Contracted to Routledge for publication in 2014.

This is my main project at the Rachel Carson Center. This book examines the ecological disorder and inequity at the heart of our food system. Modern agriculture in the “neo-Europes,” as Crosby described the new food surplus producing nations, was supposed to be the big fix that would civilize the frontier and save the environment. Its solutions often made things worse. The book’s wide-ranging narrative puts gritty local detail in its global context to tell the story of how cultural anxieties about civilization, population, and race shaped agriculture in the twentieth century. It ranges from isolated experiment farms to nutrition science at the League of Nations, from local landholders to high profile moral crusaders, to an Australian apricot grower who met Franklin D. Roosevelt and almost fed the world. The chapters are organized around seven themes: Hooves, Bores, Scrub, Wheat, Dust, Reeds, and Cotton. The environmental history of settler societies—from state planned irrigation projects to Leopold’s land ethic and conservation management—is largely the story of how people have responded to the ecological changes wrought by colonization. This is the story of how people have tried to live in the aftermath of “ecological imperialism.” During my fellowship I will finish this book for delivery to Routledge.

How to Eat a Planet: The Origins of Our Food Crisis

NewSouth Publishing

This book will be about the relationships between food, environment, and health. It is partly based on my research for the academic book *The Broken Promise of Agricultural Progress*. It examines changes to food and agricultural production over the twentieth century, the ideas that drove these changes, and the current state of our food systems. Chapters explore food and health, the international commodity trade, food and race, food and the poor, waste, alternative foods such as eating invasive species and insects, food justice, and environmental impacts of food production. At the Rachel Carson Centre I plan to complete at least three-quarters of the draft manuscript.