



A Biomass Future for the North American Great Plains: 27 (Advances in Global Change Research)

Norman J. Rosenberg

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The Great Plains' ecological fragility and economic weakness are attributed by many to removal of its original grass cover. Abandonment of agricultural cropping and restoration of the grass cover is one proposed solution to the region's problems. Simulation models suggest that the agriculture and water resources of the Plains may be stressed even further as its climate changes because of global warming. This book explores the possibility that the ecology and economy of the Plains region (and similar regions) would benefit from the introduction of perennial biomass crops. Biomass production and processing (possibly aided by genetic engineering) would partially restore a perennial vegetative cover and create new employment opportunities. Biomass also offers a means of reducing fossil fuel use, providing fuel to local power plants and a feedstock for production of cellulosic ethanol, a gasoline substitute. Interest in biofuels is growing rapidly in public, political and business circles with rising fossil fuel prices and because of a growing recognition of the need for energy independence in petroleum importing countries.



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