



The Changing Politics of Organic Food in North America

Lisa F. Clark

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'Lisa Clark's scholarly account of the development of the organic movement in the United States and Canada beautifully explains the decades-long transition from understanding organic production as inextricably tied to healthy soils, communities, and social justice ('process-based') to views of organics as meeting certain standards for marketing purposes (product-based). Read this book and you will care deeply about the difference in these views as well as understand current debates about the future of organics.'

- Marion Nestle, New York University, US and author of *What to Eat*

'In this fascinating book, Lisa F. Clark presents the history of organic food in North America, from its early roots as a marginal farming activity to its well-established position in today's food market. She analyses political institutions, social movements and corporate actors in how they deal with the delicate question of balancing the search for increasing the market for organic food while maintaining broad organic values. Without offering simple answers to this question, Clark offers important insights into the different approaches to this question. This book is very interesting and highly relevant for anyone interested in organic food in North America and beyond.'

- Peter Oosterveer, Wageningen University, the Netherlands

'In a globalized food system that struggles to connect the environmental, social, economic and governance dimensions of sustainability, this book provides precious insights. It documents the birth, development and 'mid-age crisis' of the organic movement in North America. The historic lack of clarity between organic principles and practices, and especially the insertion of the organic sector into the global trade regime, have left behind the process-related goal of organic production. Seventy years of lessons, ebbs and flows of a movement searching for an authentic future. A must read for all those interested in sustainable agriculture, institutional challenges faced by value-based movements and visioning organic agriculture pathways.'

- Nadia El-Hage Scialabba, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Italy

The Changing Politics of Organic Food in North America explores the political dynamics of the remarkable transition of organic food from a 'fringe fad' in the 1960s to a multi-billion dollar industry in the 2000s. Taking a multidisciplinary, institutionalist approach that integrates social movement theory, public policy analysis and value chain analysis, it tells the story of how the organic movement responded to the social, economic and political changes brought on by the rise of industrial agriculture in the twentieth century.

This book examines how the changing constellation of actors, institutions and ideas involved in the politics of organic food influenced the evolving goals and principles of the organic movement, including the muting of social and political organic principles in formal policy and the eclipse of the 'process-based' definition of organic by the 'product-based' definition. It discusses the integration of organic food into the globalized food system and how food and agriculture movements have responded to the forces of industrialization and globalization, as well as critically analyzing the vulnerability of social movements that do not address market interactions in their mandates.

This timely and impactful book is a theoretical and empirical resource for researchers and advanced students working on organic food, agriculture, comparative public policy analysis, trade policy, institutionalism and social movements, as well as those involved in making food and agriculture policy.

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