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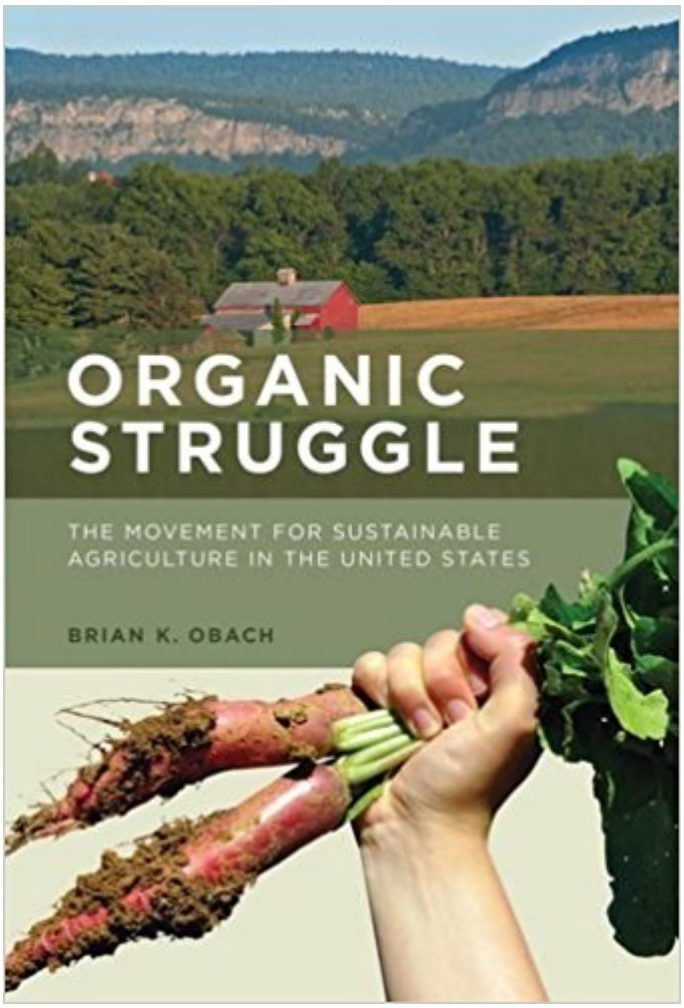
Organic Struggle: The Movement For Sustainable Agriculture In The United States (Food, Health, And The Environment)



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Synopsis

In the early 1970s, organic farming was an obscure agricultural practice, associated with the counterculture rather than commerce. Today, organic agriculture is a multi-billion dollar industry; organic food can be found on the shelves of every supermarket in America. In Organic Struggle, Brian Obach examines the evolution of the organic movement in the United States, a movement that seeks to transform our system of agriculture and how we think about food. Obach analyzes why the organic movement developed as it did and evaluates its achievements and shortcomings. He identifies how divergent interests within the diverse organic coalition created vulnerabilities for the movement. In particular, he examines the ideological divide between those he calls the "spreaders," who welcome the wider market for organic food and want to work with both government and agribusiness, and the more purist "tillers," who see organic practices as part of a broader social transformation that will take place outside existing institutions. Obach argues that the movement's changing relationship with governmental institutions is crucial to understanding the trajectory of the organic sector. The government-run National Organic Program fostered dramatic growth and deep corporate penetration of the organic market. While many activists were disillusioned by changes in the organic industry that came with corporate and government involvement, Obach sees a failure in the essential market- based strategy adopted by the movement early in its history. He argues for a refocus on policy efforts that can reshape the agricultural system as a whole.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Brian Obach has written an important book for everyone who produces, buys, or considers buying organically produced foods. This is a well-researched and utterly riveting history of the issues that unite and divide organic farmers and consumers, firmly grounded in the political context of classic social movements. If you want to advocate for healthier and more sustainable food systems, you must read this book. (Marion Nestle, Professor of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health, New York University; author of Eat, Drink, Vote: An Illustrated Guide to Food Politics) Organic Struggle is an in-depth examination of the US organic movement's evolution and pays especially close attention to the internal dilemmas and battles among advocates about what organic agriculture would be. Providing detail not published elsewhere, the book is a fine contribution to a growing body of scholarship on a phenomenon whose imprint on current day food politics is undeniable. (Julie Guthman, Professor of Social Sciences, University of California, Santa Cruz; author of Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox of Organic Farming in California, 2nd ed.)" Organic Struggle provides an illuminating and historically informed account of how the tactical and strategic choices of competing interests interacted to produce an organic sector that is rapidly getting bigger and more lucrative but that is still neither sustainable nor fair. Understanding how and why these choices were made is essential for those who want to choose effective paths to a just and resilient food future. (Jack Kloppenburg, Professor Emeritus, Department of Community and Environmental Sociology, University of Wisconsin--Madison; author of First the Seed: The Political Economy of Plant Biotechnology)A fascinating and theoretically sophisticated analysis of the mainstreaming of organic food. This book makes important contributions to the burgeoning field of food studies, but also deserves to be read by those interested more broadly in reforming institutions. (Philip H. Howard, Associate Professor of Community Sustainability, Michigan State University)This accessible book will be of special interest to anyone interested in the politics of organic food, sustainable agriculture, and food movements more broadly, but also of interest to anyone interested in a well-written case study of a particular social movement. (Pamela Oliver, Professor of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Brian K. Obach is Associate Professor of Sociology at the State University of New York at New Paltz and the author of Labor and the Environmental Movement: The Quest for Common Ground (MIT Press).

This is one of the few books that provides a comprehensive assessment of the organic movement in

the U.S. From a sociology perspective, it does an excellent job talking about the nature of the movement and succinctly summarizes some major events surrounding the developing of the National Organic Program. However, I was really wanting this book to have more depth than what was there when it came to talking about the policy side of the movement. Obach does summarize conflicting views of what the program ought to be, but the engagement with how those stories manifested seemed superficial. Maybe my expectations were off for what this book had to offer. It is a very informative read, but I was just wanting more to truly be able to give 5 stars.

came on time and a great read

Really great book!

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