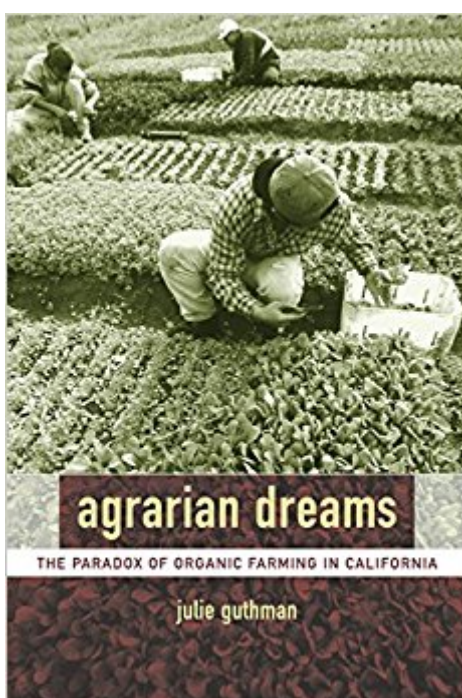


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# Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox Of Organic Farming In California (California Studies In Critical Human Geography)



## Synopsis

In an era of escalating food politics, many believe organic farming to be the agrarian answer. In this first comprehensive study of organic farming in California, Julie Guthman casts doubt on the current wisdom about organic food and agriculture, at least as it has evolved in the Golden State. Refuting popular portrayals of organic agriculture as a small-scale family farm endeavor in opposition to "industrial" agriculture, Guthman explains how organic farming has replicated what it set out to oppose.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Agrarian Dreams throws a cold shower of reality over the dream of organic agriculture in California, demonstrating all that is lost when organic farming goes industrial. This is a challenging book, and until we can answer the hard questions Julie Guthman poses, a genuinely sustainable agriculture will elude us." - Michael Pollan, author of *The Botany of Desire*; "Agrarian Dreams puts organic agriculture in a broad intellectual, social, and theoretical context in a readable way. Nobody has written at this scale and scope about organics. This is an outstanding work." - Sally K. Fairfax, University of California, Berkeley"

"Agrarian Dreams throws a cold shower of reality over the dream of organic agriculture in California, demonstrating all that is lost when organic farming goes industrial. This is a challenging book, and until we can answer the hard questions Julie Guthman poses, a genuinely sustainable agriculture

will elude us."#151;Michael Pollan, author of *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World*"Agrarian Dreams puts organic agriculture in a broad intellectual, social, and theoretical context in a readable way. Nobody has written at this scale and scope about organics. The availability of this basic data and interpretation will open discussion to a broad range of citizens, scholars, and decision makers. This is an outstanding work."#151;Sally K. Fairfax, Henry J. Vaux Distinguished Professor of Forest Policy, University of California, Berkeley"Guthman takes on the sacred cow of organic agriculture: that farmers and consumers can transform our food system simply through by adopting new philosophies of eating, farming and nature. With an analysis that is at the forefront of agrarian theory today, she shows that organic farmers, no matter what their philosophy, have to work under the economic gun of markets and land prices. As a result, organic growers in California are forced to become increasingly industrialized, unjust and unhealthy. Her analysis is proof that it will take more than new kinds of thinking to create sustainability in our food system."#151;Melanie DuPuis, author of *Nature's Perfect Food: How Milk Became America's Drink*

I agree with the previous reviewer, this book did a great job of exposing the hypocrisy of 'Big Ag' in organic agriculture without seeming the author was biased or selling an agenda. I am an aspiring organic farmer myself, and found this book informative about both the history of organic agriculture as a movement and its march towards mainstream acceptance, along with the corporate infiltration that comes with it. I thought the author did a good job of not just detailing the current state of organic agriculture in California, but in explaining the seemingly inevitability of its development to today's conditions. This is a great read for anyone interested in the economics of organic agriculture or farming in general.

Opens your eyes to what "organic" really means.

It will give consumers of organic food some heartache as it illustrates that organic food production does not equal ethical food production. Well researched but those who have not bought into the organic is good may find the author's acceptance of it as a little grating. It does explain how the organic food has moved away from the social justice issues of the sixties to something which merely satisfies the food preferences of the well to do. Seems to be well researched and gives a good historical background.

This book was so interesting that I read the whole book in one sitting. This book was for a class and we had to write a report on it. Loved it!!!!

I'm currently writing my dissertation on the dynamics of the local organic movement in Southern Arizona. This book was a wonderful resource in helping me frame my literature review.

great condition!

I recommend reading the 5 star review by Jerry Kohn. This is an excellent book with a great deal of information, ideas and opinions. Guthman did much work on this and on her other book. Many of us probably suspected organic farming was not all that it claimed to be and that given how agriculture has become industrialized and corporatized, we should not expect anything very good from it. I did not find the conclusions of the book to be extremely clear or positive. However, the book is exceptionally good otherwise. Midwest Independent Research, educational websites. Alternative agriculture, [mwir-alternativeag.blogspot](http://mwir-alternativeag.blogspot). There are book lists here.

This book follows the rise and more-or-less fall of the organic movement amongst California growers from the 1960s to its publication in 2004. Although the effect is very much like that of an expose, it isn't written like one. Instead, Guthman takes a rather flat political economy perspective. She stresses how growers choosing to adopt organic methods were sometimes motivated by idealism, especially in the beginning, but increasingly responded to economic concerns, like the desire to capture 'super-profits' (the killing to be made by early entrants to market before rivals see how much money they're making and follow suit). She shows how organic growers were growing a particular place in a particular time and how they could not -- assuming they even tried -- escape the legacies that entailed, like dependence on cowed and thus cheap immigrant labor. Likewise, Guthman follows the tensions and debates surrounding the competition amongst certification organizers. The intertwined history of growers and certifiers is leagues from the traditionally rosy image of organics without turning into a screed. This makes the book very provocative, and if it weren't for the occasional bursts of academic prose, it might have found a much wider audience. In a roundabout way, it did though: it clearly influenced Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.

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