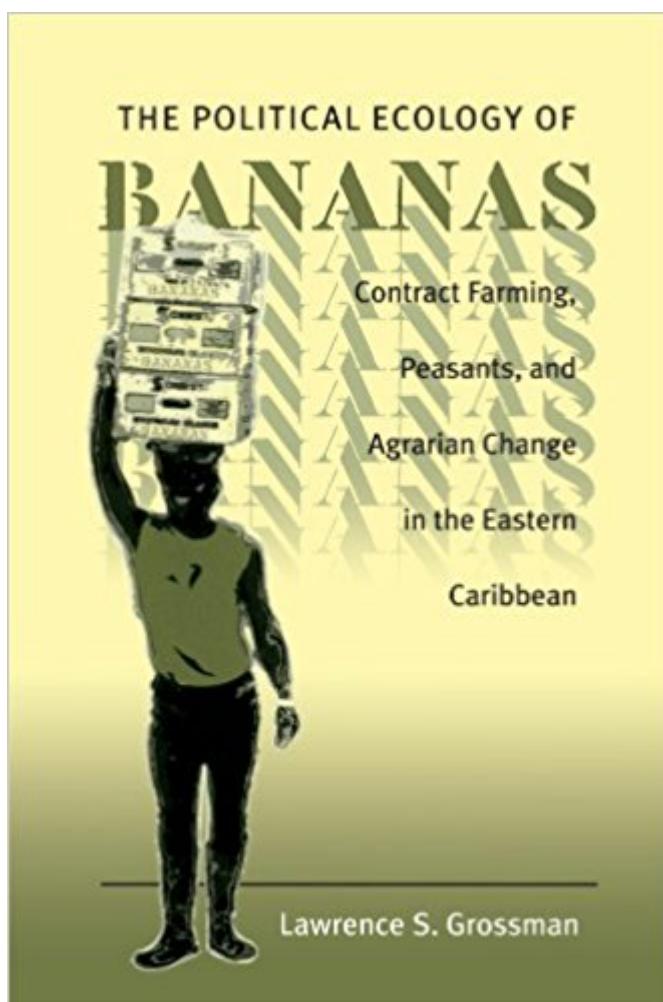


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The Political Ecology Of Bananas: Contract Farming, Peasants, And Agrarian Change In The Eastern Caribbean



Synopsis

This study of banana contract farming in the Eastern Caribbean explores the forces that shape contract-farming enterprises everywhere—capital, the state, and the environment. Employing the increasingly popular framework of political ecology, which highlights the dynamic linkages between political-economic forces and human-environment relationships, Lawrence Grossman provides a new perspective on the history and contemporary trajectory of the Windward Islands banana industry. He reveals in rich detail the myriad impacts of banana production on the peasant laborers of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Grossman challenges the conventional wisdom on three interrelated issues central to contract farming and political ecology. First, he analyzes the process of deskilling and the associated significance of control by capital and the state over peasant labor. Second, he investigates the impacts of contract farming for export on domestic food production and food import dependency. And third, he examines the often misunderstood problem of pesticide misuse. Grossman's findings lead to a reconsideration of broader debates concerning the relevance of research on industrial restructuring and globalization for the analysis of agrarian change. Most important, his work emphasizes that we must pay greater attention to the fundamental significance of the "environmental rootedness" of agriculture in studies of political ecology and contract farming.

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A wide-ranging, intellectually challenging, and substantive work. . . . A detailed, scholarly contribution combining judicious use of data and penetrating analysis. Highly recommended.--ChoiceGrossman's book is a richly textured and very detailed field-based study that answers many of the key questions on contract farming, globalization, agrarian change and the environment. It is one of few geographic and social science publications that synthetically, critically, and clearly maps this complex terrain.--Abdi Ismail Samatar, University of MinnesotaA rich, geographically contextualized volume. . . . Grossman's application of the political ecology framework to an analysis of the impact of globalization on peasant agriculture constitutes a ground-breaking accomplishment. . . . The result is a relatively rare outcome in which a highly theoretical work has clear human applications presented in a manner that, with adaptations to account for local differences, can be extrapolated to the realities of millions of others in similar situations in marginalized agrarian communities around the world. . . . Will interest anyone who is concerned with the Caribbean or with agricultural issues more generally.--Geographical ReviewThis book is a

welcome addition to a growing and increasingly charged literature on transnational firms and contract farming in the 'South.' By drawing on concepts from geography, ecology, and anthropology, and by skillfully presenting a wealth of local data, Grossman makes his book accessible to a range of disciplines and scholars. If there is a single lesson that can be drawn from the work, it is that even under the most constraining of circumstances (i.e., contract farming) Caribbean peasants maintain a range of creative strategies of resistance and survival.--Peter D. Little, University of KentuckyA rich portrait of the history and current state of banana farming in St. Vincent . . . a tour de force in demonstrating the virtue of detailed local knowledge and of bringing 'ecology' back into political ecology.--Economic GeographyThis book makes a major contribution to the research on the application of regulation theory and Fordist and post-Fordist practices in agriculture. As a study of the grassroots impact of global trade policies, it will be valuable to Caribbeanists, anthropologists, economists, and agriculturalists, as well as geographers.--Janet Momsen, University of California, DavisLawrence Grossman demonstrates that peasant persistence in export production is related less to the resilience of household economies than to the interests of the multinational firms that market peasant produce in the developed world. . . . This careful, insightful, frequently brilliant analysis of contract farming reveals the constraints and opportunities of the contemporary global system, and restores some measure of agency to the peasant communities that are involved in it.--Journal of Political EcologyShould be required reading for anyone interested in contemporary labor transformation, the globalization of Third World agriculture, the interplay between local-level environmental and international political-economic forces, rural economic development, and peasant adaptation. Skillfully blending detailed micro-level actor-oriented description, thorough historical analysis, and sophisticated theoretical disputation, Grossman debunks several prevailing myths about the internationalization of agriculture. Broad in scope, rich in description, and sophisticated in analysis, this important new work is bound to stimulate additional studies of contemporary peasant adaptation.--Hymie Rubenstein, University of Manitoba

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