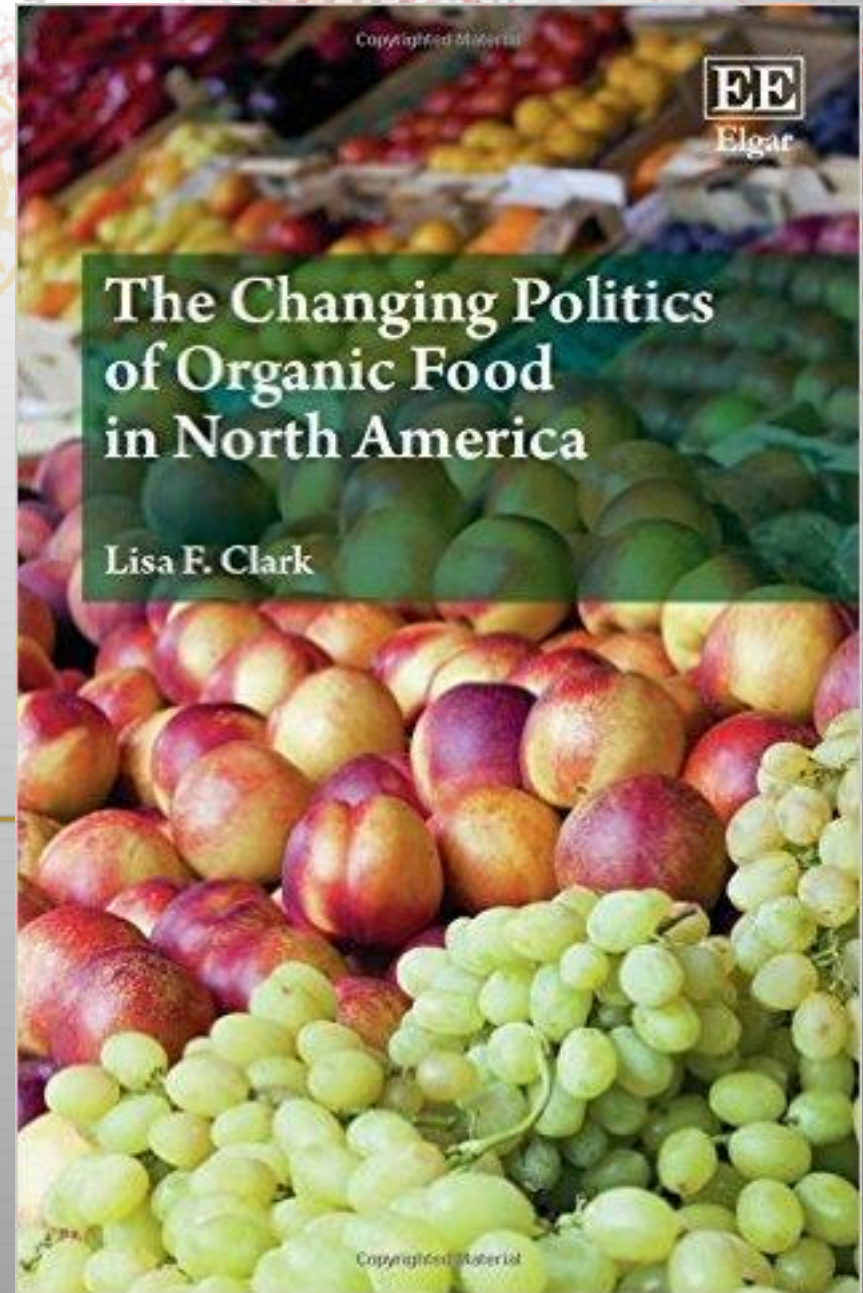


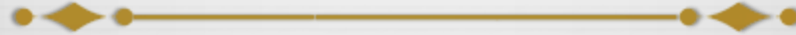
The Changing Politics of Organic Food in North America

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Current State of Organics



- ✦ Global market for organic products – worth \$72 billion (USD) in 2013
 - ✦ Canada – \$3.25 billion (1.7% of grocery sales)
 - ✦ 870,000 hectares of land for certified organic crops and grazing
 - ✦ 3,713 certified organic operations in 2011 (census data)
 - ✦ Canada imports 74% of retail certified organic products from US
 - ✦ US imports 42% of Canada's certified organic exports



Why so Political?



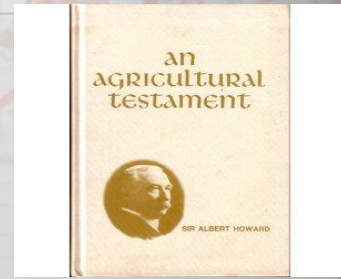
- ✦ Perceptions of what organic means differs from what regulations cover (organic v. certified organic)
- ✦ Confusion between food quality and food safety
- ✦ Ways organic is produced, distributed and consumed has changed
- ✦ Diversification of actors in organic sector
- ✦ Integration of organic food policy into 'conventional' decision-making structures

How Have the Politics Changed?

- ✦ *Changing Politics of Organic* looks at how organic food developed from fringe fad to a multi-billion dollar industry in Canada and the US from 1915-2015. It traces the
 - ✦ emergence of co-existing process-based and product-based definitions of organic
 - ✦ development of the 'organic philosophy'
 - ✦ corporatization of organic sector
 - ✦ changing organic food policies and standards
 - ✦ organic social movement's evolving response to industrialized food system and globalization



In the Beginning...



- ✧ Experimentation with different agricultural techniques to limit chemical inputs
- ✧ Lady Eve Balfour, Sir Albert Howard, Robert Rodale—return nutrients to the soil without the use of synthetic fertilizers; focus on ‘health of the soil’
- ✧ Developed principles, standards and practices to guide organic practitioners (Soil Association, Rodale Institute)
- ✧ Later, limited use of synthetic pesticides and other inputs (GMOs)



Where did Organics Come From?

- ✦ Local producer organizations developed standards based on bioregional specifications
- ✦ Third-party certifiers emerge in US; also certified Canadian operations
- ✦ Trust-based system of authenticity was no longer adequate as value chain expanded geographically; needed enforceable, traceable form of verification
- ✦ 1970s- state-level certifiers emerged as organic food markets expand (California, Oregon, Washington)
- ✦ 1980s- province-level certification established (Quebec, BC)



The Organic Philosophy



Local
food
chains



- ✦ Economic viability – financially sustainable
- ✦ Environmental sensitivity – bioregional diversity, polyculture, no synthetic inputs
- ✦ Social sustainability – preservation of rural farming culture, reduction of seasonal/cyclical unemployment
- ✦ Conventional vs. organic distinction

Organic Social Movement

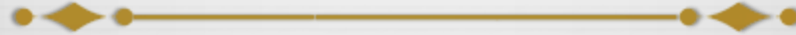


- ✧ Closely linked with the environmental, sustainable agriculture and 'back to land' movements of the 1960s
- ✧ Rejected industrializing processes of agriculture and agribusiness
- ✧ Distance from 'conventional' agri-food sector and government institutions
- ✧ Growing mainstream interest in organics attracted 'conventional' market actors
- ✧ Focus shifted from sociopolitical change through organic agricultural processes to promoting marketable qualities of organic products

Corporatization of Organics

- ✦ 'Conventional' corporate agribusiness invests in organic value chains (Coca-Cola, General Mills, Kellogg, Nestle)
- ✦ Strategies include brand introduction, mergers/acquisitions, strategic alliances, partial equity
- ✦ 1st notable merger – 1980 – Safer Way Natural Foods and Clarksville Natural Grocer merge to form Whole Foods Market
- ✦ 2000 – 14 major corporate mergers in the organic food sector; 12 in 2012
- ✦ Today, 4 companies have significant decision-making power over organic food sector in North America:
 - ✦ Hain-Celestial Group, United Natural Foods International, Whole Foods Market, Kurig Green Mountain (collective earnings over \$5.3 billion (USD) in 2014)

And the Definition is...



- ✦ Product- based; no synthetic inputs (fertilizer, pesticides, GMOs)
- ✦ Some definitions are more substantive – include animal welfare, limit additives and ingredients
 - ✦ USDA – Organic Food Production Act (2000)
 - ✦ CFIA - Organic Production Regime (2009)
- ✦ Controversies over regulatory scope and stakeholder involvement



The Politics of Organic Food

Continue...

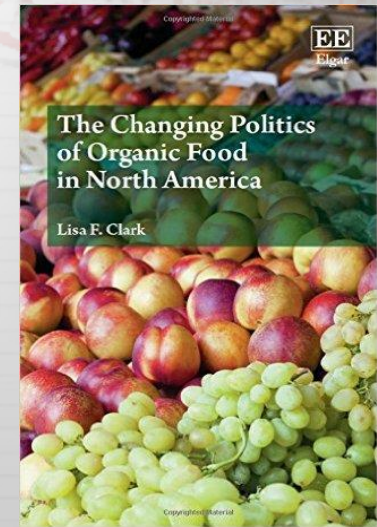
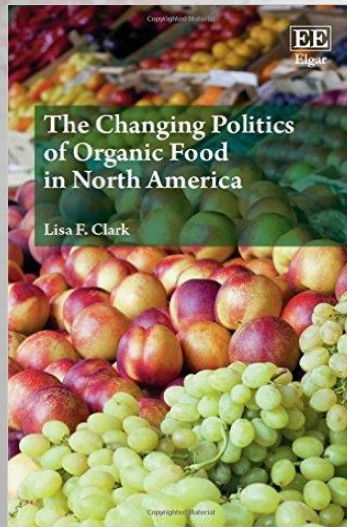
- ✧ Bifurcation of the sector – third-party process certifications v. product based standards and regulations
- ✧ Two conceptions of organic now coexist
- ✧ Pro-organic v. pro-GMO
- ✧ Organic v. natural
- ✧ Health v. safety
- ✧ Labelling GMOs?
- ✧ Links with fair trade, food security, food sovereignty, slow food & local food movements



THANK YOU!



- ✧ Ag-WestBio (Jackie Robin) and Innovation Place
- ✧ William Kerr
- ✧ Peter Phillips
- ✧ Neil Hibbert
- ✧ Kari Doerksen
- ✧ Cami Ryan



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✦ Order (hardback or e-book) *The Changing Politics of Organic Food in North America* (Edward Elgar Publishing, UK) www.e-elgar.com