



Living Under Contract: Contract Farming and Agrarian Transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Wracked by poverty, famine, and drought, Africa is typically represented as agriculturally stagnant, backward, and crisis-prone. This text, however, highlights the changing character of sub-Saharan agrarian systems by focusing on contract farming. A relatively new and increasingly widespread way of organising peasant agriculture, contract farming promotes production of a wide variety of crops - from flowers to cocoa, from fresh vegetables to rice - under contract to agribusinesses, exporters, and processors. The proliferation of African growers producing under contract is in fact part of broader changes in the global agro-food system. In this examination of agricultural restructuring and its effect upon various African societies. The editors bring together anthropologists, economists, geographers, political scientists, and sociologists to explore the origins, forms, and consequences of contract production in several African countries, particularly Kenya, the Gambia, Zimbabwe, and the Ivory Coast. Documenting how contract production links farmers, agribusiness, and the state, the contributors examine problematic aspects of this method of agrarian reform. Their case studies, based on long-term field work and analysis at the village and household level, chart the complex effects of contract production on the organisation of work and the labour process, rural inequality, gender relations, labour markets, local accumulation strategies, and regional development. "Living under Contract" reveals that contract farming represents a distinctive form in which African growers are incorporated into national and world markets. Contract production, which has been a central feature of the agricultural landscape in the advanced capitalist states, is an emerging strategy for "capturing peasants" and for confronting the agrarian question in the late 20th century.

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