

# Business History Review, Volume 90, Issue 3 (A Special Issue on Food and Agriculture) October 2016, pp. 403-404



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This issue of *Business History Review* focuses on local and international markets for food and agriculture. It follows a previous edition of the journal, from 2009, that emphasized innovation in the food industry. The articles collected here are drawn, in part, from a 2015 conference that was organized by Casey Lurtz, at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, and Sarah Milov, at the University of Virginia. That conference, "The Political Economy of Food: Grown Locally and Consumed Globally," challenged scholars to consider how to develop a new and innovative perspective on the role of food in the history of global capitalism. Discussions focused on the impact of international markets for agricultural products on local practices of production and consumption.

The essays in this issue continue to develop these themes. Together they address the questions of how food and agricultural producers were influenced in their production and distribution methods by the demands of local and international markets, how they achieved standardized brands and appearances at home and overseas, and how they were influenced by national governments to achieve broad political and economic goals.

In "Cataloging Nature: Standardizing Fruit Varieties in the United States, 1800–1860," Emily Pawley looks at efforts to develop a vibrant market for fruit trees in the United States in the early nineteenth century and how this led to a dramatic standardization of fruit varieties. These efforts, Pawley notes, led far beyond the sorting and pricing of existing fruits and extended even to problems of naming and fashioning scientific classifications. Ai Hisano's analysis of the rise of the food dye industry also narrates the strategies of companies to confront the problem of standardizing the natural varieties of food in order to meet the expectations of visual consistency for a mass market. Her article, "The Rise of Synthetic Colors in the American Food Industry, 1870–1940," traces the growing reliance on food coloring in twentieth-century America and its consequences.

The remaining essays similarly pursue the politics of marketing and distributing food. Casey Lurtz explores how Mexico created a federal department of agricultural development to promote unity between the urban and rural parts of the country in "Developing the Mexican Countryside: The Department of Fomento's Social Project of Modernization." In "Building Brand Reputation through Third-Party Endorsement: Fair Trade in British Chocolate," Teresa da Silva Lopes demonstrates how brand development and recognition was critical to the reputation of British chocolate companies in the late nineteenth century. Finally, in "Promoting Agriculture: Farmers, the State, and Checkoff Marketing, 1935–2005" Sarah Milov analyzes the pervasive growth of "checkoff" marketing in the United States, a method of using private organizations to promote federal agriculture-related goals.

The issue also includes a review essay by historian Shane Hamilton that looks at the evolving history of food and agriculture since the 1957 publication of *A Concept of Agribusiness* by John Davis and Ray Goldberg. Hamilton finds that two fields of study in particular, political economy and environmental history, have utilized approaches put forth in agribusiness scholarship, bringing more complexity and depth to the study of food and agriculture history.

Read the full content of the volume on <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/business-history-review/issue/journal-bhr-volume-90-issue-3/213599217EC56FF6EB4AB920DC9EC233>