



Family Farming: A New Economic Vision

Marty Strange

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Americans decry the decline of family farming but stand by helplessly as industrial farming takes over. The prevailing sentiment is that family farms should survive for important social, ethical, and economics reasons. But will they? Possibly not, if current policies are not altered, say Marty Strange.

This timely book exposes the biases in American farm policies that irrationally encourage expansion—a bias evident in federal commodity programs, income tax provisions, and subsidized credit services. The farm financial crisis of the 1980s is a result of this trend toward bigness. As family farms are transformed, they become more specialized, more capital-intensive, and less resilient to the inherently unstable conditions in agriculture. Financial risks are therefore greater, and public assistance to expanding farms is more frequent and costly.

Family Farming also exposes internal conflicts, particularly the conflict between the private interests of individual farmers and the public interest in family farming as a whole. It challenges the assumption that bigger is better, critiques the technological base of modern agriculture, and calls for farming practices that are ethical, economical, and ecologically sound. The alternative policies discussed in this book could yet save the family farm. And the ways and means of saving it are argued here with special urgency.

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