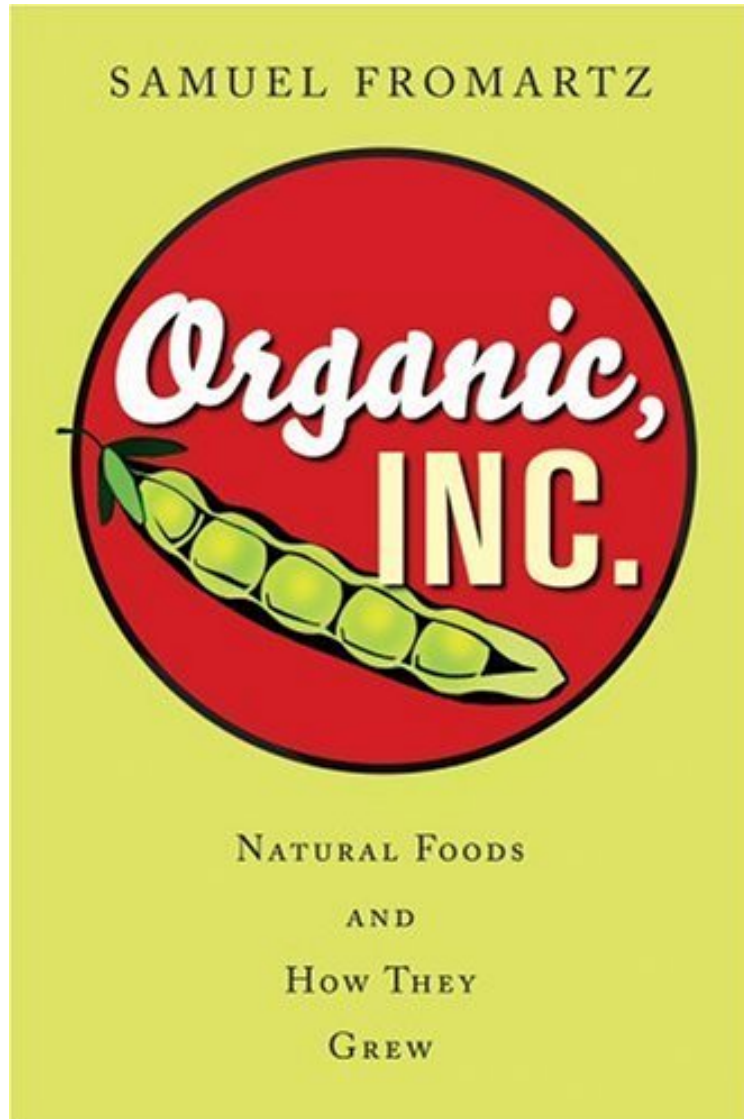


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Organic, Inc.: Natural Foods and How They Grew

Samuel Fromartz

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Samuel Fromartz : Organic, Inc.: Natural Foods and How They Grew before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Organic, Inc.: Natural Foods and How They Grew:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Insight into the organic movementBy Malvin"Organic Inc" by Samuel Fromartz offers a good introduction to the natural food movement. Written primarily for a popular audience, the book combines research with short histories, case studies and profiles of prominent personalities and companies that have shaped the industry. Although the author's frequent interjections about his own personal experiences and infatuations with organics becomes somewhat annoying, overall the book succeeds in granting insight into the organic

movement, its foundational ideals and the possibilities for the future. Mr. Fromartz provides a brief history of organic farming as an alternative to a deeply flawed agro-industrial production system. We learn that organic methods were developed for ideologically diverse reasons but tends to produce nutritionally superior foods when compared with conventional farming practices. Although yields are usually smaller, the author discusses how organic strawberry farms in California are an example of how organics can outperform when allowing for decreases in energy and fertilizer input. Mr. Fromartz profiles some of the small organic farmers whose deference to health, environment and community were shaped by the 1960s counterculture. A small but vital network of farmers, distributors and retailers supported a fledgling movement that defined itself by remaining outside the conventional food system. The author describes how such farmers often devised creative marketing strategies by catering to specialty restaurants or selling their produce directly to the public at farmer's markets. As health and safety concerns about pesticides and rBGH growth hormones caught the public's attention, organic farming has become more widespread, emerging as an increasingly important survival strategy for more and more beleaguered family farmers. Mr. Fromartz traces the rise in popularity of pre-packaged salads and refrigerated soy milk to discuss how mass market success has created divisions within the organic community. The development of large-scale organic enterprises has intensified competition and shut down smaller, less efficient producers. Regulation has become a contentious issue, with small farmers seeking to hold large farmers accountable to maintaining high standards. As supermarkets such as Safeway and Wal-Mart have begun to add organic sections to their stores, issues of local production, fair wages and sustainability are heightened. Yet, the author is upbeat in his assessment that small farmers can continue to find their niche by satisfying the needs of the more sophisticated organic consumer. I recommend this highly readable and informative book to everyone. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Organic Inc. is a very well-written analysis of the ... By Ballet Fan Organic Inc. is a very well-written analysis of the origins and development of the organic and natural food movement, particularly the conflict between its fundamental values and the corrosive effects of free market capitalism. Anyone who has wondered what the label "organic" really means on products available in the supermarket will benefit from reading this thoughtful book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Educational and interesting, but sometimes dry By SirMike607 I'm not much of an organic food purchaser, but I've always wondered why people bought it and whether it really made any difference. From his descriptions about organic farming techniques, the origins of the organic food movement and the schisms that continue to threaten to pull the movement apart, Samuel Fromartz's book certainly helped answer those questions and more. I am always a fan of books written by journalists, who often know better than others the importance of interviewing real people and capturing all sides to a story. I thought, however, that Fromartz's writing style could have used more of an edge. The book read like a 275-page newspaper article, was dry at times as a result, and failed to create the urge to "read one more page." That said, I would recommend Fromartz's book to anyone who is interesting in the past and present issues about the organic food industry.

Who would have thought that a natural food supermarket could have been a financial refuge from the dot-com bust? But it had. Sales of organic food had shot up about 20 percent per year since 1990, reaching \$11 billion by 2003 . . . Whole Foods managed to sidestep that fray by focusing on, well, people like me. Organic food has become a juggernaut in an otherwise sluggish food industry, growing at 20 percent a year as products like organic ketchup and corn chips vie for shelf space with conventional comestibles. But what is organic food? Is it really better for you? Where did it come from, and why are so many of us buying it? Business writer Samuel Fromartz set out to get the story behind this surprising success after he noticed that his own food choices were changing with the times. In *Organic, Inc.*, Fromartz traces organic food back to its anti-industrial origins more than a century ago. Then he follows it forward again, casting a spotlight on the innovators who created an alternative way of producing food that took root and grew beyond their wildest expectations. In the process he captures how the industry came to risk betraying the very ideals that drove its success in a classically complex case of free-market triumph.

From Publishers Weekly In recent decades, organic food—the idealistic, natural alternative to industrial agribusiness and processed packaged foods—has grown into a multibillion-dollar business. Fromartz's portrait of the adolescent industry reveals that that success has prompted an epic identity crisis. Big corporations like Kraft and General Mills own the bulk of the market, and half of all organic sales come from the largest 2% of farms, alienating those most committed to producing chemical-free fruits and vegetables on small family farms, and selling them locally. Business journalist Fromartz uncovers the trailblazers' tactics: how Whole Foods Market developed a religion of "moral hedonism," how Earthbound Farm launched a revolution with bagged salad mix and how Silk soy milk became "the number one brand in the dairy case, among all milk and soy milk brands." But if big business is now the muscle of the organic industry, Fromartz demonstrates that small growers remain at its heart. Fromartz's profiles—of pioneers who sell their produce at farmers' markets and foster cooperatively-owned, local distribution networks—deftly navigate the complexities of pesticide issues, organic production methods and the legal controversies surrounding organic certification. This is a pragmatic, wise assessment of the compromises the organic movement has struck to gain access to the mainstream. (Apr.) Copyright © 2004; Reed Business Information, a division

of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Although initially attracted to organic food from his encounters with it as a cook, business journalist Fromartz scrutinizes this ever-growing industry from an economic perspective. He focuses on the raising of strawberries, a fruit perpetually in high demand nationwide. Citing the example of a California grower who grew berries both conventionally and organically under virtually identical conditions, Fromartz declares organic farming to be indeed economically viable. Fromartz also examines the use of chemical pesticides, initially lauded as agriculture's great savior until the appearance of Rachel Carson made public their baneful long-term effects. Fromartz finds a different but similarly successful road to economic success in the story of Earthbound Farms, whose leafy mesclun mixes now appear in markets all over the country. Lest today's organic food producers become complacent, Fromartz recounts the tale of Kellogg, a company whose founders cherished lofty aims of spreading health and nutrition but who ironically ended up promoting mass-market, sugar-laden cereals quite contrary to what they had originally envisioned. Mark Knoblauch Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved PRAISE FOR ORGANIC, INC. "Fromartz does an excellent job of investigating consumer behavior and the trends that have permanently changed the food landscape."mdash;SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE"Revealing . . . Fromartz gives us a handy tool for educating ourselves."mdash;FAST COMPANY MAGAZINE