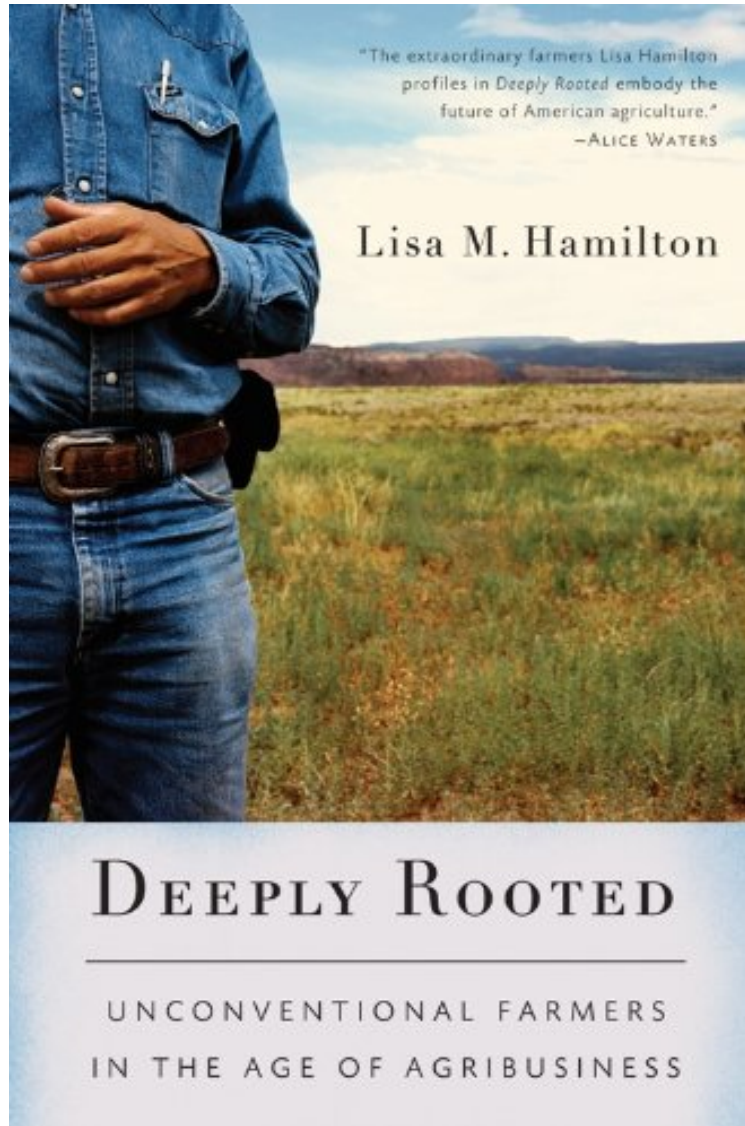


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Deeply Rooted: Unconventional Farmers in the Age of Agribusiness

Lisa M. Hamilton

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Lisa M. Hamilton : Deeply Rooted: Unconventional Farmers in the Age of Agribusiness before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Deeply Rooted: Unconventional Farmers in the Age of Agribusiness:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Overall Great BookBy CustomerAs I start read the book titled Deeply Rooted: Unconventional Farmers in the Age of Agribusiness I had no good idea of where this book was going to take me. Being an Agri-science Education major I knew I wanted to find a book I could someday share with the class I hope to have. The book starts out with the story of a man named Harry Lewis, who lives on a dairy farm in Texas. The author Lisa Hamilton explains the type of man Harry is, how he lives as an unconventional dairyman and

how the world around him doesn't always see the big picture. This book has a story unlike most, it shows how real farmers live in their everyday lives. It tells the struggles that Harry goes through as a small dairy farmer, but admits that he is not alone, being a part of Organic Valley an organization ran by other small organic dairy farmers. The area the cows are raised in, have a lot to do with what makes Harry's farm an organic and unique one. When you ask people to picture a dairy farm you automatically think of the kind of farm Harry has for his cows. The farms where the cattle are freed to graze on pasture, the farmers take their time getting their cows to the barns for the morning milking, and the type of place where the farmers decide what happens on their farm at their own pace. This section of the book really puts Harry's lifestyle into perspective when thinking of agriculture as a whole. In the next section of the book Hamilton goes to New Mexico to meet up with Virgil Trujillo a cattle rancher who came from generations of cattle ranchers. When most people think of cattle ranches they think of very large scale operations where there is thousands of cattle. In this story Hamilton shows the unconventional side of this cattle ranch and the struggles that this Mexican family has had with their land rights. Just as Harry's story Virgil lives in a county where most of his neighbors are moving to large scale operations and selling off their small cattle farms. Each section of this book shows a new perspective to the way smaller farmers think and work through their everyday life. Hamilton writes about the past present and future when she describes American agriculture as a whole. I like the fact that each story is different yet has a common goal to make their agricultural practices part of the future even if these farmers aren't alive to see it happen. In North Dakota, Hamilton visits the Podoll brother where they farm multiple different plants and seeds. They didn't really understand organic farming until seeing how they raise their product compared to larger corporations. The author writes about how David, one of the brothers, talks a lot about knowing what's morally right and wrong and that a lot of societies decisions are based on the money value placed with that problem at hand. This section shows us so much about how the world is depending upon the future of agriculture. I see each character in these sections as future leaders of the new ways of agricultural life. I like that this book shows all sides of agriculture and that the three farmers written about are all unique but very much the same. I picked this book not only because I find farming, and agriculture enjoyable to read about but also to hopefully find a book that my future students can learn more from. Reading about areas of the United States they may not be familiar with, being able to relate to the farmers unconventional ways, and seeing how agriculture as a whole makes a huge difference in the lives around us.

24 of 26 people found the following review helpful. Much praise

By snowy owl books

From the first pages of the introduction in North Dakota I know I have hit the exact source of a deeply wounded beauty belonging to traditional agriculture and the author who will stitch it together for us and give us the voice that often gets stuck in our own throat and is not easily pieced together from broken up memory. These chapters immediately make us familiar to the survivors, and all of the history we need to make sense of them. How does a 1950s style dairy farmer live on his principles that stem from a traditional land consciousness? How does a New Mexican stockman navigate ancestral lands where two distinct systems of old and new world property ownership have clashed and left him some impossible dream? In a sea of bio engineered and chemically dependent conventional crop fields, how does one North Dakota farmer feed his family using only natural methods? It is not by a matter of methods that these men survive, though the methods are important, it is their convictions and their character that lead them to independence. Harry Lewis understands that prosperity isn't something you create, prosperity is the form of our green earth; and true prosperity is received through shepherding our earth. Virgil Trujillo understands that "fitness" is "survival of the fittest" as he adapts to the cultural, political and economic forces that gash his land and his history. David Podoll has a deep spiritual sense of what is right and what is wrong, he knows that tilling massive acres of earth is a wasteful proposition if done in the conventional manner of which maximization for profit is the only god. It's also a perfect travel narrative, with a painted scenic view and a conversational style that offers absorption into the mindset and the reality of remarkable individuals. It is details that quicken the heartbeat, like the art of Georgia O'Keefe's sun bleached bones and mountains of Abiquiu, New Mexico where a surviving ejido (a form of community land ownership granted by the Spanish Crown in the 18th century) still exists in a tenuous position of holding off the government Forest Service and paying taxes. It is preparing cattle for winter rangelands and weighing in the stock, and dealing with the holier than thou environmentalists that drip in the gates to "save" the land. - Take for example the cattle in the scrubby desert, we have too often heard that cattle rampage all the vegetation and create desiccation, but as Virgil Trujillo has proven, grazing cattle in imitation of the bison using a rotational manner, may actually improve the conditions for scrub growth rather than harm them permanently. To know the land you have to be there working it. Perhaps the best vibes from this book is that we should all want to crave being as adventurous in our work and unstoppable for the truth as the embracing Lisa Hamilton has been introducing us to these unique men and women who live honorably. If we can't drive out to North Dakota, we can certainly do a little searching in our own hometowns. I may look no further than the nearest pumpkin patch run by the last farmer in the township, or the old cider mill that has pressed for nearly 140 years. As a side bar here that is personally relevant to me - I thank the author for the small-minded quote taken from the Chairman of the House Agricultural Committee - Collin Peterson (D-Minnesota) - This quote exposes the extent of his wisdom. Sadly, Monsanto pays him for those kinds of opinions.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Read!

By Craig C. Brandau

I have soft hands, well-manicured

nails and a small balcony that's too dark to grow anything. Yet, I read and enjoyed every word of this book. I'm fascinated with sustainable farming and the like, and pass information from this book and others from its genre to my high school students. Again, it's an excellent read!

A century of industrialization has left our food system riddled with problems, yet for solutions we look to nutritionists and government agencies, scientists and chefs. Lisa M. Hamilton asks: Why not look to the people who grow our food? Hamilton makes this vital inquiry through the stories of three unconventional farmers: an African-American dairyman in Texas who plays David to the Goliath of agribusiness corporations; a tenth-generation rancher in New Mexico struggling to restore agriculture as a pillar of his crumbling community; and a modern pioneer family in North Dakota who is breeding new varieties of plants to face the future's double threat: Monsanto and global warming. Threads of history and discussion weave through the tales, exploring how farmers have been pushed to the margins of agriculture and transformed from leaders to laborers. These unusual characters and their surprising stories make the case that in order to correct what has gone wrong with the food system, we must first bring farmers back to the table.

From Publishers Weekly Journalist and photographer Hamilton presents a multicultural snapshot of the American sustainable agriculture movement, profiling a Texas dairyman, a New Mexican rancher and a North Dakotan farmer, all who have converted from conventional to sustainable agriculture for economic and personal reasons. Harry Lewis, born to a family of former slaves who began farming in a Texas freedom colony, switched to organic farming to avoid price-gouging by agribusiness but also to support his core philosophical tenets. Virgil Trujillo, whose Native American ancestors were the first settlers of Abiquiu, N.Mex., practices holistic resource management at a dude ranch/retreat center. David Podoll set out to prove organic agriculture wrong, but instead was converted; he and his brother now buck the North Dakotan trend of farm consolidation and corn, soybean and wheat monoculture by focusing on the family garden and breeding plants for diversity, beauty and strength. The book vividly shows how these stubborn individualists rooted in the soil struggle are forging a path away from monolithic agribusiness to sustainable agriculture for its promise of spiritual integrity, community and food security. (May) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Agriculture is journalist and photographer Hamilton's beat, and alternatives to environmentally and economically detrimental agribusiness have become her passion. Accordingly, she profiles farmers and ranchers who believe that "agriculture is not an industry" but, rather, "a fundamental act that determines whether we as a society will live or die." East Texas dairyman Harry Lewis's commitment to keeping his organic dairy operation small and in the family stems from his forebears' role in the freedom colonies founded by former slaves. Virgil Trujillo's family has owned land and cattle in what is now Abiquiu, New Mexico, for 10 generations, and he believes that small ranches managed with an eye to the "health of the land" are the key to ending the area's bone-deep poverty. The Podoll family in North Dakota rejects "brute-force agriculture" in favor of "enduring" practices, certain that the knowledge and skills of hands-on farmers are essential to coping with climate change. Hamilton's in-depth portraits of independent farmers offer invaluable perspectives on American agriculture, past and present, while offering hope for a life-sustaining future. --Donna Seaman About the Author