Preface

This book originated in a workshop held at the Rural Sociological Society (RSS) meetings in Columbus, Ohio, in the summer of 1991. Organized at the suggestion of Frederick Buttel, then president of the RSS, the workshop was successful in two respects: first, it generated considerable interest among the forty or so people who remained after the main conference, all scholars working in the area of the political economy of agriculture; and second, the papers presented converged thematically in several ways.

The presenters had been asked to address questions of food system and agrarian change in the late twentieth century. As the resultant chapters show, they invariably located these questions in the period of global restructuring from the 1970s to the early 1990s, with two consequences. Each chapter develops a part of a matrix of changes occurring in different regions or in different commodity complexes. This overarching theme of restructuring addresses a significant transition in the world order—and does so from the novel perspective of the transformation of agricultural and food systems. Consequently, this book locates these changes in the emergence of the twenty-first-century era—an era of a new global configuration that will be characterized more by the “food” and “green” questions than by the “agrarian” question *per se*.

The following individuals deserve my gratitude for their assistance at various stages of the book’s development: Fred Buttel, for his inspiration to hold the workshop and his involvement as a discussant along

with Alessandro Bonnano, Shelley Feldman, and Gary Green; the authors of the individual chapters for their participation in this project; Billie DeWalt, for his substantive contributions to the organization of this collection; Peter Agree, for his editorial encouragement and sound advice; Helene Maddux, for her editorial attentiveness and good humor; Tonya Cook and Margo Quinto, for their skillful copy editing; Philip Harms, for his timely assistance with preparation of the manuscripts; and Le Padgett, for her tireless work in tracking down authors and typing the essays.

Finally, I thank the *Third World Quarterly* for granting permission to reprint Harriet Friedmann's essay (Chapter 11), which first appeared in volume 13, issue 2 (1992), and *Policy Studies Review* for granting permission to reprint Kathleen Stanley's essay (Chapter 5), which is a revised version of a previously published article in volume 11, issue 2 (1992).

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