



# Liberalization And Crisis In Colombian Agriculture

*Felipe Jaramillo*

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## **Liberalization And Crisis In Colombian Agriculture** Felipe Jaramillo

*Liberalization, Crisis and Change in Colombian Agriculture* provides an in-depth look at the impact of recent economic reforms on Latin American agriculture. It focuses on the experience of Colombia, a country with a large and complex agricultural sector. The bold attempt at reform initiated in 1990 posed strong challenges to Colombian agriculture, at a time when it still accounted for 20 percent of domestic employment, a fifth of gross domestic production and over a third of foreign exchange earnings. Challenges were compounded by the dual nature of this farming structure, which has traditionally consisted of two distinct segments: commercial farmers (who used modern technologies and hired labor), and *campesino* producers (who rely on family labor and more traditional production practices). Most importantly, *campesinos* have traditionally tended to specialize in the production of non-tradable staple crops, while commercial farmers favor export crops and import-competing grains and oilseeds. The book describes and analyzes events in Colombian agriculture between 1990 and 1997. It highlights the critical role that macroeconomic factors play in determining agricultural outcomes and, in particular, the effect of the real exchange rate. The analysis provides preliminary answers to important questions: What was the nature of economic reforms for agriculture? Were reforms responsible for the agricultural crisis of 1992? How did policy-makers react to plummeting farm incomes? What were the effects of policy adjustments in the aftermath of crisis? What was the nature of structural changes in Colombian agriculture between 1990 and 1997? What forces explain these changes? The Colombian experience should shed some light on similar experiences that have been recently observed in other Latin American countries. It may also yield valuable lessons for other countries still in the early stages of agricultural policy reform.

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