



A Cooperative Approach to Local Economic Development

Christophe Merrett, Norman Walzer

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Historically, the relationship between towns and surrounding farm families has ranged from suspicion to benign neglect. This book shows that rural America can be revived by uniting the interests of both farm and non-farm populations through value-added enterprises, especially those based on the principles of New Generation Cooperatives (NGCs). Instead of sending agricultural commodities out of the region to be processed, farmers and communities can collaborate to process the commodities locally, thereby adding value to the local rural economy.

In this edited volume, nationally recognized scholars discuss the on-going challenges to the agricultural sector such as declining farm subsidies and commodity prices, and the strategies used by rural communities to respond to economic decline. Specific attention is paid to the role of NGCs as a specific form of value-added agriculture which has helped some rural communities to prosper. The NGCs, however, extend well beyond traditional agriculture to include grocery stores, day care centers, and other businesses that have not always been profitable in small towns. The broader objective of the book is to show how increased collaboration among farm producers, small businesses, and community leaders can promote economic development in rural regions.

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