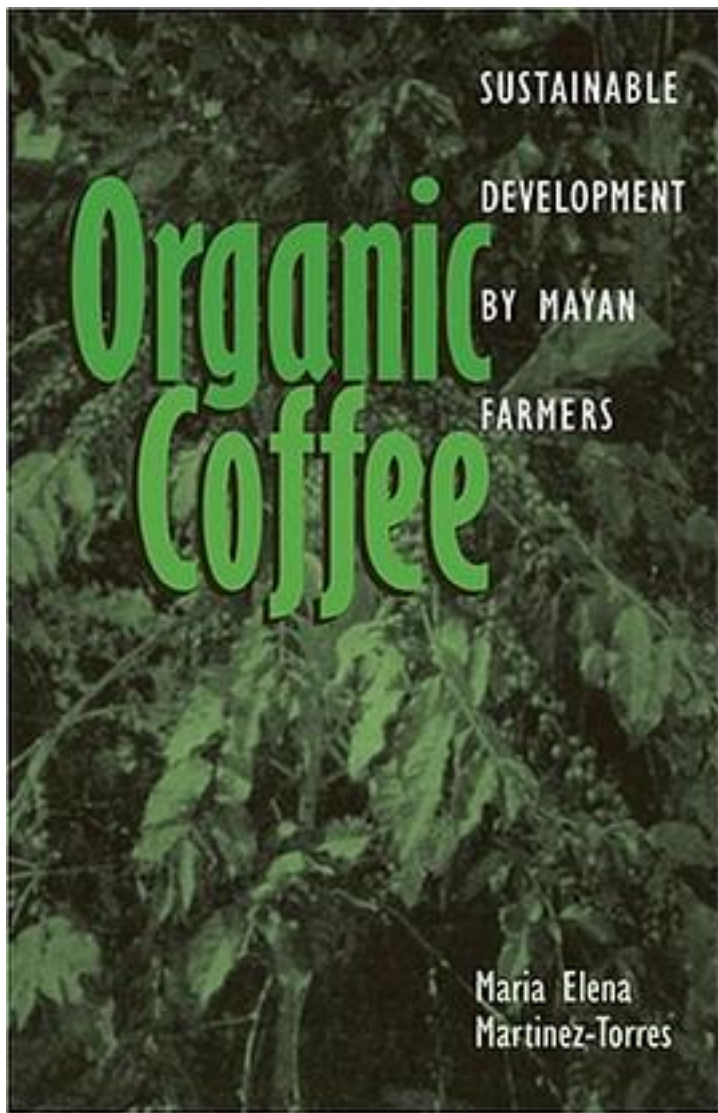


Organic Coffee



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Despite deepening poverty and environmental degradation throughout rural Latin America, Mayan peasant farmers in Chiapas, Mexico, are creating an environmental and economic success by growing organic coffee. *Organic Coffee: Sustainable Development by Mayan Farmers* provides a unique and vivid insight into how this coffee is grown, harvested, processed, and marketed to consumers in the North. Maria Elena Martinez-Torres explains how Mayan farmers have capitalized on their ethnic networks to make a crucial difference in their approach to agriculture. Taking us inside Chiapas, Mexico's poorest state, scene of the 1994 Zapatista uprising, she examines the anatomy of the on-going organic coffee boom and the effects of the free-trade movement. The energy behind this phenomenon arises from very poor farmers forming cooperatives, revaluing their ethnic identity, and adding value to their land through organic farming. The result has been significant economic benefits for their families and ecological benefits for the future sustainability of agriculture in the region. Martinez-Torres explodes the myth that organic farming is less productive than chemical-based agriculture, and gives us reasons to be hopeful for indigenous peoples and peasant farmers. *Organic Coffee* ultimately shows how sustainable agriculture at the production end can make the coffee commodity chain into a tool for bettering lives and ecologies in poor regions of the world. ABOUT THE AUTHOR---Maria Elena Martinez-Torres is from Mexico and is Global Alternatives Associate at the Center for the Study of the Americas (CENSA) in Berkeley, California. She is director of Desarrollo Alternativo, AC, a non-profit organization in Mexico that works towards alternative, sustainable development practices.

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