



# Concentration and Power in the Food System: Who Controls What We Eat? (Contemporary Food Studies: Economy, Culture and Politics)

By Philip H. Howard

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**Concentration and Power in the Food System: Who Controls What We Eat? (Contemporary Food Studies: Economy, Culture and Politics)** By Philip H. Howard

Nearly every day brings news of another merger or acquisition involving the companies that control our food supply. Just how concentrated has this system become? At almost every key stage of the food system, four firms alone control 40% or more of the market, a level above which these companies have the power to drive up prices for consumers and reduce their rate of innovation. Researchers have identified additional problems resulting from these trends, including negative impacts on the environment, human health, and communities.

This book reveals the dominant corporations, from the supermarket to the seed industry, and the extent of their control over markets. It also analyzes the strategies these firms are using to reshape society in order to further increase their power, particularly in terms of their bearing upon the more vulnerable sections of society, such as recent immigrants, ethnic minorities and those of lower socioeconomic status. Yet this study also shows that these trends are not inevitable. Opposed by numerous efforts, from microbreweries to seed saving networks, it explores how such opposition has encouraged the most powerful firms to make small but positive changes.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“The book is fun to read . . . and, obviously, well illustrated. If you want to know how current-day food markets really work, this is the place to start.” – Marion Nestle, NYU

“...this book is an excellent introductory text to food systems...Everything from the language and quotes Howard uses to the diversity of examples discussed makes Concentration and Power in the Food System an intense yet enjoyable read. Overall, this short book is packed with so much information and different points of discussion that it not only leaves readers impassioned, but also hungry for more.” – Kathleen Chiappetta, *LSE Review of Books*

“This will clearly be a major touchstone in the critical food studies field...One of the great contributions of this book is that, in synthesizing the field so effectively, it sets into relief some of the most salient questions in food systems scholarship today.” – Amy Guptill, State University of New York, co-author of *Food & Society*

#### About the Author

**Philip H. Howard** is Associate Professor of Community Sustainability at Michigan State University, USA. He has published widely in scholarly food and agriculture journals, as well as numerous outlets aimed at broader audiences, and is a member of the editorial board of the journal *Agriculture and Human Values*.

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#### Marvin Gamez:

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