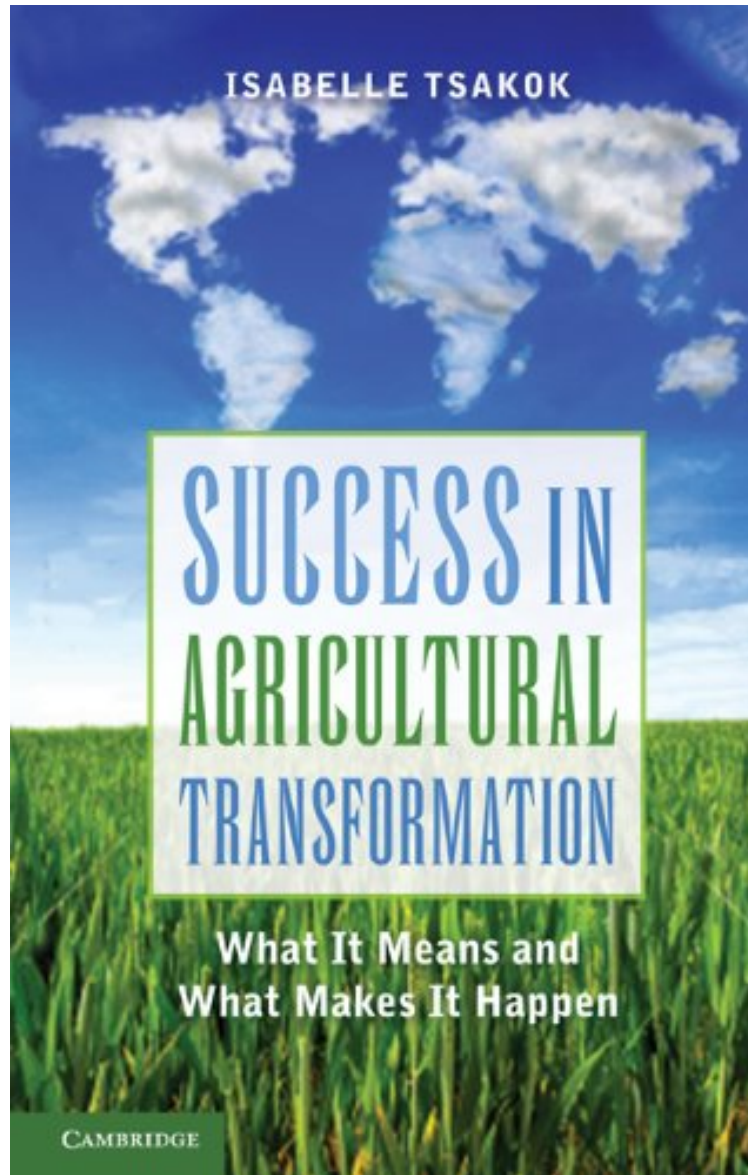


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Success in Agricultural Transformation: What It Means and What Makes It Happen

Isabelle Tsakok

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To lift and keep millions out of poverty requires that smallholder agriculture be productive and profitable in the developing world. Do we know how to make this happen? Researchers and practitioners still debate how best to do so. The prevailing methodology, which claims causality from measures of statistical significance, is inductive and yields contradictory results. In this book, instead of correlations, Isabelle Tsakok looks for patterns common to cases of successful agricultural transformation and then tests them against other cases. She proposes a hypothesis that five sets of conditions are necessary to achieve success. She concludes that government investment in and delivery of public goods and services sustained over decades is essential to maintaining these conditions and thus successfully transform poverty-ridden agricultures. No amount of foreign aid can substitute for such sustained government commitment. The single most important threat to such government commitment is subservience to the rich and powerful minority.

"Should developing countries invest in agriculture to spur growth, or tax agriculture to subsidize industry? Tsakok's examination of the fundamental evidence for these canonical economic development strategies results in a volume that is an invaluable reference to anyone making a first venture into development policy. The approach is comprehensive and nuanced, but absent the jargon and meaningless details that often obscure economic policy texts. This may well become the definitive treatment of what are the most important issues in development policy." - David R. Just, Cornell University

"Based on refutable and testable hypotheses, we finally have a serious assessment of what 'good' government can and should do to promote small-scale agriculture to reduce rural poverty. The case studies and historical evolution evaluated in this book will be welcomed by all those concerned with agricultural transformation and poverty." - Gordon C. Rausser, University of California, Berkeley

"For professionals and policy makers, a must-read for those who are willing to reassess the role of agricultural development with an open mind. For the general public, the book tells the story of how successful agricultural transformation has saved humankind from the dire predictions of the Malthusian Law of Population. For all, it is a call to action against self-serving governance that traps millions of smallholders in stagnant agricultures and soul-wrenching poverty." - Robert Thompson, Chicago Council on Global Affairs; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

"This is a marvelous book. The case studies are fascinating, the methodology used for interpreting them is innovative (and provocative), and the conclusions about the critical role of sustained support from the public sector for successful agricultural transformation are exactly right. Everyone interested in why economic development is so hard needs to read this book." - C. Peter Timmer, Harvard University

"The results of the country analyses in this book are original and relevant, demystifying many widely accepted convictions supposedly verified by econometric estimations. One belief challenged is that agricultural growth in developing countries always leads to a broad-based improvement in farm family incomes and development more generally. In contrast, Isabelle Tsakok, making use of a wealth of information from many nations, identifies five conditions common to all successful transformations of developing country agriculture and rural poverty alleviation. The comparative histories of agriculture in seventeen countries, both developed and developing, make this work a unique and valuable resource for those working in agriculture and rural development." - Alberto Valdeacute;s, Catholic University of Chile

About the Author
Isabelle Tsakok has worked on issues of economic development, particularly for agriculture and rural areas, for more than 25 years, primarily as staff at the World Bank and, since retirement, off and on, as consultant. Her professional activities focus on the policy, institutional and incentive environment for agriculture, agri-business and rural development in open, market-oriented and transition economies. Dr Tsakok's involvement in agricultural policy analysis, program and project formulation and evaluation, and research and training activities has been conducted throughout the developing world, including in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. She is the author of *Agricultural Price Policy: A Practitioner's Guide to Partial-Equilibrium Analysis* (1990), a manual widely used among development practitioners. Dr Tsakok also developed the policy simulation game EXACTION with Professor Graham Chapman, then at Cambridge University. She received her Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University.