



## *Selling Sustainability Short?*

Can private standards bring about more sustainable production practices? This question is of interest to conscientious consumers, academics studying the effectiveness of private regulation, and corporate social responsibility practitioners alike. Grabs provides an answer by combining an impact evaluation of 1,900 farmers with rich qualitative evidence from the coffee sectors of Honduras, Colombia and Costa Rica. Identifying an institutional design dilemma that private sustainability standards encounter as they scale up, this book shows how this dilemma plays out in the coffee industry. It highlights how the erosion of price premiums and the adaptation to buyers' preferences have curtailed standards' effectiveness in promoting sustainable practices that create economic opportunity costs for farmers, such as agroforestry or agroecology. It also provides a voice for coffee producers and value chain members to explain why the current system is failing in its mission to provide environmental, social, and economic co-benefits, and what changes are necessary to do better.

JANINA GRABS is a postdoctoral researcher at ETH Zurich. She is the recipient of APSA's 2019 Virginia M. Walsh Dissertation Award, the 2018 Giandomenico Majone Prize for the best early career contribution to the ECPR Standing Group on Regulatory Governance, the 2019 Oran R. Young Prize of the Earth System Governance Project, and the 2016 IFAMA Best Paper Award in the category 'relevance for managers'. She also provides strategic advice to the coffee industry, for instance as 2019 SCA Re:Co Speaker.

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# Selling Sustainability Short?

The Private Governance of Labor and the  
Environment in the Coffee Sector

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