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Abstract

This paper draws upon theories of post-Soviet economic transition to show how private agricultural contracting practices evolved in Kazakhstan. It compares how the evolution of commercial practices among food processor managers and fruit and vegetable producers in Kazakhstan differs from the experience among the same populations in Kyrgyzstan. Findings show how Kazakhstan's and Kyrgyzstan's parallel processes of commercial practice transformation yielded different outcomes. In Kazakhstan, food processors began to vertically integrate in order to address the disorderly and unpredictable commercial practices that characterized their relationships with fruit and vegetable suppliers. These buyers and sellers in the fruit and vegetable sector negotiated a transition from managerial transactions to bargaining transactions and back to managerial transactions—or hybrid transactions. Fruit and vegetable suppliers and processors in Kyrgyzstan collectively arrived at norms of business conduct that reflected a transformation from managerial transactions to bargaining transactions.