



**COST action A35 Progressore
Programme For the Study of European Rural Societies PROGRESSORE)**

Third Workshop of Working Group 4

With the collaboration of :

**Archiv für Agrargeschichte Archives of rural history
Archives de l'histoire rurale AFA AHR ARH**

State Agricultural Policies: Causes, Implementation and Consequences

Call for papers for a Workshop in Berne on 3-5 June 2008

This will be the last of three conferences to be held by the working group 4 on the historical dimensions of "The State, Government, Politics and Rural Society", within the wider framework of the project for the study of European rural societies of the European Science Foundation (COST action A 35).

The aim of the workshop is to produce a deeper insight into the complex process of change and continuity in European agriculture and rural society of Europe before and after World War I. The time to be covered in this third conference will therefore be the period of modern European statehood, beginning roughly in the late 18th century and proceeding right up to the present day. World War I stands out as a crucial turning point because in many respects it fundamentally changed the character of state intervention in agriculture. State intervention before World War I was selective and mainly geared towards encouraging self-help within the agricultural sector so as to improve adaptation to the requirements of the newly established worldwide division of labour between producers. After the 1914/18 war state agricultural policies in Western Europe became much more comprehensive with the introduction of production regulations, price-fixing and delivery obligations. Many of the core features of the new policy regime introduced during the 1914/18 war would survive intact up to the 1990's. It was therefore the experience of the threat and reality of food shortage during the First World War that would fundamentally shape the agricultural policies of most western European states in the 20th century.

The spatial focus of the conference will be on Europe. In the period up to the foundation of what would evolve into the European Union, the experience of countries in the south, west, north and east of Europe will all be looked at. For the second half of the 20th century European Union countries, eastern European ones and a small number of non EU-member states will have to be looked at closely in a comparative framework.

Attention must further be paid to the development of international organisations, especially the OECD and GATT/WTO, which could exert enormous (if, until the 1980/90's, seldom discussed) influence on the nation-states and on EU-agricultural policies since the 1950's.

While nation-based case studies will be very welcome, comparative approaches - comparing at least two countries or two different “models” with each other – will be especially encouraged.

The conference will last for three days. The first two days will be devoted to the work of the four planned sections of the third workshop (see below). The business of the third day will be to draw conclusions from all three of the workshops convened so far by working group 4 of COST action A 35. In the interests of continuity, a small number of key participants of the two earlier workshops will be invited to participate on the third workshop as well.

Workshop Sections

The workshop in Bern shall be divided into four sections. All participants will attend each section. The reason for this is to encourage participants to form an overview and to acquire a common knowledge that will stimulate further research in the themes of the conference.

Section I: The State and Agricultural Policy

In this section the motives behind the “old” and the “new” agricultural policies will be identified and analysed as will the forms and extent of state intervention in production agriculture and in food processing sectors. Attention will further be paid to emerging ‘market orders’ as well as to the question of how central agriculture has been to public policy in the 20th century.

A special question posed in Section I will ask how different states influenced agriculture’s greatly increased uptake of fossil fuel-based mineral resources in the 1950/60’s, a development that would revolutionize agricultural production, changing input, production methods and output fundamentally.

A third focus of Section I will consider the relationship between nation states/the EU and international organizations like OECD and GATT/WTO in the area of agriculture. What aims did these organisations pursue, who implemented them and how were/are they legitimised?

Section II: Actors

Even though the state became something of an “authoritarian mediator” between consumers and producers in the 20th century, the whole process required the participation of a range of different actors. Section II will therefore focus on the questions of who shaped and who implemented the new agricultural policy. Here the role and impact of the state’s administrative apparatus shall be examined as well as that of (agricultural) scientists and the cooperative movement (consumer and producer cooperatives).

The impact and influence of interest groups (producers, consumers, industrial organisations etc.) must also be examined. Why, for instance, were these included in the decision-making process in some countries and excluded in others? What impacts did that have on the political behaviour of the farming population?

Another topic for Section II concerns the issue of what alternatives to mainstream agricultural policies were propagated and why these failed to be implemented.

Section II will further regard the gender aspect of agricultural policy formation and implementation to be of basic importance, given the way policy had in many ways different implications for men and women who, accordingly, have tended to react differently.

Section III: Economic and Ecological Impacts

The links between food production, landscape creation and the development of biodiversity are not alone a feature of agricultural societies, but surfaced as issues in most European states in the years before the 1950/60's. From the 1950's on, as farmers were forced and/or induced to base their production more on the consumption of mineral resources, the relationship between food production, landscape management and biodiversity underwent fundamental change. In the process of replacing labour by mineral resources the costs of production sank dramatically and led – even though food became ever more processed and refined – to an ever declining percentage of household income being expended on food. The price for this “cheap food policy” was ecological degradation that led – in a parallel movement to the liberalization of food production – to a new wave of state intervention in the agricultural sector, this time aimed at the protection the environment.

A number of questions will be dealt with in Section 111. How have the EU/states sought to strike a balance between the requirements of “cheap food” production and the necessity to maintain and restore environmental integrity? How have farmers tried to combine conflicting trade and environmental policies on the farm level? And what implications has the “split” of human beings into consumers and taxpayers had for observable patterns of behaviour?

Section IV: Agricultural Policy in the early 21st century

Although the agricultural policies of the European states and the European Union have been criticised by groups both within and outside the agricultural sector for a long time, this criticism has intensified since the late 1960's and has eventually led to a number of contemporary reforms. One aim in Section IV will be to take a close look at the various motives and strategies of the different groups to understand why certain reforms have been approved and why others have been ignored or rejected.

Since much of the new policy is guided towards a *rural space* rather than a *rural society* or even *agricultural population*, one specific point to be discussed in Section IV is: who is implementing the new “environmental” or “rural” policy? And what does the pattern of implementation mean for the many agricultural organisations whose main purpose has been the implementation of the “old” agricultural policies? Are, along with the peasants, the farm labourers, the family members and the farmers, the agricultural scientists and economists to also disappear in the future? Who, in other words, is to decide and implement the new “environmental” or “rural” policy of the future?

Dates and deadlines

July 31, 2007: deadline for abstracts (300-400 words)

March 31, 2008: deadline for finished conference papers (15-25 pages)

3-5 June: Workshop

We invite scholars to propose papers from all parts of Europe. After the evaluation of the proposals by the scientific committee, 12-16 contributors will be invited for a presentation (in English) of approximately 25 minutes. All presentations will be pre-circulated to the contributors two weeks before the workshop. Reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs is possible for contributors from any one of the 21 signatory states of COST A35 (listed at www.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=233&action_number=a35). Further information on the workshop will be updated at www.agrararchiv.ch.

Proposals for contributions should be sent to Peter Moser (peter.moser@agrarchiv.ch) until August 31, 2007.

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