

Agriculture and Food

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[\[Introduction\]](#)

As Europe developed into one of the main industrial regions of the world, agriculture lost economic importance, both in terms of GDP and employment. European peasants abandoned the countryside, becoming industrial or service workers through migrations, either to the European cities or abroad. For policy makers, academics and society, peasants and agriculture represented the old Europe, the past, as opposed to economic and social modernisation. There was a basic contradiction between the rural world and technological innovations. After WW II, however, when the European Common Market began to be built, it was apparent that agriculture was still a dynamic part of European economy and society. Farmers had political power, particularly in those countries, like in France, where they remained an important percentage of the population. During approximately four decades, competition took place around prices; this led to mass-scale agricultural production, intensive capitalisation and ever-growing mechanisation and fertilisation, and the increasing substitution of small farmers for agricultural firms. The extent to which agricultural production was industrialised determined costs of production and thus viability. Entire areas were forced to shift to new productions, following policies designed and implemented in "Brussels".

This growing competition was not restricted to the mere food production, but it also led to enormous changes with regard to the whole process of nourishment, i.e., the agro-industry, the catering business, the kitchen at home, and the table, which deeply influenced the way Europeans eat and think about food. New techniques, more machinery, and innovative organisation were applied to acquire and keep part of the consumer market (e.g., sophisticated dairy products, eating out in new environments, microwave ovens...). This individualised the food consumption highly, which led (and will further lead) to serious economic, social and cultural interrogations.

The growing awareness of Europeans about the importance of the food consumed upon their health, together with a high rent level, has introduced higher standards of quality in the European demand for food: competitive prices are no longer the clue to survival for European farmers. In fact, among educated (and well-paid) classes there is a tendency for non-industrial food that privileges locally produced, traditionally manufactured products. The image of French farmer José Bové campaigning against McDonald's (the symbol of industrial, non-European food) and vindicating the return to local, 'natural', European food, represents well these new tendencies, that have deep economic and social implications.

Today, a new image of both our food and the countryside is developing in Europe (the "genuine" against the "false" of urban, industrial society). New functions are assigned to the agricultural population, their work and produce: gardeners to take care of forests and landscapes for urban tourists, farmers to maintain old techniques of production, ecologists to rise healthy poultry and vegetables, preservers of our environmental heritage, food quality control, healthy meals et cetera.

We propose five themes to be inserted into these developments.

1. *Industrial catering, fast food and their rejection*

Food for large communities: ways in which food is provided for people in schools, factories, firms, institutions (canteens, aeroplanes...); ways in which food is provided for recreating masses (diversification and choice: fast food, fish & chips shops, ice cream, diners, snack bars...). The consequence for daily (and festive) meal patterns, eating in & out; the reaction

and rejection of industrial catering with the growing mobilisation of consumers around --i.e., for and against different types of food.

2. *Hygiene and technological innovations in food preservation.*

Problems related to food production and commercialisation: changes in the way food is stored and sold. This implies attention to the role of medicine and research, the bond between "science" and industry, the influence of marketing and advertising, the response of (male and female) consumers, the role of the state. Particular attention may be devoted the two World Wars in developing industrial food and catering (new systems of canning and packing food, e.g.).

3. *European models of agricultural technological innovations: the ecological restriction*

Basically, there are two Europe's: a wet one and a dry one. Conflicts around the use of water are frequent in the dry south, leading to specific water policies. Quite different technological innovations have responded to the very distinct situations in both Europe's.

4. *The technical formation of the agricultural labour force.*

How is technical knowledge created? Do farmers themselves innovate, or do state technicians, co-operatives or firms take the initiative? When and why did farmers reject technological innovations, and when did they adopt these? How did the process occur by which the technical qualification of the European agricultural population increased? How were immigrant labourers incorporated to the highly technified European agriculture?

5. *The role of EC policies in technological innovations in agriculture.*

To what extent did institutional factors shape (direct, stimulate) the increasing technification of European agriculture? To what extent did European policies create or, on the contrary, eliminate the tensions derived from change?

[Project Team]

Theme coordinators

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Peter Scholliers (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussel), (peter.scholliers@vub.ac.be), Theme coordinator

Participants

- Martin BRUEGEL (Laboratoire de Recherche sur la Consommation, Institute National de la Recherche Agronomique, Paris) (Martin.Bruegel@ivry.inra.fr), Techniques for food conservation in the 20th century.
- Rayna GAVRILOVA (University of Sofia, Dept. of History and Theory of Culture) (rgavrilova@osf.bg), Changing tastes: the influence of medical discoveries and new hygienic norms on food consumption.
- Isabelle LESCENT-GILLES (Université Sorbonne, Paris) (llescentgiles@aol.com)
- José LÓPEZ-GÁLVEZ (Universidad de Almería) (jgalvez@ual.es), Environmental impact of modern agricultural technologies.

- Konstadinos MATTAS (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Economics,) (mattas@auth.gr), The role of EC policies in technological innovations in agriculture.
- Barbara ORLAND (ETH Zürich, Institut für Geschichte, Zürich) (barbara.orland@history.gess.ethz.ch) . Milky Ways. Dairy Cattle Production, Landscape and Nation Building in 19th century.
- Josep PUJOL (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona) (josep.pujol.andreu@uab.es), Biological innovations and agrarian growth in Atlantic and Mediterranean Europe.
- Michael REDCLIFT and David GOODMAN (King's College, London), (michael.r.redclift@kcl.ac.uk). Ecological Modernisation and the International Food System: rearticulation and resistance.
- Vaclav SMIL (University of Manitoba) (vsmil@cc.UManitoba.CA), Nitrogen in European agriculture: changes, benefits and undesirable consequences.
- Ulrike THOMS (Freie Universität Berlin, Institut für Geschichte der Medizin, Berlin) (ulrike.thoms@medizin.fu-berlin.de), Industrialising catering. Technological developments and its effects in the twentieth century.
- Leen Van Molle (Department Geschiedenis, Leuven) (leen.vanmolle@arts.kuleuven.ac.be), The impact of agricultural technological innovations on the formation of the agricultural labour force.
- Anneke VAN OTTERLOO (Universiteit van Amsterdam, Vakgroep Geschiedenis, Amsterdam) (Vanotterloo@pscw.uva.nl, and egelwier@wxs.nl, home), The development of fast food and its counter movements in Europe in the twentieth century.

[Schedule]

We plan a meeting in Barcelona, March 2003. A group of 15 people will come together. The Tensions of Europe network will pay travel and accommodation cost. Participants will present short papers in English (between 6.000 to 9.000 words) on the state of the art, not so much as an annotated bibliography but primarily as a text that brings together the relevant questions, indicates big problems, points at different methodologies and approaches. A final conference where all themes will come together is due to take place in the fall of 2003.

[Publications]

We aim at the publication of the papers of the Barcelona meeting (either as a separate book or as a special issue of a review). Also, the results of our theme (Agriculture and Food) will be linked to results of other themes in a horizontal approach (see above). A further aim will be the submitting of research proposals in co-ordination with other themes of Tensions of Europe. This would be done in the course of 2003 or early 2004. In a way, the present stage is only the long-term preparation of the coming research.

Agriculture and Food Workshop

Barcelona, 27-30 March 2003

Organized by Prof. Peter Scholliers (Vrije University, Brussels) and
Prof. Carmen Sarasúa (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

PROGRAM

Thursday 27 of March

Arrival. Hotel Cristal Palace (Diputació, 257, Tlf.: 93 487 87 78)

Free evening

Friday 28 of March

- 9 am. Presentation, by Peter Scholliers and Carmen Sarasúa
- 9'30 am. Conference by Prof. Ramon Garrabou (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), president of the Spanish Association of Agrarian History. **Les conditionnements environnementaux du changement technique agricole.**
- 10'15 am. Prof. Ruth Oldenziel (ToE's Coordination Committee, Vice-chair). **Presentation of the Tensions of Europe Project.**
- 10'45 am Coffee break

SESSION 1. AGRICULTURE (chair: Carmen Sarasúa)

- 11 am. Vaclav SMIL (U. of Manitoba), **Nitrogen in European agriculture: changes, benefits and undesirable consequences, 1850-2000.**
- 11'45 am. Leen VAN MOLLE (Departement Geschiedenis, K. U. of Leuven), **'Kulturkampf' at the countryside: the social and cultural impact of technological innovations in agriculture, 1890s-1950s.**
- 12'30 am. Discussion
- 1 pm Lunch at the Hotel.

SESSION 1. FOOD (chair: Peter Scholliers)

- 2'45 pm. Martin BRUEGEL (Institute National de la Recherche Agronomique, Paris), **Food conservation technologies and consumption patterns, 20th-century Europe.**
- 3'30 pm. Anneke VAN OTTERLOO (Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Amsterdam), **The development of fast food and its counter movements in Europe in the twentieth century.**
- 4'15 pm. Coffee break
- 4'30 pm. Isabelle LESCENT-GILLES (Université de Paris-Sorbonne and Institute Universitaire de France), **The impact of technological innovation on food retailing in France and the UK since the 1950s.**
- 5'45 pm. Discussion
- 9 pm. Dinner at Restaurante Can Margarit (Concòrdia, 21, Telf.: 93 441 67 23)

Saturday 29 of March

SESSION 2. AGRICULTURE (chair: Carmen Sarasúa)

- 9'30 am. Josep PUJOL (Dept. de Història Econòmica, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), **Biological innovations and agrarian growth in Atlantic and Mediterranean Europe, 19th and 20th centuries.**
- 10'15 am. Konstadinos MATTAS and Efstratios LOIZOU (School of Agriculture, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), **The role of EC policies in technological innovations in agriculture.** Discussion
- 11 a.m. Coffee break
- 11'15 José LÓPEZ-GÁLVEZ, María del Carmen NAVARRO, José SALAZAR MATO (Escuela de Ingenieros Agrónomos, Universidad de Almería), **Environmental impact of modern agricultural technologies, 1975-2000.**
- 12 pm. Michael REDCLIFT (King's College, London), and David GOODMAN (University of California at Santa Cruz), **Ecological Modernisation and the International Food System: rearticulation and resistance.**
- 12'45 pm. Discussion
- 1'30 p.m. Lunch (at the hotel)

SESSION 2. FOOD (chair: Peter Scholliers)

- 3 p.m. Rayna GAVRILOVA (Dept. of History and Theory of Culture, University of Sofia), **Changing tastes: the influence of medical discoveries and new hygienic norms on food consumption.**
- 3'45 pm. Barbara ORLAND (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zurich), **Milky Ways. Dairy Cattle Production, Landscape and Nation Building from the 1850s to World War I.**
- 4'30 pm. Coffee Break
- 5 pm. Ulrike THOMS (Institut für Geschichte der Medizin, Freie Universität Berlin), **Industrialising catering. Technological developments and their effects in the twentieth century.**
- 5'45 pm. Discussion
- 9'30 pm. Dinner at EL TAXIDERMISTA, plaza Reial, 8 (tel: 93 41245 36) together with the Tensions of Europe's Group on Information Systems and Technology in Organisations and Society (ISTOS).

Sunday 30 of March, 2003.

- 8 am, by bus to Amposta (Tarragona) (1'45 hours)
- 10 to 1'30, visit to Delta del Ebro
- 1'30 pm lunch at L'Estany.
- 3'30 leaving for Barcelona airport.
- 5 pm. Airport.