

## Abstract

This study of meat production, marketing and consumption aims to shed light on the causes and consequences of the major structural change that took place in West German agriculture in the second half of the twentieth century. It will consider a number of key factors in this transformation. These include the changes in livestock production and meat processing that occurred through improved animal breeding and other scientific knowhow (such as veterinary expertise for example), labour-saving machinery, swifter transport and more effective refrigeration techniques. Meanwhile, meat marketing and consumption were transformed by the rise of big supermarket chains and new consumer expectations. Other factors shaping meat production and marketing emerged after the founding of the EEC in 1957: West German agricultural policy underwent a process of alignment with EEC directives and had to adapt to the opening of the agricultural market to foreign imports following the founding of the Common Market in 1967/68.

The main focus of the study is the period up to the beginning of the 1980s: this enables a close examination of farmers' reactions to the challenge of the Common Market and the new practices they evolved as a response. But it will also offer a survey of subsequent developments up to 1993/4, when a serious outbreak of swine flu in the north German intensive farming region exposed the problems associated with the new production methods and triggered new levels of public concern.

Since livestock production represents the commercial core business of West German agriculture, meat production and marketing constitute the ideal object through which to explore the emergence of modern agribusiness from more traditional farming methods. By focusing on three sorts of meat - beef, pork and chicken – whose production was subject to different degrees of mechanization, the project is conceived so that it can analyse different trajectories of change within the overall trend. The proposed project will produce a study that combines agricultural history in new ways with political, business and consumer history and the history of science and technology. Through adopting these multiple methodologies and perspectives, the project aims to produce an unusually rich and vivid form of social history.