

Wheat production in fascist period. A comparison among high farming, latifundium and sharecropping using the Catasto Agrario of 1929

Keywords:
agriculture, wheat, fascism

In the mid-1920s, the Kingdom of Italy was a strong importer of wheat; In order to reverse this deficit in the trade balance, the fascist regime decided to implement an agrarian policy aimed at achieving, within a few years, full self-sufficiency. This policy is remembered as the "Battaglia del Grano" and began in 1925, relying heavily on the studies of Arrigo Serpieri. The measures were aimed at increasing production not so much with the increase in the area to be allocated to wheat, but above all with an improvement in yields per hectare. Factors that had a positive impact were the progressive spread of mechanization in the countryside, the increased use of chemical fertilizers, the widening of land credit, the use of selected seeds. In this work we will analyze the effects of fascist politics in the first period using data from the Catasto Agrario of 1929, the second experience of this type after that of 1910. In this case, they were taken in between case studies (Lombardia, Tuscany and Puglia) were taken into account corresponding to three geographical areas of the country (North, Central and South) and three different forms of agricultural management (intensive agriculture, sharecropper and latifundia) . After an initial descriptive analysis with provincial data, the focus will be on yields per hectare by comparing the values of 1929 with the average values of 1923-28 using data at the municipal level. We will try to understand if there is a link between the yield of wheat and its spread on the territory in the three different forms of conduction and, with different models of linear regression, we will go to identify which explanatory variables had a greater influence on crop productivity levels in different provinces. The variables that influenced the increase in yields can highlight chemical concisms, the agrarian population the number of livestock and the impact of the agricultural population on the present one.