

Piotr Franaszek
Institute of History
Jagiellonian University
Cracow – Poland
piotrfra@Argo.hist.uj.edu.pl

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Agricultural Production in the Northern Province of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (Galicia) in the 19th Century

In my paper I will be dealing with the problems of agricultural production in the northern province of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy known as Galicia. However, at the very beginning, it is my duty to draw attention to the basic conditions of the development of agriculture at the whole territory of Poland, divided towards the end of the 18th century among Russia, Austria and Prussia.

Even a superficial analysis of current developmental level of Polish agriculture, the structure of agricultural products, mechanisation ratio, demographic structure of rural community, and even rural scenery indicates the presence of substantial differences between the Polish and West-European country.

These essential differences have got unusually strong setting in the history of Polish agriculture. Some distant conditions can even be found in social-economic history of the 16th century Europe. As is commonly known that time the Elbe River divided Europe into two essentially different areas in economic and social terms. Great demand in West-European countries for Polish agricultural and forest products was very important for intensive development of Polish agriculture, and especially wheat culture products as fundamental Polish export goods. On the other hand, however, this boom lasting for over a century became a primary cause for negative, long-term social-economic effects that prolonged up to the middle of 19th century for country farming and also for a whole state. And so, beginning from the 16th century there occurred the process of re-feudalization of the Polish country manifested by formation of nobleman farms called villein granges, where basic manpower was that of peasant's unpaid labour, the peasant remaining personally subject to the grange's owner. In 1782 a partial personal liberty was granted to peasants on the Polish lands included in the Austrian state, whereas in 1807 personal liberty was awarded to peasants living on the Polish lands under the Prussian rule and in the Duchy of Warsaw formed by Napoleon¹. However, as far as up to around mid 19th century, namely to the affranchisement, peasants remained hereditary tenants of the land formally owned by the nobility. Because of this peasants had a duty to do compulsory, unpaid job at a nobleman's estate. Low and systematically falling effectiveness of this job made that it prolonged from one day a week at the beginning of the 16th century to - what may seem funny - 10, or even 12 days a week at the beginning of the 19th century. Besides burdens on behalf of the court, peasants had to provide benefits for the state, commune, and the Church. This huge amount of burdens, with the lack of own land, made the peasants determined to fight for it, and once having got it - by

¹ Z. Ludkiewicz, *Handbook of agrarian policy*, Warsaw 1932, p.49-60.

way of affranchisement - the circumstances described gave rise to exceptionally strong, almost instinctive attachment to one's own land.

Over a whole 19th century the Polish lands were ruled by the three neighbouring states, namely Russia, Prussia and Austria. Partition of Poland between these three states, which took place in the 18th century, had an essential effect on diversity of political and economic-social situation in each of the three regions of partitioned Poland. The developmental line of agriculture in each of the three regions of partitioned Poland had more or less the same course until the beginning of the 19th century, when agricultural development began to substantially diversify in individual parts of partitioned Poland. A decisive moment was affranchisement, which was carried out by authorities of each region of partitioned Poland in different time and according to different rules, however, just before affranchisement and especially in the second half of the 18th century the attempts could have been observed on the lands of Prussian region that granges voluntarily changed villein service for hired labour².

The Prussian state was the first to begin the process of affranchisement, however, it did not go through in the same way in all parts of the state. An edict issued by a Prussian king in 1811 did not award to peasants the land they had cultivated so far, but only created an opportunity to purchase it. Affranchisement was meant to be a bilateral agreement between a peasant and a grange's owner, who was entitled for large damages in compensation for villein service and other benefits he gave up. A peasant paid damages directly in money, or gave away about 1/3 of his land to the grange. Only rich peasants could have taken advantage of such form of abolition of villein service, whereas poor peasants did not qualify for affranchisement and still performed villein service. On the territory of the Wielkopolska region, which in 1811 belonged to the Duchy of Warsaw, the process of affranchisement started in 1823. Also this time large peasant holdings of ca 15 ha underwent the affranchisement. Ultimately the problem was solved in 1850, when poor peasants were allowed to obtain favourable bank credits to pay damages to granges' owners, which made possible to carry out affranchisement of smaller holdings³. The way of carrying out the affranchisement in the Prussian region of partitioned Poland (also called the "Prussian road to capitalism") formed a very characteristic, for this area, agrarian structure marked with deep stratification of the country. Thus, about 56% of a whole cultivated land came into possession of great land owners (ca 2.5% of all farms), and an average area of grange farm was 760 ha. On the lands owned by peasants strong peasant holdings were dominant of average area over 20 ha that occupied more than 80% of peasant land, whereas holdings of area under 5 ha occupied less than 20%. The process of affranchisement carried out in this way made the grange farms essentially strengthened in terms of economy. On one hand they possessed more cultivated land, on the other hand acquired huge funds necessary to carry out investments and pay to hired workers once they had lost free manpower of villein peasants. This is just these holdings that created strong capitalistic-type farms in a relatively short time. Also large peasant holdings supported by convenient bank credits underwent transformation, in a short time, into farm-type holdings. On the other side owners of smallholdings became a natural manpower back up for stronger holdings. Owing to these changes agriculture on Polish lands annexed by Prussia showed the same level as agriculture in the best-developed European regions.

However, history of agriculture in the Kingdom of Poland (lands annexed by Russia) and Galicia, i.e. Polish lands governed by Austria went another way. First of all, affranchisement was performed there much later and on different rules as it was in a region annexed by Prussia. In Galicia affranchisement took place in 1848, thus in the time of the

² *History outline of country husbandry in Poland*, vol.III, Warsaw, ed. J. Leskiewiczowa, p.172.

³ Z. Ludkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p.44-49.

Springtide of Nations /Revolution of 1848/⁴, and still later on in the Kingdom of Poland, namely in 1864 during a great uprising against Russian rule, which in the Polish history has been referred to as the January Uprising. In both these regions, with some differences, the rules of enfranchisement were similar. In Galicia peasants were given the land they cultivated, with villein service of about 25 million days (!) at the moment of enfranchisement cancelled at the same time. The act provided compensation for the court, which should have partially been paid by peasants and the state. Also in the Kingdom of Poland peasants were granted, on the ownership base, the land cultivated by themselves. In spite of the fact that the state made itself responsible for paying compensation to the owners, peasants were burdened with higher land tax, which was assumed to give rise to indemnity fund. Actually, to some small extent a part of state property was distributed also between peasants with no farmland of their own⁵. Both in Galicia and the region under Russian rule numerous conflicts were caused by the problem of servitudes, in other words the right of peasants to free use of court's woods and pastures.

After enfranchisement a peasant became an owner of his holding. It appeared, however, that initially he was not able to run it under new conditions. Moreover, he had no capital to invest in the holding, still being burdened with land tax and compensation for the benefit of the court. The amount of burden for 1 ha of peasant land was higher than that of 1 ha of grange land. As holdings were small, the peasants searched for additional job. This caused an increase in supply of manpower in the country, which led to wage decrease. The peasants tried to fulfil these obligations by contracting loans, often with usury, which consequently worsened their material status. Before enfranchisement, in case of disaster, a peasant obtained benefits from the court. After enfranchisement grange farms sued peasants, who could not pay compensation instalments on time. Many a time it ended in the sale of holdings the peasants were forced to. At the same time high birth rate in the country led to division of holdings in the course of inheritance right, which accelerated the process of diminution of peasant holdings. It was a harmful circumstance that caused an increase in the number of holdings economically not self-dependent, which could not face competition of larger, better run holdings.

A remnant of feudalism, which made a peasant unable to run his holding in a rational way, was a "patchwork of fields", namely a cultivated own land comminuted into many parts quite frequently distant from each other.

In both regions of the partitioned Poland the assumed rules of enfranchisement reforms led to the formation of unfavourable ownership structure. Especially poor the situation was in Galicia. In the mid 19th 15% of peasant holdings occupied the area less than 0.5 ha, 42% made holdings of 0.5 to 5 ha, and 16% of 5 to 10 ha. Only majority of the holdings belonging to the latter group (and also depending on location) were goods holdings. The holdings of an area smaller than 5 ha, in overwhelming majority made agricultural products to satisfy their own needs. These holdings were characteristic for low mechanization level and used primitive, wooden tools. Substantial areas of land lay fallow due to the lack of financial means to carry out melioration process. The above-mentioned circumstances and many other reasons made that the level of agrarian culture was different in each of the three regions of partitioned Poland. It has been reflected in analysis of synthetic ratios. One of them is yield ratio.

These long lasting economic and social conditions as well as the political events having adverse effect on Poland of the final years of the 18th century, had a very strong impact on the direction which Polish agriculture started to follow. It would be useless to look for any

⁴ S. Inglot, *Peasants social-economic history in the Austria ruled region of partitioned Poland*, [in:] *History of Polish peasants*, Warsaw 1972, p.161-289.

⁵ Z. Ludkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p.65-69.

significant improvement in the land production at the turn of the 18th and the 19th centuries. What is more, in the case of Galicia, the situation at that period became markedly worse. This was pointed to by Stanisław Szczepanowski, actively involved in dealing with the economic problems of 19th century Poland, in the book he wrote in 1888. The book had the all telling title *Poverty in Galicia in Numbers and the Program of Intensive Development of the Country Economy* (*Nędza Galicji w cyfrach i program energicznego rozwoju gospodarstwa domowego*)⁶.

Szczepanowski considered agriculture to be the most neglected branch of the Galician economy. He also drew attention to the faulty structure of land ownership and to the excessive taxes put on peasants. At the same time, according to him, it was agriculture that should have been given special attention as the most important branch of the country economy. That is why he suggested government support for the essential projects that would involve land improvement, building of new farming facilities and purchase of tools and livestock. Such actions were supposed to lead to the intensification of Galician agriculture and, in effect, offer tolerable life conditions to the rural population.

Basing on detailed studies a question should be put whether the Galician agriculture was really characterised by decline, stagnancy, or perhaps revealed some slow but nevertheless positive tendencies. In an attempt at solving this problem, the author has made a thorough analysis of plant production which showed a visible growth only in the second half of the 19th century. As a result a raise of agricultural productivity, observed in many countries at the turn of the 18th century, came to Galicia about 100 years later.

The global evaluation of plant production in Galicia at that time, presented in strictly statistical terms, was related by the author to the two selected issues. Firstly, he took into consideration the general index of plant production, and secondly, the demographic aspects accompanying changes in this branch of agriculture in Galicia. The chosen indices refer to plant production in the whole province and in its two parts i.e. the West Galicia and the East Galicia, which differed both in respect of the social structure and the production abilities.

Before we refer however, to the results obtained during such analysis, let us present a more general picture of plant production in Galicia in the second half of the 19th century.

Detailed studies point to positive tendencies as for the growth of the crop area. The studies revealed the unquestionable domination of the forage plants cultivation area in relation to the total crop area in Galicia⁷. If the forage plants cultivation area was increased by the area used for growing oats, largely grown as a forage plant, the two values resulted in over 40% of the total crop area in Galicia (ca. 1830700 ha). Nearly one fourth of the crop area was however used for two basic cereals – rye and wheat (average ca. 1022230 ha). Significant area was devoted to growing potatoes treated as a staple food but also as forage plant and a basic raw material for distilleries (average ca. 417700 ha). We cannot at the same time fail to notice the low share of industrial crops which not only presented a negligible 1.5% of the total crop land area but what is more, underwent constant reduction which had an obvious effect on the size of industrial crops obtained. Here are the average shares of the field crops in the total cultivable land area in Galicia in the years 1876-1913; 1. Hay producing pasture land - 19.7%, 2. Oats - 17.1%, 3. Rye - 14.9%, 4. Wheat - 10.5%, 6. Potatoes - 10.4%, 7. Barley - 8.8%, 8. Clover grown for hay - 6%, 9. leguminous plants - 3.4%, 10. Buckwheat - 2.2%, 11. Maize - 2%, 11. Plant mix - 1.7%, 12. Millet - 0.7%, 13. Mangel - 0.6%, 14. Clover grown for seed-

⁶ Stanisław Szczepanowski, *Nędza Galicji w cyfrach i program energicznego rozwoju gospodarstwa krajowego* (*Poverty of Galicia in Numbers and the Program of Intensive Development of the Country Economy*), Lvov 1888.

⁷ P. Franaszek, *Produkcja Roślinna w Galicji doby autonomicznej* (*Plant Production in Galicia of the Autonomy Times*), Cracow 1995.

0.6%, 15. Hemp - 0.6%, 16. Flax-0.45%, 17. Rape - 0.3%, 18. Sugar beet - 0.11%, 19. tobacco-0.05%, 20. Hop - 0.04%.

A comparative analysis of plant production in both parts of Galicia, i.e. the East Galicia and the West Galicia, points to obvious domination of the East Galicia. Nearly three times bigger area of the East Galicia as compared to the West Galicia was the reason why nearly 70% of the cultivable land in Galicia was concentrated in its eastern part. Consequently, the East Galicia also showed higher share of cultivable land available for respective field crops. Similar areas used in both parts of Galicia to grow crops such as flax, sugar beets or clover for seed were quite an exception.

The most positive feature of plant production in Galicia was the growing tendency found for all crops (except maize). This testifies a slow, distributed over many years, but still progressing crop culture. Higher crops were obtained in the East Galicia, which was undoubtedly the result of better climatic and land quality conditions, but also, what is interesting, with faster progress of land division processes in the West Galicia which led to breaking up better prospering, large farms⁸

Domination of the West Galicia was found only in the crops of oats, barley and hop, and in the forage plants group, only the crops of hay and mangel were higher in the West Galicia, which was an immediate effect of more intensive growth of livestock breeding in this part of the country.

Respective field crops came in majority from eastern parts of Galicia. And so, e.g. in case of wheat, leguminous plants, rape, hay, these proportions were 3:1 in favour of the East Galicia, and more or less 2:1 in case of such crops as rye, potatoes, sugar beets. In case of hemp or buckwheat, around 90% of crops came from the East Galicia. Only in the crops of oats, mangel and clover grown for hay, each of the two provinces participated nearly by a half of the total of these field crops in Galicia. Despite the periodical, sometimes considerable, fluctuations the amounts of majority of crops were steadily growing.

To achieve a comprehensive, statistically presented picture of plant production in Galicia an index applicable in historical studies was adopted, which cumulated plant production of a number of field crops. This index reflects a general tendency in relation to crops as the final effect of plant production. According to the author it is one of the indices which in the synthetic way, best characterises changes in agricultural production, and in particular, plant production. This index cumulates the growth tendencies of plant production in Galicia in the studied period and therefore reveals in the specific way the direction which this production followed⁹. The value of general plant production index was found for the East Galicia and the West Galicia and then for the whole of Galicia.

The value of this index (I) was defined as a sum of products of the factor (w) and the crops (P) of respective plants (i) in subsequent years (j) of the studied period, which is illustrated by the below formula:

$$I = \sum P_{ij} * w_i$$

The index for subsequent years, calculated from this formula was related to the common base the value of which was assumed to be 1000. In order to avoid the effect of accidental values, the base represented the average value of the index, calculated for all the

⁸ L. W. Biegeleisen, *Stan ekonomiczny Malopolski na podstawie bilansu handlowego (Economic Condition of Little Poland on the Basis of Commercial Balance)*, Warsaw 1921, p. 14.

⁹ J. Gadisseur, *Le produit physique de la Belgique 1830-1913. Prèsentation critique des données statistiques. Introduction générale. Agriculture, tome IV-Histoire quantitative et developpement de la Belgique au XIX^e siecle, sous le direction de P.Lebrun, Bruxelles 1990, p.861-875.*

years of the studied period. As results from the above formula, the principal element when using the above index is to determine the value of the „w” factor for respective crops. It has been assumed that for cereals the factor was 1, for potatoes 2, for leguminous plants 1, for industrial plants – respectively- rape 1, sugar beets 2, flax 2, tobacco 4 and hop 4; for forage plants – respectively - hay 0.7, clover 0.85, plant mix 1 and mangel 2. The observation covered the years 1884-1913 for which information is available for the total of Galicia as well as for the West and the East Galicia.

The analysis of the problem in each of the three cases discussed shows considerable fluctuations of the index value for respective years, which reflects high degree to which plant production in Galicia was affected by unfavourable conditions such as weather changes or natural disasters. For example, in all the three territories studied such phenomenon was observed in the years 1890-1895. A marked drop in the value of the factor is also seen towards the end of the analysed period and it was the largest in the East Galicia. The lowest value of the factor in the West Galicia was noted in 1893 – (621), in the East Galicia in 1884 – (500), and for the whole of Galicia in 1889 – (698). The peak values for each of the studied areas were observed in 1910; in the West Galicia it was 1300, in the East Galicia - 1493, and for the whole of Galicia -1371. The growth tendencies obtained on the basis of specific values of the factor for each of the areas under study offer a statistically presented evidence of the growing trend of plant production both in reference to the whole of Galicia and to the West and the East Galicia. The highest dynamics of such changes is however noticed in the East Galicia (figs. 1, 2, 3).

Fig. 1

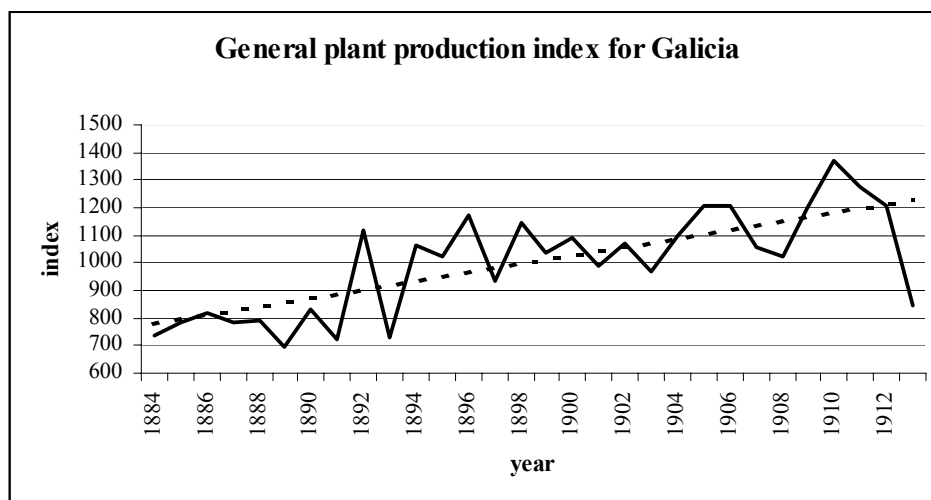


Fig. 2

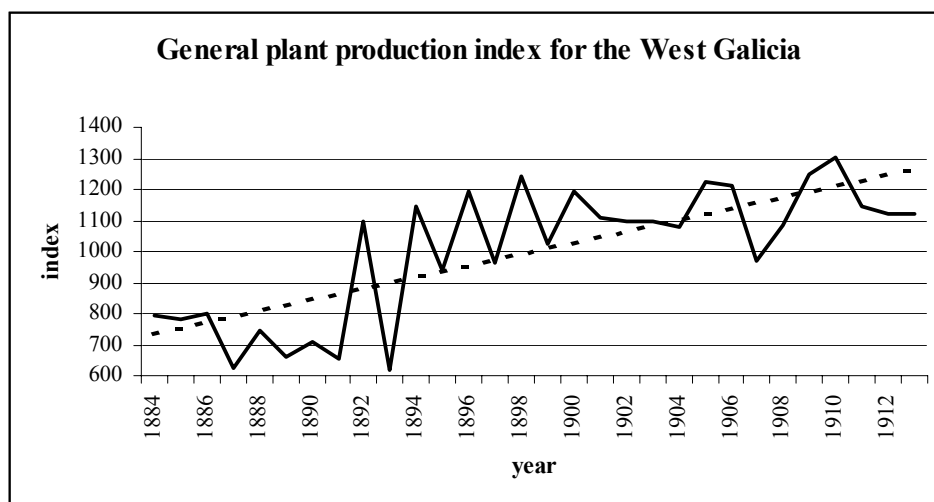
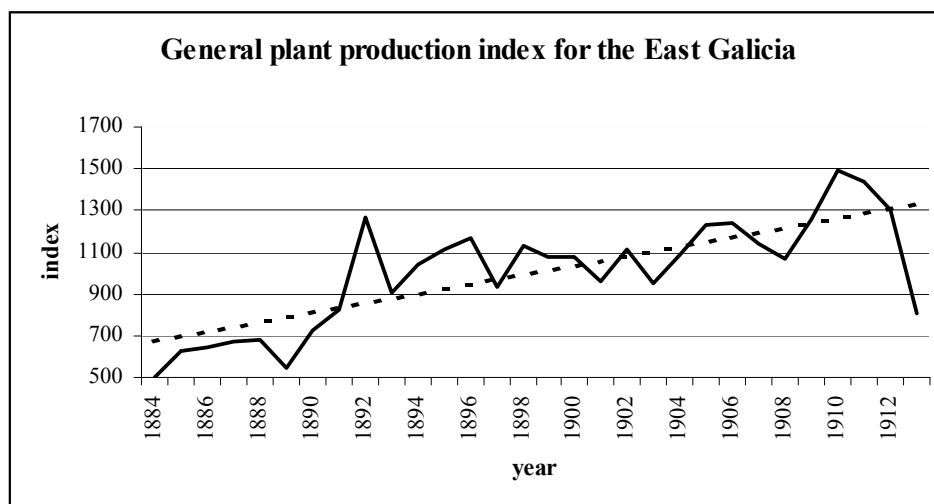


Fig. 3



In the next step, let us refer changes in plant production to the demographic processes in Galicia. This is an important aspect of cognitive significance for assessment of changes in the scope of agricultural production. Here we may only hint some diverse relations between agricultural economics, changes in agricultural system and demographic processes in Galicia. Therefore, in connection with the tendencies observed in the agricultural production, it is possible to study the changes of total population or the proportions between the number of people directly involved in the food production and the number of people employed in other economic sectors¹⁰

¹⁰ R. Bićanić, *Three Concepts of Agricultural Overpopulation* [w:] *International Explorations of Agricultural Economics*, ed. R.N. Dixey, Ames 1964, p. 8-20; C. J. Robertson, *Population and Agriculture with Special Reference to Agricultural Overpopulation* [w:] *Documentation for the European Conference on Rural Life*, International Institute of Agriculture, Rome 1939, p.11-30; C. Clark, *Population Growth and Land Use*, London 1969; E. Boserup, *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth; The Economics of Agrarian Change under*

The analysis of plant production compared with the total population makes even more convincing the opinion of favourable changes appearing in the Galician agriculture in the studied period of time. Assuming as reference value the wheat, rye and potato crops in 1876 and the population of Galicia in the same year, we arrive at a situation in which the growth rate in the production of each of these field crops exceeded the growth rate of the total population. The increase was the strongest for potato crops, which undoubtedly resulted from growing potatoes for industrial purposes¹¹.

In Galicia, the per capita crops ranged in the case of wheat from 0.36q(1889) to 0.84q (1908) (fig. 4), in case of rye, from 0.38q (1907) to 1.09q (1910) (fig. 5) and potatoes from 2.05q (1879) to 9.23q (1905) (fig. 6).

Population Pressure, London 1965; E. Le Roy *The Peasants of Languedoc*, Urbana 1974; J.de Vries, *The Dutch Rural Economy in the Golden Age 1500-1700*, New Haven 1974.

¹¹ J. Michalewicz, *Przemysł gorzelniany w Galicji doby autonomicznej. Między monopolem dworskim a monopolem państwowym (The Alcohol Distillery Industry in Galicia of the Autonomy Times. Between the Landlord's Monopoly and the State Monopoly)*, Cracow 1988.

Fig. 4

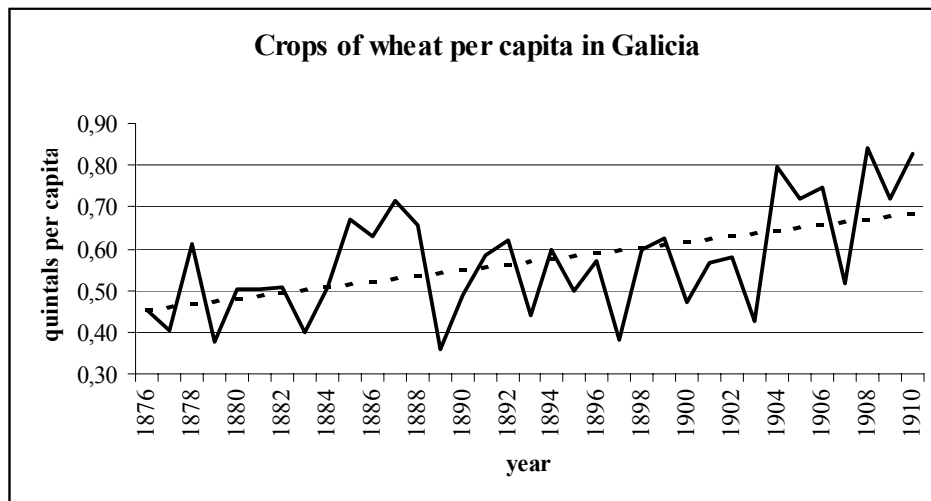


Fig. 5

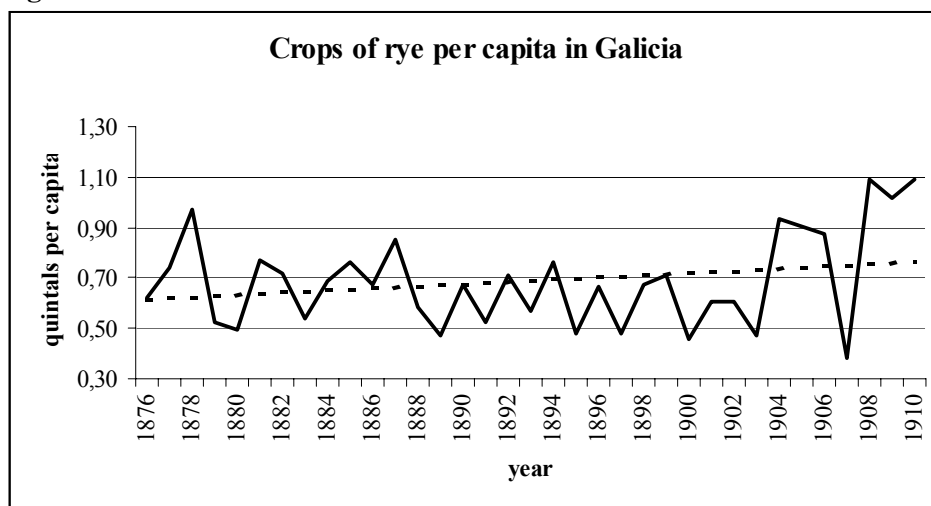
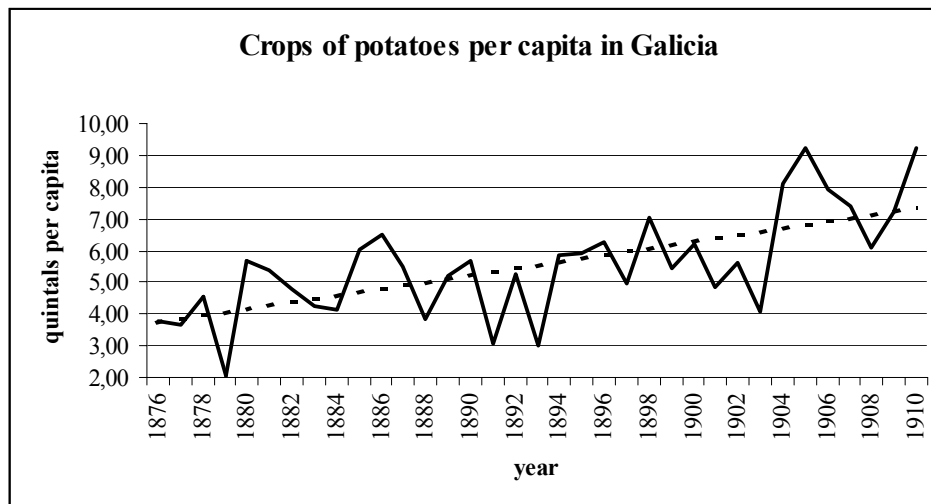


Fig. 6



The mean per capita values in Galicia amounted to 0.57 quintal of wheat, 0.69 quintal of rye and 5.53 quintals of potatoes. Despite considerable annual fluctuations in the respective years, in case of each of the three crops a significant growing tendency was observed. For the census years of the studied period, that is for 1880, 1890, 1900 and 1910 when general population censuses took place, the above index was presented separately for the east and west parts of Galicia. And so, in the West Galicia the per capita wheat production rate was in 1880 – 0.25q, 1890-0.40q, 1900-0.35q and in 1910-0.52q. The per capita rye production rate was in 1880-0.54q, 1890-0.58q, 1900-0.44q and in 1910-1.13q. The per capita potato production rate was in 1880-4.12q, 1890-4.04q, 1900-7.23q and in 1910-7.61q. In the East Galicia, the per capita wheat production rate was in 1880-0.67q, 1890-0.54q, 1900-0.53q and in 1910-0.98q. The per capita rye production rate was in 1880-0.81q, 1890-0.73q, 1900-0.46q and in 1910-1.07q. The per capita potato production rate was in 1880-5.71q, 1890-6.66q, 1900-5.66q and in 1910-10.03q.

There is a visible supremacy of the East Galicia compared to the West Galicia, although one should also pay attention to the higher value of this index in the West Galicia for potato production in 1900 and rye in 1910.

Another, and at the same time one of the principal problems in the relations between plant production and demographic changes, is the formation of proportions between the number of direct food producers and the consumers. An increase, along with the urbanisation and industrialisation processes, of the number of non-agricultural population enhanced the demand for agricultural products which in turn affected the growth of agricultural production. Needless to say, the socio-economic situation in Galicia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries largely differed from the situation of industrialised countries at a higher urbanisation level. But an attempt at correlating the tendencies observed in the agricultural production with shifts within socio-occupational groups may become a source of valuable observations. The only reliable source of information in this field is a list of agricultural companies from 1902¹². Basing just on the results of this census it is possible to estimate the number of people occupationally active in the Galician agriculture in 1902 as 3 384 196¹³. Unfortunately there are no continuous statistical data concerning the number of people occupationally active in agriculture in Galicia. In this situation, the analysis was limited to the changes in the size of the urban and rural populations in Galicia. And though in the studied period there were no significant population shifts between towns and villages, there was however a constant growth in the percent of urban population. This was true both in relation to the whole of Galicia and to the West and the East Galicia treated separately.

Following the up till now carried out studies it could be concluded that over the period of thirty years, i.e. from 1880 to 1910, the percentage of rural population in Galicia decreased by 2.1%, in the West Galicia by 3.9%, and in the East Galicia only by 1%¹⁴. Although these were not very large changes, still (even at such small changes) rural areas had to supply more food for the growing urban population. It was exactly this situation that could be observed for the whole of Galicia, as well as for the West and the East Galicia. In effect, at sometimes significant annual fluctuations, we notice an increase in the per capita crops in rural Galicia in the studied period. Consequently, the per capita wheat production rate for rural Galicia was in 1880-0.64q, 1890-0.63q, 1900-0.61q, and in 1910-1.09q. The per capita rye production rate

¹² *Ergebnisse der Landwirtschaftlichen Betriebszählung vom 3 Juni 1902 in der eichsrathe vertretenen Königreichen und Ländern. Österreichische Statistik, Hrsg. Von der K.K. Statischen Central-Commission, Band 88, Wien 1907-1909.*

¹³ F. Bujak, *Galicja. Kraj. Ludność. Społeczeństwo. Rolnictwo (Galicia. The Country. The People. The Society. The Agriculture)*, Lvov 1908-1910 vol. I p.382-383.

¹⁴ F. Bujak op. cit., vol. I, p. 253.

was in 1880-0.63q, 1890-0.87q, 1900-0.59q, and in 1910-1.43q. The per capita potato production rate was in 1880-7.22q, 1890-7.36q, 1900-7.97q, and in 1910-12.1q. Taking every care in the interpretation of data and allowing an influence of accidental factors on the sizes of crops determined in the census year, it could be suggested that population changes enforced growth of the economic level.

The above presented problems of plant production in Galicia, carried out globally for a longer period of time, will allow in the future to undertake further studies extending knowledge of the Galician agriculture and its role in the development of other branches of Galician economy. In consequence, this may also contribute to the necessity to verify the assessment of the economy of Galicia and its place against the wider background of Polish lands.

It cannot be denied that the opinions of underdevelopment of the Galician agriculture were often well grounded, in particular when it was compared with the situation of better developed countries, including also other provinces of Austro-Hungary. Nevertheless, it becomes obvious for someone scrupulously studying the problem, that the general tendency for plant production in Galicia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, although diverse, was characterised by favourable changes.

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