

## **Working Paper: Fascist numbers? Agricultural data collection methods as tools of rural fascism and agricultural modernization in Nazi Germany (1933-1945)**

The time between the Great Depression and the End of the Second World War is one of the most important periods in the history of agricultural statistics. The reasons for this are as varied. The Great Depression that followed the Wallstreet crash in September 1929 led many countries to increase their efforts to collect agricultural data. Aiming to obtain information about the crisis, officials hoped to find ways to combat the downward spiraling of national farm incomes as well as national wave of farm foreclosures.<sup>1</sup> Governments took one out of two approaches to develop data-driven agricultural economic policies. On the one hand, countries were pushing for an expansion of agricultural accounting statistics, which produced agricultural accounting statistics. This happened in Germany during the Weimar Republic and the Nazi regime.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the search for better agricultural data caused states like the U.S.A to expand their system of agricultural surveys.<sup>3</sup>

The 1930s heralded a decade of statistical innovation. In America, new collection techniques such as agricultural random sampling were developed after 1933.<sup>4</sup> In Nazi Germany, a new format of data collection was invented in the form of the 'Hofkarte'.<sup>5</sup> Formally, the two ways of collecting data were very different. While sampling provided American experts with nation-wide standardized agricultural data from a small group of farmers, the German 'Hofkarte' gave Nazi state officials data from over two million farmers.<sup>6</sup> The American aim was to create averages by consulting as few farmers as possible, whereas their German counterparts wanted as much data from as many farmers as possible to impose a totalitarian form of state oversight.<sup>7</sup>

New methods were not the only hallmarks of the story. International technocrats and organizations were at the center of the global movement emerged to create new agricultural statistics and facilitate the circulation of statistical knowledge between countries. The main actors were the International Institute of Agriculture (IIA) and the International Conference of Agricultural Economists (IAAE). While the IIA ensured the exchange of national agricultural data

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<sup>1</sup> Alston, Lee J: Farm foreclosures in the United States during the interwar period, in: *The Journal of Economic History* 43 (4), 1983, S. 885–903.

<sup>2</sup> Sant, Paul T.; Vickery, Raymond E.: The Food and Agricultural Statistics of the Reich Food Administration, in: *Agricultural History* 21 (3), 1947, JSTOR, S. 177–185.

<sup>3</sup> Didier, Emmanuel; Porter, Theodore M.; Sen, Priya Vari: *America by the numbers: quantification, democracy, and the birth of national statistics*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2020 (Infrastructure series).

<sup>4</sup> Brooks, EM: As we recall: the growth of agricultural estimates, 1933-1961. *Statistical Reporting Service*, in: US Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC, 1977; Houseman, Earl E; Becker, Joseph A: A centenary profile of methods for agricultural surveys, in: *The American Statistician* 21 (2), 1967, S. 15–21.

<sup>5</sup> Corni, Gustavo; Gies, Horst: 3. Collection, control, monitoring, coercion-regulation from producer to trader to consumer, in *Bread-Butter-Canons*, 2015, pp. 319-364.

<sup>6</sup> Padberg, Kurt; Brummenbaum: *Reichsnährstand und landwirtschaftliches Rechnungswesen.*, Bd. 19, Berlin 1938 (Mitteilungen für die Landwirtschaft 53), Institut für Zeitgeschichte, S. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Corni, Gustavo; Gies, Horst: *Brot - Butter - Kanonen: Die Ernährungswirtschaft in Deutschland unter der Diktatur Hitlers*, 2015. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783050072494>>, Stand: 05.02.2021.

through its conferences<sup>8</sup>, publications, and commissions, the IAAE was promoting the personal exchange of academic and practical knowledge among its members.<sup>9</sup> For this purpose, the IAAE held four conferences throughout the Interwar period, bringing together hundreds of agricultural experts to discuss the impact of the global economic crisis and the collection of data.<sup>10</sup> American representatives of the guild were instrumental in these talks, especially in the ones about data. For the second IAAE's conference in 1930, over three hundred foreign agricultural economists accepted George. F. Warren's invitation to Cornell to debate about the global price collapse, measures to combat this agricultural crisis with the help of new data collection methods.<sup>11</sup> At the local level, agricultural statistics were pushed by farmers associations and academics. In Germany, farm organizations formed the "Green Front"<sup>12</sup> to ensure the profitability of German agriculture.<sup>13</sup> Lead the biggest German farm lobby organization, the Deutsche Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft (DLG), the front ensured that German farmers were well informed about the economic effects of the Great Depression on the global and domestic agricultural markets.<sup>14</sup> In the U.S., initiatives to improve data collection came from academic institutions working with and for the US Department of Agriculture.<sup>15</sup> Agricultural statisticians from the Iowa Statistical Laboratory, collaborated with the USDA to develop the random Mail Carrier Survey as a new U.S. format for local data gathering.<sup>16</sup> The comparison between these two national trends to improve agricultural data collection in the 1930s reveals a division. It shows that in the 1930s, domestic efforts to improve agricultural statistics were not homogeneous, but bi-directionally differentiated. On the one hand, free-market agricultural economies such as the one in the U.S.A. and the United Kingdom used farm surveys.<sup>17</sup> In continental Europe, on the other hand, the German farm accounting statistics experienced a boom as tools of governments that sought to impose planned agricultural economies. As new fascist and communist governments came into power in the Kingdom of Italy and the Bolshevik Soviet Union by the early 1920s, *Agricultural accounting statistics* quickly established

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<sup>8</sup>D'onofrio, Federico: Agricultural numbers: the statistics of the International Institute of Agriculture in the Interwar period, in: *Agricultural History Review* 65 (2), 2017, S. 277–296.

<sup>9</sup>Rolfes, Max; Rolfes, Max: The International Association of Agricultural Economists 1929 to 1969: The Growth of an International Fraternity of Scientists, in, 1970. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.22004/AG.ECON.188128>>, Stand: 28.04.2021; Raeburn, John Ross; Jones, J.O.; Raeburn, John Ross u. a.: The History of the International Association of Agricultural Economists: Towards Rural Welfare World Wide, in, 1990. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.22004/AG.ECON.253530>>, Stand: 28.04.2021.

<sup>10</sup> For a complete list of participants, see the Proceedings of the IAAE conferences of 1929-1934. Available online.

<sup>11</sup> For a complete list of discussants and their presentation see: Proceedings of the IAAE conferences of 1930.

<sup>12</sup> Mergel, Thomas: Grüne Front gegen Weimar: Reichs-Landbund und agrarischer Lobbyismus, 1918–1933, in, 2002. In this organization, which was founded in 1929 and existed until 1933, four of the biggest German farm associations, the Reichsland-Bund and the Agrarian League (Bund der Landwirte)

<sup>13</sup>Seidl, Alois: *Deutsche Agrargeschichte*, Frankfurt am Main 2014, S. 252.

<sup>14</sup> The DLG was publishing nearly weekly entries on the effect of the agricultural depression of the 1920s and the world agricultural crisis after 1929 as well as the importance of agricultural book-keeping in its weekly magazine: *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschaft*.

<sup>15</sup> Biddle, Jeff E: The introduction of the Cobb-Douglas regression and its adoption by agricultural economists, in: *History of Political Economy* 43 (suppl\_1), 2011, S. 235–257; Biddle, Jeff: Statistical Inference in Economics in the 1920s and 1930s: The Crop and Livestock Forecasts of the US Department of Agriculture, in: *History of Political Economy* 53 (S1), 2021, S. 53–80; Delcey, Thomas; Noblet, Guillaume: « The eyes and ears of the agricultural markets»: A history of information in interwar agricultural economics, 2021.

<sup>16</sup>Didier; Porter; Sen: *America by the numbers*, 2020.

<sup>17</sup>Houseman; Becker: *A century profile of methods for agricultural surveys*, 1967.

themselves as the most popular data gathering tools among experts. In the Russian case, Soviet statisticians adapted the German accounting system to facilitate state control of large collective farms<sup>18</sup>, while in fascist Italy budget studies and accounting analyses were used to organize the country's largest economic campaign, the “Battle of Grain”<sup>19,20</sup>. The development of these two methodological-political country blocs has received little interest since agricultural statistics are usually examined from a national perspective.<sup>21</sup> No piece has investigated why some countries preferred surveys and some accounting statistics. However, historian Speich Chassé provide a starting point.<sup>22</sup> He argues that the development of statistics is co-dependent on the socio-historical context of the state and actors involved in their creation. Applied to the question of why there were two agricultural-methodological country blocs in the 1930s, it seems that the group of totalitarian regimes and those of democratic-liberal states shared certain elements that, in turn, manifested themselves in the use of specific agricultural data collection methods. But what common denominator led agricultural statisticians of fascist and communist countries to predominantly use farm records and accounting statistics ? The German history of agricultural statistics offers two answers to this.

## **1. The Legacy of Weimar: Agricultural statistics before and during the Great Depression (1929-1933)**

The first reason why agricultural accounting statistics established themselves as one the dominant format in German data collection after 1933, was that that the public-private system of agricultural chambers, state officials and farm lobby organizations had been using them to design anti-dumping measures since 1924. They had existed in Weimar republic's system of collecting agricultural data and that system was inherited by the NS Regime in 1933. Then National Socialist government under its chancellor, Adolf Hitler, not only assumed full political power from the outgoing Weimar government when it took office in January 1933.<sup>23</sup> The Nazi regime took over the Weimar

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<sup>18</sup>Volin, Lazar: Agricultural Statistics in Soviet Russia: Their Usability and Reliability, in: *The American Statistician* 7 (3), 1953, JSTOR, S. 8–12. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2685493>>.

<sup>19</sup>Grando, Stefano; Volpi, Gianluca: Backwardness, modernization, propaganda. Agrarian policies and rural representations in the Italian Fascist regime, in, 2014, S. 43–84.

<sup>20</sup>D'Onofrio, Federico: Knowing to Transform: Three Ways for Agricultural Economists to Observe Italy 1900-1940, Universiteit Utrecht, 2013; Federico D'Onofrio: The Microfoundations of Italian Agrarianism: Italian Agricultural Economists and Fascism, in: *Agricultural History* 91 (3), 2017, S. 369. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.3098/ah.2017.091.3.369>>.

<sup>21</sup>D'Onofrio: Knowing to Transform: Three Ways for Agricultural Economists to Observe Italy 1900-1940, 2013; Didier; Porter; Sen: *America by the numbers*, 2020.

<sup>22</sup>Desrosières, Alain: *The politics of large numbers: a history of statistical reasoning*, Cambridge, Mass 1998; Speich Chassé, Daniel: Die Ursprünge der Millenniums-Entwicklungsziele/The Roots of the Millennium Development Goals: A Framework for Studying the History of Global Statistics, in: <p>Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung Vol. 41 No. 2, 2016, S. Volumes per year: 1</p>. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.12759/HSR.41.2016.2.218-237>>; Didier; Porter; Sen: *America by the numbers*, 2020; Porter, Theodore M.: *Trust in numbers: the pursuit of objectivity in science and public life*, Princeton, N.J 1995.

<sup>23</sup>Tooze, J. Adam; Badal, Yvonne: *Ökonomie der Zerstörung: die Geschichte der Wirtschaft im Nationalsozialismus*, München 2007; Plumpe, Werner: *Die Wirtschafts- und Unternehmensgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus*, in: *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte / Economic History Yearbook* 45 (2), 01.2004. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.1524/jbwg.2004.45.2.241>>, Stand: 03.03.2021; Langthaler, Ernst: > Landflucht, Agrarsystem und Moderne: Deutschland 1933–1939, in: *Nationalsozialistisches Migrationsregime und Volksgemeinschaft*, 2017, S. 109–136;

Republic's agricultural-statistical apparatus, which had developed steadily agricultural bookkeeping since 1924, and the agricultural problems that arose in the Weimar as consequences of the Great Depression after 1929.<sup>24</sup> These two aspects influenced how agricultural data were collected in Germany after 1933 because they created a path dependency for the NS Regime that put *Agricultural accounting statistics* above agricultural surveys.

### **1.1. The Collection of Agricultural Data in the Weimar Republic before 1929**

The agricultural statistical system of the Weimar Republic contributed to the rise of Agricultural accounting statistics in the NS Regime as the Weimar Republic's system already showed a methodological, institutional and personnel preference for these methods. This argument is supported by a comparison of the historical evolution of both Agricultural accounting statistics and agricultural surveys. From 1925 onwards, there was a methodological, institutional, and personnel expansion of farm records method began, the census evolved only to an extent. Although census data was used by national experts to evaluate long-term agricultural policy, these same experts preferred agricultural bookkeeping data for short-term measures.

#### The history of the agricultural census in Weimar before 1929

The history of the census makes it clear that the census did not change much after 1919. As seen in Table 1, nearly all censuses already existed at the beginning of the 20th century. The only two exceptions were the livestock census which was introduced in 1928. and the one-time special wheat census from 1927. All other formats had been 'invented' between 1873 and 1900. Even after the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, no new formats were introduced. Thus, it seemed that until 1941, the demand for new census types within the German state had ceased quite early. In addition to the stagnation of census format development after 1929, this also shows that while the number of censuses may have partially increased in 1927 and 1929 due to the previously explained effects of the long agricultural depression, there were no significant changes in terms of timing. In fact, except for the Fruit Tree Census, there was no increase or seemingly no adaptations to the Great Depression in the agricultural census. The importance of two aspects, the lack of new formats and accelerated census processes during the Great Depression, become even clearer when they are compared to the number of censuses conducted by the Nazi regime. After 1933 Hitler's government continued not only Weimar's policy of not invention new census, with the exception,

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Gerhard, Gesine: *Nazi hunger politics: a history of food in the Third Reich*, Lanham, Md. 2015 (Rowman & Littlefield studies in food and gastronomy). Some readings include Tooze; Badal: *Ökonomie der Zerstörung*, 2007; Plumpé: *Die Wirtschafts- und Unternehmensgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus*, 2004; Langthaler: *Landflucht, Agrarsystem und Moderne: Deutschland 1933–1939*, 2017; Gerhard: *Nazi hunger politics*, 2015.

<sup>24</sup>Graevenitz, Fritz Georg von: *Argument Europa: Internationalismus in der globalen Agrarkrise der Zwischenkriegszeit (1927-1937)*, Frankfurt New York 2017; Clavin, Patricia: *The Great Depression in Europe, 1929-1939*, 2000.

"farm laborer census" of 1941. It also maintained the period that elapsed between the censuses. The only case cases where this was not done, were the agricultural holdings census, which after 1933 was conducted every two years, and the special wheat census, which was made in 1935 on the instructions of the Nazi Minister of Agriculture Darré, which was intended to measure grain stocks in the wake of the current grain price crisis.<sup>25</sup> From a technical point of view, it becomes clear that the census method was hardly further developed after 1919 and especially not after 1928, neither methodologically nor institutionally.

### The history of agricultural accounting statistics in Weimar before 1929

The accounting methodology underwent a completely different development, growing from its first establishment in 1924/1925 throughout the 1920s, especially during the Great Depression. Originally the data collection of the state from farm books was introduced as a method in 1924/1925. This was due to the course of state to make bookkeeping compulsory for economically successful farms. From the 1925 year onwards, all farms with more than RM 200,000 in total assets, 100,000 in net assets or with a monthly net income of more than RM 6000 were liable to tax.<sup>26</sup> To calculate the tax levies of these farms, operators or owners were required by law to submit their annual accounts to the tax offices. This contained information on the farm, its stock and goods, but also its assets, income and expenses. Like the census, bookkeeping was used more frequently as a statistical tool of the German state in the first five years of its existence.

In Table 2, the numbers of farms accounts that were evaluated by state officials for the German "Betriebsstatistik". It records a continuous increase in the number of holdings evaluated from 1924 onwards. This increase, just like in the case of the census, reflected the problematic situation within the German agricultural sector during the years of the harsh 1920s agricultural depression. However, unlike the census, the number of evaluated holdings also increased significantly during the agricultural crisis of 1929-1933, from 3954 in 1928/1929 to 6208 in 1931/1932. Unlike the census, which was not used more after the Wallstreet Crash in 1929 sent agricultural prices down the drain, the amount of book-keeping numbers evaluated analyzed by German state officials were skyrocketing. Table 2 not only provides information about the development of the method in Weimar. It shows what happened to the method after 1933. From it, it becomes clear here that bookkeeping as a format of national data collection was not both adopted by the NSDAP and

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<sup>25</sup>Tooze, Adam: The wages of destruction: the making and breaking of the Nazi economy, 2007, S.192. Online: <[https://nls.jdls.org.uk/welcome.html?ark:/81055/vdc\\_100048947948.0x000001](https://nls.jdls.org.uk/welcome.html?ark:/81055/vdc_100048947948.0x000001)>, Stand: 15.03.2021.

<sup>26</sup>DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1935., 1935, DLG Archive, Frankfurt am Main.Dr. Udermann, Berlin: Die Buchführungspflicht s.646-647.

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increased. As seen in the table, the number of book deals evaluated in 1933/1934 on behalf of the RNS showed an increase of almost 60% compared to the previous year 1932/33, rising from 5692 to 9160. Compared to 1924, the NS evaluations were even more impressive. Between 1924 and 1934, the number of farms analyzed increased by over 240%. This indicated a near tripling of government evaluations of accounts. This increase was even surpassed after 1935. In addition to the farm statistics figures as listed in Table 2, separate Fensch/Padberg analysis of indebtedness was added, based on between 17,000 to 25,000 evaluations.<sup>27</sup>

The methodological continuity between the Weimar and the Nazi regimes is of great importance as it established a path dependence between the two systems. This path dependency is indicated, on the one hand by the NS Regimes adoption and expansion of the Weimar book-keeping system, and on the other hand by its inherited policy of rejecting the census method. Simply put, the methodological system of Weimar statistics was a factor that greatly contributed towards the use of agricultural accounting statistics of NS agricultural statistics because it set the NS regime on a specific methodological path through its adoption.

#### Institutional and personnel continuity from Socialist Weimar to Nazi Berlin

The adoption of the biased methodological heritage of Weimar was not the only way through which the Weimar influenced National Socialist ways of agricultural data collection. Other aspects determined the shape of the Nazi system. There was also the aspect of institutional and personnel continuity. It is true that after the enactment of the Reichsnährstandgesetz and the Reichserbhofgesetz of 1933 there was a reorganization of agricultural society and its representation of interests that was unique in German history.<sup>28</sup> But because of this agricultural reorganization, it must not be overlooked that all the organizations and persons who had previously been involved in the execution of the census and the bookkeeping also found their place in the New Third Reich. About the agricultural census, the Reich Office for Statistics, the statistical offices of the Länder and their staff were spared further restructuring and reorganization even up to the war.<sup>29</sup>

Continuity was also an important factor in the successful transfer of the method from Weimar to Berlin. Thus, after 1933, all farmers' organizations, chambers of agriculture, and accounting offices were officially dissolved. But almost all organizations were also incorporated, albeit in a new form,

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<sup>27</sup>Padberg; Brummenbaum: Reichsnährstand und landwirtschaftliches Rechnungswesen., 1938, S. 7.

<sup>28</sup>Gerhard: Nazi hunger politics, 2015; Gerhard, Gesine: 5. The modernization dilemma: agrarian policies in Nazi Germany, in: Fernández Prieto, Lourenzo; Pan-Montojo, Juan; Cabo, Miguel (Hg.): Agriculture in the Age of Fascism, Bd. 13, Turnhout 2014 (Rural History in Europe), S. 139–158. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.1484/M.RURHE-EB.4.00006>>, Stand: 03.03.2021; Farquharson, John Edgar: The plough and the swastika: the NSDAP and agriculture in Germany 1928-45, London and Beverly Hills 1976 (Sage studies in 20th century history).

<sup>29</sup>Vickery, Raymond E.; Sant, Paul T.: Agricultural Statistics in Germany, in: Journal of Farm Economics 28 (4), 11.1946, S. 1061. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.2307/1232369>>.



into the newly founded ‚Reichsnährstand‘.<sup>30</sup> Exemplary for this was the fate of all German book offices which kept the books of mainly taxable farmers. These were all privatized from 1934 and incorporated into the ‚Reichsverband für landwirtschaftliche Buchstellen‘.<sup>31</sup> This association, which had existed since 1936/7, was subordinated to the Reichsnährstand entirely according to the principle of "National Socialist corporatism".<sup>32</sup> From 1937 on, the ‚Reichsverband für landwirtschaftliche Buchstellen‘ ensured the standardization and expansion of agricultural bookkeeping, and, through its subordination to the RNS, supplied complete records of the book offices at any time.<sup>33</sup> In 1938, 10,000 to 25,000 accounting results on various subjects were evaluated regularly by the experts Fensch and Padberg, who were already established in Weimar.<sup>34</sup>

Path dependency was a facilitator behind the development of the NS agricultural data collection system. The existence of bookkeeping and census methods, the employment of persons and the institutional and methodological design of the Weimar agricultural statistical system ensured that the census and agricultural bookkeeping made their way into the agricultural statistical repertoire of the NS government. However, the development of the Weimar agricultural- statistical system between 1924 and 1932 and its inheritance to the Nazi Regime was not the only reason why bookkeeping had a greater priority as a method among German statisticians after 1933. Instead, another historical event contributed to the rise of German Agricultural accounting statistics because it convinced many German experts that bookkeeping was the better method for generating national farm data. This methodological mindset, which preferred numbers from books over questionnaires, found its way into the Third Reich not through the inheritance of the Weimar system but due to the Great Depression and its effects on German agriculture after 1929.

## 1.2. The Great Depression expands German agricultural accounting statistics

The Great Depression of 1929 was the second reason why German statisticians preferred to use peasant financial accounting rather than survey questionnaires because it made them realize two things. First, it illustrated the weaknesses of the census and the inadequate development of accounting. Second, the crisis was the catalyst for bookkeeping as it convinced experts that bookkeeping was better suited for short-term agricultural policies than census data.

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<sup>30</sup>Sant; Vickery: The Food and Agricultural Statistics of the Reich Food Administration, 1947, S. 179.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., S. 179–180.

<sup>32</sup>Gerhard: 5. The modernization dilemma, 2014.

<sup>33</sup>Padberg; Brummenbaum: Reichsnährstand und landwirtschaftliches Rechnungswesen., 1938.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., S. 5.

From an economic perspective, the years between the Wall Street Crash of October 24, 1929, and the NSDAP's rise to power in 1933 were by all accounts negative. The largest U.S. stock market crash in modern history caused Germany's net national product to plummet by 25% and its annual growth rate to drop by -7.2 after 1929.<sup>35</sup> German agriculture, where about 1/3 of the population worked, spiralled with it.<sup>36</sup> Thanks to the rising monetary inflation of the Reichsmark, agricultural sales plummeted by 40% in 1931/32 when compared to 1923/1924.<sup>37</sup> Probably the biggest problem of agriculture was the low agricultural prices, which reduced the income of the farmers. Historically, this problem was not new; even before 1929, prices had fallen at regular intervals due to a worldwide overproduction of food. Between 1925 and 1929, rising food exports from the U.S. Canada, the Soviet Union, etc. had caused world prices for wheat, sugar, rubber, cotton, silk, coffee and tea to fall by about 30%.<sup>38</sup> The financial crash of 1929, however, caused an unabated crash in world agricultural prices because of its inflation. After 1930, the world's overproduction of foodstuffs met with a continuing decrease of people willing to buy them. This was because most incomes in Germany but also worldwide had suffered heavily from international inflation that devaluated money and caused individuals to spend less on food.<sup>39</sup> For the German farmers, the 1929 price crash resulted in more than just the lowest income in German history.<sup>40</sup> Combined with inflation, many of the problems that had plagued Germany for years were tremendously exacerbated. Thanks to inflation and low incomes, the number of unemployed in German agriculture and forestry rose from 145,220 in December 1929 to over 287,000 in 1932.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, poor exchange rates caused a downward trend in domestic food production, as the inflation led to more expensive prices for fertilizer and farm machinery.<sup>42</sup> However, things like tractors and fertilizers were needed to keep domestic food production going. The lack of money in the bank and the collapse of global and national financial systems also harmed the indebtedness of German farmers. Particularly in Germany, the monetary inflation of the RM caused rising interest rates on the loans which many smaller farmers needed to get by. The high number of indebted German farmers was a known fact. Since the end of the First World War, more and more farmers had secured loans as part of their attempt to increase production on a long-term basis by buying better

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<sup>35</sup>Hesse, Jan-Otmar; Köster, Roman; Plumpe, Werner: Die Große Depression: die Weltwirtschaftskrise 1929 - 1939, Frankfurt am Main 2014, S. 56.

<sup>36</sup>Tooze: The wages of destruction, 2007.

<sup>37</sup>Dornheim, Andreas: Rasse, Raum und Autarkie: Sachverständigengutachten zur Rolle des Reichsministeriums für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft in der NS-Zeit: erarbeitet für das Bundesministerium für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Verbraucherschutz, 2011, S. 101. Wunderlich, Frieda: Farm Labor in Germany, 1810-1945, 2015, S. 43. Dornheim: Rasse, Raum und Autarkie: Sachverständigengutachten zur Rolle des Reichsministeriums für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft in der NS-Zeit: erarbeitet für das Bundesministerium für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Verbraucherschutz, 2011, S. 101.

<sup>38</sup>Von Dietze, Constantin: Grundzüge der Agrarpolitik, in, 1967, S. 60–61.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid. ; Seidl: Deutsche Agrargeschichte, 2014, S. 237.

<sup>40</sup>Gies, Horst: NSDAP und landwirtschaftliche Organisationen in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik, in: Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 15 (4. H), 1967, S. 341–376.

<sup>41</sup>Kaufhold, Jan Andreas, Oltmer, Jochen: Migration und Weltwirtschaftskrise: Wanderungen im Deutschen Reich in den späten 1920er und frühen 1930er Jahren, 2019, S. 346.

<sup>42</sup>Beck, Stefanie: Die Weltwirtschaftskrise der 1930er Jahre in Deutschland: Ursachen, Verlauf und Maßnahmen der Wirtschaftspolitik, Hamburg 2011, S. 17.



tractors or fertilizer.<sup>43</sup> With the Great Depression, the interest rate on long-term interest-bearing real loans in Germany however, climbed from 4.3% in 1913 to 8.5% at the end of 1929.<sup>44</sup> This increase caused a doubling of farm foreclosures between 1926 and 1931.<sup>45</sup>

The world agricultural crisis of 1929 had both political and methodological implications. Politically, the continuing fall in agricultural prices ensured, that the Reich Minister for Food and Agriculture in Weimar was replaced three times as none of the three candidates succeeded in stabilizing agricultural prices despite excessive protectionist tariffs.<sup>46</sup> However, the crisis also contributed to the overall exchange of government that took place in 1933. Studies on the social composition of the NSDAP's rural electorate show that it was middle-class farmers who "supported the rise of Hitler's party to power"<sup>47</sup>, for whom the NSDAP's agricultural program overlapped with political-economic interests., Hitler, promised the farmers, among other things, the introduction of fixed agricultural prices and thus a guaranteed minimum income.<sup>48</sup> The prevention of forced farm sales due to debt was part of the NS program. From 1933, the state-protected and financially strongly supported model of the "Erbhöfe" (inherited <sup>49</sup>farms) was introduced to safeguard the peasantry, ensuring that farms always remained in family hands through the inheritance regulation, but could never get into debt.<sup>50</sup> The crisis was a catalyst that accelerated agricultural accounting statistics in Germany as it tilted in several ways the scales in favour of farm book accounting and against the census method. Firstly, the crisis did by ensuring that accounting was extended. To relieve the financial burden on small businesses, a new flat tax was introduced in German agriculture in 1931.<sup>51</sup> To qualify for this tax, however, farmers had to prove that they had no more than RM 200,000 in total assets, RM 100,000 in net assets or RM 6000.<sup>52</sup> The linkage of accounting to agricultural tax policy was a good example of how government policy directly affected national data collection

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<sup>43</sup>Seidl: Deutsche Agrargeschichte, 2014, S. 234–235.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., S. 235.

<sup>45</sup> Gies: NSDAP und landwirtschaftliche Organisationen in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik, 1967, S. 342. While between 1926 and 1928 about 4896 farms (ca 75 000 ha) had been sold off by farmers unable to pay back their debts, in 1931 this number rose to over 5765 farms (ca 176 662 ha).

<sup>46</sup>Möller, Horst; Bitterlich, Joachim; Corni, Gustavo u. a. (Hg.): Erster Teil: Vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis zum Ende der Weimarer Republik, in: Agrarpolitik im 20. Jahrhundert, 2020, S. 9–102. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110655308-002>>, Stand: 26.02.2021. Overall, livelihoods declined by 22% Hesse; Köster; Plumpe: Die Große Depression, 2014, S. 57. The three ministers of agriculture were: Hermann Dietrich (1928–1930), Martin Schiele (1930–1932), Magnus Freiherr von Braun (1932–1933).

<sup>47</sup>Thurner, Paul W.; Klima, André; Küchenhoff, Helmut: Agricultural structure and the rise of the Nazi Party reconsidered, in: Political Geography 44, 01.01.2015, S. 62. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2014.08.004>>.

<sup>48</sup>Gerhard: Nazi hunger politics, 2015; Farquharson: The plough and the swastika, 1976; Möller, Horst; Bitterlich, Joachim; Corni, Gustavo u. a. (Hg.): Zweiter Teil: Das Reichsministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus, in: Agrarpolitik im 20. Jahrhundert, 2020, S. 103–262. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110655308-003>>, Stand: 04.03.2021.

<sup>49</sup>Kaden, Eric Hans: The Peasant Inheritance Law in Germany-On the Basis of the Reich's Hereditary Peasant Farm Law of 1933, in: Iowa L. Rev. 20, 1934, S. 350.

<sup>50</sup>Gerhard: Nazi hunger politics, 2015; Farquharson: The plough and the swastika, 1976; Möller u. a. (Hg.): Zweiter Teil, 2020.

<sup>51</sup>DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1932., 1932, DLG Archive, Frankfurt am Main. U. Löfer, Diplolandwirt, Buchführungspflicht in der Landwirtschaft, pp. 560-561. DLGDLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1935., 1935. Dr. Udermann, Berlin: Die Buchführungspflicht s.646-647. DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1932., 1932.

<sup>52</sup>DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1932., 1932., U. Löfer, Diplolandwirt, Buchführungspflicht in der Landwirtschaft, pp. 560-561 DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1935., 1935. Dr. Udermann, Berlin: Die Buchführungspflicht pp. 646-647.

formats. Secondly, the crisis contributed to the rise of book-keeping after 1933 as it showed experts how useful it was to collect specific data on the specific problems caused by the crisis. In Weimar, the agricultural chief statisticians of the republic Ludwig Fensch and Kurt Padberg introduced a scheme that systematically analyzed accounting records in 1930 to compile national debt statistics that informed policymakers about the average level of agricultural indebtedness, the types of loans, the scope of the loans, etc.<sup>53</sup> The crisis did more than just expand the agricultural farm accounting system. It also proved that the current design of the Weimar agricultural statistical system of accounting and census was not good enough to provide current data on the German agrarian crisis. Adolf Seedorf, the brother of the well-known German agricultural economist Wilhelm, wrote in one of his articles that the lack of accounting books among German farmers was about 70% the reason why German agriculture was in this mess in the first place.<sup>54</sup> Without these accounts, he states, German farmers were not only uninformed about potential financial mistakes they made on their farm. The lack of accounts also meant that the state had little knowledge of what was going on in the farms on the microeconomic level.

The small number of farmers that were using books might have been the central problem in German bookkeeping. However, other aspects of the 1932 state bookkeeping system that analyzed farm accounts also contributed to the lack of practical knowledge from German farms during the Great Depression. There was the fact that the state was relying not only on a small but on a biased sample pool for its book-keeping statistics. As previously elaborated, most books were kept either by big or successful farms for tax reasons. Thus in 1932, the data pool was not only relatively small but also biased towards big and rich farms. Also, there was the point that the national institutions responsible for analyzing the accounting entries was far too small to handle a large amount of book-keeping data. It generally took months after the end of the fiscal year in June/July for the first good accounting data to become available for policy action<sup>55</sup>.<sup>56</sup> When the Great Depression broke out in September 1929, the figures for 1928/1929 were not available until December 1929.<sup>57</sup> Three months after the crisis, the figures were thus useless. However, there were similar problems with the agricultural census. As Table 1 elaborated, at no point between 1929 and 1933 did the Weimar government consider the possibility of a large agricultural census as a way of generating data. The reason for this was the long-time lag and the lack of an institutional/personnel

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<sup>53</sup>Padberg; Brummenbaum: Reichsnährstand und landwirtschaftliches Rechnungswesen., 1938, S. 5.

<sup>54</sup> Seedorf, W.: Cod\_Ms\_W\_Seedorf\_J\_7.pdf, Folder, Göttingen 1932, Universitätsarchiv Göttingen, Nachlass Wilhelm Seedorf. Adolf Seedorf: Die Bedeutung der Statistik für den Landwirt, dargestellt an den Verhältnissen der Schweinefleischproduktion im Kreise Uelzen, 1932.

<sup>55</sup>Fensch, Hans Ludwig: Die Entwicklung der landwirtschaftlichen Betriebsergebnisse seit der Neugestaltung der Währung: 7-jährige Buchführungsergebnisse aus den Wirtschaftsjahren 1924/25-1930/31, 1932.

<sup>56</sup>Fensch, Hans Ludwig: Das landwirtschaftliche Buchführungswesen in Deutschland, 1927.

<sup>57</sup>Fensch, Hans Ludwig; Padberg, Kurt; Weitz, Herbert: Zahlen und bilder aus dem deutschen landbau: bearbeitet auf grund zehnjähriger buchführungsunterlagen, Bd. 12, 1936.

infrastructure. Generally, the generation of numbers by the census took months, if not years. For combating a fast-paced agrarian crisis, the census was unsuitable.

Overall, the NS agrarian statistical system was biased in several ways at its founding in 1933. The adoption of the Weimar system ensured a strong path dependency due to two reasons. On the one hand, the system three pillars the methodological institutional and personnel exhibited a clear tendency that favour Agricultural accounting statistics over surveys. On the other hand, the choice of data collection methods employed by NS agricultural statisticians after 1933 was shaped by the Great Depression. The agrarian crisis revealed the main problems of the Weimar agricultural system and pointed out the inability of large-scale censuses and small-scale accounting analyses to quickly provide the necessary information. Furthermore, the agricultural crisis shaped the history of NS agricultural statistics because accounting emerged from it as a clear winner. In the course of the crisis, bookkeeping as a method gained more respect among farmers and experts alike, since its ability to look inside the farm helped to make certain problems such as indebtedness visible and thus combatable.

## **2. The Invention of Totalitarian Agricultural Statistics: The Nazi Regime and the Reorganization of Agricultural Statistics (1933-1939)**

There is a second reason why agricultural accounting statistics were a prominent feature in German agricultural statistics was their compatibility with the fascist agricultural-economic ideology and the subsequent policies. Nazi agricultural statistics are one of the few skeletons that have remained in the closets. A literature survey on the history statistics shows no work on the agricultural data produced by the Nazi administration. However, records from Nazi Germany, and literature on Nazi agriculture and Nazi food policy are full of references about the statistical ability of the Nazi regime. It is a well, established consensus among historians that between 1933 and 1945, the large Nazi agricultural state administration was using statistics for domestic and foreign food, land and agricultural-economic trade policies.<sup>58</sup> However, how and what kind of statistics were generated has yet to be examined by German historians. Instead, there is only a handful of American works that, to date, have described composition of the German Nazi agricultural statistical system. And these accounts were produced after 1945 by members of the American Military Government for Germany (OMGUS).<sup>59</sup> Investigations into Nazi agriculture look at four topics:

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<sup>58</sup> Vickery; Sant: *Agricultural Statistics in Germany, 1946*; Sant; Vickery: *The Food and Agricultural Statistics of the Reich Food Administration, 1947*; Lovin, Clifford R.: *Agricultural Reorganization in the Third Reich: The Reich Food Corporation (Reichsnährstand), 1933-1936*, in: *Agricultural History* 43 (4), 1969, JSTOR, S. 447–462.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

- a) Nazi agricultural doctrines/ideologies (i.e., “Blood and Soil”<sup>60</sup> and “Erzeugungsschlacht”<sup>61</sup>),
- b) Nazi’s food autarky, food policies<sup>62</sup> and agricultural modernization<sup>63</sup>
- c) Nazi agricultural politicians (i.e., the German Ministers of Agriculture Walther Darré (1895-1953)<sup>64</sup>/Herbert Backe (1896-1947)<sup>65</sup>).
- d) Nazi agricultural institutions like the German Ministry for Food and Agriculture (RMEL)<sup>66</sup> and the German Food Corporation (Reichsnährstand, RNS)<sup>67</sup>.

Unfortunately, these bodies tell very little about the agricultural quantification that happened in Germany during the Nazi period. They, for now, have to make do with the historical accounts provided by Adam Tooze and Aly/Black/Roth. The first worked on the history of German economic statistics during the Weimar and early Nazi period, while the second investigated the Nazi population census.<sup>68</sup> Despite the richness of their works, these also, unfortunately, sideline German agricultural data collection and agricultural statistics. Regrettably, the lack of books on the social-genesis and development of German (agricultural) statistics is a common trade among historians. Daniel Speich-Chassé, a known specialist for both economic and statistical history, has pointed out this chronic condition when saying that: “*Statistical data are frequently used as a kind of reality check in consigning past politicians’ room to manoeuvre, but are only rarely made a subject of historical study in themselves.*”<sup>69</sup>

For readers familiar with German historiography, the lack of attention to agricultural statistics is hardly surprising. By nature, Nazi ideology, institutions, politicians, and policies are far more interesting than their statistics. Case studies on Nazi food policies automatically take a horrifying

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<sup>60</sup> Corni, Gustavo; Gies, Horst: *Blut und Boden: Rassenideologie und Agrarpolitik im Staat Hitlers*, Idstein 1994 (Historisches Seminar). Lovin, Clifford R.: *Blut Und Boden: The Ideological Basis of the Nazi Agricultural Program*, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28 (2), 1967, JSTOR, S. 279–288. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2708423>>.

<sup>61</sup> Weinreb, Alice Autumn: *Modern hungers: food and power in twentieth-century Germany*, New York, NY 2017.

<sup>62</sup> Gerhard: *Nazi hunger politics*, 2015.

<sup>63</sup> Gerhard: 5. The modernization dilemma, 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Gies, Horst: *Richard Walther Darré: Der „Reichsbauernführer“, die nationalsozialistische „Blut und Boden“-Ideologie und die Machteroberung Hitlers*, Köln 2019. Richard Walther Darré was born in im Jahr 1895 in Belgrano, Buenos Aires Argentine, and died in 1953 in Munich. During the Nazi period, he was the “Reichsbauernführer” and the German Minister of Food and Agriculture from 1933 to 1942.

<sup>65</sup> Weinreb, Alice Autumn: *Matters of Taste: The Politics of Food and Hunger in Divided Germany 1945-197*, o D.

<sup>66</sup> Möller, Horst; Bitterlich, Joachim; Corni, Gustavo u. a.: *Agrarpolitik im 20. Jahrhundert: das bundesministerium für ernährung und landwirtschaft und seine vorgänger*, Boston 2020<sup>1</sup>. The Abbreviation RMEL stands for the German name of the institution: Reichsministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft

<sup>67</sup> Lovin: *Agricultural Reorganization in the Third Reich: The Reich Food Corporation (Reichsnährstand), 1933-1936, 1969*. Gies, Horst: *Der Reichsnährstand-Organ berufsständischer Selbstverwaltung oder Instrument staatlicher Wirtschaftslenkung*, in: *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie* 21, 1973, S. 216–233.

<sup>68</sup> Tooze, J.A.; Feinstein, C.; O’Brien, P. u. a.: *Statistics and the German State, 1900-1945: The Making of Modern Economic Knowledge*, 2001 (Cambridge Studies in Modern Economic History). Online: <[https://books.google.ch/books?id=7Z\\_\\_3vW17yAC](https://books.google.ch/books?id=7Z__3vW17yAC)>. Tooze, Adam: *Trouble with Numbers: Statistics, Politics, and History in the Construction of Weimar’s Trade Balance, 1918–1924*, in: *The American Historical Review* 113 (3), 06.2008, S. 678–700. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.113.3.678>>.

<sup>69</sup> Tooze, J. Adam: *Weimar’s Statistical Economics: Ernst Wagemann, the Reich’s Statistical Office, and the Institute for Business-Cycle Research, 1925-1933*, in: *The Economic History Review* 52 (3), 1999, JSTOR, S. 523–543; Tooze; Badal: *Ökonomie der Zerstörung*, 2007. For the history of the German Nazi census see the English and German versions of the book by Aly: Black, E.; Aly, G.; Roth, K.H.: *The Nazi Census: The Nazi Census: Identification and Control in the Third Reich*, 2017. Online: <<https://books.google.ch/books?id=pc0QEAAAQBAJ>>; Aly, Götz; Roth, Karl Heinz: *Die restlose Erfassung Volkszählen, Identifizieren, Aussondern im Nationalsozialismus*, 2018. Online: <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2018060622115346573988>>, Stand: 06.03.2021.

<sup>69</sup> Speich Chassé: *Die Ursprünge der Millenniums-Entwicklungsziele/The Roots of the Millennium Development Goals*, 2016, S. 220.

turn towards mass starvation seen in the Warsaw Jewish Ghetto.<sup>70</sup> And stories about the utilization of human ashes for the fertilization of beautiful, large cabbage fields at the Majdanek concentration camp rightly cause an outrage.<sup>71</sup> In comparison, writings on how Nazi agricultural censuses might have suppressed the liberty of farmers to facilitate a planned food and war economy seem rather boring. In the context of Nazi history, any story that aims to emphasize agricultural statistics seems doomed to failure because Nazi numbers didn't kill people – the Nazi system and its people did.

Despite lack of drama, the development of agricultural data collection methods during the Nazi period is of importance because it encourages readers to question the political and social use of agricultural statistics. Looking at the methods through which the Nazis collected agricultural data allows readers to understand how Nazi ideologies were affecting administration practices because it shows how i.e., antisemitism appeared in agricultural censuses. More importantly, this examination also allows a look deeper at the Nazi state/farmer relationship. Only an investigation of Nazi agricultural bookkeeping makes it clear how the Nazi agricultural regime developed accounting statistics to subject farmers to its system. A critical examination of Nazi agricultural censuses acts similar. It provides insights into the ambiguous relationship that existed between German farmers and the Nazi agricultural state government. One of the most important findings of this paper is that this relationship between the state and farmer was not harmonic.<sup>72</sup> Instead, the liaison between the Nazi government and its farming community might have started as symbiotic in the first three years of the Nazi administration. However, after 1936, it quickly turned sour as German farmers were left mercy of the state by the outbreak of WWII in 1939. From there, the relationship further completely deteriorated as German farmers were increasingly subjected to a government hell-bent on becoming food-autarch.

In German agricultural history, the years after Hitler's seizure of power were marked by changes. Richard Walther Darré<sup>73</sup>, who was the leading agricultural expert of the NSDAP and head of its secret National Socialist "Agrarapparat" since 1930, organized a complete restructuring of German agriculture after 1933.<sup>74</sup> In the course of this upheaval, new organizations were created through which the different parts of German agriculture were structured. All farms were incorporated into

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<sup>70</sup> Winick, Myron: Final stamp: the Jewish doctors in the Warsaw ghetto, Bloomington, IN 2007.

<sup>71</sup> Mailänder, Elissa: A specialist: the daily work of Erich Muhsfeldt, chief of the crematorium at Majdanek concentration and extermination camp, 1942–441, in: Destruction and human remains, 2017, S. 51.

<sup>72</sup> Corni; Gies: Brot - Butter - Kanonen, 2015. Here the authors mention several instances to show not only that farmers were aligned in 1933/1934 with the Nazi policy. They also show the problems that were raised by the "Gleichschaltung und Arisierung" that came with the new Nazi state institutions in agriculture and the agricultural-economic and agricultural-political policies executed under the leadership of Walther Darré and Herbert Backe.

<sup>73</sup> Gerhard: 5. The modernization dilemma, 2014, S. 141.

<sup>74</sup> Bramwell, Anna: Blood and soil: Richard Walther Darré and Hitler's «Green Party», Abbotsbrook, Bourne End, Buckinghamshire 1985; Gies: Richard Walther Darré, 2019.

the Reichsnährstand (RNS). This was established by law in September 1933 as a "*self-governing body under public law*"<sup>75</sup> and as the "representation of the German farming community and German agriculture, including the agricultural cooperatives, the agricultural trade (wholesale and retail) and the processors of agricultural products"<sup>76</sup>. A good example of how the RNS reorganized German institutions in agriculture was the German dairy industry. Thus, after 1934, every farm in Germany connected with the production, processing and distribution of milk<sup>77</sup> had to be a member of local farmers' unions of the RNS and its milk association and had to implement the state's milk prices as well as its delivery quotas.<sup>78</sup>

Economically, the Nazi changes were marked by the agricultural crisis. Darré, with the help of the RNS, subjected the German agricultural sector to a totalitarian, planned economy model.<sup>79</sup> Hitler had already considered this to be particularly good when he wrote that a planned economy was the only alternative to the primacy of free agricultural markets.<sup>80</sup> In addition to fighting the crisis, the ordered planned economy was also a means to achieve the German food autarchy.<sup>81</sup> By implementing Görings two "four-year plans"<sup>82</sup>, German agriculture was to increase its domestic production to the maximum to ensure complete independence from foreign countries. These two objectives, the ending of the crisis and food freedom, were secured by proclaiming the "battle of production" (Erzeugungsschlacht) and establishing the "order of production" (Erzeugungsordnung). The first was a political and economic campaign that, inspired by the Italian model, called for national competition between farmers after 1934, measuring the production performance of farms. In the course of this project, farmers were the "soldiers of a food war"<sup>83</sup> whose ultimate victory was German independence from foreign food imports.<sup>84</sup>

To reach this maximum increase in domestic agricultural production, Darré and his protégé, Herbert Backe enforced a planned agricultural economy. This meant that all farms, markets and farm people were, as part of the German agricultural resources, subjected to serve the German economy in the best and most efficient way possible. To establish this "Erzeugungsordnung" the

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<sup>75</sup>Seidl: Deutsche Agrargeschichte, 2014, S. 252–253. German original term: Selbstverwaltungskörperlichkeit des öffentlichen Rechtes

<sup>76</sup>Ebd. German Original Term: German Original quote: „Vertretung der deutschen Bauerschaft und der deutschen Landwirtschaft einschließlich der landwirtschaftlichen Genossenschaften, des Landhandels (Groß und Kleinhandels) und der Be/Verarbeiter landwirtschaftlichen Erzeugnisse

<sup>77</sup>Lovin: Agricultural Reorganization in the Third Reich: The Reich Food Corporation (Reichsnährstand), 1933-1936, 1969, S. 445.

<sup>78</sup>Fink, Andrea: Von der Bauernmilch zur Industriemilch: zur Entwicklung und Funktion der Qualitätsnormen bei Milch, 1991.

<sup>79</sup>Von Dietze: Grundzüge der Agrarpolitik, 1967, S. 65–67; Farquharson: The plough and the swastika, 1976; Gerhard: Nazi hunger politics, 2015; Tooze: The wages of destruction, 2007, S. 166–203.

<sup>80</sup>Seidl: Deutsche Agrargeschichte, 2014, S. 255.

<sup>81</sup>Petzina, Dieter: Autarkiepolitik im Dritten Reich: Der nationalsozialistische Vierjahresplan, Bd. 16, STUTTGART 1968 (Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte). Online: <<https://doi.org/10.1524/9783486703672>>, Stand: 04.03.2021.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Von Dietze: Grundzüge der Agrarpolitik, 1967, S. 63. Original term : Soldaten im Ernährungskrieg

<sup>84</sup>Cornij; Gies: Brot - Butter - Kanonen, 2015; Möller u. a. (Hg.): Zweiter Teil, 2020; Gerhard: Nazi hunger politics, 2015.



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RNS founded, local, district and state farmers' unions (Orts und Kreisbauernschaften).<sup>85</sup> Employed by the state, these unions observed and organized local production as part of a state-run centralistic system that operated on the local, regional, federal and national levels to “ensure that each farmer got the most out of his farm”<sup>86</sup>. On the ground, the RNS asked farmers to switch from producing meat to wheat, if the soil was better for that.<sup>87</sup>

The statistics used to design and implement the RNS production order were created by agricultural statisticians working for three different RNS departments. These departments were established to create a maximally efficient system of German farms, markets and people.<sup>88</sup> The largest number of statisticians was found in the ‚Reichshauptteilungen II (Market) and III (Farm). In the first, statisticians were responsible for ensuring the "operational and professional promotion of agriculture to feed our people from our German soil".<sup>89</sup> Among others, the accounting experts Fensch and Padberg were employed here, who through the analysis of farm books determined whether "each farmer and farm owner tried everything to increase the yield of his land"<sup>90</sup>. Fensch's colleagues in Reichshauptabteilung III operated similarly. To provide the RNS with a complete market overview, they used bookkeeping but also the census and the Hofkarte as a means of total "statistical surveillance" <sup>91</sup>.

In Table 3, a list of surveillance tools is presented. These were available to agricultural statisticians had been continuously improved and extended since 1933. As seen in this table, which lists the data collection methods of 1928/1929 and 1938/1939, several new data collection formats were invented and used by the RNS in ten years that passed between the end of the Weimar Republic. Among the old methods, were data collection formats that had already existed before 1929, such as the census but also the state analysis of accounting books. On the other hand, there were five new formats. There was, the Hofkarte, which was a complete analysis of the farm in 150 points that was continued annually from 1936. There was the Schlusschein, a document which existed for each individual produced/purchased food item, and recorded who bought something, when, where, and how much.<sup>92</sup> This was replaced from 1935/6 for grain by the grain stamp and from

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<sup>85</sup> Muellenbusch, Josef: Die Organisation der deutschen Ernährungswirtschaft-Der Reichsnährstand, 1941.

<sup>86</sup> Lovin: Agricultural Reorganization in the Third Reich: The Reich Food Corporation (Reichsnährstand), 1933-1936, 1969; Dornheim, Andreas, W. Kohlhammer GmbH: Beamte, Adjutanten, Funktionäre Personenlexikon zum Reichsministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft und Reichsnährstand, 2021. Online: <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2021022322050343612156>>, Stand: 15.03.2021.

<sup>87</sup> DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1939., 1939, DLG Archive, Frankfurt am Main. Dr. H. Rathschlag Blumethal, Unterweser, Ustellung eines bäuerlichen Betriebes in dej Haren 1935/1938 , 1939, S. 1.-2 Dr. H. Rathschlag Blumethal, Unterweser, Umstellung eines bäuerlichen Betriebes in den Jahren 1935/1938 , 1939, S. 1.-2

<sup>88</sup> Corni; Gies: Brot - Butter - Kanonen, 2015, S. p.164-165.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., S. 163.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. German original term: „ob auch jeder Bauer und Betriebsbesitzer alles versucht hat, den Ertrag seines Bodens zu steigern“.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., S. 164. Original translation: “statistischen Überwachung”

<sup>92</sup> Ebd., S. 332–333; Muellenbusch: Die Organisation der deutschen Ernährungswirtschaft-Der Reichsnährstand, 1941, S. 50–51.

1937 by the potato stamp.<sup>93</sup> New was also the Kreismappe, which represented a conglomerate of all Hofkarte located in one Kreis. Also, after 1937, regular farm inspections (Hofbegehungen) were made during which the NS local advisers visited the farms with low performance<sup>94</sup> - Finally, there were the monthly reports in which the farmers reported their performance to the RNS shortly after the End of the season.<sup>95</sup> From this overview, it can be seen that of these five new formats, four belonged to the Agricultural accounting statistics (FRM) group and one to the Survey Method (SM). This meant that in 1939 the number of FRMs more than doubled to 5:2, whereas in 1932/1933 the ratio was still 1:1, census vs. bookkeeping.

## 2.1. Survey methods and the totalitarian NS agricultural policy

The revelation that FRM doubled between 1933 and 1939 raises the fundamental question of what kind of agricultural surveys existed in the Nazi regime and more importantly, why this format was not used more widely. The reasons for this were that the two existing survey methods, the census and also the farm inspections, were only suitable for specific tasks that had only partially played a small role in upholding the NS planned agricultural economy, as implemented by the Nazi regime after 1933. Agricultural accounting statistics played a much bigger one because they were more compatible with NS ideology and better at enforcing the fast, and harsh measures of the NS agricultural policy that were necessary to create and maintain the planned economy.

### The Nazi and the agricultural census prior to WWII (1933-1939)

It is no secret that Nazi population censuses were used to carry out the Holocaust.<sup>96</sup> It was often used to find and eliminate Jewish and other foreign minority groups. However, to facilitate a dynamic and flexible economic policy, which was at the core of the German battle of production, the census method was not a good tool. In fact, its methodology proved to be too static and inflexible to provide spontaneous information. As most censuses, the enumerations carried out by the RNS in the local, district and regional farming communities provided precise information on the amount of pasture, meadow and cultivated land available in Germany in a given year.<sup>97</sup> And these figures were also used by the RNS to issue decrees with guidelines for how much of their land should be used for what purpose.<sup>98</sup> But these numbers were only good for creating a basic value that had to be adjusted on an individual level. What the census generally did was roughly

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Aly; Roth: Die restlose Erfassung Volkszählen, Identifizieren, Aussondern im Nationalsozialismus, 2018; Black; Aly; Roth: The Nazi Census: The Nazi Census: Identification and Control in the Third Reich, 2017.

<sup>97</sup>Vickery; Sant: Agricultural Statistics in Germany, 1946, S. 1063–1064.

<sup>98</sup> DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1939., 1939. Dr. H. Rathschlag Blumethal, Unterweser, Umstellung eines bäuerlichen Betriebes in den Jahren 1935/1938 , 1939, pp. 1.-2.

establish a national average of i.e., how much arable land a farm should have. But this figure was not always transferable, since the nature of i.e., soil varied within farms. If the soil on a 50-ha big farm in central Germany had too few nutrients then, the implementation of the RNS fixed acreage rate for rye of this farm size etc, made little sense. Thus, the compatibility of the census with the NS agrarian economic objectives, which were primarily aimed at optimizing the increase in output on all farms individually, was rather mediocre. The census method was just as powerful as the population censuses for the implementation of Nazi racial and land ideology. The General Agricultural Holdings Census was used to identify Jewish-owned farms and businesses. This was because these questionnaires recorded among other things, the religion or race of the farm managers. For Darré, who promoted the "Aryanization" of German agriculture in the course of the blood and soil ideology, such data provided the necessary figures for his anti-Jewish legislation. Thus, between 1935 and 1938, he enacted a series of laws under which Jews were not allowed to own, inherit, sell, or manage farms, or to hire people who could do all this for them.<sup>99</sup>

#### Nazi farm inspections as sources of agricultural data

The second survey method used by the RNS was the 'farm inspection' (Hofbegehungen). This was used from 1936/1937 as part of the Second Four Year Plan (1936-1940). Its central motive was to expand national agricultural economic extension. The method was used by local RNS economic advisers, who visited farms to get an on-the-spot view of the situation and/or to improve what was probably poor farm management on the ground.<sup>100</sup> This method was compatible with Nazi ideals because, on the one hand, it exercised a controlling function over the farmers as part of statistical monitoring. On the other hand, it was part of the production order, because the farm inspection by the RNS local advisers ensured that each farmer got the most out of his farm by following the RNS guidelines.<sup>101</sup> However, farm visits were not suitable for the national collection of data because they were too costly in terms of human resources and time. Thus, the consultants had to spend some time on the visit, but also the preparation and follow-up.<sup>102</sup>

Both the census and the farm inspection were formats that had adapted statistics to the planned economy. But a hundred per cent harmony with this model was not present in either case. The census was a passive means of retrospective economic observation. Its figures were evaluated retrospectively and much later. But for Nazi agricultural policy, which planned partly in months,

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<sup>99</sup>Möller u. a. (Hg.): Zweiter Teil, 2020, S. 183.

<sup>100</sup>Corni; Gies: Brot - Butter - Kanonen, 2015, S. 332.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1938., 1938, DLG Archive, Frankfurt am Main. Ausbau der Wirtschaftsberatung., p. 241. 1937

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at most in annual intervals, the census method was only a mediocre means of collecting data. This was similar to farm inspections. As a statistical tool for obtaining microeconomic data, this format was well suited for checking individual farms. And it was used heavily in individual economic extension. But to carry out farm inspections at the national level for all 1.3 million farms was something that even the RNS with its ten thousand employees could not manage, nor did it want to. Only for the poorly performing farms was it worth the time and personnel needed to collect good data during the farm inspection.

## 2.2. A Perfect Harmony: Agricultural accounting statistics in Nazi Agricultural Policy and Racial Ideology

*"Sensible entries of income and expenditure lead man to a planned order of his way of life and thus to a much higher stage of culture and civilization"*<sup>103</sup> -  
Gustav Ruhland

The second group of methods that developed under the Nazi regime were formats that passed on written-down data from farmers to the state.

### Agricultural accounting statistics in the early years NS regime

After the end of the Weimar Republic, the analysis of accounts had migrated into the repertoire of Nazi agricultural statisticians. For the German farmers and the members of the RNS, however, bookkeeping, i.e., the writing down of more than 500 aspects of the farm business, was more than just a way to calculate one's taxes. As indicated by the quote from the German farm politician Gustav Ruhland, bookkeeping was part of a new agricultural culture that the RNS wanted to implement in Germany. Thus, for the RNS, bookkeeping was to become a cornerstone of agricultural business practice, since only it could guarantee the maintenance of good planned economic "order" on the farm.<sup>104</sup> For bookkeeping, the farm managers had to list all items of their farm, income, goods in kind, expenses, etc., and evaluate them for their contribution to improving performance. As already explained in the first section, bookkeeping experienced an institutional expansion from 1933 onwards. Fensch and Padberg, as Reichstableiter in the RNS, now produced analyses of at least 10,000 enterprises in numerous investigations, whether for the debt statistics or the operating statistics.<sup>105</sup> However, the activities of the Padberg/Fensch duo were not just a continuity of their previous work. Accounting practices itself, and their practical application in

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<sup>103</sup>DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1934., 1934, DLG Archive, Frankfurt am Main.Prof. Dr. W. Wilmanns, Jena, Buchführung auf dem Erbhof. S.522. German original quote: *Sinnmäßig Eintragungen der Einnahmen und Ausgaben führen den Menschen zu einer planmäßigen Ordnung seiner Lebensweise und damit zu einer wesentlich höheren Stufe der Kultur und Zivilisation.*"

<sup>104</sup> DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1935., 1935.Hans Henning von Rofenberg -Lipinsky, Der Einfluss der Buchführung auf die Betriebsführung, pp. 878-879.

<sup>105</sup>Padberg; Brummenbaum: Reichsnährstand und landwirtschaftliches Rechnungswesen., 1938.

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politics had changed compared to 1932. Before 1933, the most important measure of accounting had been the financial efficiency of a farm, its "profitability". This was measured between 1925 and 1932 by the net profit a farmer made from his work during a fiscal year. Good farms recorded economic successes, while poor illiterate farmers had low profits. However, using money this yardstick for valuing a farm was an expression of the "liberal-capitalist objective"<sup>106</sup> that had prevailed in the Weimar Republic:

"Money as the overriding means of expression for all events and as a means of representing processes. For this purpose, economic values and processes had to be estimated and converted in their monetary value. Money embodies values and things and enters these counterparts into the foreground of consideration."<sup>107</sup>

Before 1932, the most important factors had been monies, which were the primary factors in capitalist accounting, things like calculating earnings, net income, profit, income, pension, and so on.<sup>108</sup> But these factors were, in principle, problematic because they favoured especially valuable farms. In the "age of capitalism, banks gave preference to farms that provided the most sufficient capital with the highest return"<sup>109</sup>. After 1933 the measure of success of a farmer and his farm changed. It was no longer profits or monetary issues that were important in the Nazi agrarian state. Through the establishment of the planned economy and the proclamation of the production battle, instead of money, the number of foodstuffs that the farmer produced on his farm and the number of people he fed were in the foreground of the accounting:

"The decisive change from the past is based on the fact that profitability must no longer be given priority as a measure of performance, but that the assessments of an enterprise must be based primarily on its performance for the whole."<sup>110</sup>

Responsible for the implementation of this approach in agricultural accounting was the accountancy offices. They were supervised by the Reichsverband der landwirtschaftlichen Buchstellen.<sup>111</sup> Founded in 1936/7 and affiliated with the RNS, its main task was the standardization of accounting and its spread.<sup>112</sup> The association pursued these aims intensively and with considerable success, especially with smaller and medium-sized farms. As early as May 1938, it succeeded in attracting about 2500 new small businesses to the association.<sup>113</sup> If one considers

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<sup>106</sup>DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1934., 1934. Die Zukunft der Buchführung, Dr. G. Klauer, Leipzig, p. 938

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. Die Zukunft der Buchführung, Dr. G. Klauer, Leipzig, p. 938. German original quote: *Geld als überragendes Ausdrucksmittel für jegliches Geschehen und als Darstellungsmittel von Vorgängen. Zu dem Zweck mussten wirtschaftliche Werte und Vorgänge in ihrem Geldwert geschätzt und umgerechnet werden. Geld verkörpert Werte und Sachen und tritt diesen gegenüber in den Vordergrund der Betrachtung*

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. Die Zukunft der Buchführung, Dr. G. Klauer, Leipzig, p. 939.

<sup>109</sup>Padberg; Brummenbaum: Reichsnährstand und landwirtschaftliches Rechnungswesen., 1938, S. 1. German Quote: *Zeitalter des Kapitalismus den Betrieben den Vorzug, die das hinreichend Kapital mit der Großen Verzinsung brachten*

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., S. 2. German quote: *Die entscheidende Wandlung gegenüber der Vergangenheit beruht darin, dass der Rentabilität als Maßstab für die Leistungsfähigkeit nicht mehr der Vorrang eingeräumt werden darf, sondern dass die Beurteilungen eines Betriebes in erster Linie sich nach den Leistungen für die Gesamtheit zu richten hat.*

<sup>111</sup>Vickery; Sant: Agricultural Statistics in Germany, 1946, S. 1063.

<sup>112</sup>Padberg; Brummenbaum: Reichsnährstand und landwirtschaftliches Rechnungswesen., 1938, S. 1–2.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., S. 6.

that before 1913 only about 2% of small farms, 14% of medium-sized farms and 84% of large farms were members, this was already a great success.<sup>114</sup> However, if one compares this aspect with the fact that in 1934 the books of the book offices were distributed as follows: 20% on small farms up to 20 ha, 50% on medium-sized farms and 30% on large farms, it becomes clear to what extent and above all among what part of the agricultural population the method spread.<sup>115</sup> Thus, during the Weimar period, but also due to the RNS, bookkeeping was becoming more and more widespread, especially on smaller farms. The spread of bookkeeping to farms of less than 100 ha was not the only change that took place between 1924 and 1934. This evolution was proportional to the institutional expansion of the accountancy offices. Before 1913, the number was 3200 holdings managed by 60 accountancy offices. In 1934, nearly 600 book offices kept the books for about 55,000 holdings.<sup>116</sup>

The structure of bookkeeping and its institutional spread was adapted to the specifications of the Nazi regime within the framework of the planned economy. From 1934, books were kept for increasing performance and establish a total agrarian economic order. For the history of National Socialist agricultural policy, the conversion of bookkeeping was not the only evidence that bookkeeping enjoyed particular popularity in the Nazi regime. This is made clear above all by the intensive use of the method. Thus, accounting was used to collect data for both planned economic and ideological purposes. Planned economic examples of this were that bookkeeping was used to compile national agricultural debt statistics<sup>117</sup> and that it informed grain policy and feed policy. Padberg reported that his analyses of accounting results were used in 1935 to "abruptly introduce a grain contingent/quota"<sup>118</sup>. Padberg was referring to the action taken by the RNS from 1936 to curb production by prohibition because of falling German grain prices. This measure was implemented through a strict price and purchase policy in which RNS bought only a certain amount of grain from each farm. Surplus grain could no longer be offered for sale, and farmers who grew more risked financial loss.<sup>119</sup> For this policy, however, the RNS needed guideline rates that determined the maximum amount of grain for each type of farm, and that local authorities and also farmers could use as a guide. These standard rates came from Padberg and Fensch, who calculated the quotas from accounting results.<sup>120</sup> Based on this, these experts were able to

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<sup>114</sup> DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1934., 1934.Diplomlandwirt Dr. Stieger, Berlin, Neuordnung des Buchstellen und Buchführungswesens p. 901

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>Padberg; Brummenbaum: Reichsnährstand und landwirtschaftliches Rechnungswesen., 1938, S. 4–9.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., S. 9. German quote: eine " Getreidekontingierung schlagartig einzuführen

<sup>119</sup>Tooze: The wages of destruction, 2007, S. 193.

<sup>120</sup>Padberg; Brummenbaum: Reichsnährstand und landwirtschaftliches Rechnungswesen., 1938, S. 9.



determine how much grain was cultivated on average on certain farm sizes and forms and therefore how high the RNS purchase quota for grain had to be for the respective farm size.<sup>121</sup>

A similar use of record-keeping was also made in national feed distribution. In 1937, a ban on feeding rye was declared by the RMEL and the RNS organized to the bread grain supply, and anyone who violated it was, according to Herman Göring, a "traitor to the country"<sup>122, 123</sup>. Bookkeeping statistics took on two roles to enforce this ban. First, the farm accounting books of the year 1938 was surveyed for the impact and implementation of the ban.<sup>124</sup> This was done because farm accounts were the only format in which farmers had to declare how much fodder they produced or how much they fed to their animals. Secondly, based on the accounting results of 1936 and 1937, the concrete amount of maize that was necessary to replace the missing rye cattle feed was calculated by Fensch and Padberg and distributed among farmers by the RNS.<sup>125</sup>

The use of accounting for agricultural purposes, there were also applications for the blood-and-soil ideology because accounting was a fundamental element of the hereditary farm, a product of Nazi agricultural ideology.<sup>126</sup> This category of farms was officially established in 1933 with the Reichserbhofgesetz. It comprised about 650,000 farms, all of which "provided at least one arable crop, i.e., the livelihood for a family, which was about 7.5 ha."<sup>127</sup> The maximum size was about 125 ha, and the special feature of these farms was that on the one hand they were protected against indebtedness because they could not be mortgaged.<sup>128</sup> On the other, hand the hereditary farms were exceptional because the whole farm went to only one heir and thus other relatives were left out. In the case that there were several heirs, the new law decreed that the other "heirs" of a farm, i.e. those who did not take over the property, were entitled to food, vocational training and equipment.<sup>129</sup> This was linked to the performance of the farm.<sup>130</sup> For the clarification of the financial claim, i.e. the maintenance to which the heirs were entitled to food, occupation etc., the bookkeeping was of great importance. For in this document, on the one hand, the value of the farm, including its inventory (land, livestock, etc.), but also the annual performance was noted.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>Ibid.

<sup>122</sup>Seidl: Deutsche Agrargeschichte, 2014, S. 259. German original term: "Landesverräter"

<sup>123</sup>Tooze: The wages of destruction, 2007, S. 193.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid.

<sup>125</sup>Padberg; Brummenbaum: Reichsnährstand und landwirtschaftliches Rechnungswesen., 1938, S. 9.

<sup>126</sup>Dietze, Constantin von: Reichserbhofgesetz, Folder, Freiburg 1934, 1950.1933, Universitätsarchiv Freiburg; Kaden: The Peasant Inheritance Law in Germany-On the Basis of the Reich's Hereditary Peasant Farm Law of 1933, 1934; Galbraith, John Kenneth: Hereditary land in the Third Reich, in: The Quarterly Journal of Economics 53 (3), 1939, S. 465-476; Lovin: Agricultural Reorganization in the Third Reich: The Reich Food Corporation (Reichsnährstand), 1933-1936, 1969, S. p.447.

<sup>127</sup>Seidl: Deutsche Agrargeschichte, 2014, S. 254.

<sup>128</sup>von Dietze: Reichserbhofgesetz, 1933.

<sup>129</sup>Seidl: Deutsche Agrargeschichte, 2014, S. 255.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

<sup>131</sup>DLG: Mitteilungen der Deutschen Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft.1934., 1934.Ibid. Kurt Padberg, Ohne Buchführung geht es nicht. P. 520

However, it was precisely why these two factors were used to calculate the exact amount of maintenance for widows and children, and for those who had inherited after 1934.<sup>132</sup>

In summary, the accounting method was a tool of the Nazi regime that had adapted to both its planned economy and its ideology. After 1933, accounting determined the value of its enterprise based on the increase in performance, because the "production" of the enterprise was the most important thing for the people. In this sense, it differed massively from pre-1932 accounting, which had seen "profitability," that is, the financial income of individuals, as the measure of all things. Similarly, the analysis of some government sources available here has shown that after 1933, on the one hand, bookkeeping intensified due to the reorganization of German agriculture. Thus, the adherence of small and medium farmers also increased due to the involvement of the RNS and its offshoot in the field of agricultural accounting, the Reichsnährverband für landwirtschaftliche Buchführung. On top of this, it was demonstrated that the expansion of record-keeping at the state level was because of specific policies. It was not only very different from its predecessor in the 1920s, which had few accounting statistics to evaluate for political purposes. It was also in complete contrast to the U.S.A. where at no time did accounting for the New Deal come into play. This was probably because, as has already been pointed out, accounting was seen as a means of ore battle and a planned economy that needed a lot of standardized books. This was never present to this extent in the U.S. even during the New Deal with its strong interventionist policies.

#### All eyes on the farm: the Reichsnährstand and the German Hofkarte

The invention and implementation of the Hofkarte in Germany represented a milestone in German Nazi agricultural history because it reflected Nazi ideology and planned economy like no other instrument. The introduction of the map was a blessing for the planned economy, which envisaged a further massive increase in agricultural production from 1936 in the Second Four-Year Plan. For each of these maps, 150 different entries were made annually for each agricultural holding with more than two hectares. Here were recorded all manner of factors relating to the farm, its internal organization, efficiency, labour, produce, land use, ownership, crop rotation, livestock, machinery, fertilizers, manure, supplies, water and electricity, processing plants, market sales, special facilities and yield.<sup>133</sup> With these factors, it was easy for the economic advisers who visited poorly performing farms from 1936/7 from the RNS to get a quick overview of the farm and its problems.

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid,

<sup>133</sup> Sant; Vickery: The Food and Agricultural Statistics of the Reich Food Administration, 1947, S. 178.

For the national implementation of the production order, the Hofkarte was also a gift through its details. The Hofkarte made it possible to determine which areas were used for what, which areas produced too little, or even how much free, unused land there was. For the creation of national order, the Hofkarte was also a good thing, because it standardized the data regardless of farm size or geographical location. Thus, in 1937 and 1945, approximately "2.3 million farmers who farmed more than 90 per cent of the agricultural land of the German national territory"<sup>134</sup> filled out the same form. From an administrative point of view, the map was a real eye-opener because it allowed statisticians to quickly create a uniform picture of the German agricultural economy based on a standardized data pool. Other reasons why the Hofkarte was a statistical expression of the Nazi regime were the division of their survey and storage process which made the farm a "glass" farm. The creation of the Hofkarte showed directly who was in charge within the state-farmer relationship. Although the farmer was responsible for the initial production, it was up to an RNS to check and store this information.<sup>135</sup> The reason why the Hofkarte as a format was an example of totalitarian agricultural policy was that the map was not only the private property of the farmer. It belonged equally to the local farmer's leader or the state.<sup>136</sup> Another aspect that demonstrates that the Hofkarte was a specific NS instrument was its role in state-imposed economic advice. The Hofkarte was one of the most important documents for state advisors who, after 1936, explained to farmers how they could improve the economic performance of their farms. It was used to:

*"compare the performance and trends of performance of all producers in a village and to select inefficient farms that need additional advice, and to encourage farm owners and managers to be more efficient by comparing the production of their farms."*<sup>137</sup>

To Americans, the description of this process may sound familiar. It resembles in some ways the process by which farm management uses were found through the USDA's Extension Service in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>138</sup> Unlike its American cousins, however, the RNS Extension Service was not primarily concerned with helping farmers improve their incomes for the sake of farmers. Rather, RNS agents differed from their American counterparts in that they provided severe consequences for farmers who did not meet the required food quota. The Hofkarte was used to calculate these quotas. It determined what amount of food farmers had to produce and deliver to the government.<sup>139</sup> As the Hofkarte captured all aspects of production, it was more difficult for farmers

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid. German quote: 2,3 Millionen Landwirte, die mehr als 90 Prozent der landwirtschaftlich genutzten Fläche des deutschen Staatsgebiets bewirtschafteten.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup>Sant; Vickery: The Food and Agricultural Statistics of the Reich Food Administration, 1947, S. 178.

<sup>138</sup>Taylor, Henry C.; Taylor, Anne Dewees: The history of Agricultural Economics in the U.S.pdf, Ames, Iowa 1952, S. 258.

<sup>139</sup>Sant; Vickery: The Food and Agricultural Statistics of the Reich Food Administration, 1947, S. 179–183.

to find excuses or reasons why the calculated food quotas could not be met. Farmers could not talk their way out of the situation by blaming poor soil conditions. These conditions had already been included in the calculation of the quota the year before thanks to the Hofkarte. In summary, the Hofkarte as a new reporting element was a means by which the RNS could and did constantly monitor German farmers and their production.<sup>140</sup> In general, therefore, the Hofkarte, which was made mandatory for all German farms after 1936/7, was an instrument of data collection that almost 100 per cent supported the Nazi planned economy and its ideology. It did this by placing the farmer at the center of agricultural production and, above all, of data collection.

### **3. From Use to Abuse: Nazi Agricultural Data Collection in the Second World War (1939-1945)**

In September 1939, German troops overran the Polish border, thus triggering the Second World War. At the same time, however, the German invasion marked the beginning of a new phase of Nazi agricultural policy, agricultural economy and agricultural statistics. After 1939, all data collection formats were used for the implementation of Nazi political war measures and ideology. For this, a wide repertoire of German data collection methods, including Hofkarte, bookkeeping, and census, was used to increase German food production, regulate food distribution, integrate conquered territories into the German planned economy, and combat agricultural problems created by the war.

#### Agricultural accounting statistics as Part of the War Production Battle (1939-1945)

To smooth over the German conversion from a peacetime to a wartime economy, the RNS undertook a series of institutional, economic, and statistical measures. To organize and control local agricultural production, the RNS established food offices to ensure the domestic food supply. This was supposed to ensure the "maintenance of agricultural production"<sup>141</sup> and the collection and distribution of food to the local population. However, this was only partially successful. Thus, between 1939 and 1944, German agricultural production fell from 200,000,00 tons by just over 2/3 to 61,000,000.<sup>142</sup> In the economic sphere, on the instructions of Herbert Backe, who took over the organization of German agriculture from Darré in 1939, the RNS established delivery quotas for agricultural producers and expanded the rationing model for German consumers that had existed since 1937. The aim here was to ensure food security in Germany and to prevent German

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<sup>140</sup>Corni, Gustavo; Gies, Horst: 3. Erfassung, Kontrolle, Überwachung, Zwang-Reglementierung vom Erzeuger über den Händler bis zum Verbraucher, in: Brot-Butter-Kanonen, 2015, S. 319–364.

<sup>141</sup>Muellenbusch: Die Organisation der deutschen Ernährungswirtschaft-Der Reichsnährstand, 1941, S. 74–75.

<sup>142</sup>Hilton, Laura J: Postwar Food Rumors: Security, Victimhood and Fear, in: Food, Culture and Identity in Germany's Century of War, 2019, S. 183.

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famines from bringing the war to an early end.<sup>143</sup> For precisely this goal, Darré and Backe, who were familiar with Hitler's expansion plans towards the East, had indeed set fixed quantities for butter, margarine and fats as early as January 1937.<sup>144</sup> After 1939, other foodstuffs were added, above all grain and livestock (fish, meat, etc.).<sup>145</sup>

Statistically, the policy of safeguarding German food production manifested itself in the efforts of the RNS to induce German farmers not only to increase their production output but also to hand over everything that was not necessary for their use. To implement these two objectives, the food offices used the full range of German agricultural statistical data collection methods. The motto of the nutrition offices followed the German motto of "carrot and stick". For control and the necessary punishment of farmers who did not adhere to the quotas, the employees of these offices used both bookkeeping and the Hofkarte. It was used on the one hand to calculate quotas and on the other hand to control the delivery quotas.<sup>146</sup> On the positive side, the RNS used its methods to provide financial incentives and assistance. From 1940, the RNS set up a public "competition" for German dairy farmers to increase German milk production. In 1943, Wilhelm Götebier's family was awarded a prize by the Landesbauernführer for its "outstanding performance in the fight against the fat blockade"<sup>147</sup>. The basis for the decision on which the RNS issued this certificate to the family in 1943 was the comparison of accounting results. According to these, the Götebier family had won, and thus received the certificate, but also the public honour and recognition that went with the receipt of this document. On the negative side, however, the analysis of accounting results and the Hofkarte were also used by the nutrition offices to identify underperforming farms after 1939. To improve production, these farms were subjected to strict, tailor-made economic advice because, in the view of the Nazi regime, the German people could not afford any weaknesses in agricultural production during the war.<sup>148</sup> Taken together, the outbreak of World War II shaped the use of post-1939 data collection formats to the extent that here, as in other areas, there was an expansion for the radicalization of Nazi agricultural policy.

### Accounting statistics as part Nazi invasion policies

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<sup>143</sup>Fojtik, Christine: The Productive Heimat: Territorial Loss and Rurality in German Identity at the Stunde Null, in: Food, Culture and Identity in Germany's Century of War, 2019, S. 158; Allen, Keith: Sharing scarcity: bread rationing and the First World War in Berlin, 1914-1923, in: journal of social history, 1998, S. 371–393.

<sup>144</sup>Gerhard: 5. The modernization dilemma, 2014, S. 146.

<sup>145</sup>Ulrich, Kluge: Vierzig Jahre Agrarpolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1989, S. 44–75.

<sup>146</sup>Muellenbusch: Die Organisation der deutschen Ernährungswirtschaft-Der Reichsnährstand, 1941, S. 74–75.

<sup>147</sup> See picture 1. German original quote: Auf Grund der Entscheidung des Milchleistungsschausschusses wurde der Familie Wilhelm Götebier für hervorragende Leistungen im Kampf gegen die Fettblockade diese Urkunde zuerkannt."

<sup>148</sup>Corni; Gies: Brot - Butter - Kanonen, 2015.

In terms of the market economy, bookkeeping and Hofkarte were developed more than tools of domestic Nazi agricultural-economic measures. Beginning in 1938/1939, these two, in particular, were used along with the census as part of Nazi foreign and military policy to subjugate newly conquered territories and quickly integrate them into the Nazi regime's agricultural economy. A good example of how the census was used in German military administrations is provided by the German occupation of Poland. After the invasion of German troops in 1939, the German Wehrmacht ordered both a census of the population and a farm census.<sup>149</sup> Based on these, the food quotas for feeding the Polish population were to be calculated, as well as the amount of food to be sent back from Poland to the German core area. The responsibility for the removal of wheat and other products fell to the provisional administration of the "Generalgouvernement"<sup>150</sup>, which quickly and efficiently took on this task. While the first shipment of grain from Poland to the Reich amounted to only 40,000 tons, in 1943-1944 it was approximately 571,682 tons.<sup>151</sup> The analysis of questionnaires from Polish farmers for grain collection was not the most influential way in which the Nazi regime used data collection methods for its political goals. Agricultural accounting statistics were mainly used to firstly integrate the foreign agricultural economy politically/economically in Germany.

In Poland, the Hofkarte was introduced in 1939 to establish a copy of the German planned economy of agriculture.<sup>152</sup> With the help of this Polish Hofkarte, farmers were supposed to record how much they produced. As in Germany, however, the Hofkarte was used by the local German authorities to establish the German model of delivery quotas, to organize figures for the entire Reich, and to take political prisoners.<sup>153</sup> In the course of the German farm census of 1939, enumerations were made in Poland, Austria and Belgium, collecting numbers for all farms under German control and their production, but also tolling the amount of Polish workers that were working as a forced laborers in Germany against their will. Similar processes of combined agrarian-economic integration and Nazi ideology took place in all areas where the Nazi regime had established itself as the new political ruler, either through annexation or through the conclusion of treaties. In Austria, which more or less willingly became part of the German Reich in 1938, the German model of bookkeeping (with the yardstick of "production output") and the Hofkarte were introduced.<sup>154</sup> The transfer of these methods was not only intended to bring Austrian agriculture into line with German agriculture. These two formats were also means to an end to increase the

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<sup>149</sup>Gross, Jan Tomasz: Polish society under German occupation: the Generalgouvernement, 1939-1944, Princeton, N.J 1979, S. 106.

<sup>150</sup>Gross: Polish society under German occupation, 1979.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., S. 106.

<sup>152</sup>ŁUCZAK, CZESŁAW: Expulsions of Polish civilians in the territories incorporated into the Reich, 1939-1945. Selected Sources, in: VII, 2019, S. 60-61.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid.

<sup>154</sup>Langthaler, Ernst: Varieties of modernity: fascism and agricultural development in Austria, 1934-1945, in: Agriculture in the Age of Fascism: Authoritarian Technocracy and rural modernization, 1922-1945, 1922, S. 170-172.



Austrian agricultural, organic production output in such a way that Austria could feed itself, but above all also the German people.<sup>155</sup> In Belgium, where German troops also took control of part of the agricultural holdings by invasion in 1939, the export and adaptation of the German agricultural system of planned economy and its data collection methods took place. Thus, here too, the Hofkarte was introduced as part of the occupation policy.<sup>156</sup>

### The Farm Labor Census as a Part of the NS racial and agricultural policy

The third reason why World War II was a factor in shaping German data collection formats after 1939 is that it created problems. To solve these, the Nazi regime developed new data collection formats. This argument quickly becomes apparent when one looks at the history of the farm labour census. This format, in which farmers were questioned by the Ortsbauerschaften about the number and type of their employees, was introduced in 1941.<sup>157</sup> The purpose of this census was to know the size and exact composition of the total German agricultural labour force that existed in the German Reich as of 1941.<sup>158</sup> The political background for the introduction of this census was created by one of the main problems that existed in German agriculture after 1939. This was the surge in agricultural labour. Between 1939 and 1942 the number of German farmers and employees decreased rapidly due to military mobilization, as soldiers were needed for the Wehrmacht. Their deployment translated into a lack of physical manpower that was put to work on the farms to plant and bring in the harvest. As more men were called to service, the absence, of farmers, however, became an economic issue that threatened to decrease German national agricultural production. In most cases, the family members who remained on the farms, such as wives and children, could only partially compensate for the knowledge and labour of the farmer/agricultural workforce.<sup>159</sup> To solve this problem, a new policy was developed by the Nazi regime, the policy of agricultural “forced labour” (Zwangsarbeit). From 1940/1941 forced labourers were to be employed in agriculture to compensate for the loss of local labour. The implementation of the forced labourers' policy was, first and foremost, based on the racist Nazi ideology. National Socialist agricultural officials and statisticians chose which races were best suited for tilling the German soil based on the Nazi racial hierarchy. This racial model allocated Germans as "Übermenschen" at the top. Subordinate to them were various groups of "Untermenschen", some of which were better suited for agriculture because of their racial qualities.<sup>160</sup> In this system,

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<sup>155</sup>Langthaler, Ernst: Schlachtfelder: alltägliches Wirtschaften in der nationalsozialistischen Agrargesellschaft 1938-1945, Wien 2016 (Sozial- und wirtschaftshistorische Studien).

<sup>156</sup>Gillingham, John R: How Belgium Survived-The Food Supply Problems on an Occupied Nation., in: UMSL Global Occasional Papers (8204), 1982.

<sup>157</sup>Vickery, Sant: Agricultural Statistics in Germany, 1946, S. 1065.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid.

<sup>159</sup>Herbert, Ulrich: Fremdarbeiter: Politik und Praxis des «Ausländereinsatzes» in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches, Berlin 1999.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid., S. 94.

the best kind of "Untermenschen" for farms came from Slavic countries such as Poland. In the eyes of devoted NS agricultural politicians like Backe, they were best suited for forced agricultural labour because they lacked special intellectual abilities.<sup>161</sup> By lacking certain cognitive abilities, Nazi ideology held that the Poles were better off on the farm than on construction sites or in industrial factories. This view led to the fact that twelve months after the German invasion of Poland about 900,000 Polish foreign workers were transferred to Germany as "loot", of which about 90 per cent worked in agriculture.<sup>162</sup> In contrast, French and British prisoners were, despite being forced laborers, considered more equal to Germans. Because they were, by NS ideology, 'naturally smarter and better educated'<sup>163</sup>, they were better off in construction and industry. Evidence for these cruel accusations is found in documents showing the distribution of British, French and Polish prisoners among agriculture and other sectors. Between 1939 and 1940, over 90% of Polish prisoners were used by the Germans in agriculture<sup>164</sup>, while by the end of 1940, only 54% of French and British prisoners were working on farms.<sup>165</sup> For German agricultural statistical history, the introduction of the 1941 census demonstrated that German formats of data collection methods under the Nazi regime were not directed solely by the inheritance of the Weimar system. They were also affected by current problems and the solutions that the NS Regime came up with by drawing on its ideology. Instead, the circumstances described here demonstrate that the introduction of this census was in response to a contemporaneous problem caused by the war. Second, the history of the census demonstrated that in the Nazi system, agricultural data was just as suitable for the implementation of racist and Nazi policies as was demonstrated in Götz/Aly with the German population census.<sup>166</sup>

#### **4. Conclusion: What factors shaped Nazi agricultural data collection?**

In the history of German agricultural statistics between 1929 and 1945, the study identified three factors that had an impact on their methodological design. The first factor examined was the two forms of path dependency that existed between the Weimar and Nazi agricultural statistical systems. Here it was determined that the format of the NS regime was influenced on the one hand by the inheritance of the Weimar system. During this, a statistical apparatus took over after 1933 not only all institutions and persons, but also its biased system of methods, which favoured bookkeeping over the census. However, in addition to passing on the Weimar agrarian statistical

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<sup>161</sup>Rathkolb, O.: Revisiting the National Socialist Legacy: Coming to Terms With Forced Labor, Expropriation, Compensation, and Restitution, o. D., S. 84.

<sup>162</sup>Herbert: Fremdarbeiter, 1999, S. 78.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., S. 111.

<sup>166</sup>Black; Aly; Roth: The Nazi Census: The Nazi Census: Identification and Control in the Third Reich, 2017.

system to the Nazi government, the world economic crisis also shaped the collection of agricultural data after 1933. Thus, the outbreak of the agrarian crisis in Germany in 1929, which was associated with numerous problems, ensured that bookkeeping became more widespread due to, among other things, German tax policy, while the census was relegated to the back seat of German agrarian statistics. In this sense, the Great Depression was not only identified as a historical condition for NS agricultural statistics, showing which methods and systems were not suitable for rapid and dynamic data collection. It was also a catalyst for the accounting method in Germany in the early 1930s. However, this fact influenced the form of NS agricultural statistics after 1933 in that the agricultural statisticians of the RNS set out to establish a better, faster and more flexible system of agricultural data collection in the wake of the new National Socialist planned economy.

The second factor was the dependence of Nazi agricultural statistics on Nazi agricultural policy and ideology. Through the historical analysis of Nazi agricultural data collection methods between 1933 and 1945 presented here, it was explained that the Nazi regime did not just adopt Weimar conditions after 1933. Instead, it became clear here that during the reorganization of German agriculture, the Weimar census and accounting methods were adapted to the Nazi ideology and its vision of a German planned agricultural economy. Thus, it was demonstrated that the agricultural censuses after 1933 were a means of observing and evaluating the production order and production battle, as they served the implementation of "Aryan" agricultural legislation after 1936. The accounting method, which in Weimar was primarily driven by tax policy and based on the determination of profitability, was also adapted for new political systems after 1933. Thus, it was not merely utilized as a chief tool for generation battle, generation order, and Reich court policy. Its format was likewise reoriented to the primacy of "performance enhancement." However, in addition to the Nazi "reformation" of the adopted capitalist-liberal methods, the introduction of new formats to optimize performance enhancement also occurred between 1933 and 1939. It was Nazi policies, which organized an anti-capitalist economic and fascist agrarian policy, introduced the Hofkarte, Kreismappe, monthly reporting, and farm inspections as a means of total control of agricultural production. Through this total micro-economic quantification of agriculture, the Nazi regime succeeded in eliminating the free market as the main cause of Germany's agricultural problems and in securing its ultimate goal of the German food monarchy. The methodological design of the Nazi agricultural data collection system was thus based on the Nazi government's belief that the free market, rather than market distortions, was the cause of German farmers' suffering. To eradicate these two problems by imposing order and structure, the Nazi regime

facilitated the institutional expansion of agricultural record-keeping and especially the invention of new agricultural recording instruments occurred after 1934.

The final factor was the dependence of agricultural data collection methods on external circumstances. This was examined in more detail through the historical development of agricultural statistics between 1939 and 1945. Here, the use of the agricultural policy and agricultural statistics apparatus changed with the outbreak of the Second World War. Thus, in the course of the conversion from a peacetime to a wartime economy, government efforts to evaluate agricultural data in Germany promptly were once again intensified so that a constant delivery and distribution of food in Germany could be guaranteed. Furthermore, the formats for determining data were also adapted to the contemporaneous problems of the domestic war economy. Among other things, the Nazi system introduced a completely new census to combat the agricultural worker problem. In addition to safeguarding domestic food production, however, the German formats of agricultural data collection also found application in military policy. Thus, among other things, the Hofkarte and the district map were transferred abroad as part of the military policy of conquest. This migration of German survey methods served to implement Nazi occupation policy and to promote the economic integration of the conquered countries and their agricultural sectors into the German agricultural economy. However, after 1943, as German defeats became more frequent due to the entry of the USA but also the formation and invasion of the Allies in Europe, the collection of data also became more difficult. thanks to the bombing of German cities, the losses of agricultural statisticians, etc., Germany was faced with the total loss of its agricultural-statistical infrastructure. A new era also dawned on the German way of collecting agricultural data with the suicide of Hitler. Then with the arrival of the American forces, agricultural survey methods also made their way into Germany. And they were here to stay.

**Table 1 "Preliminary list of investigations declared as censuses between 1900 and 1945" <sup>167</sup>**

Census	Year
Fruit tree census	1900, 1913, 1932-1933/1934/1938
Land use census	1883 <sup>168</sup> , 1898 <sup>169</sup> , 1900 <sup>170</sup> , 1913 <sup>171</sup> , 1927-1937 <sup>172</sup>
"Agricultural Holdings" section in General census	1882, 1895, 1907, 1925, 1933, 1935, 1937, 1939
Livestock census	1873, 1920-1945 (annually)
Hog census	1928, since 1930 (made on the 3.3. 3.6.3.9.3.12)
Sheep, milk, cows	Annually (3.6.)
Special census of grain capacity of mills	1927, 1935, 1938
Census of farm labourers	1941-1945 (annually)

**Table 2: Number of farms used by German Ministry for its annual book-keeping scheme between 1924/1925 and 1934/1935<sup>173</sup>**

Year	Farms
1924/1925	2689
1925/1926	3218
1926/1927	3212
1927/1928	3325
1928/1929	3954
1929/1930	4320
1931/1932	5020
1932/1933	6208
1933/1934	5692
1934/1935	9160

**Table 3: Table of data collection formats 1829/29 and 1938/1939 <sup>174</sup>**

Methods in 1928/1929	Methods Data collection in 1938/1939
Business censuses/ Census	Business censuses/census (SM)
Accounting (approx. 6,000); measure of profitability	Accounting (approx. 10,000-25,000); scale performance improvements (FRM).
	1935: Kreismappe (FRM)
	1934/1935: Schlusschein (FRM)

<sup>167</sup>Ibid., S. 1062.

<sup>168</sup>Reichardt, W.: Der statistische Dienst in Deutschland, in: Progress in Public Administration 8 (1), 01.01.1935, S. 6–43. Online: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/002085233500800101>>.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid.

<sup>172</sup>Vickery, Raymond E.; Sant, Paul T.: Agricultural Statistics in Germany, in: Journal of Farm Economics 28 (4), 11.1946, S. 1061. >.

<sup>173</sup>Fensch; Padberg; Weitz: Zahlen und bilder aus dem deutschen landbau: bearbeitet auf grund zehnjähriger buchführungsunterlagen, 1936, S. 7.

<sup>174</sup>Padberg; Brummenbaum: Reichsnährstand und landwirtschaftliches Rechnungswesen., 1938; Fensch; Padberg; Weitz: Zahlen und bilder aus dem deutschen landbau: bearbeitet auf grund zehnjähriger buchführungsunterlagen, 1936.

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	1935: Monthly reporting (FRM)
	1936/1937: Hofkarte (FRM)
	1937/1938: Farm inspections (Hofbegehungen) (SM)

Picture 1: Deed of the family Wilhelm Götebier, 1943 <sup>175</sup>

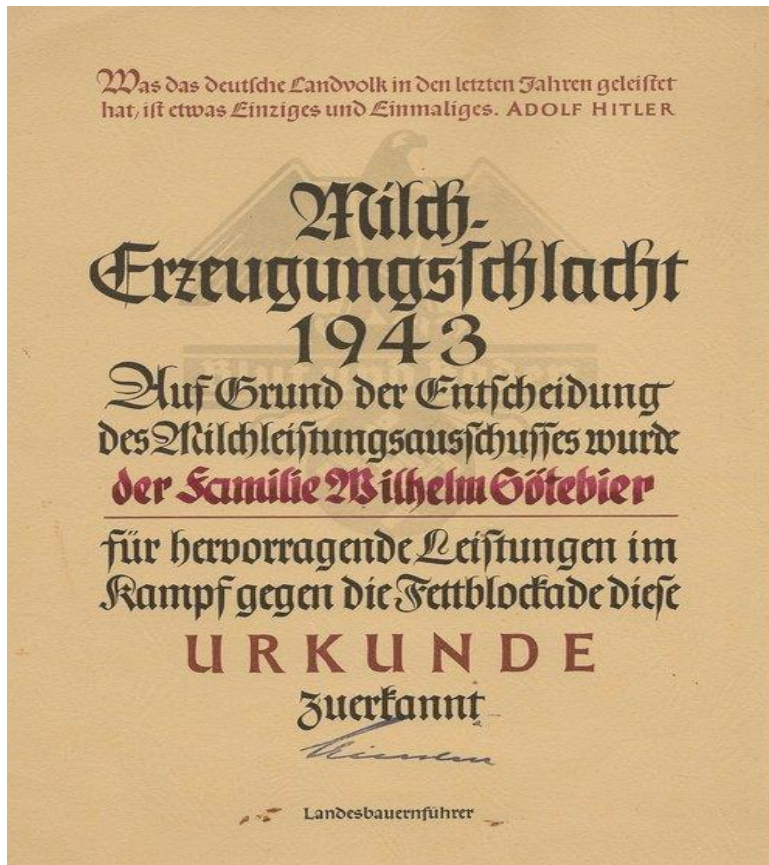


Table 4: List of country transfers of German data collection methods (1938-1945)

Date	Country	Formats introduced on site
1938 <sup>176</sup>	Austria	Bookkeeping, Hofkarte, Kreismappe, Schlusschein
1939/1940 <sup>177</sup>	Poland	Bookkeeping, Hofkarte, Kreismappe,
1942	Belgium	Hofkarte, Kreismappe

<sup>175</sup> Haller Zeiträume. "Deed Dairy Battle" last modified 2021-11-02. <https://nat.museum-digital.de/index.php?t=objekt&oges=227176> URL: 12.11.21.

<sup>176</sup> Langthaler, Ernst: Schlachtfelder: Alltägliches Wirtschaften in der nationalsozialistischen Agrargesellschaft 1938–1945, 2016.

<sup>177</sup> Luczak, Czesław: Wsiedlenia ludności polskiej na tzw. ziemiach wcielonych do Rzeszy, 1939-1945, Bd. 8, 1969. Translated English version from 2019: Expulsions of Polish Civilians in the Territories incorporated into the Reich 1939-1945, 2019, p. 60 and 61. URL: [http://www.iz.poznan.pl/archiwum/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/DOCUMENTA-OCCUPATIONIS-VIII\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.iz.poznan.pl/archiwum/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/DOCUMENTA-OCCUPATIONIS-VIII_ENG.pdf)



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