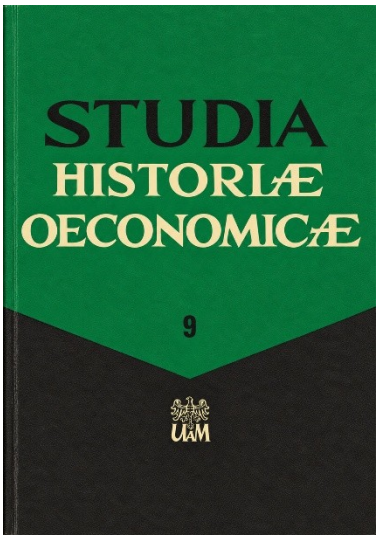


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STAGES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE IN PEOPLE'S POLAND

Conditions of development

World War II inflicted serious direct and indirect losses on Polish agriculture. 35% of the fixed assets of agriculture were destroyed[1]. Some 500 thousand farms were destroyed completely or partly. Serious damage was done to land improvement installations. Many areas were mined. In 1945, about 7.5 million hectares lay idle. Cattle population dropped to one third of the pre-war figure, pig population to one fourth. The war spared less than one third of the sheep population, and less than one half of the horse population.

The reconstruction of agriculture in People's Poland in the years 1944 - 1949 was connected with essential social and ownership changes resulting from the change in system. Factors of particular weight included the land reform, liquidation of the prewar debt of the countryside and the increased possibilities of finding employment for the surplus countryside population outside agriculture thanks to the reconstruction of the national economy.

A radical land reform whose principles were laid down in the decree of September 6th, 1944[2], and the settlement of farmers[3] in the western and northern territories created foundations of a new agrarian structure. Large landed estates were liquidated and 6.1 million hectares of land were distributed among peasant holders of small and medium farms, small tenants and farm labourers. This produced about 814 thousand new farms and increased the area of over 254 thousand existing farms[4]. When these reforms were completed in 1949, individual peasant farms accounted for 86% of the overall area of agricultural land and 91% of arable land, while the rest went mostly into the hands of state farms[5].

Following the period of reconstruction, further development of agriculture

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[1] Data on war losses from: *Sprawozdanie w przedmiocie strat i szkód wojennych Polski w latach 1939 - 1945*. Biuro Odszkodowań Wojennych przy Prezydium Rady Ministrów. Warszawa 1947.

[2] Decree of the Polish Commitee for National Liberation on land reform, September the 6th 1944. See: Dziennik Ustaw RP 1944, No 4.

[3] Dziennik Ustaw RP 1946, No 49.

[4] Rocznik Statystyczny 1963, p. 222.

[5] Cf.: Statystyka Rolnictwa 1946 - 1957, GUS, 1961, p. 124, 175.

was taking place under the all-powerful influence of essential structural changes, and above all under the influence of a dynamic development of industry and other non-agricultural sectors of the national economy, as well as of the urbanization of the country. There was a rapid rise in the demand for food, especially on the part of an increasing and ever better earning non-agricultural population, as well as for agricultural raw materials — on the part of industry. Foreign trade also needed agricultural products. After coal, their export was the second major source of foreign currency needed for the import of indispensable investment equipment and consumer goods.

The dynamic development of the national economy, especially of industry, played also an important role in relieving the countryside and agriculture of surplus manpower. The highest intensity of this process was registered during the six-year plan period (1950 - 1955). Together with the land reform, this was the second essential factor reducing the serious overpopulation of the countryside. However, a part of countryside population taking jobs outside agriculture did not leave the countryside at once: for many years these people commuted and still commute to often distant jobs, continuing to live in the countryside and combining work outside agriculture with the running of their small farms. This produced a social group of peasant-workers, numbering some 3 million people today (1972 figure), which is most numerous in the southern and central part of the country. Their incomes are sometimes even higher than the incomes of workers living solely from their work in a factory, as well as than the incomes of middle-size peasant farmers whose farms are situated on medium or poorer soil. This state of affairs means, therefore, an improvement in the living standard of a part of the sometime group of small-scale peasant farmers. At the same time the labour productivity, and particularly the commercialization of farms of this type, is lower, just as also lower is the labour productivity of peasant-workers in industry, building, etc.

The outflow of the countryside population is noted also on medium and larger farms, which limits the subdivision of farms among the members of the same family, and inhibits the process of the diminution of farms. It is also noted among young people from socialized farms. (see Table 1).

The land reform and the outflow of people from agriculture have brought about changes in the structure of individual peasant farms.

The land reform had an effect on strengthening a part of middle-sized farms (5 - 10 hectares), and increased the acreage of smaller farms (2 - 5 hectares). A characteristic phenomenon after 1950 was a systematic growth of smaller farms which were an additional source of income for families with mixed sources of livelihood. From 1960 on, on the other hand, we note a stronger tendency for the growth of the proportion of larger and smaller farms at the expense of the group of middle-sized farms (5 - 10 hectares).

The development of industry and other non-agricultural sectors of the

Table 1

Structure of individual peasant farms in 1939[a]) - 1971

Farms with an overall area in hectares	Year			
	1939	1950	1960	1971[b])
	in per cent			
up to 2	30.1	25.9	32.8	37.6
2 - 5	29.1	31.3	30.4	27.1
5 - 7	24.2	15.1	13.2	12.2
7 - 10		15.7	12.9	12.1
10 - 20	12.4	10.7	9.7	11.0
over 20	4.2	1.3	1.0	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

[a]) within the present state frontiers.

[b]) The June agricultural census, the data are not fully comparable with the data from the general censuses of 1950 and 1960.

Source: *Struktura gospodarki narodowej* (Structure of the national economy), Główny Urząd Statystyczny (GUS), (Central Statistical Office) 1969, p. 206. GUS data for 1971.

national economy has not only contributed essentially to a reduction of the overpopulation of the countryside, but it also reduces slowly employment in agriculture, thus creating conditions for its intensification. Poland is a country which has no empty lands. This is why following the period of reconstruction agricultural output could be increased only through an increase in land and labour productivity.

Increase in the land productivity depends on the standard of agricultural operations, fertilizing, plant protection and land improvement. A decisive influence on labour productivity is exerted by mechanization of agriculture. In both cases it is indispensable to buy the required tools, agricultural machines, fertilizers and chemicals. The dynamic development of the engineering and chemical industries made this gradually possible.

Increase in the agricultural output was very rapid during the period of the reconstruction of agriculture, which was done with a considerable assistance of the state. In the years 1947 - 1950, the index of the average annual increase of overall output amounted to 21%. As early as 1949, output calculated per one hectare of agricultural land was bigger than before the war[6]. The increase in output was due chiefly to the expansion of the areas sown thanks to the cultivation of idle land. Some progress was also noted, however, during the 3-year plan period (1947 - 1949): yields increased and an increase was noted in the population of farm animals per one hectare of agricultural land. This created conditions for a further development of agriculture. However, the

[6] As above, p. 30.

growth of agricultural output after 1950 did not take place harmoniously. This was due to a number of different factors, the strongest influence among which was exerted at that time by the agricultural policy.

Situation of agriculture during the 6-year plan period (1950 - 1955)

The law on the 6-year plan assumed that the overall agricultural output in 1955 will be 50% higher in comparison with 1949, plant production increasing by 39% and animal production by 68%[7].

The first year of the execution of the plan was successful. Plans concerning the increase in the yields of rye, potatoes, sugar beet were exceeded, and the number of breeding livestock grew. All in all, the rapid rate of increase of agricultural output noted during the economic reconstruction of the country was maintained. However, the growth was arrested, while 1951 and 1952 saw even a certain drop in agricultural output. This situation was brought about by a combination of atmospheric, economic and sociopolitical factors unfavourable for farming.

Two successive years of bad harvests of root crops and a third year of bad grain harvests caused a drop in yields. Economic conditions of the development of agriculture deteriorated at the same time. In view of the aggravation of the international political situation essential changes were made in the proportions of investments in the national economy. As a result of the concentration of the investment effort of the state on the expansion of heavy industry, a marked reduction was noted in the supplies of means of production for agriculture and in the investment expenditure on agriculture. In the years 1951 - 1953, they were on the average 24% lower every year than in the years 1947 - 1950. At the same time the value of investment expenditure of the peasant farmers themselves decreased more than three times[8]. This was due to restrictions of its accumulation capacity brought about by a drop of peasant incomes as a result of increased taxation and the introduction in 1952 of a system of obligatory deliveries of farm produce for which farmers were paid prices about 50% lower than market prices[9]. This meant that they returned only the material outlays for production, and did not pay for the actual work of the farmers. The delivery quotas depended on the quality of soil and the size of a given farm. In 1953, obligatory deliveries embraced 85% of the grain output of peasant farms, 51% of the potato crop and about 50% of the output of livestock for slaughter[10].

[7] Law on 6 years plan. See: Dziennik Ustaw RP 1950, No 37.

[8] Struktura Gospodarki Narodowej. GUS 1969, p. 214.

[9] J. Okuniewski, *Przemiany strukturalne i modernizacja rolnictwa* (Structural changes and modernization of agriculture). In: 25 lat gospodarki Polski Ludowej. Warszawa 1969, PWE, p. 104.

[10] Cf.: Z. Kozłowski, *Obowiązkowe dostawy w planie sześcioletnim* (Compulsory an-

The liabilities of the countryside charged by the state were increasing much faster than the pure output of the peasant farms. In this situation, progression in obligatory deliveries arrested financial accumulation. Its effects were felt especially keenly by larger and medium peasant farms.

The marked increase in the liabilities of the private peasant farms and the progression applied were to play a twofold role: draw agriculture into the process of the accumulation of funds for the development of industry and speed up the socialist reconstruction of the agriculture, which was one of the targets of the 6-year plan. It was assumed that the socialization of the agriculture will cause an increase in output through a simple cooperation of labour, and that it will permit to achieve the increase of the output of farm produce planned in the 6-year plan in spite of a reduction of investment expenditure. Collectivization could have been effective particularly for increasing the commercial production, because through a better organization of work, and consequently through a reduction of employment, the countryside's own consumption could be cut down. Moreover, the possibility of a direct influence of the state on socialized agriculture would permit a fuller use of agricultural output for supplying the population and industry.

The intensified process of collectivization of the agriculture caused a rapid increase in the number of farming cooperatives. In 1949 there were 243 of them, while in the final year of the 6-year plan there were 9,076 already. They had a membership of 205.2 thousand people and administered over 1.6 million hectares of agricultural land[11].

However, the decision to speed up collectivization fell on a ground prepared neither economically nor politically. Shortage of the technical equipment hampered newly founded farming cooperatives in obtaining good results. There happened also a set back in investments on private peasant farms.

The combined effect of these factors caused a slowing down of the development of agricultural production. The average annual rate of its increase throughout the 6-year plan period amounted to a mere 1.5% or so[12]. Meanwhile, with the high natural increase of population of that time, the maintenance of the 1950 consumption level alone required a 2% annual increase of the overall output of peasant farms[13]. And it must be borne in mind after all that it was not only the natural increase that created a need of additional output. The dynamically rising numbers of urban population (a 31% increase in the years 1951 - 1955) created an extra demand for foodstuffs. Industry also needed ever more raw materials of agricultural origin.

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nual supplies of live-stock and agricultural products to the State at prices fixed by law in the six-years' plan). Warszawa 1960, PWRiL, p. 89.

[11] Rocznik Statystyczny 1956, p. 154, 156; 1971, p. 299.

[12] Calculated based on Statystyka Rolnictwa 1946 - 1957, p. 29 - 30.

[13] F. Tomczak, *Rolnictwo Polski Ludowej* (Agriculture in People's Poland), Warszawa 1969, PWRiL, p. 36.

The system of obligatory deliveries which tightly harnessed agriculture to the process of accumulation for the needs of the socialist industrialization of the country, permitted the state to amass sufficient agricultural products to meet the basic needs of non-agricultural population and secured a comparative control of the market. It arrested the rate of increase of the mean price of agricultural products, but it did not solve the problem of the equilibrium between the supply and demand on the food market.

The slow-down of the development of agricultural production and the growing disproportion between the demand for agricultural products and their supply limited the increase of real wages in towns and gave birth to social tensions which became acute towards the end of the 6-year plan. It was indispensable to accelerate the development of agricultural production which could otherwise arrest the growth of the whole national economy. But the development of agriculture called for changes in the economic policy. Their introduction began in 1954. They consisted in an increase of investment funds for agriculture, mainly by an expansion of credits, an increase in the supply of materials and increased expenditure on the mechanization of farming operations. The volume of obligatory deliveries was stabilized, and the principles of collectivization were changed.

These measures brought about a certain enlivening of agriculture in the last two years of the 6-year plan period. It was insufficient, however, for the achievement of planned indices of growth. A comparison of the results of the plan with its provisions shows that it was implemented with a surplus in the breeding of sheep and pigs. Grain crops, on the other hand, were 13% below the plan, potato crops 25%, and cattle breeding 17% below the plan[14]. Measures introduced in 1954 and 1955 proved too weak for a marked acceleration of the development of agriculture. What was needed was a radical change of the agricultural policy, particularly where loads on the countryside were concerned, with regard to the economic conditions of the development of agriculture and the attitude towards collectivization.

Agriculture in the years 1956 - 1970

Changes in the agricultural policy introduced at the beginning of 1957 altered radically the situation in the countryside and designed out directions for the development of agriculture for the following years. The principles of this policy created better conditions for the work of farms. It began with an improvement of the economic conditions of agricultural production, a reduction by nearly one third of obligatory deliveries and a reduction of the number of products subject to them, a rise in the prices paid by the state organizations for the purchase of farm produce, a gradual, but marked, increase in the

[14] Calculated comparing the plan with the production obtained. See: Statystyka Rolnictwa 1946 - 1957, p. 56, 80.

supply of means of production and credits for agriculture, as well as a considerable expansion — with the financial assistance from the state — of the scale of basic agricultural investments. Of essential significance was also the departure from the old system of collectivization. Ever since, agricultural policy follows the principle of combining the increase in output with a gradual strengthening of elements of socialism in the countryside[15].

This principle served in 1959 as the basis for setting up an Agricultural Development Fund. It was made up from the difference in the prices of products supplied within the framework of obligatory deliveries and free market prices. The sums collected under this scheme — 88% of which is placed at the disposal of agricultural circles[16] — self-government peasant organizations which are a simpler form of cooperative — created the foundations of the development of the social ownership of means of production in the countryside. The sums are earmarked for the purchase of tractors and agricultural machinery for common use by the farmers, for the construction of technical installations, the purchase of equipment for the production of building materials, the financing of water installations, the development of basic processing of farm produce, common cultivation of land belonging to the State Land Fund, and for conducting educational and cultural activity. The contribution of agriculture to the development of national economy was thus transformed into a collective accumulation within the agriculture itself for the development of agriculture and the creation of socialized property, with a simultaneous universal existence of private peasant farms. In the years 1957 - 1970 the number of agricultural circles increased from 11,600 to 35,100, and their membership from 390,600 to 2,605,000 people[17].

Of major importance for the socio-economic development of the countryside was moreover the promotion and development of various forms of rural cooperatives, of supply and sales cooperatives, dairy cooperatives, horticultural cooperatives, credit cooperatives, cooperative savings and loan banks, etc.

Private peasant farms are highly sensitive to economic incentives of the market. This does not apply, of course, to small, unspecialized farms or farms belonging to peasant-workers, whose production is to a considerable extent natural and serves primarily their owners. This was why the changes in agricultural policy after 1956 caused first of all the development of medium and larger farms.

The changes in the agricultural policy created foundations for the development of agricultural production. However, towards the end of nineteen fifties and in the early nineteen sixties one can note again a slow-down in the increase of the supply of means of production for agriculture. This was the

[16] As above, p. 41.

[15] F. Tomczak: op. cit., p. 30 - 40.

[17] Rocznik Statystyczny 1965, p. 244; 1971, p. 296.

result of the concentration of the state effort on speeding up the rate of the growth of the national economy as a whole and a necessity to increase in the number of jobs outside agriculture, among other things at the cost of investment expenditures in farming. The decrease of the supply of means of production caused in turn a drop in investment expenditure from the farmers' own funds. As a result of this the rate of increase of agricultural output, which had risen by 33% in the years 1956 - 1961[18], dropped markedly again.

The state reacted to this situation by increasing the share of agriculture in the investment programme from 1963 on. A further increase in the investment outlays for agriculture and its industrial facilities was also one of the principles of the plan for 1966 - 1970. Average annual investment expenditure in agriculture in that five-year plan period constituted 15,4% of overall investment expenditure in the whole national economy[19].

The main role in the structure of investment outlays in agriculture was played by the costs of farming construction and mechanization. The cubature of farm buildings handed over for use in the years 1961 - 1970 increased threefold[20]. The growth of farming construction was noted mainly on private peasant farms. Progress in the mechanization of agriculture may be seen in the growth of the tractor park from 28,400 tractors in 1950 to 213,600 in 1970. 24% of them are the property of private peasant farms and 43% are in the hands of agricultural circles. In 1950, one statistical tractor had to service 802 hectares of agricultural land, in 1970 — it had to service 74 hectares. On peasant farms the index amounted to 101 hectares and on socialized farms to 30 hectares[21].

91% of peasant farmsteads and nearly 100% of socialized farms were electrified by 1970[22]. This permitted a further increase in the use of electric engines on these farms.

The share of land improvement in the overall investment expenditure increased considerably. In the years 1950 - 1970, new land improvement installations and the reconstruction of existing ones covered 2.0 million hectares of arable land and 1.9 million hectares of pastures and meadows[23].

Investments financed directly by the state covered more than one half, and those financed by the Agricultural Development Fund brought the figure to over two thirds of the investment expenditure in agriculture. Investments made by the farmers themselves (less than one third of the total agricultural investments) were financed in a large part from state credits. All

[18] Cf.: Rocznik Statystyczny 1967, p. 222.
[19] Cf.: Rocznik Statystyczny 1971, p. 149.
[20] As above, p. 311.
[21] As above, p. 316 - 317.
[22] As above, p. 317.
[23] As above, p. 318.

in all, the state met directly or indirectly about three fourths of the cost of all investments.

The expanding and elastic system of credit assistance is made up of turnover credits and medium-term and long-term investments. These sums are earmarked mainly for speeding up the development of those branches of agricultural production which are particularly important from the point of view of the national economy as a whole.

Increased supplies of means of production for agriculture have contributed to progress in the chemization of crop growing and the technology of the feeding of farm animals. The use of fertilizers per 1 hectare of agricultural land which amounted to a mere 17.7 kg NPK in pure content in the years 1949 - 1950, rose in 1959 - 1960 to 36.5 kg and in 1969 - 1970 to 123.6 kg. The use of lime increased in these two decades from 6.2 kg to 90.9 kg per 1 hectare of agricultural land[24]. An increase in the supplies of plant protection preparations permitted the introduction of the legal duty of their use on all farms wherever so ordered by the state agricultural service. Farmers are also in duty bound to exchange every few years the seeds of the basic cereals and potatoes. The production of graded seeds permits a general renovation of seed material of cereals every 3 - 4 years and of potatoes every 3 - 5 years.

Of essential importance for the development of livestock breeding was a considerable increase of the supplies of power fodder from 1,994.4 thousand tons in 1960 to 4,007.5 thousand tons in 1970[25], as well as the development of the artificial insemination of cows (nearly 80% of the cattle population in 1970[26].

An important role is played in the raising of the standard of agricultural economy by the development of agricultural education, connected with the expansion of vocational education of all levels. A rise in the qualifications of the farmers themselves, an ever bigger personnel of agronomists, breeders and veterinary surgeons, brought about a gradual change in the proportions between unskilled and skilled work in agriculture, which helped in the introduction of technological advance and the application of the achievements of natural sciences.

Agriculture did not develop harmoniously in the years 1956 - 1970, it passed through two crises during that time: at the beginning and towards the end of the sixties. True, the crises appeared in years particularly bad for farming as regards climatic conditions, but in both cases they were stronger than it could be expected from natural causes. Mention has already been

[24] As above, p. 319.
[25] As above, p. 321.
[26] As above.

made of the investment difficulties in agriculture, which were the main cause of the economic breakdown of agricultural production at the beginning of the nineteen sixties. The second crisis, much deeper than the earlier one, was due to the combination of a number of factors.

The 1966 - 1970 plan provided for a marked increase in the yields and crops of cereals, a marked development of the fodder base — and as regards livestock — the stimulation of a quantitative and qualitative improvement of cattle breeding, with a slowing down of development of pig breeding. The intention of this programme was to limit the import of grain and to change the structure of the export of farm produce.

In the first few years of the implementation of the plan, significant increments were achieved in plant production, due largely, when all is said and done, to good atmospheric conditions. The 1968 value of the overall agricultural output was nearly 13% higher than the 1965 value[27].

A particularly large, 42%, increase was registered in crop production. In spite of this it proved impossible to reduce effectively tensions in the overall balance sheet and limit tangibly the import of grain, since market needs proved greater than expected. A very small increase, 9%, was noted in livestock breeding. For while the rate of increase in pig breeding was arrested in accordance with the plan, it proved impossible to develop the production of cattle. The new incentives appeared too weak. Corrections in prices did not increase satisfactorily the profitableness of this sector.

A tangible drop in the incomes from private peasant farms was noted in the latter part of the 5-year plan period. The average incomes in 1969 were more than 40% lower than in 1966[28]. Their drop was especially noticeable on small farms on which pig breeding — ever less profitable — played a great role.

The rate of production increase slowed down markedly, production activeness of agriculture diminished, and the process of the expansion of the production potential of a considerable proportion of farms was arrested. Repeated bad harvests led in this situation to a deepening and speeding up of the downward production trend, ending finally in a crisis of agriculture.

Taking it by and large, the rate of the increase of agricultural output in the nineteen sixties was insufficient in relation to the growing demand. This caused periodical shortages of foodstuffs resulting in tensions on the market. Attempts at restoring solid market equilibrium did not always bring the expected results.

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[27] Rocznik Statystyczny 1969, p. 216.

[28] See: Koszty i opłacalność produkcji rolnej w Polsce. In: Zagadnienia Ekonomiki Rolnej — Appendix to No 5/1970, p. 3 - 57.

Increase of agricultural output in the years 1971 - 1973

A marked acceleration of the rate of increase of agricultural output was recognized as the basic target in the field of the development of agriculture in the years 1971 - 1975. Its achievement is made possible by a proper policy of the state, whose aim is the creation of ever better economic and production conditions for farms in all the three sectors (private peasant farms, state farms and farming cooperatives). By way of suitable incentives and quick reaction to all undesirable phenomena that might appear the state stimulates the production promotion of agriculture. Rapid increase of output requires correspondingly rapid progress in the intensification of both crop production and animal breeding. This is possible thanks to bigger investment expenditure and supplies of means of production, particularly machines and installations, tractors, building materials, mineral fertilizers and power fodder. Work has begun on making the apparatus purchasing farm produce more efficient, land transactions have been facilitated, and supplies of industrial consumer goods for the countryside are improving every year. The organization of large combined farms has been started. The construction of agricultural food processing plants was precipitated. The prices paid by the state for farm produce were corrected, which raised markedly the incomes of farms. Obligatory deliveries were abolished. The main form of the organization of agricultural production and the amassing of food reserves by the state is a system of contracts concluded between farmers and state organizations on conditions convenient for the farmers. The system has become an instrument of a planned regulation of production, introduction of technological advance and improvement of the quality of farm products. Multi-year contracts create conditions conducive to the specialization and intensification of agricultural production.

In its endeavour to improve the standard of agriculture and agricultural production the state tries also gradually to equalize the living and working conditions of rural and urban population, treating this as an important prerequisite of the socialist transformations in the countryside. This process is helped along by the ever more energetic activity of the organizations of peasant self-government, particularly of agricultural circles.

The measures adopted by the state resulted in a visible activation of agriculture whose overall output in the years 1971 - 1972[29] increased by over 12% in comparison with 1970 (and by 9% in comparison with 1968). This increase was made up of a 9% increase in crop production and a 16%

[29] Data on agricultural production in 1971 and 1972 according to: Rocznik Statystyczny 1973, p. 244 - 322. Data for 1950 according to: Rocznik Statystyczny 1960, p. 183 - 254.

increase in animal production. The latter is of a special importance after a period of stagnation in livestock breeding. In accordance with market needs and state policy, this increased the share of animal production in the overall agricultural output from 41.6% in 1970 to 46.1% in 1972. The increase of the overall output was accompanied by an even faster increase in the commercial production of agriculture whose share rose from 44.5% to 46.8%.

The main role in crop production is played by the four cereals, but the share of industrial plants is also increasing. We note also a marked trend for the development of vegetable and fruit growing. The increase in animal breeding was strongly influenced by a rapid development of pig breeding. Their population increased by 30% in the course of the two years.

A great majority of agricultural products is produced on private peasant farms. Their share in the output of cereals in 1971 amounted to 84%, of potatoes — to 91%, of sugar beet — to 88%. These farms had also 82% of the cattle population and 87% of the pig population.

A gradual increase has been noted, however, in the importance of state farms whose role has changed essentially in the course of the last dozen years or so. In the early phase of their activity their task was to improve the exploitation of land and to supply the state with certain products, mainly grain. This was essential for strengthening the regulating role of the state on the market of agricultural products. The share of state farms in the commercial production of the entire agriculture increased from 12.3% in the years 1954 - - 1957 to 17.8% in 1972. Today they are playing an essential role first of all in supplying the entire agriculture with means of production of agricultural origin, conditioning the general progress in the productivity of crop and farm animals. They produce practically all graded cereal seeds, over one half of pod crop seeds and two fifths of seed potatoes. State farms account for nearly three fourths of pedigree cow breeding, about 65% of sow breeding and two thirds of ewe breeding. The acreage of state farms increased by 1.4 million hectares in the years 1951 - 1972. Out of that area 1,152 thousand hectares increased the overall area of agricultural land (including 673 thousand hectares of arable land). This is a result of the process of a gradual decrease of a number of peasant farms, first of all because of the ageing of the farmers, many of whom have no successors.

State farms can contribute to a general improvement of the standard of agriculture as a whole thanks to a marked improvement of their own economy. In the years 1961 - 1972, the value of their overall output (in comparable prices) per 1 hectare of plough-land increased by 74.4%, and that of marketable output by 110%.

The existence and development of state farms are an important element in the process of the preparation of the socialist reconstruction of the agriculture. Their task is to work out methods for a large scale farming, to intro-

duce new technologies, new organizational forms — in short technological and organizational advance — in the agricultural production under Polish conditions. As nuclei of modern agriculture, they constitute the base of this advance. They contribute to its transmission to private peasant farms.

At the same time state farms guarantee for the state the supply of a part of the bulk of agricultural production of which it can dispose in an unlimited manner. In 1971, nearly 20% of all farm products purchased by socialized trade came from the state sector. The share of this sector in the grain purchases of the state amounted to about 30%. This means that it is an essential factor in the effective regulation of the agricultural market.

Last but not least, state farms play an important role in shaping a new style of work and life of the rural population, similar to those of urban population. Forms of production and social relations worked out on state farms are beginning to penetrate gradually to collective farms.

The latter, though their position in agriculture is still modest, can also boast considerable economic, production and social achievements. They represent a type of large scale intensive agricultural economy. It is they that obtain the highest yields of the 4 cereals — 26.1 quintals/1 hectare in 1972 (the national average — 24.2 quintals/1 hectare).

The good results of the first two years of the current 5-year plan and the good harvests of 1973 were achieved under favourable weather conditions. However, the visible enlivening of agriculture, the increased activeness of farms which find encouragement for developing production since its profitableness is increased, all this permits the assumption that the high rate of the growth of agriculture will be maintained.