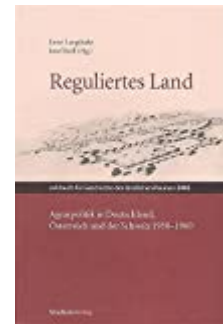




**Ernst Langthaler, Josef Redl.** *Reguliertes Land: Agrarpolitik in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz 1930-1960.* Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2005. 250 S. EUR 29.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-7065-4072-8.



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## State Regulation of the Rural World

This book is a collection of essays that depict new paths in agricultural history. The editors have dedicated the volume to Ernst Bruckmüller, the director of the Austrian Institute for the History of Rural Areas, the site of a workshop held in 2004 where earlier versions of the contributions were delivered. In his introduction, Langthaler characterizes the twenty-four short essays as pieces of a general European agricultural history that still needs to be written. The articles address a variety of aspects of Swiss, Austrian and German agrarian policies between 1930 and 1960.

No other area of life and work saw the same extent of state regulation as the rural world (hence the title of the book). The beginning of the worldwide depression in 1929 prompted all governments to involve themselves heavily in the agricultural sector. This state interference was not new, but the crisis in 1929 caused rural actors to radicalize their demands and pushed national governments to do anything to keep the rural population happy. Market regulations for food products were introduced and the special significance of the agricultural sector for the “health” of the country emphasized. After the war,

national governments continued to maneuver between affordable food and sustainable producer prices to deal with the ongoing food crisis. This negotiation was accomplished with a renewal of agrarian protectionism and subsidies as well as propagandistic emphasis on the “special position” of agriculture in society. In all three countries, laws reassured the family farm of its continuing financial support. The costs of this support were absorbed by the growing economies and were not recognized until years later. With the beginning of European integration of agricultural policy in the late 1950s, regulation of the rural sector continued on a supranational level.

Chapters focus on different facets of the “regulated land” in Switzerland, Austria and Germany. Horst Gies, Uwe Mai and Daniela Mänkel (who have published longer studies on the same subject elsewhere) consider the most radical example of state regulation of agriculture that followed ideological premises: the Third Reich. Gies provides a brief glimpse into some of his main theses on Nazi food policy. Since the National Socialist goal to become economically independent in the realm of food production was illusionary from the beginning,

Nazis planned on expanding Germany's "living space" to secure raw materials and agricultural produce. Conquest of territory in the East would also provide space for German peasants to settle and "Germanize" the areas. According to Gies, the planned "special position" of the peasantry had to be forfeited because of the needs of an industrial society fighting a war.

The following essays consider German agricultural politics after 1945. Ulrich Kluge describes the postwar years as a success story in many ways, but also laments that politicians did not learn from the experiences of the Weimar years. Subsidies and market regulations for agricultural products were continued after the war without regard to the costs and effects of this policy. Because of the revival of an outdated rural ideology that proved inadequate in the changing international economy, the envisioned equal participation of agriculture in overall economic prosperity remained unfulfilled. Andreas Eichmüller's study focuses on Bavaria's path to an industrial society. Amidst an ongoing industrialization, Bavaria tried to maintain its rural character and emphasized agriculture as the base of its economy. Bavaria also provides a case study of agrarian interest groups and their strong influence on agrarian politics. Andreas Dix's essay compares rural colonization in both German states, while Arnd Bauerkämper and Barbara Schier analyze land reform and collectivization under a socialist regime.

Two authors examine Swiss agriculture. Beat Brodbeck considers the milk market from 1914-22 and Peter Moser traces larger trends in food policy from 1914/18-60. Seven authors chose Austrian regions as their geographic focus. Especially noteworthy are Stefan Eminger's analysis of the "Aryanization" of Jewish

landed property and Ernst Langthaler's discussion of rural workers in Vienna and the Lower Danube region during the war. Langthaler describes how German administrators addressed the labor shortage that followed the "flight from the land" and the military draft of male agricultural workers. Since recruitment of women to a compulsory year of labor was not enough to make up for the diminishing numbers of people working in agriculture, POWs and civilians were used as forced laborers. Langthaler looks at four specific examples to illustrate life and work conditions for foreign workers. Race, gender and age shaped experience, as did the size of farms employing workers; the smaller the unit, the higher the chance to form alliances with German coworkers and employers.

The last four contributions venture to outline future paths in the field. Verena Winiwarter pleads for an integrated approach of environmental and agricultural history. Gertrude Langer-Ostrawsky showcases how the study of gender has allowed for a broader understanding of rural society. Michael Mitterauer advocates a global perspective and further intercultural comparison. Finally, Norbert Ortmaier points out how the comparative global angle could benefit from the field work of cultural anthropologists.

All of the essays are interesting and discuss important aspects of German, Austrian and Swiss agricultural history between 1930 and 1960. Most of the papers provide a first insight into larger studies conducted by the authors. Historians of German agricultural history will find much here that is familiar; for the novice or general reader, the volume provides a wonderful introduction and will spur readers to investigate the authors' monographs.

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