

## WHEAT PRODUCTION IN FASCIST PERIOD. A COMPARISON BETWEEN HIGH FARMING, LATIFUNDIUM AND SHARECROPPING USING THE CATASTO AGRARIO OF 1929

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**Abstract:** In the mid-1920s, the Kingdom of Italy was a strong importer of wheat; In order to reverse this deficit in the trade balance, the fascist regime decided to implement an agrarian policy aimed at achieving, within a few years, full self-sufficiency. This policy is remembered as the “battle for the wheat”, which began in 1925 and was mainly directed by Arrigo Serpieri. The measures were aimed to increase the yields per hectare of wheat. The factors that had a positive impact were the

progressive spread of mechanization in the countryside, the use of chemical fertilizers, the widening of land credit and the use of selected seed. The present work will analyze the effects of the fascist politics in the first period using the data coming from the Catasto Agrario of 1929; the second experience of this kind after that of 1910. In this case, three case studies (Lombardy, Tuscany and Puglia) will be considered corresponding to three geographical areas of the country (Northern, Central and Southern) and three different forms of land management (high farming, sharecropping and latifundium). After an initial descriptive analysis with provincial data, the focus will be shifted on the yields per hectare by comparing the values of 1929 with the average values of 1923-28 using the data at the municipal level. It will try to understand if there is a link between the yield of wheat and its spread on the territory in the three different forms of conduction and, with different models of linear regression, it will go to identify which explanatory variables had a greater influence on crop productivity levels in different provinces.

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