

Rural Development and Changing Labour Relations in Italy and Spain in the 1950s and 1960s

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ABSTRACT

Der Aufsatz beschäftigt sich mit der Politik gegenüber ländlichen Räumen in Italien und Spanien der 1950er und 1960er Jahre. Er untersucht die sozio-ökonomischen Folgen dieser Politik am Beispiel Siziliens und Andalusiens. Der Vergleich der beiden ländlichen Räume verweist auf ein gemeinsames Entwicklungsmodell im südlichen Europa, in dem die Steigerung landwirtschaftlicher Produktion und die Verringerung der in der Landwirtschaft tätigen Arbeitskräfte im Mittelpunkt standen. Siedlungsprojekte spielten demgegenüber nur eine vergleichsweise geringe Rolle. Der Beitrag rekurriert auf Datenmaterial, das den Grad der Beschäftigungen in der Landwirtschaft zwischen 1950 und 1970 widerspiegelt. Er zeigt, dass zwar immer weniger Menschen insgesamt in der Landwirtschaft beschäftigt waren, die Zahl von Landarbeitern, die nicht über Grundbesitz verfügten, aber zunahm.

Introduction

Until the 1950s and 1960s a significant part of the population in Spain and Italy was employed in agriculture, and many lived in poor socioeconomic conditions. The term 'land-hunger' was used by contemporaries to illustrate the desires of many rural workers and peasants, as they had no other possibility of finding employment and as the possession of land was not only a source of income but also a source of political power. This situation was particularly problematic in the Southern parts of the two countries, where much of the land was in the hands of only a few owners. Low levels of subsistence and unemployment coexisted alongside large parcels of uncultivated land, which were often owned by absentee landowners. However, such problems were also endemic outside the

so-called *latifundium*, the extensive parcels of private land. A large workforce of landless labourers moved around the countryside looking for seasonal work, often for very low salaries. These labourers often included poor peasants who were either owners of small plots or settlers, and whose own work did not provide enough for them to subsist.

This situation changed dramatically during the 1950s and 1960s, when policies for industrialization and the reform of the rural system transformed the social and economic panorama of the countryside in both countries. This article focuses on the moment of transition in Italy and Spain during the 1950s and 1960s. Rather than studying the process of industrialisation and urbanization, the article investigates the two states' agrarian policies and their impact on socioeconomic conditions in the Sicilian and Andalusian countryside. In doing so the article raises the following questions: What role was attributed to agriculture in Italy's and Spain's economic development schemes? Which proposals existed to 'modernise' the agrarian system? And what were the effects of those programs at the local level?

Although Spain and Italy had very different governmental systems (Franco's dictatorship and Italy's parliamentary democracy), the two nations shared similar socioeconomic problems and were both trying to steer their way towards industrialisation. Hence, it seems promising to analyse them in a comparative way to ascertain whether we can speak of a 'Southern' model of rural change.

Broadly speaking, there were two driving interests at play. For one, the political elites of Spain and Italy aimed at increasing agricultural productivity, at protecting the interests of the rural elite, and at meeting the demands of the rural labourers and peasants living in the countryside by providing them with better living conditions. Secondly, the process of industrialization in the two countries affected the rural sector, too. To sustain the industrialization process, and to provide sufficient food resources for the growing urban population, agriculture needed to become more efficient, or more 'modern', as contemporaries put it. Additionally, a larger number of workers was required for the factories. Hence, the labour market had to change, too. It was against this background that the Italian and Spanish governments tried to implement rural reforms in the post-war decades.

In the following, I will first describe the political, social and economic contexts in which these policies took shape and then discuss the ways in which they represented a new direction of rural reform in both countries. Secondly, through an analysis of the different policies that were enacted and the expert debates surrounding them, I will trace the reasons and interests behind these policies, specifically the understanding of the relations between agriculture and industry they contained. Finally, shifting attention to the Sicilian and Andalusian countryside, I will illustrate the effects of the reforms and assess the relation between their social and economic aims. In order to ascertain the nature of the reforms I draw on data concerning the employment levels of labourers and peasants in the Spanish and Italian countryside from 1950 to 1970.

Land Reform in Post-War Italy and Rural Development Plans

After the Second World War, the working population in Italy's countryside made renewed appeals for a land reform. Similarly, the post-war Italian government began planning interventions in the agricultural sector, including a land reform. However, in spite of the rhetorical support from the Italian Prime Minister, Christian Democrat Alcide De Gasperi, as well as from other Italian politicians from 1946 onwards, a systematic reform remained elusive until 1950. Still, some measures directed at a structural reform of the rural system were implemented during the second half of the 1940s: the so-called Gullo decrees.

The Gullo decrees, named after the communist minister of agriculture, Fausto Gullo, were enacted in 1944 and 1945, right after the end of the war in Italy. Their goal was to provide better rental contracts and to make previously uncultivated or poorly cultivated land available to peasants and labourers. Although these measures were praised by the poorest inhabitants of the countryside, other political parties and the agrarian elite strongly opposed them. This resulted in a series of strikes and land occupations, with poor peasants demanding the application of the decrees and a full-fledged land reform. Violent clashes between protesters and the police escalated in the second half of 1949, with twelve people being killed by the police. Against this background, the press and the Italian public pushed the government to overcome the resistance of the landowners and to meet the demands of the peasants. Eventually, Gullo's successor, Christian Democrat Antonio Segni, opened a new era of rural politics and policies.

In 1950 a land reform was enacted that aimed both at redistribution and at achieving higher productivity. This was done through two laws, the *Sila* Law (May 1950) and the *Stralcio* Law (October 1950).¹ The first was applied in Calabria, while the second one was implemented in the Po Delta, Tuscany's Maremma, the Fucino Basin, some areas of the Campania, and in Puglia, Sardinia, and Molise. Then, in December of the same year, the autonomous region of Sicily enacted its own land reform. However, the land reform was not only the result of pressure from the countryside, but a necessary choice to improve the economic situation of the country, which could no longer endure its customary agricultural model, especially the large estates with absentee owners.¹ In other words, the land reform was not applied to the entire Italian territory but only to specific areas. According to Giuseppe Medici, an agrarian expert and member of the Christian Democrats, the reform was most crucial in regions where agricultural structures were 'archaic'

1 C. Daneo, *Breve Storia dell'Agricoltura Italiana, 1860–1970*, Milan 1980, chap. IX; P. Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy, 1943–1980*, London 1990, chap. IV; G. Massullo, *La Riforma Agraria*, in P. Bevilacqua (ed.), *Storia dell'agricoltura Italiana in età Contemporanea*, Vol. III, *Mercati e Istituzioni*, Venice 1991. On Sicily, see F. Renda, *Il movimento contadino in Sicilia*, in P. Amato et al., *Campagne e movimento contadino nel Mezzogiorno*, Bari 1979. On the decrees, see A. Rossi Doria, *Il Ministro e i Contadini, Decreti Gullo e lotte nel Mezzogiorno, 1944–1949*, Rome 1983.

and on large properties where land owners failed to fulfil their economic and social function – their contribution to providing employment and allowing for economic growth.² The term ‘archaic’ was used principally as an economic concept and was associated with the type of agriculture that dealt with farm animals and the cultivation of extensive crops like cereals and legumes. These provided lower levels of income in comparison to intensive crops like vegetables and olive groves. It was therefore believed that a so-called land transformation was required. This meant improving the quality of the soil to allow for the cultivation of intensive crops, which together with the mechanisation of farming would increase income levels per hectare, and thus allow for the existence of small but economically self-sufficient farms. To encourage the transformation process, estate owners were to be given monetary incentives. In this way, landowners were made responsible to cultivate all the land available to them, thus ending the problem of uncultivated land in the *latifundium*. As a result, there would be more opportunities for labourers and peasants to gain work. Similarly, intensive cultivation would raise the demand for labourers since it required more work than extensive cultivation. Therefore, through a series of incentives, the reform pushed absentee landlords to become active land-entrepreneurs. However, the land reform, and especially its redistributive component, represented just a part of the plans designed to ‘modernise’ the agricultural sector. The reform and its implementation were closely linked with the work of the *Cassa per opere straordinarie di pubblico interesse nell’Italia Meridionale* (CASMEZ, 1950–1984), also called *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* (Fund for the South). The *Cassa* was a public institution, created with the support of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to stimulate the economic development of the Italian South. The CASMEZ had a double purpose: First, it was supposed to increase the value of agricultural resources through intensification; second, it aimed at creating conditions under which the economic activity outside of the agricultural sector could be intensified, for example by setting up industries.³ Furthermore, in 1954 the Italian Minister of Finance, Ezio Vanoni, presented the Employment and Income Development Scheme (*Schema di sviluppo dell’occupazione e del reddito*, 1954–1964), also known as the Vanoni Plan. It was a result of the discussions and objectives established by the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), founded in 1948 to assist the administration of Marshall plan funds. The Vanoni plan’s principal aims were to increase the country’s income and to reduce the economic gap between the North and South of the country. In order to achieve this, the Vanoni Plan intended to create four million new jobs in ten years on the national level, to be divided between industry and services, with an increase of employment rates of four percent and three percent in both sectors. Conversely, the number of employees in

2 G. Medici, *L’Agricoltura e la Riforma Agraria*, Milan 1946, p. 92; G. Medici, *Politica Agraria 1945–1952*, Bologna 1952, p. 81.

3 P. Saraceno, *Necessità e Prospettive dello Sviluppo Industriale nelle Regioni Meridionali in Relazione all’Opera della Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, in: M. Carabba (ed), *Mezzogiorno e Programmazione 1954–1971*, SVIMEZ series, Varese 2008, p. 119; see also L. D’Antone, *L’Interesse Straordinario per il Mezzogiorno (1943–1960)*, in: *Meridiana* 24 (1995), pp. 17–64.

the agricultural sector was supposed to decrease by eight percent (from 41 percent to 33 percent).⁴ To reach those targets, the plan counted not only on the creation of 120,000 new jobs but also on the emigration of 80,000 Italians abroad each year for ten years.⁵ With regard to increasing the rates of employment in the agricultural sector, the Vanoni Plan counted on the land reform and the policies of CASMEZ, which were expected to create new jobs in agriculture in the context of land redistribution and transformation.⁶ As becomes clear, the activities of CASMEZ and the Vanoni Plan were tightly interlinked with each other. The land reform aimed at the creation of small, self-sufficient peasant properties as well as the general increase of agricultural productivity by encouraging landowners to undertake the necessary transformational works. Those works, as well as the infrastructure measures, were supposed to be financed by CASMEZ. However, while considered crucial to improving the social and economic conditions in the South, those measures were not considered sufficient to entirely solve the problem of unemployment and poverty. In this sense, the Vanoni Plan constituted the third essential part of the development plan for the Italian South. It would shift the so-called agricultural 'surplus workforce' to the industrial sector, which would lower the pressure on the agricultural sector and provide industry with the necessary workforce. Clearly, an increase of employment levels in industry and services as well as emigration had to be generated by the primary sector from the southern agrarian regions of the country. In fact, an analysis of the Vanoni plan made in 1955 stated that an overall employment increase had to take place entirely outside agriculture with a shift, in ten years, of 900.000 workers from the agricultural sector to other ones.⁷ Similarly, with regard to emigration, the movement had to originate in the southern regions and aimed for the transfer of 1.100.000 workers from the South to the North of the country and abroad.⁸

In sum, the plans of the early 1950s aimed at creating a new socioeconomic scenario in the countryside, characterized by a more efficient agriculture and fewer people directly depending on it. More people would be employed in decent conditions, while others would be able to live off their land more easily. This improvement would then lead to the social and economic modernization, not only of the South, but of Italy as a whole.

4 E. Vanoni, *Lo Schema Decennale, Linea di Sviluppo e Metodologia*, in: P. Barucci (ed.), *La Politica Economica degli Anni Degasperiani, Scritti e Discorsi Politici ed Economici*, Florence 1977, p. 346.

5 G. H. Hildebrand, *Growth and Structure in the Economy of Modern Italy*, Cambridge 1965, p. 436 footnote no. 20.

6 G.G. Dell'Angelo, *L'Agricoltura nello Schema Vanoni e nel Programma di Sviluppo Economico*, in E. Zagari (ed.) *Mezzogiorno e Agricoltura, SVIMEZ series*, Varese 1997, pp. 429-430.

7 L. Fezzi, *Un Programma per gli Italiani, Appunti sul Piano Vanoni*, in: *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, Aug.-Sept. (1955), p. 364.

8 P. Saraceno, *Riesame del Piano Vanoni a fine 1957*, in: *Moneta e Credito*, Vol. II, 4 (1958), p. 23.

Spanish Rural Development Plans in the Post-war Period

In Spain, land reform and rural development issues were discussed intensively throughout the 1950s, yet the plans were not implemented until a decade later. This can be explained by the fact that during the first two decades of Franco's dictatorship, Spain pursued a policy of economic autarchy and self-sufficiency.⁹ The economic isolation of the 1940s had serious consequences for the production and trade of major agricultural products, which in addition to the state's violent repression of any form of protest, led to wages being restrained and workers being exploited.¹⁰ At the end of the 1950s, the severe situation of the agricultural sector and its workers put increasing pressure on the Spanish economy, forcing the Franco regime to abandon its policy of autarchy and to implement changes in economic policies.¹¹

During the late 1950s and 1960s, the Spanish government tried to promote the consolidation of fragmented land holdings and settlements, hoping to increase agricultural productivity. The measures were carried out by the National Institute of Colonisation (*Instituto Nacional de Colonización*, INC, 1939–1971) and by the National Institute for Land Consolidation (*Servicio nacional de concentración parcelaria*, SPC, 1953–1971). The INC oversaw the procedures aimed at transforming uncultivated land into productive fields, and to attract new settlers in the regions. The SPC dealt with the problem of scattered land. As in the case of the Italian land reform, interventions into rural settlement and production structures were not the only instruments adopted to develop the agricultural sector. Policies aimed at industrialization constituted the second element of the overall modernization plan.

Rafael Cavestany y de Anduaga, the Spanish Minister of Agriculture (1951–1957), was the key thinker behind the policies that emphasized the interdependence between industrial development and agricultural reform. In 1955, referring to the developments in the United States, Great Britain, and Italy, Cavestany remarked: "A real revolution has been produced in the economic policy, and all the states are planning, stimulating, and leading an active policy of transformation and improvement of agriculture, parallel to an intense industrial revolution".¹² He specifically referred to the Italian case, speaking of "the Italian agrarian revolution". But it was not the Italian land reform he praised. He rather had the Vanoni Plan in mind – the central role the plan attributed to industrial

9 For a compendium see Barciela et al., *La España de Franco (1939–1975)*, Economía, Madrid 2001, pp. 178–195; and J. L. Orella, *La España del Desarrollo*, el Almirante Carrero Blanco y sus hombres, Valladolid 2014, chap. III.

10 See M. Á. Del Arco Blanco, *Morir de Hambre. Autarquía, Escasez y Enfermedad en la España del Primer Franquismo*, in: *Pasado y Memoria*, revista de Historia Contemporánea, 5 (2006), pp. 241–258. For an analysis of the Francoist repression in the countryside see M. Sánchez Mosquera, *Del Miedo Genético a la Protesta. Memoria de los Disidentes del Franquismo*, Barcelona 2008.

11 J. R. Cuadrado Roura, *Regional Economy and Policy in Spain (1960–1975)*, in: J. R. Cuadrado Roura (ed.), *Regional Policy, Economic Growth and Convergence*, Berlin 2009, p. 23; P. Martín Aceña, E. Martínez Ruiz, *The golden age of Spanish Capitalism: Economic Growth Without Political Freedom*, in: N. Townson (ed.), *Spain Transformed, The Late Franco dictatorship, 1959–75*, London 2007, pp. 34–35.

12 R. Cavestany y de Anduaga, *Menos Agricultores y Mejor Agricultura*, in: *Revista de Estudios Agrosociales*, 13 (1955) p. 99. All quotes have been translated by the author of the article.

development, its aim to reduce the rural population, and the efforts toward the transformation of land.

Against this backdrop, Cavestany's call for "better agriculture and fewer farmers" became the slogan of Francoist agricultural policies throughout the 1960s. Better agriculture could be achieved by increasing agricultural productivity, thanks to measures such as land consolidation and land transformation, while to reach the goal of "fewer farmers" it was necessary to shift workers from agriculture to industry.

In addition, in Cavestany's view, the *latifundium* did not have to be measured in terms of extension but in economic terms since "when land ownership is fully exploited, there is no *latifundium*".¹³ Hence, Cavestany was not opposed to the concentration of land in the hands of a few; what he considered problematic was that land was not cultivated. In this sense, the only commitment that large landowners had to agree to was similar to Giuseppe Medici's requirement stated before, that they fully exploited the natural resources on their land.

The principles of rural and agricultural development outlined by Cavestany were taken up by two laws that were in force during the dictatorship. The first was the law on the Settlement and Distribution of Properties in Irrigable Areas (*Colonización y Distribución de la Propiedad en Zonas Regables*), which was passed in 1949 and revised during the 1950s and 1960s. The second one was the law on Farm Improvements (*Finca mejorables*), passed in 1953 and modified in 1962. The first law operated together with the Coordinated Plan of [Public] Works (*Plano Coordinado de Obras*) and was led by both the Ministry of Public Works and the INC. They carried out irrigation, reclamation and infrastructural works on properties which were uncultivated or were still operating in the 'traditional' style. As part of this effort, the INC tried to acquire part of the properties which were considered excessive for the benefit of poor peasants and landless labourers.¹⁴ In other words, it practiced a form of redistribution of land. The second law concerned the transformation and use of abandoned and uncultivated land belonging to estate owners, for the purposes of making it productive, and in turn to increase the labour supply in the area by having more cultivable land available. According to the law, if a property was qualified for improvement, the owner was offered state subsidies to make the land productive; if the owner chose not to make any improvements the state expropriated the land.¹⁵ Consequently, the threat of the expropriation through the law of 1953 pushed owners to implement the improvement works.¹⁶

As a general plan for agricultural development, the Spanish rural development laws were supposed to combine the settlement of the expropriated land and the transformation of the land in conjunction with infrastructural projects. This dual approach was very similar

13 Ibid, 99-100.

14 See N. Ortega, *Política Agraria y Denominación del Espacio*, Madrid 1979, pp. 186-204.

15 J. González Pérez, *La Declaración de Finca Mejorables*, in: *Revista de Administración Pública*, 13 (1954), pp. 207-236; M. Pérez Yruela, *La Reforma Agraria en España*, in: C. Gómez Benito, J.J. González Rodríguez (eds.), *Agricultura y Sociedad en la España Contemporánea*, Madrid 1997 p. 898.

16 Pérez Yruela, *La Reforma Agraria en España*, p. 898.

to the Italian model outlined above. This similarity was not entirely a coincidence. In an article published in 1953, Emilio Gómez Ayau, one of INC's most influential experts, underlined the value of the Italian land reform both in political and in socio-economic terms, stressing the importance of property distribution and of land transformation, and the role of CASMEZ in promoting industrial development and increasing employment levels through state intervention.¹⁷ Gómez Ayau was an expert of the Italian reform. In fact, he had edited Spanish translations of the works written by the famous Italian agrarian expert, Mario Bandini, who had worked closely with Antonio Segni in drawing up of the Italian land reform. In addition, Gómez Ayau visited the reform authorities in Puglia, Lucania, Calabria, Emilia, and Veneto, accompanied by Bandini, his "great friend and master of many things".¹⁸ Hence, it seems safe to assume that there was a transfer of ideas and approaches from Italy to Spain.

The dual nature of the Italian rural reform was central to the thinking of Spanish and Italian experts, suggesting not only its effectiveness but also the creation of a shared agrarian development model. In 1959, Spain enacted the so-called Stabilisation Plan. The plan marked the end of the period of autarchy and foresaw interventions in the public sector, reforms in monetary policy, and more economic flexibility. During the 1960s, new legislation was introduced to allow for capital imports and to encourage foreign investment in national enterprises and industrial sectors, which had until then had only been reserved for Spaniards.¹⁹ At the same time, Spain entered the Organisation for Economic Cooperation in Europe (OECD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. The stabilisation plan was the result of collective work involving a group of Spanish reformist technicians and international economic organisations.²⁰

Finally, 1964 saw the enforcement of the First Development Plan, jointly with the new *Ordenación Rural* (Rural Laws), which encompassed the Land Consolidation and Rural Ordinance Service (*Servicio de Concentración Parcelaria y Ordenación Rural*, SNCPOR, 1962–1971) created in 1962 by the previous SPC.²¹ The first national development plan (1964–1967) together with the new *Ordenación Rural* was defined as an "authentic organisation of community development".²² On the one hand they both regulated and promoted the acquisition of land, favouring the extension of land surfaces for economic purposes through new state regulations. On the other hand, it introduced technical education for settlers, provided incentives to transfer their surplus labourers from the coun-

17 E. Gómez Ayau, El Papel del Estado en las Grandes Obras de Transformación Agraria. Estudio de Poco Más de Medio Siglo de Legislación en España, Italia y Estados Unidos, in: Revista de Estudios Agrosociales, 4 (1953), pp. 57–59.

18 E. Gómez Ayau, Una Reforma Agraria Eficaz y Oportuna, in: Revista de Estudios Agrosociales, 82 (1973), pp. 69–76.

19 P. Martín Aceña, E. Martínez Ruiz, The Golden Age of Spanish Capitalism, pp. 34–35.

20 See M. J. González, La Economía Política del Franquismo (1940–1970): Dirigismo, Mercado y Planificación, Madrid 1979, chap. IV; J. L. Orella, La España del Desarrollo, pp. 45–61.

21 A. Maceda Rubio, De la Concentración Parcelaria a la Ordenación Rural, in: Eria 93 (2014), p. 18.

22 J. L. de Los Mozos, La Ordenación Rural en la Nueva Ley de 27 Juño de 1968, in: Revista de Estudios Políticos, 164 (1969), abstract.

tryside to industrial sectors, and promoted the establishment of industries and service sector.²³

Similar to the Italian case, the Spanish plans for rural development included migration schemes, too. Emigration from Spain had been *de facto* forbidden in 1941. When rural development was put on the political agenda in the 1950s, the migration policy was reconsidered. In 1960 and 1962, new laws on migration were passed. Their purpose was to adapt the policies on migration in such a way that the rural population would decrease – in other words, the inhabitants of rural areas were supposed to migrate and become workers in underserved sectors in other regions. Toward that goal, the Spanish development plan of 1964 established (just as the Vanoni Plan had done nine years earlier) a target number of migrants, based on the assumed relation between population growth and job creation. The study on which the targets were based was carried out by the Spanish Institute for Migration (*Instituto Español de Emigración*, IEE); it suggested that Spain should aim for the migration of 80.000 workers per year from 1964 to 1972.²⁴

Over the course of the early 1960s, the development doctrines enunciated by Cavestany in the 1950s were finally put into practice. Agricultural reforms, industrialization, and migration complemented each other to achieve their goals. Agricultural productivity was strengthened, through the marginalisation of the settlement policies in favour of land transformation and consolidation as stipulated by the Rural Laws.

In both countries the effect of the policies was a continuous decrease of the absolute number of peasants within the general population, with an modification of the rural labour structure especially in the regions of Sicily and Andalusia. In this respect, one of the first effects was produced by the state's rural reform plans, namely an important modification in land property sizes in the Spanish case, and a change in the ownership of land in the Italian case. However, this modification did not benefit poor peasant and rural labourers as in the intent of settlement policies. It was rather the result of an imbalance in the application of the 'combined model' of rural development, in which settlement policies played a minor role compared to migration and agricultural productive improvement. Let us look at this process in detail.

The effects of rural reforms on labour relations and social conditions in Italy and Spain

In Sicily, between 1949 and 1965 around 40 to 45 percent of landed property that exceeded 200 hectares changed owners.²⁵ However, this modification was not the direct result of the land reform. Most of the land that changed owners was sold, not expropriated

23 Ibid., p. 86; J. L. Orella, *La España del Desarrollo*, pp. 56-59; J. R. Cuadrado Roura, *Regional Economic Policy in Spain (1960–1975)*, pp. 32-33.

24 See A. Kreienbrink, *La Lógica Económica de la Política Emigratoria del Régimen Franquista*, in: J. de la Torre and G. Sanz Lafuente (eds.) *Migraciones y Coyuntura Económica del Franquismo a la Democracia*, Zaragoza 2008, p. 222-228.

25 F. Renda, *Movimenti di Massa e Democrazia nella Sicilia del Dopoguerra*, Bari 1979, p. 52.

or redistributed by force. 193,785 hectares were freely sold to 82,281 buyers; 243,000 hectares were purchased through the Law for the Formation of the Peasant Small Property (*Legge per la Formazione della piccola proprietà Contadina*, 1948); and 99,049 hectares were expropriated through the land reform, of which 74,290 were distributed to 17,157 beneficiaries and divided between labourers and poor peasants; and 24,759 hectares of land were given to 7,712 farmers.²⁶

If the amount of land that was expropriated and redistributed was smaller than the amount that was sold, then there is scope to question the effectiveness of the land reform in terms of balancing economic and social inequalities. At the same time, this finding fits with both the state's reluctance to enforce the reform as well as with the politicians' emphasis on increasing agricultural productivity. In fact, as we have seen, the reform was enforced for mainly two reasons: a social one due to the demand coming from the countryside, which aimed at the formation of small peasant properties; and an economic one, directed towards absentee landlords and uncultivated properties, to be resolved through land improvement and expropriation. On the surface, the reform was most successful in terms of land improvement by irrigating 250,000 hectares of land in southern Italy within ten years.²⁷ However, the social impact of the land redistribution was basically a failure because landowners, under the Law for the Formation of Small Peasant Property, were allowed to sell the land. This represented a compromise, given that the Communists had called for a general expropriation while the Christian Democrats were trying to secure the support of the larger landowners by allowing them to gain financially from the redistribution.²⁸

In 1952, two years after the enforcement of the Italian land reform, the Christian Democrat and agrarian expert Medici praised the land market, supported by the state, as the best way to encourage the formation of small agricultural units:

*The goal will be easily achieved if the farmers enjoy the necessary credit and understand that the land cannot be donated, but you have to pay for it like all things that you want to preserve and grow: by paying for it, they will have the certainty of possession and will dispel the baleful visions of the miraculous land of milk and honey, where farmlands are given.*²⁹

The poorer peasants criticized the law, which they considered to be in contradiction with the land reform principles.³⁰ Their critique notwithstanding, much land was sold according to the law for the Formation of Small Peasant Property, which granted tax breaks and up to thirty-year mortgages for land acquisition to the buyers. In addition, large landowners managed to further reduce the impact of the expropriation by giving away land that was already in use by the peasant and not the uncultivated ones. The

26 F. Renda, *Il Movimento Contadino in Sicilia*, p. 688.

27 G. Massullo, *La Riforma Agraria*, p. 527.

28 Renda, *Movimenti di Massa e Democrazia in Sicilia del Dopoguerra*, p. 48.

29 G. Medici, *Politica Agraria*, p. 46.

30 A. Rossi Doria, *Il Ministro e i Contadini*, p. 149.

expropriation was affecting land which was the subject of contracts, either long-term or concessional, or managed through cooperatives under the Gullo decrees.³¹ In other cases the transformational works began by landowners resulted in withdraw of existing contracts with sharecroppers and *piccolo affitto* (small tenants).³² Landowners in Andalusia behaved similarly.³³

During its implementation the land reform often resulted in the eviction of the tenants either because the landowners ended the contracts for a more profitable exploitation of the transformed land, or they presented land that was already rented to peasants as available for expropriation. Furthermore, organizational difficulties plagued transfer of the land and its cultivation. One of the problems was the size of the plots. The average size ranged from a minimum of six hectares to a maximum of 30 hectares, but many people were given plots of only two to three hectares.³⁴ Bandini himself recognised that in Sicily in 1956 out of 84,000 new properties only 25,000 could be considered economically self-sufficient.³⁵ The financial situation was supposed to improve with the help of the transformational work, which would increase the outputs of the small farms. In the meantime, Bandini suggested a temporary solution: the new poor settlers could find employment as rural labourers or by participating in the transformational works.³⁶ However, delays in the realisation of the works frequently prevented the success of this measure.³⁷

Overall, the Italian land reform scenario suggests that the two main categories of workers in the countryside, the poor peasants and the labourers, instead of benefitting from the land reform, were excluded from its advantages. They lacked the financial means to purchase land, while the land redistribution, which was supposed to be in their interest, played only a minor role in the general modification of the property structure. Moreover, for those who remained in the countryside, this outcome represents a preamble of a massive transition in the rural labour force from peasants to dependent landless labourers.

Moving on to the evaluation of the results of the Spanish policies, it has to be said that this presents some difficulties since the national, and particular regional data sets are still missing.³⁸ However, the available data can provide us with a general understanding of the change that took place. The land acquired and redistributed by the National Institute of Colonisation (INC) amounted to 505,772 hectares and was distributed to 47,820 set-

31 Renda, *Movimenti di Massa e Democrazia nella Sicilia del Dopoguerra*, pp. 45-48.

32 Relazione al IV Congresso Provinciale della Federbraccianti-Agrigento, November 1955, FLAI-CGIL, Donatella Turtura Archive, Rome, Folder 38/3.

33 Manuel Romero Cadenas y otros presentan escrito sobre desahucio de la finca que llevan en arrendamiento, Asunto 62, 1957, Archivo De La Delegación Del Gobierno De Andalucía, Sevilla, Folder 748.

34 A. Graziani, La política del Desarrollo en el Sud de Italia. Enseñanzas de una Experiencia, in: *Revista de Economía y Estadística*, 6 (1962), p. 49.

35 M. Bandini, *L'Offensiva contro la Riforma*, in E. Zagari (ed.) *Mezzogiorno e Agricoltura*, p. 273.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 275.

37 G. E. Marciani, *L'Esperienza della Riforma Agraria in Italia*, Roma 1966, p. 95 footnote 2.

38 See C. Gómez Benito, *Una Revisión y una Reflexión sobre la Política de Colonización Agraria en la España de Franco*, in: *Historia del presente*, 3 (2004), pp. 81-86.

tlers and 5781 labourers over a period of 35 years.³⁹ This suggests that the result of the settlement intervention was almost irrelevant in terms of providing new employments, especially if we consider that the Italian land reform was not thought to be particularly successful even though it redistributed 681,000 hectares to 113,000 families over twelve years.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, large tracts of land were transformed in the same period: 600,000 hectares were improved through direct state intervention, and if we include the work enacted by private initiatives, the total amounts to 1,200,000 hectares.⁴¹ The Spanish land consolidation effort continued until 1982 and affected 5,331,298 hectares. It achieved its best results in the north of the country where the reform was targeted, while in Andalusia only 39,080 hectares were consolidated.⁴² The projects to improve soil productivity in Andalusia were quite successful in terms of size, as by 1975, 120,999 hectares had been transformed.⁴³ However, like the rest of the country the results of the land settlement were poor, with 91,695 hectares being redistributed to 14,556 farmers and 2,632 labourers.⁴⁴ If we compare this outcome with the Sicilian one - 99,049 hectares were distributed to 24,869 families - it appears that the results were similar. However, it has to be considered that the redistribution in Spain took place over a longer period of time and that the percentage of the rural population was much higher in Andalusia than in Sicily (see table 1).

To sum up, according to the data, in Spain the greatest successes were achieved in soil transformation and land consolidation. Similarly, in Andalusia, the settlements were barely implemented, but a significant amount of land was made productive. This finding reflects the predominantly economic outlook of the reforms and the fact that social concerns regarding the situation of the rural poor played a marginal role at best. Nevertheless, historians have argued that the outcome of the settlement is not surprising since a land reform was actually never part of the plan.⁴⁵ In fact, the Francoist agrarian policy never had the intention of changing the *status quo* but emphasized the importance of the market economy, especially with regard to the Stabilisation Plan.⁴⁶ In the 1960s, the government became even more determined to preserve landed property; settlement policies were now treated with less importance than in previous years.

39 N. Ortega, *Política Agraria y Denominación del Espacio*, p. 236.

40 G. Massullo, *La Riforma Agraria*, p. 525.

41 C. Gómez Benito, J. C. Gimeno, *La Colonización Agraria en España y en Aragón. 1939–1975*, Huesca 2003 quoted in C. Gómez Benito, *Una Revisión y una Reflexión sobre la Política de Colonización Agraria en la España de Franco*, p. 83.

42 J. Bosque Maurel, *Del INC al IRYDA: Análisis de los Resultados Obtenidos por la Política de Colonización Posterior a la Guerra Civil*, in: *Agricultura y Sociedad*, 32 (1984), p. 177.

43 E. Araque Jiménez, *La Política de Colonización en La Provincial de Jaén, Análisis de sus Resultados*, Jaén, 1983, quoted in J. Bosque Maurel, *Del INC al IRYDA*, p. 187.

44 My elaboration of data provided by N. Ortega, *Política Agraria y Denominación del Espacio*, p. 245.

45 M. Bueno, *La Reforma de las Estructuras Agrarias en las Zonas de Pequeña y Mediana Propiedad en España*, in: *Agricultura y Sociedad*, 7 (1978), p. 159; C. Barciela, *La Contrarreforma Agraria y la Política de Colonización del Primer Franquismo, 1936–1959*, in: A. García Sanz, J. San Fernández, (eds.), *Reformas y Políticas Agrarias en la Historia de España: de la Ilustración al Primer Franquismo*, Madrid 1996, p. 372; M. Pérez Yruela, *La Reforma Agraria en España*, p. 898.

46 J. Bosque Maurel, *Del INC al IRYDA*, p. 180.

This shift away from reform and toward stabilization was no coincidence. Rather, it has to be understood against the background of new policies relating to migration, industrial development, and the effort to anchor capitalist practices in agriculture. In practical terms, the proposed solution to overcoming unemployment and poverty in the countryside consisted of migration, the reallocation of the workforce to other sectors, and the improvement of the productivity of existing properties, which did not require a change in land ownership and would raise incomes and employment in the countryside. These policies permitted the state to avoid direct interventions into the rural property structure, which would have carried political risks, and to argue that the migration, transformation, and modernization policies would have the effect of improving the social and economic conditions in the countryside. In other words, the market forces would reduce inequality. This was stated quite clearly by the jurist Alejo Leal García, an important manager in the INC: “The reform of [rural] social structures will largely be a consequence of the economic reforms, and in part of the reforms that were directed at non-specific agricultural institutions”.⁴⁷

When, in 1968, Spain adopted the second development plan, the jurist and agrarian expert José Luis de Los Mozos stated that “the property of the land is not an important factor, having been replaced by the productive capacity”.⁴⁸ In fact, if important results were achieved, it was done within the framework of the state’s high regard for private property; indeed, the projected change was meant to keep existing power structures in place. Policies for land consolidation led to the progressive decrease of the number of small agricultural holdings and increased those that were of a size of 50 to 100 hectares.⁴⁹ In particular, the properties that ranged from one to five hectares generally decreased by 11 percent, with peaks of 37 percent where the land consolidation was more effective. Similarly, properties over 200 hectares increased by five percent overall, with peaks of 23 percent in areas that were affected by the reform.⁵⁰

In both countries, the increasing importance that politicians gave to agricultural productivity played an important role in diminishing the number of the small peasant properties as land development clashed with small peasants’ businesses, since they could hardly compete with large companies. The state actively supported this tendency by granting a series of benefits to estates owners, including credits, state subsidies, and fiscal privileges.⁵¹ As in Italy, these benefits reinforced the landowners’ standings and their business opportunities.

Overall, the emphasis placed on increasing agricultural productivity came with a certain preference for larger properties, and created the optimal conditions for new companies

47 A. Leal García, *Perspectivas Generales de la Reforma de Estructuras Agrarias*, in: *Revista de Estudios Agrosociales*, 64 (1968), p. 19.

48 J. L. de Los Mozos, *La Ordenación Rural en la Nueva Ley de 27 Juio de 1968*, p. 83.

49 C. Barciela et al., *La España de Franco*, p. 377.

50 M. Bueno, *La Reforma de las Estructuras Agrarias*, p. 164.

51 R. Carr (ed.), *La Época de Franco (1939–1975)*, vol. 41 of R. Menéndez Pidal, J.M. Jover (eds.) *Historia de España* Madrid 1996, pp. 478–479.

who were capable of achieving higher profits. However, this also caused the progressive disappearance of small properties. Looking back, the founder of the Communist Party in Galicia argued in 1976 that the state's policy had led to the disappearance of small and medium peasants.⁵² Similarly, in Italy, the *Alleanza Nazionale dei Contadini* (National Peasant Association) criticized the government's liquidation of small peasant farms, arguing that the majority of public funds and tax relief were being given to the big capitalist companies, which easily secured their supremacy on the market.⁵³

In the Italian case, the privileged condition of larger properties owners further undermined the goal of creating new settlements. The disappearance of 'traditional' agriculture set in at the same time, and in some cases even prior to the changes in settlement. In Italy, there were basically two developments taking place at the same time: the first was driven by a group of agrarian entrepreneurs who were turning farms into businesses, through private and public capital investments; the second was the arrival of new settlers who were strictly dependent on the success and timing of the reforms addressed to them. In this scenario, the delays and the market competition clearly favoured larger existing farms that had already taken up more intensive practices. In this situation, it was very difficult for the less wealthy peasants to secure their position on the labour market. Bandini himself wrote that it was necessary to allow for a "natural selection" of the land assignment, which would determine "the progressive affirmation of the best of the most capable and hardworking" while the rest would leave.⁵⁴ In the end, 19.9 percent of new settlers abandoned the land given to them by the state; in Sicily the figure was even higher at 25.6 percent.⁵⁵ The only opportunity they had was to take up temporary jobs as labourers inside or outside the rural sector, or to migrate.

The fact that the Italian land reform did not result in a large-scale redistribution of land, and that in Spain the number of new settlers remained very low compared to the initial goals had important consequences for the shape of the new rural systems in the two countries. The rural economy lacked the means to provide the number of jobs for the unemployed, which originally the creation of new small farms was supposed to resolve. Consequently, the migration that originated from the countryside was higher than expected.

Labourers replacing peasants

In the Sicilian case, the general rural population employed in agriculture decreased during the 1950s, passing from 51.3 percent to 41.3 percent in the 1960s. Yet the major

52 S. Álvarez, *El Partido Comunista y el Campo*, Madrid 1976, p. 41.

53 *Alleanza Nazionale dei Contadini*, *Due linee di Politica Agraria*, Conferenza Nazionale del Mondo Rurale e dell'agricoltura, Roma 1961, pp. 6-9; see also G. Fabiani, *L'Agricoltura in Italia tra Sviluppo e Crisi, 1945-1977*, Bologna 1979, pp. 129-130.

54 M. Bandini, *L'Offensiva contro la Riforma*, pp. 276-277.

55 C. Barberis, *La Riforma Fondiaria trent'anni dopo*, Dieci tesi, in: *Giornale degli Economisti e Annali di Economia*, 39 (1980), p. 393.

decrease took place during the following decade. When the industrial turn consolidated, many labourers found employment in the infrastructure and construction sectors. Thus, in 1970 the Sicilian rural population employed in agriculture fell further still and accounted for only 28.7 percent out of the total working population.

Comparing these results with the initial proposition of the Vanoni Plan, it is evident that the percentages consistently surpassed the projected forecasts. The plan aimed for a decrease of eight percent in the rural sector between 1955 and 1964; meaning a passage from 41 per cent to 33 percent of the national average. However, already in 1960, the rate of decreased was already higher than the expected threshold, as the national percentage of the employed rural population reached 29.1 percent, with a further decrease in the next decade to 17.2 percent. At the same time, Sicily lost over 20 years almost three times more than the proposed eight percent of the Vanoni Plan. The Sicilian outcome provides an explanation for this rapid decrease, as the southern regions were the main target of the plan. In this sense, the southern population more or less responded to the plan. However, considering the sharp drop of employees in the rural sector in the national economy, it is possible to hypothesise that the other southern regions experienced a similar decline, if not more than Sicily; but it is also possible that regions which already had a low rural population overcame the optimal percentage proposed by the plan. This basically means that many more people moved from the agricultural to the industrial and services sectors, while the number of jobs created in the rural sector remained below the plans.

Similarly, in the Spanish case, the Andalusian population employed in the primary sector experienced an initial decrease from 1950 to 1960, passing from 64 percent to 58.2 percent, but the major decrease occurred in the next decade. This was due to the reinforcement of policies on migration as well as the enforcement of the development plans. Indeed, by 1970 Andalusia had 41.8 percent of the active rural population, about 16 percent less than the previous decade (Table 1, Figure 1).

However, the most significant feature the data reveal is the reversal in the relation between the general rural population and the rural labourers. In terms of percentage, while there was a progressive decrease of the general rural population, within the same group there was an increase in the percentage of rural labourers. In 1950, at the beginning of the reforms, the rural labourer population in Sicily constituted 55.4 percent of the total rural working population. In 1960, the same group had increased to 66.9 percent. This was a growth of 11.5 percent in ten years, a tendency which remained largely stable throughout the 1960s. Similarly, Andalusia experienced an increase of rural labourers employed in the rural sector from the 64.5 percent in 1956 to 74.5 percent in 1970.

In other words, in Sicily and Andalusia peasants were replaced by rural labourers. The reasons were the eviction of tenants from the estates for a more profitable use the property, the formation of farming businesses, and the increasingly difficult conditions of small farms in this changing environment. This replacement of peasants by labourers is also mirrored in the Italian decrease of the general rural population employed in the rural sector parallel to the increase of the percentage of rural labourers. Italy saw a progressive growth of rural labourers, passing from 32.2 percent to 40.5 percent between

1950 and 1970. By contrast, the Spanish national average of rural labourers declined during those years, from 47.3 percent to 37.6 percent (Table 2, Figure 2). Studies that have considered the Spanish national average of rural labourers suggest that the massive migration from Spain in the 1950s can explain this decrease, as it largely affected rural labourers.⁵⁶ Others have argued that the increase of rural labourers started in Spain only in the 1970s.⁵⁷ Clearly, these two explanations cannot be applied to the Andalusian case analysed here, since its rural labourers population experienced, differently from Spain, an increase. However, the difference between the national Spanish and the regional Andalusian trends shows the necessity to take both regional cases and the country's overall development into consideration. In fact, the national average does not always represent local and regional developments.

Conclusion

As the analysis has shown, the decrease of the rural population and the general increase in the percentage of rural labourer in both Sicily and Andalusia was a response both to agrarian development strategies and to the Italian and Spanish states' attempts to preserve the property interests of agrarian elites. The land reform policies aimed to promote industrialisation of the country but were not interested in land reform *per se* to serve as a structural reform that would reduce the socioeconomic inequalities of the countryside. This idea was present in both countries, but it became radicalised under the Spanish dictatorship, since in Spain the demands for land reform from below were necessarily weak, whereas in Italy the communist party played a crucial role in national and regional politics. When we look at the Italian case only, it appears that the Italian land reform was not very effective in creating new settlements. However, its results appear much more effective when compared with the resulting settlement policies in Spain. In addition, in Italy the presence of an outspoken political opposition pushed the landowners who did not want to take part in rural development policies to at least sell their properties, which created an important land market and opened new possibilities for bourgeois entrepreneurs.

Beyond these differences, and in looking at the broader context, the two land reforms did not have notably different results when looking at Sicily and Andalusia. Relatively speaking, the redistributive effects of land reform were not decisive; migration, the shifting workforce, and aims to improve productivity also played an important role. In the policymakers' minds the improvement of the social and economic condition of the countryside would only have been possible by increasing agricultural productivity, and by reducing levels of employment in the countryside. In this framework, as long as the

56 J. M. Naredo, *La Evolución de la Agricultura en España (1940–1990)*, Granada 1996, pp. 204–205; A. Ferrer Rodríguez, M. Sáenz Lorite, *Las Actividades Agrarias*, in: J. Bosque Maurel, J. Vila i Valenti (eds), *Geografía de España (Geografía Humana I)*, 2 (1989), pp. 302–303.

57 E. Sevilla Guzmán, *La Evolución del Campesinado en España*, Barcelona 1979, pp. 221, 225–226.

land was productive, its concentration was not considered a determinant for the socio-economic change of the countryside. Thus, it is not by chance that despite the plans for settlements, the 1950s and 1960s saw a progressive reduction of small peasant holdings. In particular, this shift was the result of the poor settlement outcomes, which was a result of the emergence of a new group of agrarian entrepreneurs who came into play during the transition period of the reforms. At the same time, this new trend provoked a shift in the workforce within the same rural sector from peasants to labourers, a shift that was particularly significant in regions such as Sicily and Andalusia, where the imbalances and inequalities were among the strongest in both countries.

Although infrastructure works were carried out, the expected mechanization and the envisioned change in cultivation from extensive to intensive cultivation did not take place on a large scale. Similarly, the social function of the landowners in creating employment through the full exploitation of the land and cultivation of intensive crops was not fully realized. This also meant that there was not a substantial increase in employment and the standard of living.

Indeed, the problems of unemployment, poverty, unfair contracts and so on had also moved from the peasant to the rural labourers. In fact, the decrease of the rural population did not represent a definitive solution to the pre-existing condition of underemployment and low salaries of rural labourers. This condition persisted after the land reform, due to both the abandonment of the land (or failure of settlement policies) and to the lack of a more rational use of the cultivations, in terms of full employment. The poor peasants moved from the low incomes of its land and joined the rural labourer working only few months a year for very low salaries. With the percentage increase of rural labourers this constituted a growing problem.⁵⁸ The precarious working situation of rural labourers has always been a recurrent problem in southern countryside. Still today, a large workforce, often made up by migrants, works under very exploitative conditions.

More generally, the value and meaning of land changed over time. For the population who remained in the countryside and who were employed in the new farming business, the possession of land was no longer the only aspiration. Land did not have to be owned to provide a decent source of income. Thus, new claims came from below; these included job contracts, salaries, and benefits that were in line with those of the industrial workers. Such changes marked a new era of rural history that in many ways is still present today.

Appendix

The following data presents my elaboration of the data provided by the ISTAT (Italy), INE (Spain) (National statistical Institutes). Sources: IX Censimento generale della popolazione, 1951, ISTAT, Vol. I-II; X Censimento generale della popolazione, 1961, ISTAT, Vol. III; XI Censimento generale della popolazione, 1971, ISTAT, Vol. II, IV, VI;

58 Claims and working conditions of rural labourer are aspects covered in my Ph.D. thesis, *The Damned of the South: rural landless labourers in Sicily and Andalusia, 1946 to the present*, forthcoming.

Censo de la población De España, 1950, INE, Vol. II-III; INE, Censo de la población De España 1960, INE, Vol. III; Censo de la población y de las viviendas, 1960, INE, Tab. IV; INE Censo de la población De España, 1970, INE Vol. II-III.

The data for Andalusia of 1960 have been elaborated with the data provided by Encuestas agropecuarias of Junta Nacional de Hermandades (Agricultural surveys of National Board of the Francoist trade union), published in 1956. Therefore, the value in the tables are correspondent to 1960 refer to 1956.

Table 1 shows both the absolute terms and percentages of the general agriculture working population – sharecroppers, owners, labourers etc. – in the agricultural sector. Figure 1 shows, per area, a graphic representation of the percentages presented in tab 1. Table 2 shows both the absolute terms and percentages of the rural labourers place in the general agriculture working population. Fig. 2 graphically represents the percentages per areas.

Tab. 1, Number and Percentage of Employees in the Agricultural Sector

| | 1950 | | 1960 | | 1970 | |
|-----------|-----------|--------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Andalusia | 1.123.384 | 64% | 1.022.816 | 58,2% | 673.890 | 41,8% |
| Spain | 5.271.037 | 58% | 4.696.390 | 49,8% | 2.898.569 | 30,3% |
| Sicily | 760.080 | 51,26% | 610.333 | 41,3% | 380.190 | 28,7% |
| Italy | 8.261.160 | 42,2% | 5.692.975 | 29,1% | 3.234.710 | 17,2% |

Tab. 2, Number and Percentage of Rural Labourers in the Agricultural Sector

| | 1950 | | 1960 | | 1970 | |
|-----------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Andalusia | – | – | 692.054 | 64,5% | 502.081 | 74,5% |
| Spain | 2.494.212 | 47,3% | 1.977.930 | 42,1% | 1.088.697 | 37,6% |
| Sicily | 421.051 | 55,4% | 408.080 | 66,9% | 256.579 | 67,5% |
| Italy | 2.660.236 | 32,2% | 2.074.472 | 36,4% | 1.309.422 | 40,5% |

Fig. 1, Percentage of Employees in the Agricultural Sector

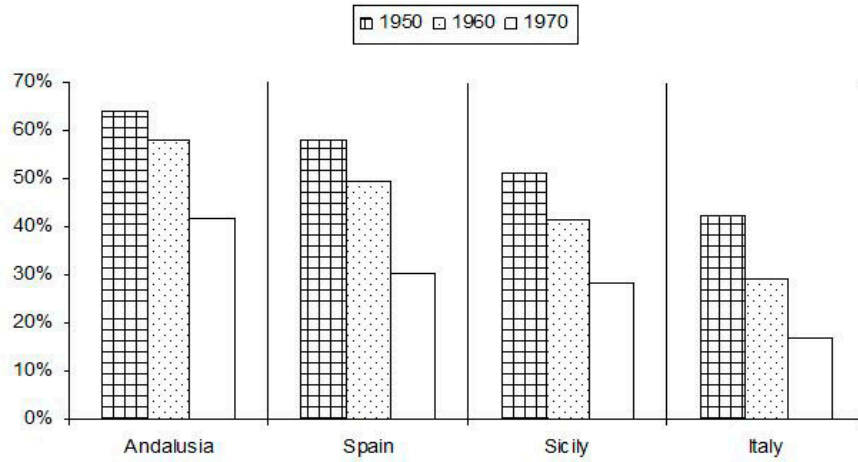


Fig. 2, Percentages of Rural Labourers in the Agricultural Sector

