

**THE GERMAN FAT PLAN  
AND ITS ECONOMIC SETTING**

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No. 6     ,     ,     ,     ,     September 1938

**THE GERMAN FAT PLAN  
AND ITS ECONOMIC SETTING**

By

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**FOOD RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA**

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## DIRECTOR'S PREFACE

Growing governmental interposition in agriculture, and in the commerce in animal and vegetable fats and oils, has greatly modified world trade in these important foodstuffs; and it is profoundly altering the general character of farming in a number of countries. Of these countries Germany seems to offer the most instructive case for study, because control has perhaps gone farther there than elsewhere, both socially and economically. From it, certainly, there emerge a large number of highly significant facts and lessons to be learned.

To analyze the German situation in fats and oils, the measures embodied in the so-called "Fat Plan" and the outlook, however, demanded a far more intimate acquaintance with German agriculture and German policy than any regular member of the Food Research Institute staff possessed or could readily achieve. Accordingly, while I still enjoyed the active collaboration of my two co-directors, Drs. Alonzo E. Taylor and Carl L. Alsberg, we arranged with Dr. Karl Brandt to produce this work under a temporary appointment, since replaced by a permanent one. His own foreword, and the book as a whole, adequately indicate his peculiar fitness for the task.

The scope and significance of the work are much wider than a brief title can suggest. The first half not merely provides the essential background for discussion of the far-reaching fat plan of recent years; it also constitutes an illuminating treatise on the whole economy of fats and oils in Germany prior to the new regime, with special emphasis on the dairy industry, the oil-mill and margarine industries, and the marketing system through to the consumer. This complex part of modern economic

life is so little understood, for any country, that so competent a presentation is to be welcomed for itself. It gains in weight as the author proceeds to show how the control measures evolved, how they are working, and whither they are leading.

JOSEPH S. DAVIS

March 15, 1938

## FOREWORD

The peculiar nexus between the markets for different fats, and between the markets for fats and those for other agricultural commodities, constitutes an important international problem which has commanded my interest from the time when German grain stabilization began (1928). When the first great shifts caused by that stabilization became apparent, I began to investigate the basic causes of the plight of the dairy industry, the cattle industry at large, and the hog industry, in Germany. The interplay of economic factors which are responsible for the price level of domestic animal fats was hidden, because no one had undertaken to study these factors in a comprehensive manner.

In August and September 1932 I discussed the supply-demand and price factors, and the all-embracing competition among all the interchangeable fats, in two articles in an economic journal, *Der deutsche Volkswirt*. At that time the extension of the network of interlocked agricultural commodity markets into the field of fats, and its implications for the dairy industry, were not yet recognized. The German fat plan has been built—largely contrary to my intentions—directly upon my analysis, which had dealt with possible policies and their shortcomings.

The dairy and fat expert of the Reichs- und Preussisches Ministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft, Ministerialrat Dr. Wegener, after reviewing the competition of fats in the world market, stated correctly:

In spite of this situation, until 1933 we in Germany were exclusively concerned with dairy economics as such, with reference to milk, butter, and cheese prices, which in turn were influenced by the low world prices and from which we tried to sever the domestic production by butter and cheese tariffs or through im-

port quotas. But after having discovered for the first time the coherence between dairy economics and the fat economy, we began to tackle the problem at its root . . . .<sup>1</sup>

In the autumn of 1933 I left Germany, but I have followed the fat plan with a keen interest ever since. The unique resources of the economic division of the public library in New York City have enabled me to keep my observations up to date. Many of my former pupils and my friends have most generously supplied me with the current literature. Nevertheless, the present book suffers from certain handicaps.

In spite of the four years that have elapsed since it was launched, the nation-wide experiment is still in the making. Even in many of its practical details, the policy to be pursued is still being shaped and reshaped. Many desirable conclusions cannot be drawn as yet or be founded on material evidence, simply because everything is still too new. There is, moreover, a conspicuous lack of critical literature on the plan, its operation, and its achievements. This can be explained only in part by the extraordinary restraint of scientific research and critical information of the public under a regime of the undebatable leadership principle. Those in charge of the administration of the plan have neither the time nor the desire to evaluate and weigh the policy pursued. And if they had both, they would probably not be especially fit for such a task because scientific investigation, critical mind, and aloofness from actual events seldom coincide with the capacity of even the ablest administrators.

Under such circumstances it was so much the more valuable to have the benefit of critical comments on my manuscript.

For numerous suggestions and critical comments I am especially obliged to Dr. Hans von der Decken, Berlin

<sup>1</sup> Wegener, "Ordnung der deutschen Milch- und Fettwirtschaft," *Deutsche Molkerzeitung*, Kempen, Festnummer, May 30, 1937, LVIII, 26.



(Institut für Konjunkturforschung), Staatssekretär a. D. Dr. Hans Krüger, Berlin (formerly Preussisches Ministerium für Landwirtschaft, Domänen und Forsten); to Dr. Leland Spencer, Professor of Marketing at Cornell University; and to Dr. Roy Ballinger, Professor of Agricultural Economics at Louisiana State University.

My profoundest indebtedness, however, is to the directors of the Food Research Institute, Drs. Joseph S. Davis and Carl L. Alsberg (now director of the Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics). Both have not only read the manuscript repeatedly in its various stages but cooperated with me by contributing the most fertile and searching criticism. I am also indebted to Dr. Davis for the organization of the charts and tables, to Mr. P. Stanley King for his competent draftsmanship, to Dr. M. K. Bennett for suggestions on the final draft, and to Elizabeth Brand Taylor for invaluable assistance on the manuscript and the proof. For reading the galley proof and for many fruitful suggestions I am grateful to Dr. Alonzo E. Taylor.

KARL BRANDT

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## UNITS OF WEIGHT, MEASURE, AND MONEY

1 gram = 15.432 grains

1 kilogram (1000 grams) = 2.2 pounds

1 metric ton (1000 kg.) = 2,204.6 pounds

1 hectare = 2.471 acres; 1 acre = 0.405 hectare

1 liter = 1.0567 quarts; 1 quart = 0.9463 liter

1 hectoliter (100 liters) = 26.42 gallons

1 mark, to April 18, 1933 = \$0.24; \$1.00 = 4.20 marks,  
thereafter slowly changing to the new level

1 mark, from February 24, 1934 = \$0.40; \$1.00 = 2.50  
marks

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