

area devoted to agriculture. This allowed Poland to be the largest producer in the Eastern Bloc (excluding the Soviet Union) of rye (6.8 million tons), barley (1.6 million tons), oats (2.8 million tons), potatoes (38 million tons), sugarbeets (5.9 million tons), rapeseed(canola), cattle, milk, pork, eggs, as well as other agricultural commodities.³

During the interwar period, Poland largest trading partners were western neighbors such as Czechoslovakia, Austria, and particularly Germany. Agricultural exports played a major role in foreign trade and subsequently in Poland's balance of payments. During the years preceding War World II, food represented approximately 37% of total exports and, combined with fuel and timber represented four fifth's of Poland's total exports.⁴ Poland's food imports prior to the war consisted only of tropical foods and vegetable oils. During the same period, western Europe as a whole relied heavily on food imports.

Although Poland had higher levels of food production than most of its eastern neighbors, food consumption figures were not superior to those found in countries such as Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and were definitely lower than those found among western Europeans. Before World War II, Polish food consumption consisted mainly of grains and potatoes.

POSTWAR ERA

During World War II, 470,000 peasant farms were either destroyed or severely damaged.

³ 1934-38 average. ERS "Agricultural Statistics".

⁴Zauberman, p 283.