

How agriculture changed our society

[Science](#), [Agriculture](#)



Agriculture provides the basis of subsistence for the population by production of food and raw materials. Traditionally, the inhabitants of each country or region depended on the bread-basket filled by the farmers, for ex; everybody depended on agriculture and was interested in its outcome. In recent times, regional and international trade have reduced the dependence on home agriculture, and the quantity of available food is less a function of the harvest than of the political decision on the amount of food imports. To meet the requirements of the ever increasing population with its higher purchasing power, and this despite less and less manpower because of the high outmigration from rural areas, agriculture increased its outputs and productivity, a process which had consequences for the price of agricultural products. The more people live in the cities and have to buy food at the market, the more agricultural prices became a political issue. The interest of urban society in agriculture is an interest in low prices, and the request of the primary sector for price increases is a regular nuisance for the urban population. The increase in output and productivity of agriculture could only be achieved by division of work and specialization. Today only part of the production process takes place on the farm, while, in addition, agriculture uses industrial products like fertilizer, pesticides, machinery and equipment, the services of the tertiary sector like banking, insurance etc. and hands its products over to other sectors for packing, processing, or distribution. Today, agriculture is deeply interwoven with other sectors of the economy. It cannot produce anymore without their inputs and services, and acts itself as a customer to these other sectors, thus providing work and income outside of agriculture. These changes in agriculture had consequences for the

agricultural population. Many people from rural areas migrated to the cities and filled the ranks of workers in the secondary and tertiary sectors. For the remaining rural population, agriculture changed from a way of life to a profession in which technical know-how plays an ever increasing role. Frequently, the structure and organization of the farm changed. New forms like part-time farming arose. In areas with very tiny holdings and poor soil, rural-urban migration reached the stage, where only the aged live in the village. Particularly under such conditions, the responsibility of agriculture for the preservation of nature adds to the roles it plays today. The changes in agriculture – briefly outlined here – bring with them new tasks in training and research for colleges of agriculture. The process of agricultural production has become increasingly complex and requires therefore scientific help in research and extension. The need for optimizing the allocation of inputs has given agricultural economics importance, especially in the field of farm management. Necessary changes in the agrarian structure require special studies. The application of inputs in agriculture have created new tasks in fields like agricultural chemistry and engineering, and the processing of food has become a new area of specialization. Such a highly differentiated organization of agriculture requires professional associations. Finally, the provision of food for the population with so many contributors and interest-groups can be achieved only with a functioning marketing and distribution system as well as a sound agricultural policy. For all these tasks, persons have to be trained, and research has to provide the necessary scientific basis. The changes in agriculture have broadened the role the colleges of agriculture have to play as training and research institutions.