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Food Legumes and Cultural Fixation

by

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Introduction

Some time ago, our friend Günter Wiegelmann, for whom we were pleased to carry out field research in order to gather the material for this article, wrote a contribution to the anniversary volume for Matthias Zender called "Reliktgebiet und Kulturfixierung: Zu einigen Begriffen und Modellen der schwedischen Ethnologie und deutschen Volkskunde"¹. In it, he explained in an intriguing manner that Scandinavian ethnology, with its notion of "cultural fixation", possesses a model which may well prove useful for investigations into cultural change, for three reasons.

Firstly, the model has room for phenomena which are usually lumped together in the phrase "cultural innovations", as well as phenomena of the opposite kind, i.e. cultural fixation; secondly, in this model neither phenomenon is conceived of as static, but as a process: on the one hand a process of innovation, on the other, a process of fixation; thirdly, it looks for the causes of both processes in one and the same factor, i.e. the relative differences in the development in the standard of living in socially interconnected population groups, though with the proviso that a group which is relatively growing more prosperous will be inclined to apply innovations to its material culture, whereas a group with a relatively decreasing prosperity will try to maintain at least the level of material culture it had attained.

On the basis of his own observations Wiegelmann notes that a process of innovation and of fixation follows the business cycle with some delay, of which the extent is still not clear².

¹ GÜNTER WIEGELMANN, Reliktgebiet und Kulturfixierung. Zu einigen Begriffen und Modellen der schwedischen Ethnologie und deutschen Volkskunde. In: Studien zu Volkskultur, Sprache und Landesgeschichte, ed. by GÜNTER WIEGELMANN und EDITH ENNEN, Festschrift Matthias Zender, 2 Bde., Bonn 1972, pp. 59-71.

² GÜNTER WIEGELMANN, Möglichkeiten ethnohistorischer Nahrungsforschung. In: Ethnologia Europaea, Vol. 1 (1967), pp. 185-194.

Inspired by the above-mentioned article, allied to our own interest in the changing position of legumes in the assortment of foodstuffs since about 1900, we arrived at the following question: "Was there a question of cultural fixation or cultural innovation regarding the assortment of legumes cultivated for private use in two occupational groups of which the standard of living has developed in a very specific way since World War I and, if so, what was the extent of the delay before the process became apparent?"

One "occupational group" we had in mind comprised the farmers who, from 1918 on, saw the respective departures of their living-in labourers, living-in maids, non-resident maids and finally labourers on annual contracts. These departures might have alleviated the farmer's financial burden, but the departure of the living-in maid meant a decrease in manpower available to the household. This situation became acute with the additional departure of the non-resident maid, leaving only the weekly charwoman. On the other hand, the servants' departures from the household meant a decrease in the number of people needing daily meals, which, in turn, meant that it took the farmer's wife less time and energy to prepare these meals. In short, it was a complicated process which, from the early 1900's on, particularly affected the household on the larger farm.

These changes were reflected in the household of the social class (from now on called "lower class") which had traditionally been the main supplier of non-resident labourers as well as of living-in domestic personnel. It is quite possible that in this class it was particularly the provision of room and board to an increased number of older children — i.e. those who would have been receiving room and board from their employer — that was felt as the most severe problem resulting from these changes³. However, for this class too, we have concentrated on the question of whether the processes of cultural fixation or innovation can be demonstrated within the assortment of home-grown legumes.

Scheme of Research

In his article, "Möglichkeiten ethnohistorischer Nahrungsforschung"⁴, Wiegelmann points out that foods are essentially part of the material culture of a society. But as their lifespan is short, they should still be considered as non-material culture goods in ethnohistoric research, however paradoxical this may seem. This means, that the quality of our knowledge about food consumption in the past is dependent on the accuracy and shortcomings of

³ One of our respondents told us that in 1929, when she was eighteen and working as a maid, she was literally thrown out of her parental house because of the impending birth of another baby. Because neither her family nor her employer could provide her with a place to sleep, she had no choice but to find a job as a living-in maid as soon as possible.

⁴ See note 2.

human memory. As a consequence, investigation into this part of the past will demonstrate the usual phenomena of forgetfulness, failure to understand and distortion of reality amongst respondents. In the field, improvisation is therefore needed to obviate these inadequacies as far as possible.

Although legumes are not as short-lived as many foods, we also had to work with the paradox of conceiving of legumes as a non-material culture good, the more so because we were mainly interested in the question of whether the decrease in the supply of labour to the farming households caused any change in the assortment of home-grown legumes and also in the subsequent reaction of the lower class household to the fact that husband and children who used to eat at their employer's now ate at home.

With this in mind we decided to use the open interview recorded on tape. To boost the memory of our subjects we took along a basket with 25 different dry food legumes.

Care was taken during the interviews that all matters important to our investigation were discussed. However, respondents were not prevented from discussing subjects they thought relevant to the theme of investigation, even if we thought otherwise. It was to appear later that at those instances things were said which made it clear that an obvious interpretation of the material at hand would not do justice to our respondents' reality.

There were several considerations regarding the choice of location for the research. For instance, in earlier research projects into the consumption of legumes in the Netherlands⁵, it was ascertained that in the north-east of the country there still exists a specific pattern concerning the production of legumes. We therefore decided to concentrate on the north-east, and because the actual field work had to be carried out in four "weeks" during the summer of 1986, we chose a limited location and made sure beforehand that the interviews would yield sufficient and relevant material. Thus the research was carried out in the village of N. which we knew well and which had been the location for an earlier research project⁶. This enabled us to compile the list of potential respondents in such a way that

1. together they would account for the period 1900-1986
2. regardless of their age they would be descendants of farming stock

⁵ M.E. VAN SUYLEN, *Het peulvruchtgebruik in de breedste zin van het woord*. Department of Human Nutrition, Agricultural University, Wageningen 1985, undergraduate thesis No. 85-03; G. LINSSEN, *Peulvruchten op tafel*. Department of Human Nutrition, Agricultural University, Wageningen 1985, undergraduate thesis No. 85-66; R. DA COSTA SENIOR/W. DUISTER, *Variëren met en vervangen door peulvruchten in de maaltijden*. Department of Human Nutrition, Agricultural University, Wageningen 1986, undergraduate thesis No. 86-37.

⁶ JOHANNA M.P. EDEMA, *Een sociaal-geografische beschrijving van de gemeente Noordbroek*, Bachelor of Science extended essay Social Geography, University of Utrecht, 1947.

3. they would belong to the farming community themselves
4. the list would state not only autochthons but also allochthons married to autochthons and autochthons who had moved elsewhere because of their marriage.

Because we also knew the degree of blood relationship between our potential respondents, and their social interconnections, we could concentrate in this project on the effect of a change in the standard of living on the assortment of cultivated legumes in a socio-culturally homogenous population.

From the list we selected 15 addresses. However, in case we would need to put the collected material into a somewhat larger social framework, we added two more addresses of agricultural commission merchants, two addresses of respectively one first and one second generation allochthonous farming couple and three addresses of people who would be able to tell us about the assortment of home-grown legumes used by lower class families from their own experience.

All made positive responses, and the material for this article was collected at 22 addresses from a total of 31 persons, varying in age from 30 to 93 years.

Assortment of legumes cultivated in N.

Fairly early in the interview the respondents were asked to take from the basket we had brought those legumes with which they were familiar because either they themselves or their parents grew them in the field or in the garden. At the conclusion of the 22 interviews it turned out that 7 out of the 25 samples had never been taken from the basket. However, the respondents had added 10 additional samples to the basket, which were part of the assortment of legumes they knew. Therefore, this assortment consisted of 28 varieties (Table I).

Table I clearly shows the distinct division between garden-grown and field-grown varieties as it existed before World War II. The first important change, however, was only temporary: during World War II farmers used to cultivate straw yellow beans with the sole purpose of providing friends, acquaintances and incidental passers-by who were not able to grow legumes for their own use, with at least one nutritious and preservable product. Table I also proves that one cannot understand the choice of home-grown legumes without realizing the objectives people have in mind when they decide to grow a particular variety. Therefore, both elements will be mentioned repeatedly during the following discussion.

Vicia faba L.

The initial distinction between field-grown and garden-grown legumes went beyond the question of: "This we'll grow here and that we'll grow there". For instance, no farmer's wife had ever gone to the field to pick immature horse beans to serve them as a vegetable dish. For this purpose she grew faba beans. Mature and dehydrated horse beans were mainly used as an energy booster for the horses⁷ and cows on the farm and an eventual surplus would be sold. In the latter case it was considered a matter of course that those horse beans, like mount beans and pigeon beans, would be sold to the cattle fodder plants and that vetches were used for bird seed.

Apparently the lower class also considered horse beans as cattle fodder. One of the respondents told us: "Sometimes my husband could get some unthreshed horse beans from the farm so that we had some extra food for the animals".

However, in winter time, farmers' children were occasionally treated to home-popped horse beans by their fathers, and sometimes a farmer's wife would take a small bag of these beans home after a visit to Town⁸. However, in the 1950s, with the introduction of the tractor, horses and with them horse beans disappeared from the farm, which meant an end to this treat and also to another one. It was the farmer's custom to have the baker bake a cheap kind of black bread for the horses, the so-called horse bread, which consisted of a mixture of horse beans, barley and/or rye. This bread was of a lighter colour and somewhat different in taste from the black rye bread which was a favourite, traditional food here⁹. Children would sometimes get a slice of this bread when playing in the barn and the labourers would occasionally take a piece when feeding the horses with it. "Not because we were hungry, but just because it was tasty." However, because of the fact that one informant¹⁰ reported that in the past, poor people sometimes ate horse bread out of need, we continued questioning the farmers as well as the labourers on this point. The farmers' answer varied from: "This might

⁷ Sometimes dried beans would be soaked whole and fed to the horses. But farmers were cautious when feeding these to the animals: "It's irritating and softens the skin: if you feed them too many or too often, the harness will easily abrade the skin on the breast". According to the first generation allochthonous farmer, however, horse beans were always grown at his parents' farm and after soaking fed to the horses and the cows as well.

⁸ To the inhabitants of N. and of the entire province of Groningen, "Town" is synonymous with the city of Groningen (the province's capital). The inhabitants of the capital are nicknamed "mole beans" (i.e. popped horse beans).

⁹ JOHANNES J. VOSKUIL, *De weg naar luilekkerland*. In: *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, Vol 19 (1983), pp. 460-484.

¹⁰ Our informant was Prof. Dr. E.W. Hofstee, the author of, a.o. *Het Oldambt, een sociografie, deel I. Vormende krachten* (dissertatie Amsterdam, Groningen 1937) and *Groningen, van grasland naar bouwland, 1750-1930: een agrarisch-economische ontwikkeling als probleem van sociale verandering* (Wageningen, Pudoc, 1985).

Botanical name	Variety	Name		f	Farmer's wives						Labourer's wives								
		local	translated		ip	is	sp	ss	mp	ms	b	ip	is	sp	ss	mp	ms	b	
Phaseolus vulgaris L	tender-shell (= haricot beans) ^o	18 dubbele witter ^x	double white		r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r		
		19 stamslaboon	wax bean		r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
		20 stokslaboon	pole wax bean		r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
		21 chinese boon ^x	china bean ²		r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r
		22 citroen boon ^x	lemon bean ²		r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r
		23 conservenboon ^x	friezer bean ²																
24 eenpoter ^x	single seed ²																		
Phaseolus coccineus L	shred-beans ^o	25 pronker	(white) runner bean		r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r		
		26 snijboon	(white) French bean	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r		
		27 rode pronker	scarlet runner		r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r		
		28 rode snijboon	scarlet French bean		r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r		

main uses: ip = green pods with immature seeds enclosed; is = immature green seeds; sp = pods with semi-mature seeds enclosed; ss = semi-mature seeds; mp = mature pods with mature seeds enclosed; ms = mature seeds; b = seed beans
^x respondents' additions to the basket with legumes; ^o local name for this category of food legumes; ^v local name, Dutch name „tuinboon“; ^a market-crop
¹ before World War II seldom cultivated by wives of labourers; ² cultivation started well after World War II; ³ crop disappeared from the gardens when farmers started to cultivate it as a field-crop after World War I; ⁴ appeared as a garden-crop after the farmers started it as a field-crop well after World War II.

have been the case" and: "This sounds familiar, I must have heard this before", to: "You used to take the meal for the horse bread to the baker and he returned the number of loaves you had ordered; it's entirely possible that he could have baked a few extra loaves with the meal and sold them to the poor." The labourer's responses varied from: "This could have been the case but we never ate it" (as a meal) to: "Not in my family and not at my parents' home, but at their parents', they have had to eat it." With the latter respondent we calculated that in N. "the past" should be considered the time before 1870 at least, and perhaps even before 1860.

With reference to Table I it should be noted regarding *Vicia Faba* that lower class women did not include the faba bean in their assortment of home-grown legumes until just before World War II. About the same time it became a growing practice among farmer's wives to harvest this bean as immature as possible and to serve it as a vegetable dish with potatoes. "In the past you did not eat the beans as immature as that. They are much more nutritious when they are larger. At the time you did not serve them as a vegetable dish but as a main course. You had faba beans with potatoes, not the other way round", according to one of the oldest respondents.

Pisum sativum L

In contrast to the above-mentioned representatives of *Vicia Faba*, all cultivated representatives of *Pisum sativum* were considered suitable for human consumption, with the qualification that the "arvensis" variety was grown in the field and the "sativum" in the garden. *Pisum sativum arvensis* was only harvested when mature and subsequently marketed after dehydration. A small quantity — the estimated quantity needed for private use — was kept back. Later a farmer would, if he had not cultivated dry peas or yellow peas during that particular year¹¹, buy a portion for private use from another farmer or ask his agricultural commission merchant to pick up a suitable parcel for him. The label "suitable" not only applied to quantity or taste, but especially to the question of whether the peas could be cooked quickly and properly. Labourers still buy their dry peas and yellow peas directly from the farmer. Nowadays, however, there are not many farmers left who cultivate these products.

It was noted earlier that the farmer's wife did not go to the field to pick immature horse beans for use in the kitchen. This also applied to immature dry peas and yellow peas before World War II. Even when the farmers began to supply the industry with fresh immature peas, their wives continued the cultivation of garden peas. This changed suddenly after the industry offered the farmers contracts for the cultivation of regular peas. "It was rather convenient;

¹¹ The marrowfat pea was hardly ever cultivated or eaten.

they brought you your peas picked and shelled at your kitchen door." Still later, the industry switched back to immature dry peas, and then an unprecedented event took place: the farmer's wife replaced her peas with immature dry peas. This was a triumph for the convenience of saving labour.

A similar development occurred in the household of the labourer's wife, though they added the green pea as well as the sugar pea to their assortment of home-grown legumes at a much later point in time than did the farmer's wives.

The observation in Table I on experimental harvesting of semi-mature seeds of the sugar pea also deserves some explanation. It concerned an accidental experiment: during the summer of 1986 the sugar peas of one of the respondents had accidentally become overripe. She then decided to let them mature for an additional period of time and harvested the peas when semi-mature, in the hope that they would still be suitable for consumption. She was surprised to find that they turned out to be "even better tasting than green peas".

Phaseolus vulgaris L and *Phaseolus coccineus* L

Following the example of Day E. Kay¹², we made a distinction of dry-shell beans and haricot beans between the representatives of *Phaseolus vulgaris* as listed in Table I. This division matches the distinction made by the people in N. between hard-shell beans and tender-shell beans. According to Kay hard-shell beans are cultivated in the field and for the market. This was the custom at the parental farm of the first generation allochthonous farmer, but was unknown in N., where hard-shell beans have always been cultivated exclusively in private gardens for private use just like tender-shell beans and *Phaseolus coccineus*, here called shred beans.

Table I shows only two exceptions to this rule. The first one concerns the straw yellow bean which was cultivated during the war not only in the garden but in the field also, to provide people who had no gardens of their own with a product which was nutritious, compact, easily transportable and easy to preserve. "However", a respondent told us, "in that case you are in fact a horticulturalist". The second exception concerns the freezer bean, a new product, cultivated on contract for the canning industry. Subsequently, various farmers' wives and labourers' wives began to cultivate this bean in the garden for private use.

In view of remarks by our respondents on the cultivation of beans, we prefer to discuss all hard-shell beans, tender-shell beans and shred beans together. This is easily done, because the straw yellow bean is mainly a garden crop in N. and because the freezer bean used to be a field crop only, but now has become a garden crop as well.

¹² DAY E. KAY, Food legumes, Tropical Products Institute, London, 1979 Crop and Production Digest No. 3.

The assortment of garden crops among food legumes appears at first to be rather high, but of the dry-shell beans most respondents only grew the straw yellow bean. One lower class respondent, however, told us that his mother had switched to the cultivation of white hard-shell beans from straw yellow beans. "The skin of white hard-shell beans is more tender than those of straw yellow beans. My father, who had stomach trouble, could tolerate these better." Furthermore, the mother of one of our respondents used to grow straw yellow beans as well as brown beans. Another farmer's wife grew straw yellow beans as well as cocoa beans. "But you had to take care not to run out of seed-cocoa beans, because they were very scarce." She cultivated cocoa beans because "the skin of these beans is more tender". One of her daughters, however, had dropped this bean from her assortment because "its colour was not good after cooking; that's why I do not like to have them on my plate". A respondent from the lower class made the same remark about the black bean, and another respondent from the same class who had dropped the peewit bean after a first try-out, observed: "they taste well, but the yield is poor; they are too expensive!"

Because of the fact that the other six varieties of tender-shell beans were added to the assortment used by our farmers' wives and labourers' wives well after World War II, most respondents had only three varieties in their assortment for quite a long time. These were the double white bean, the wax bean and the white French bean. The scarlet runner and the scarlet bean were each cultivated by one farmer's wife respectively. Thus the assortment of garden-grown legumes was traditionally restricted to one dry-shell bean, three tender-shell beans and two shred beans. This is still a respectable amount, the rationale for which is well illustrated by a remark of one of our oldest respondents: "You just had to have a large variety of beans on the farm, because you had all these people to feed." In the early days of her marriage this farming couple had to provide meals for a labourer and a maid (both living-in) and a nanny (non-resident), all the year round, and two regular labourers used to have their meals at the farm during harvesting time. "On top of that we also used to take in some casual labourers during harvest time. There must have been ten people at least. Half of them ate their meals in the field and the other half in the churn-hall. The living-in personnel used to have their meals in the kitchen and our family and sometimes learners ate in the living room." But the food was the same for everyone. "When you had to cook for so many people, you had better not serve wax beans, you needed those double white beans with the semi-mature seeds. You did not have potatoes with the beans, that was not customary. They were nutritious enough, when the seeds were well-grown and, you see, everyone also got a piece of pork. That's why you also grew runners in the garden, for shred beans. You used to salt them in large barrels in summer so that you would have enough beans for the following winter and summer. In fact, broken double white beans and white cabbage got pretty well the same treatment. You had to preserve them in harvest time, when you had to cook for so many people. And you had to check the runners every day, because, if you didn't, there was a chance that the pods

became too tough, and then they would be useless as shred beans. In that case it was impossible to get them well-cooked. Whenever I noticed that a few beans had escaped my attention, I would shell them, shred the seeds with the other beans, and discard the shells. It was a hectic time for a farmer's wife and for the labourer's wife, too. I often felt sorry for them, particularly when they had to go making sheaves on top of everything. For when they would come home, they would have their own household and often small children to look after."

Food Legumes and the Weekly Bill of Fare

According to our respondents it was common practice on the farm before World-War I to stick to the same bill of fare year in, year out, week in, week out in order to cope with the housewife's workload all the year round. As for the main dish, it basically looked like this:

- Sundays: a main dish of potatoes and a side dish of one vegetable, meat and gravy
 Mondays: yellows peas or straw yellow beans, pork, bacon fat
 Tuesdays: one dish of potatoes and one vegetable (mashed), pork
 Wednesdays: a main dish of potatoes and a side dish of one vegetable, ham and a sauce
 Thursdays: as for Tuesdays
 Fridays: as for Tuesdays
 Saturdays: pea soup or bean soup and pork on a slice of black rye bread.

In the labourers' cottages the weekly bill of fare ran along the same lines. But "on Sundays and Wednesdays there were only potatoes with bacon fat or stewed onions. Well up to World War II a labourer could not afford the luxury of a side dish of vegetables." This observation coincides more or less with that of a farmer's wife who told us: "On Wednesdays you served carrots, wax beans or spinach. But spinach was not much appreciated, the lower class was not familiar with that kind of vegetable."

The above-mentioned bill of fare suggests that legumes were only served twice a week. In reality legumes were served at least three times a week, and sometimes even four or five times a week, as legumes were a regular ingredient in the various kinds of "hotchpotch"¹³. Double white beans, when ripe for picking, sometimes were served as often as twice a week. A variety of hotchpotch which was regularly served was the so-called "cement", i.e. mashed potatoes with fresh or dehydrated double white beans, or "putty", mashed potatoes with stray yellow beans. Furthermore, the labourers' wives frequently added straw yellow beans to their carrot hotchpotch because of their nutritive value.

From this summary review it appears that not only the farmer's wife but also

¹³ Dutch: stampot; German: Eintopf; American: potpie.

the wife of the labourer had to grow different varieties of food legumes and to grow them in large amounts. In a sense, the latter needed even larger quantities than the farmer's wife, for the more shred beans and tender beans she had left after filling her barrels, the more dehydrated beans she would have. From this stock of dried beans she would be able to prepare bean soup on Saturdays, and to cook beans on Mondays, which would enable her to save money, which she otherwise would have to spend on green peas and yellow peas. On the other hand, she ran a larger risk of not being able to fill up her barrels than the farmer's wife, because the bean harvest coincided with the hectic period of the wheat harvest, a time when she was needed in the fields, where she could earn some urgently needed money. The risk that her runners and double whites would become too mature for use in a barrel or Cologne pot (preserving jar) was much higher for her than for the farmer's wife who could more easily afford a daily check of the bean poles. Besides, the farmer's wife could concentrate on her provision bags of dry straw yellows and dry double white beans-in-the-pods and, of course on her wooden barrels or Cologne pots, her husband supplying her with all the yellow peas and green peas she needed, free of charge, of course. Only at the end of the year would the costs for the above-mentioned legumes be ascribed to her in the books. Naturally, just like the labourer's wife, she had to grow the necessary seed-beans also. Whenever it appeared that she had grown too much of these, she would cook the beans on Mondays but only very rarely use them for the preparation of the Saturday soup of legumes.

It would seem that after World War I the farm household could easily have dropped its strict bill of fare for the larger part of the year, because labourers would only have their meals on the farm during harvest time. A number of farmers' wives did begin to do so, but several 50-60 year old respondents remembered that their mothers had kept up the old system as a whole or at least basically until well after World War II.

The old bill of fare was maintained even longer amongst the lower classes. The most obvious explanation for this was offered by respondents who said: "We could only just get by." But it was never mentioned that as from World War I the care for the provision of food in the lower class household had increased at the same rate and pace as it had decreased in the farming household. The labourer no longer had his meals at the farm, farm hands and maids no longer lived in, the daily girl worked mornings only, and all of them had to begin to eat at home. Because these people were not exactly small eaters, this burden must really have been a heavy one. The fact that "now they were much more part of the family", as one of our female respondents put it, must have gilded the pill, so much so, that the negative consequences of that particular change are now completely forgotten.

After World War II, however, the labourer's wife began to give up the old bill of fare bit by bit, so that people from this class now eat less beans and hotchpotch and more leafy vegetables and other greenstuff. Yet the old tradition of harvesting part of the tender beans after maturing, and dehydrating them

before consumption, was kept up and even extended to all the new varieties, which were added to the cultivation plan after World War II, such as "China bean", "lemon bean", "freezer bean" and "single seed". The primary reason for cultivation these beans, however, was the fact that they were tasty when they were fresh: "Much pod, and very small beans." The farmers' wives, also, continued their old tradition in this respect: "In case you have a surplus of seed-beans of a particular variety you eat them dehydrated and shelled, but only then."

Conclusion

In our attempt to answer, on the basis of the preceding information, the question of whether, in the complicated process of development of prosperity which affected the farming household from approximately 1918 and which also had repercussions in the development in prosperity in the lower class, there was a matter of cultural fixation and/or innovation of the assortment of home-grown legumes, we arrive at the following conclusion: the first change affected the variety of double white beans that was cultivated. Initially this variety was the double white with string, but later this became the stringless double white. Other changes did not occur until after World War II with on the one hand the addition to the assortment of new varieties of tender-shell beans, and on the other, the elimination by the farmers' wives of green peas from their assortment when they were able to obtain these from their husband's farm. Later they would accept fresh dry peas instead of green peas, an unprecedented development. Before World War II lower class housewives not only replaced double white stringed beans with the stringless variety, but before 1940 they also cautiously included the faba bean in their assortment.

There were not many innovations therefore, and these occurred with considerable delay. Was it thus a matter of cultural fixation? In view of the composition of the assortment included in the cultivation plan, we would be inclined to answer this question affirmatively; but it was not a matter of cultural fixation regarding the way people used their assortment of vegetables. From about 1925 faba beans would increasingly be harvested when immature and as yet with a low starch content, thus demoting them from a main dish to a side dish. This same tendency occurred with tender-shell beans: these were increasingly picked when they were still small and served as a vegetable dish together with potatoes instead of as a main dish in itself. The third clue that it was not exclusively a matter of cultural fixation regarding legumes is the fact that a steadily increasing number of housewives gave up the weekly bill of fare and made more room for a combination of potatoes with leafy vegetables or other vegetables on their menus. But several households kept up the old tradition for a long time.

It is tempting to speculate on why the introduction of the innovations as

described was delayed for such a long time. However, the question as to the point in time when the professional groups investigated by us were able to realize that the past had become irreversible, seems more relevant. For it was only when the farmer's wife could be sure that she would no longer have to feed so many people with big appetites in the summer of the following year, that she could change her scheme of cultivation accordingly in the summer of the current year; and it was only when the labourer's wife could be sure of the fact that in future she would have to provide daily meals for her husband and children and that during harvest time she would no longer have to undertake wage work, could she adjust her cultivation scheme accordingly. In due time we will make a point of discussing this fact with our respondents.