

‘Better a wolf in the field on Candlemas than a plough’

Farm work in tune with nature

‘Better a wolf in the field on Candlemas than a plough,’ says an old German farming proverb. It warned against ploughing cold soil too early in February. Such proverbs were intended to make it easier to do one's work at the right time. But nature did not follow a rigid calendar: weather changes and climatic fluctuations occurred in fixed patterns with varying intensity and could shift the entire course of the year – sometimes with serious consequences for the harvest.

Early attempts at weather research from the mid-19th century onwards were also considered unreliable. Even in the 1920s, agricultural associations recommended combining meteorological forecasts with one's own experience. Weather forecasting, and thus the harvest, remained uncertain.