

The end of the flail

The transformation of village community work

Until the end of the 19th century, labour-intensive harvesting work was carried out communally. Increasing mechanisation brought about a change in this tradition. Exhausting work such as threshing with a flail was made redundant by machine-driven harvesting equipment.

The purchase of such large machines was expensive, so they were often rented, including an operator, or jointly purchased and used by agricultural associations. Although the machines reduced the amount of work required, there was a shortage of labour in the agricultural sector, as workers had migrated to industry. Harvesting thus remained a communal effort, but was more strongly influenced by technological developments and supra-regional labour.