

TITLE: The Onset of the English Agricultural Revolution: Climate Factors and Soil Nutrients

AUTHORS:

Enric Tello	(Universitat de Barcelona)
José Luis Martínez	(Universitat de Barcelona)
Gabriel Jover–Avellà	(Universitat de Girona)
José Ramón Olarieta	(Universitat de Lleida)
Roberto García–Ruiz	(Universidad de Jaén)
Manuel González de Molina	(Universidad Pablo de Olavide)
Marc Badia–Miró	(Universitat de Barcelona)
Verena Winiwarter	(Alpen–Adria–Universität K.)
Nikola Koepke	(Universität Zürich)

Abstract: The English Agricultural Revolution began during a period of climate change in which temperatures decreased significantly. Lower temperatures meant less bacterial activity, a slower release of mineral nitrogen into cultivated soils, and a shorter growing season for crops—a combination that tended to diminish yields. The English farmers reacted by increasing the flow of organic matter and manure into the soil, thus mitigating the negative effect of the colder temperatures to some extent. When the temperatures rose again, the faster mineralization of soil organic matter led to bountiful yields that encouraged English farmers to continue with these innovative strategies. The upshot is that the English agricultural revolution was more a discovery than an invention, induced by a combination of climate challenges, social and institutional settings, and market incentives.

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