

First, the 12.5 percent tithe rate, initially retained, was reduced to 10 percent of the gross yield in 1925. Second, tax farming was abolished in 1919.

However, two other changes in the collection of the tithe more than offset any potential benefits that the first two measures could have produced. First, in 1928, the ordinance issued the previous year for the “commutation of tithe” came into effect. This meant that the tithe was now a fixed annual amount based on the average yield of the four years preceding its application (i.e., 1924-1927). What made this new measure disastrous for the peasants was the “scissors crisis”³ that transpired in some of the following years in terms of bad harvests and deep price drops, especially during the Great Depression.

For major winter crops, the average total production for 1924-1927 was 159,000 metric tons.⁴ In 1928, production was 119,000 tons, a drop of 25 percent. The next three years production bounced back, but in 1932 and 1933, it decreased substantially to 81,000 and 86,000 metric tons, respectively. As for wheat only, the average production for 1924-1927 was 98,000 metric tons, and in 1928 decreased to 65,000 tons. Again, the next three years saw increases on wheat

³The “scissors crisis” was an idea commonly applied to the fact that during the 1920s and early 1930s, farm prices generally fell more than nonfarm prices throughout the world. Although Palestine, like other primarily agricultural countries was severely affected by this crisis, I am using the term, somewhat differently, to also illustrate the “twin” effects of falling prices and harvest failures.

⁴All numbers on production are taken or derived from *Abstract 1939*, Table 47, 39, and rounded to the nearest thousand. Winter crops include wheat, barley, lentils, *kersenneh*, beans, and chick peas; summer crops include *durrah*, sesame, chives, melons, grapes, figs, almonds, other fruits, and vegetables.