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Europe in Agro-Food Globalizations, 1870-2020

34th Annual Conference of the Austrian Society of Agricultural Economics
(BOKU University, 19 September 2024)




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When did agro-food globalization begin?

Ask three historians –
and you'll get three different answers!



Around 1500



Around 1870 →
world market for
basic foodstuffs

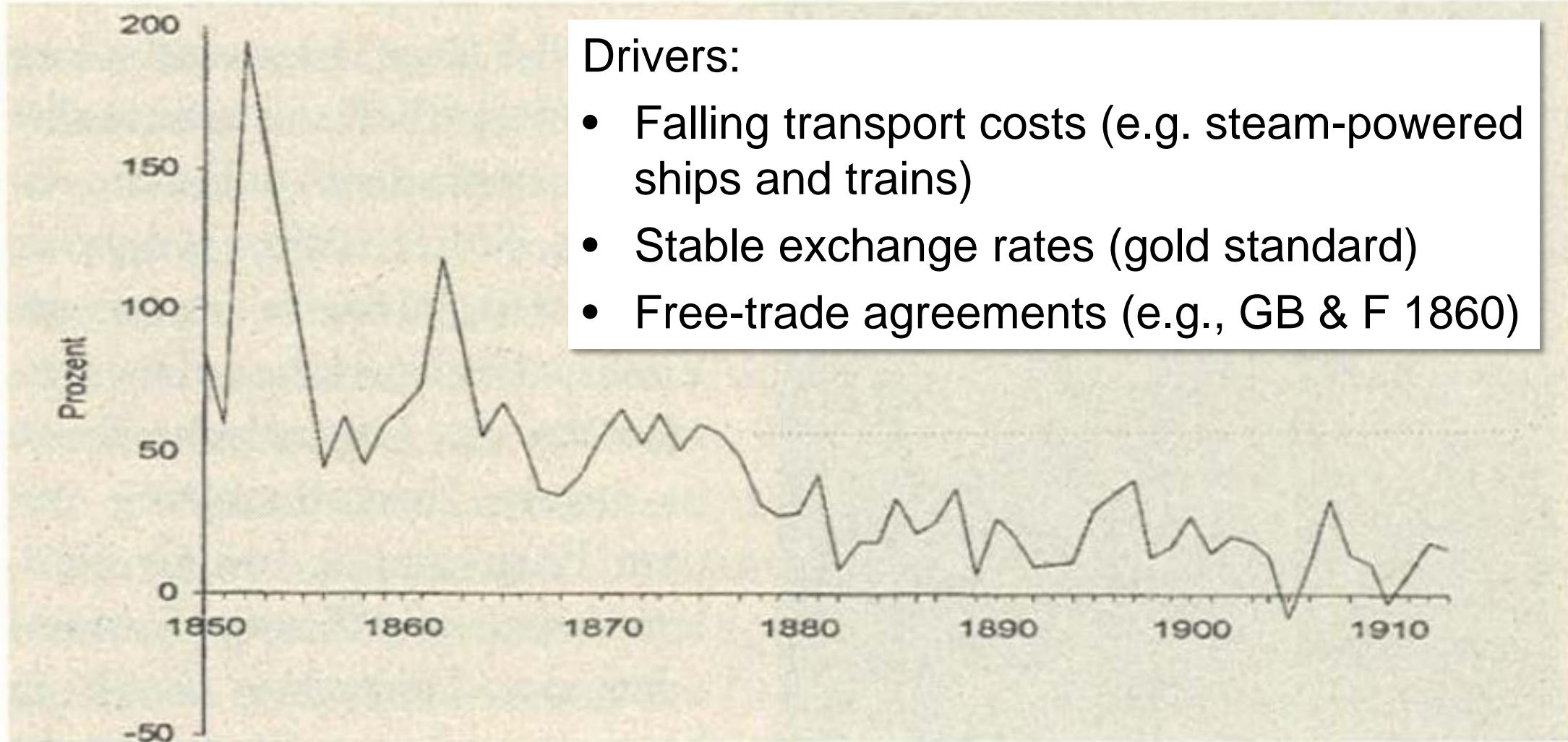


Around 1990



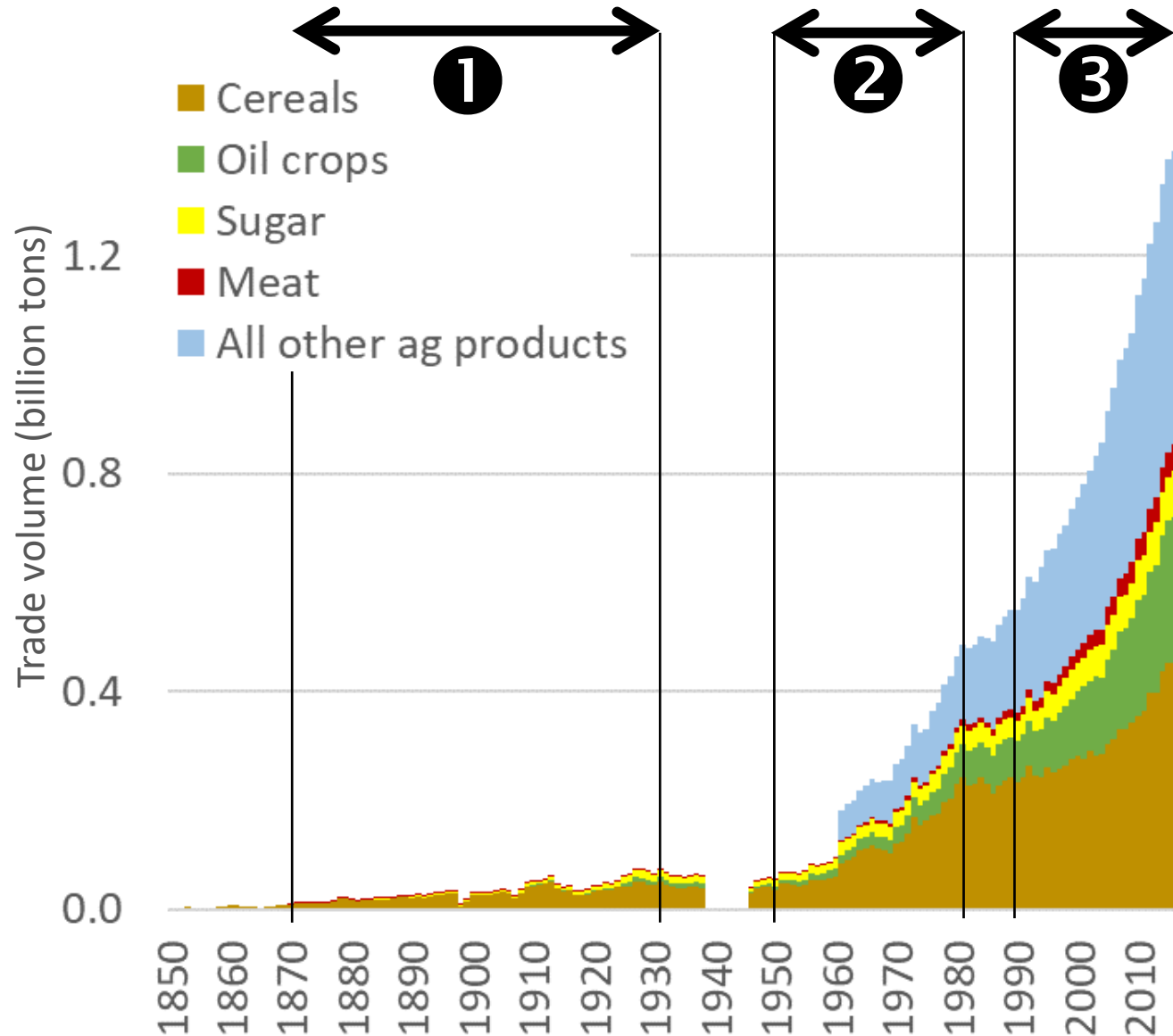
The making of a global wheat market

Wheat price difference between Chicago and Liverpool, 1850-1913



Waves of agro-food globalization

Agricultural world trade, 1850-2016



① ,Great Specialization' (UK-centered agro-food regime, c.1870-1910/30)



Great Depression & WW II



② ,Great Acceleration' (US-centered agro-food regime, c. 1950-1970/80)



Stagflation, energy & food crisis



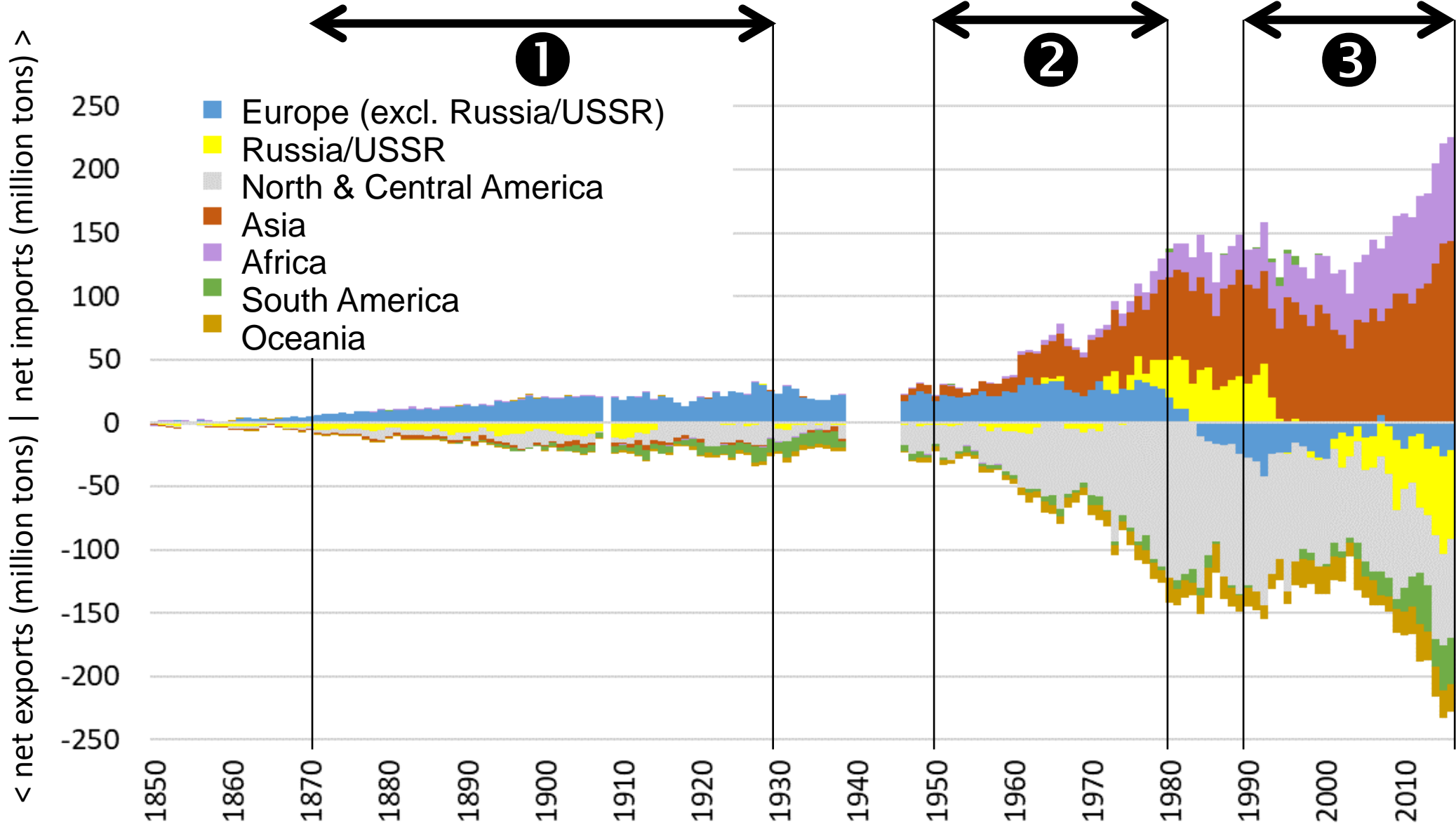
③ ,Turbo-Capitalism' (WTO-centered agro-food regime), c. 1990-2010/20)



Polycrisis (climate, energy, prices, etc.)

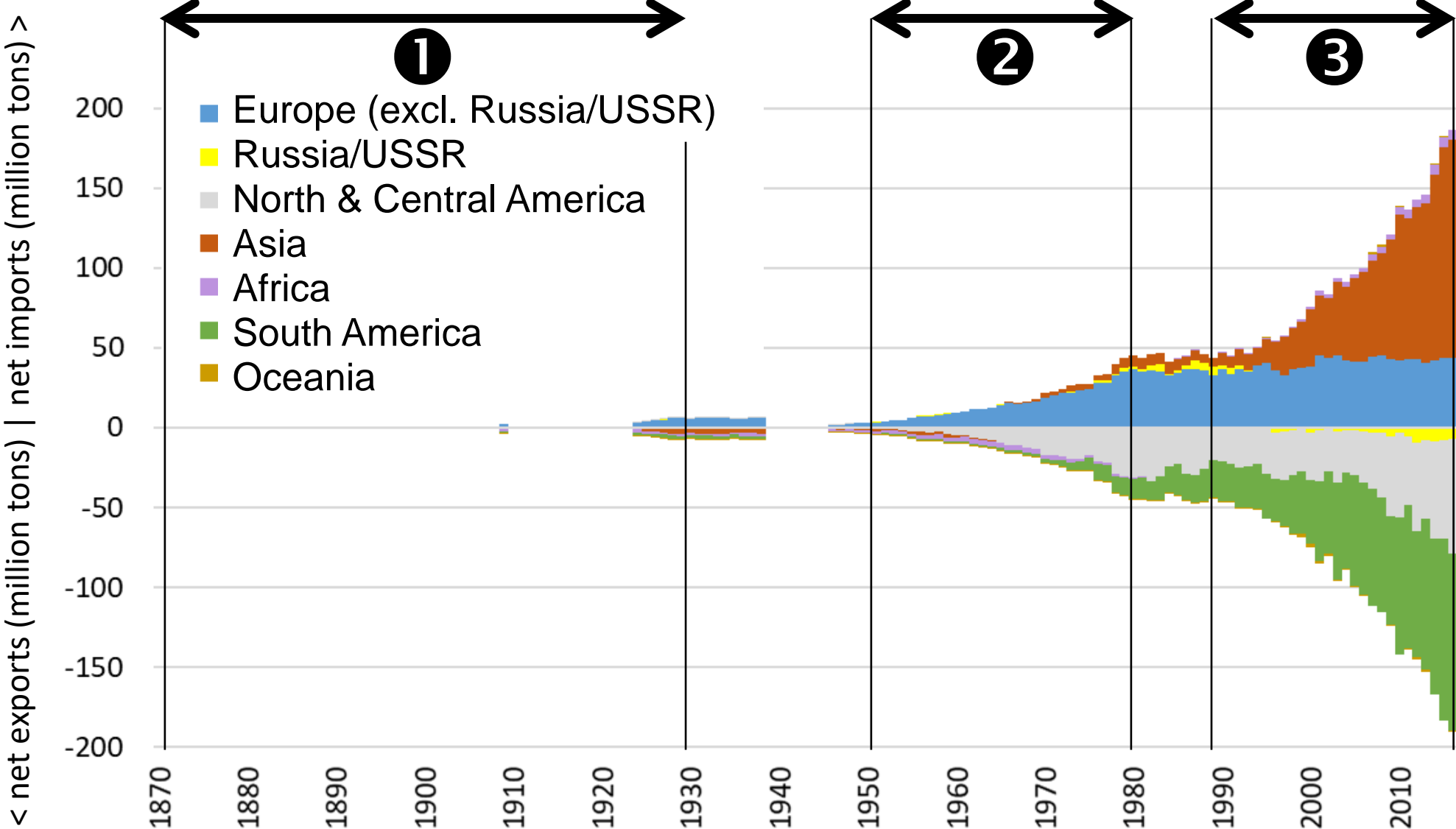
Europe in grain markets: from importer to exporter

Grain trade balance by world regions, 1850-2016



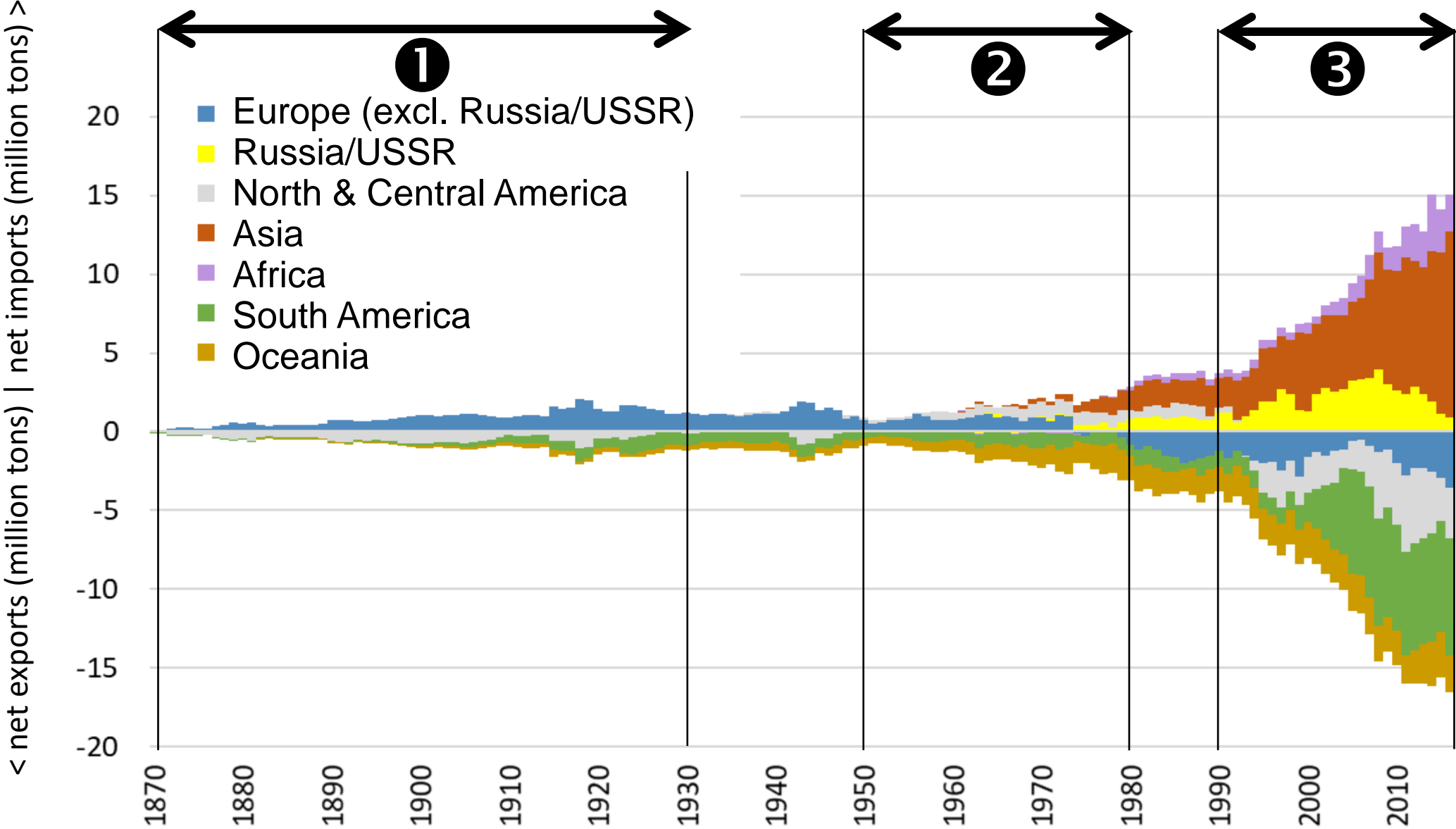
Europe in oilseed markets: long-term importer

Oilseed trade balance by world regions, 1870-2016



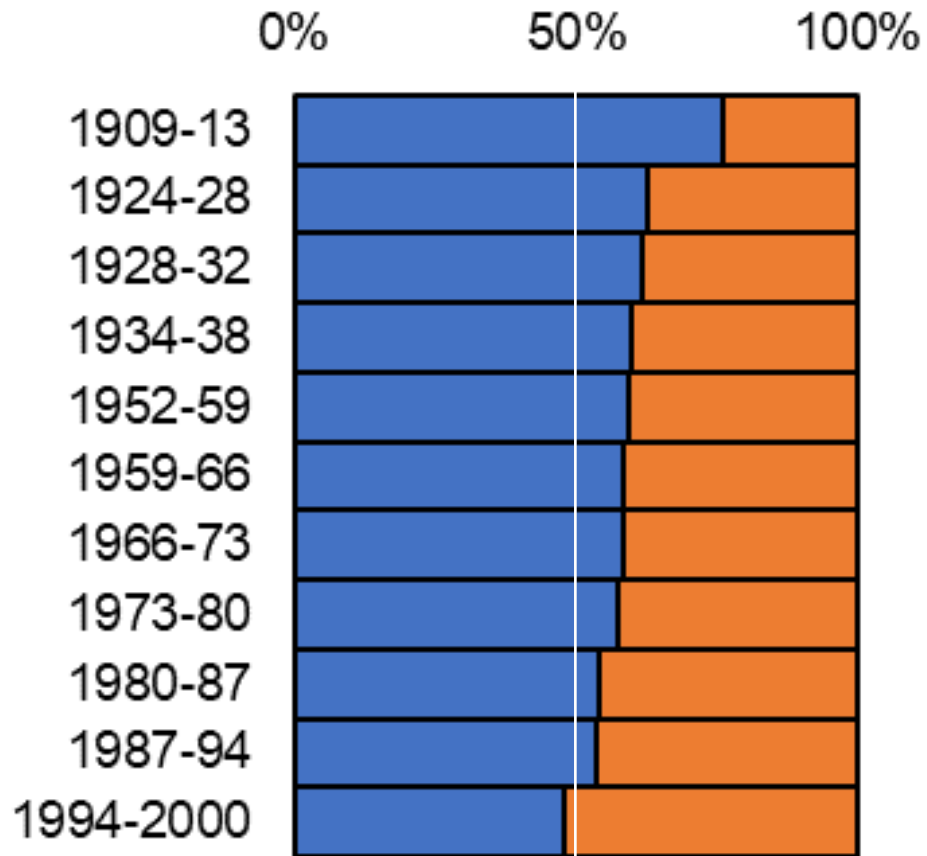
Europe in meat markets: from importer to exporter

Meat trade balance by world regions, 1870-2016

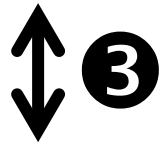
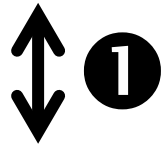
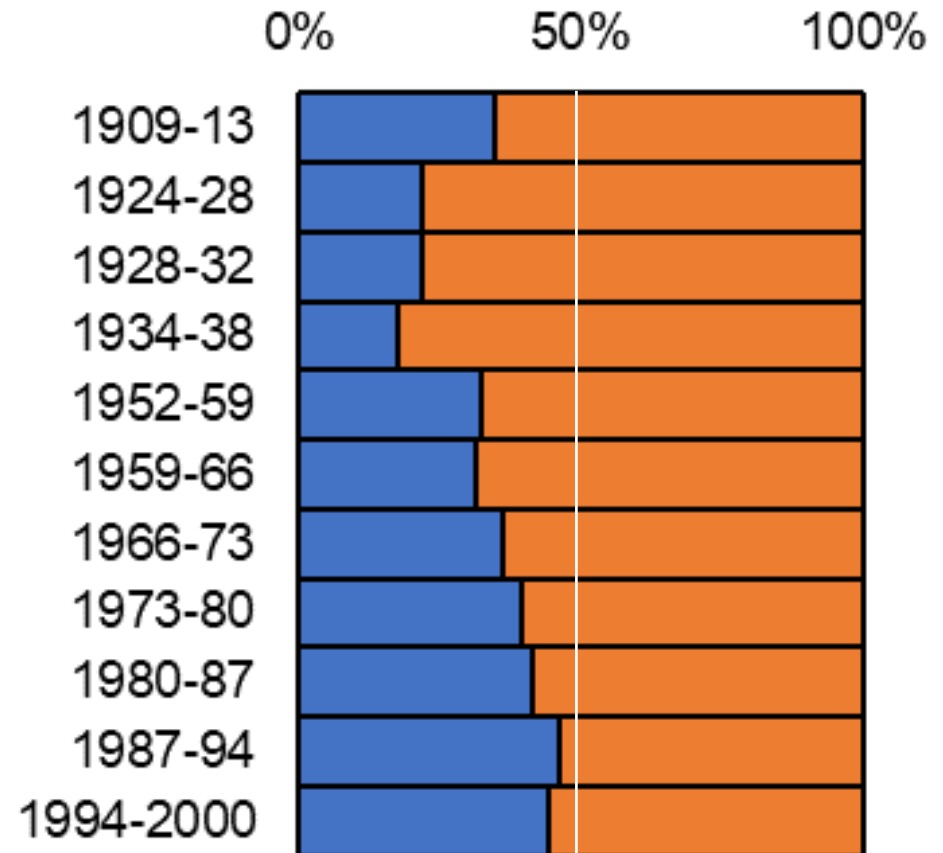


Europe in agricultural markets: from trader to self-supplier

Percentage of agricultural imports
(1909-38 at 1925 prices, 1952-2000 at 1980 prices)



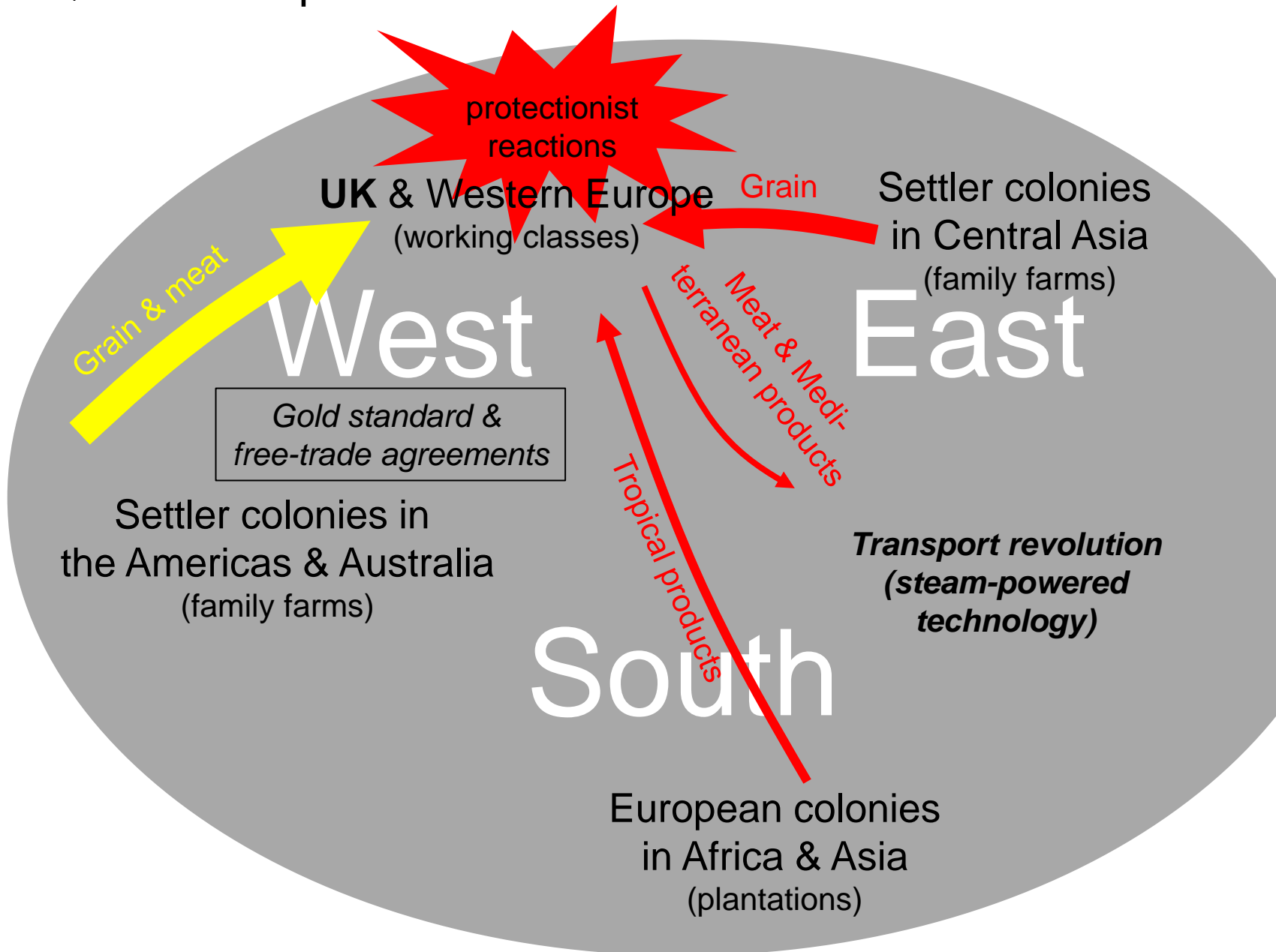
Percentage of agricultural exports
(1909-38 at 1925 prices, 1952-2000 at 1980 prices)



■ Europe (incl. Russia/USSR) ■ Rest

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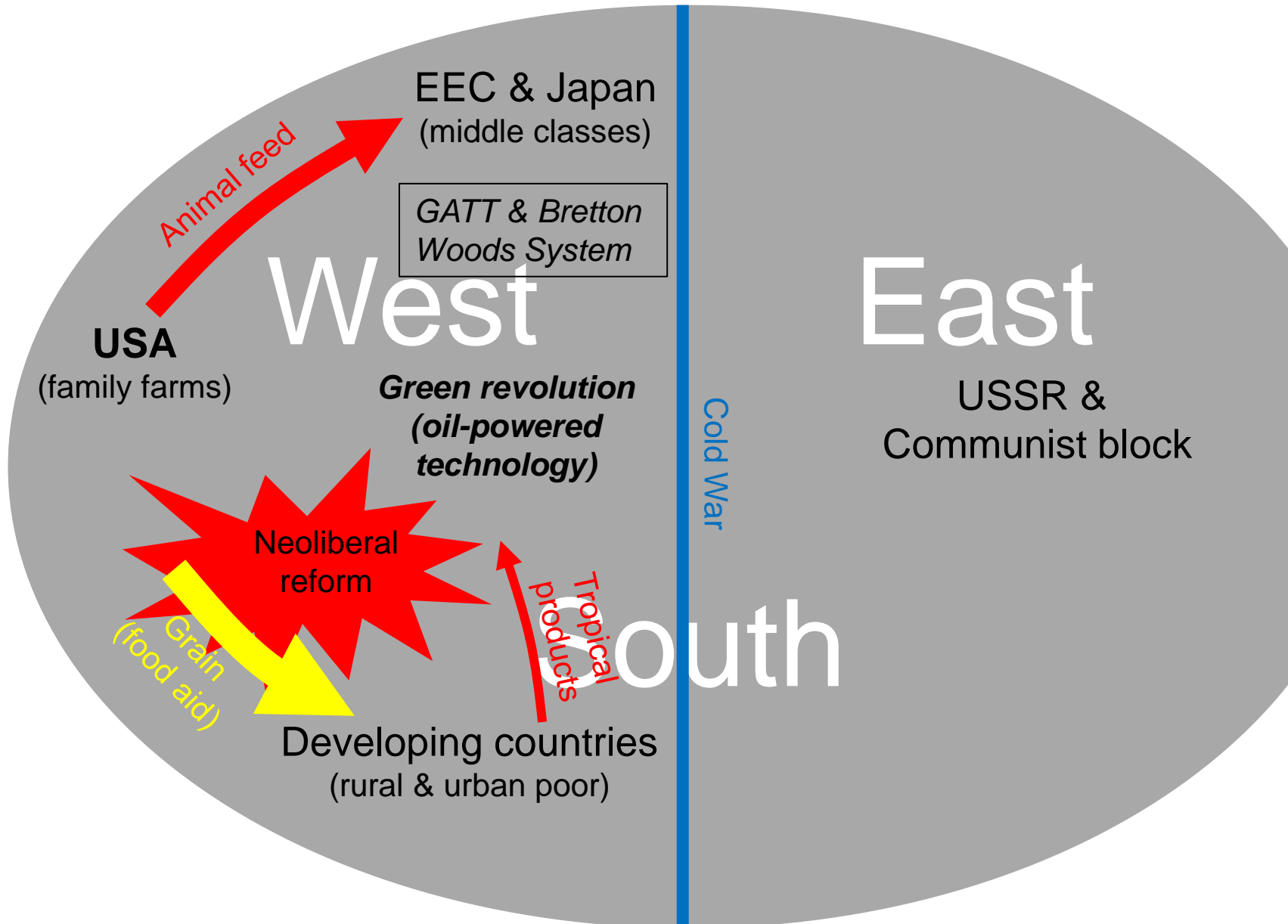
„Great Specialization“ in the UK-centered regime, 1869-1929



European empires & nation states:

- Classical liberalism (state & market)
- Multiple pathways:
 - Low-tariff importer (e.g., UK)
 - Low-tariff exporter (e.g., DK)
 - High-tariff self-supplier (e.g. F)
 - High-tariff customs union (e.g., A-H)

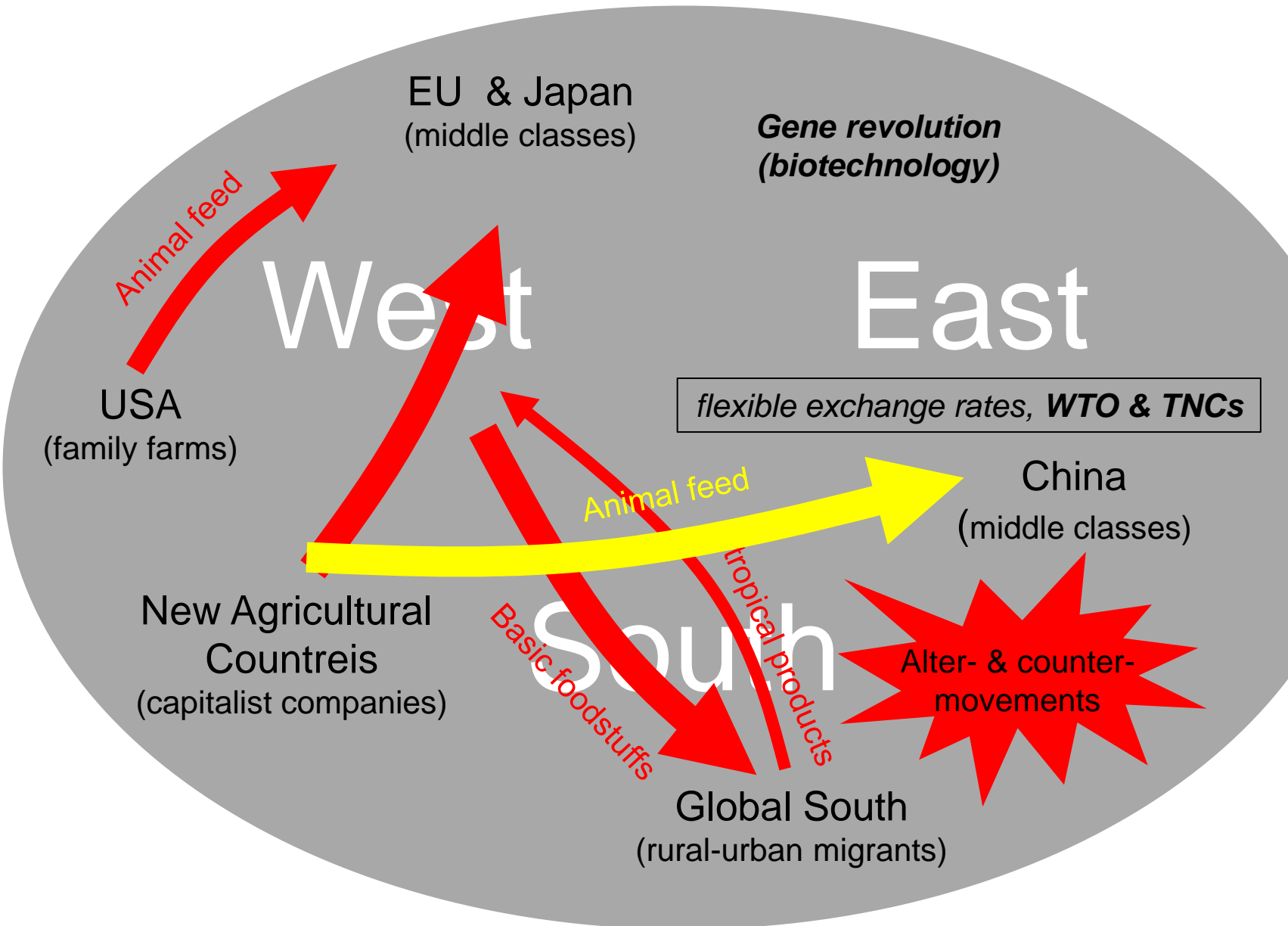
'Great Acceleration' in the US-centered regime, 1947-1973



European Economic Community (1957):

- Neo-mercantilism (state & civil society)
- Aims: producers' income security & consumers' food security (ISA)
- CAP: price support & productivist technology
- Trade: duty-free imports of inputs & protection of outputs

„Turbo-Capitalism“ in the WTO-centered regime, 1995-2020



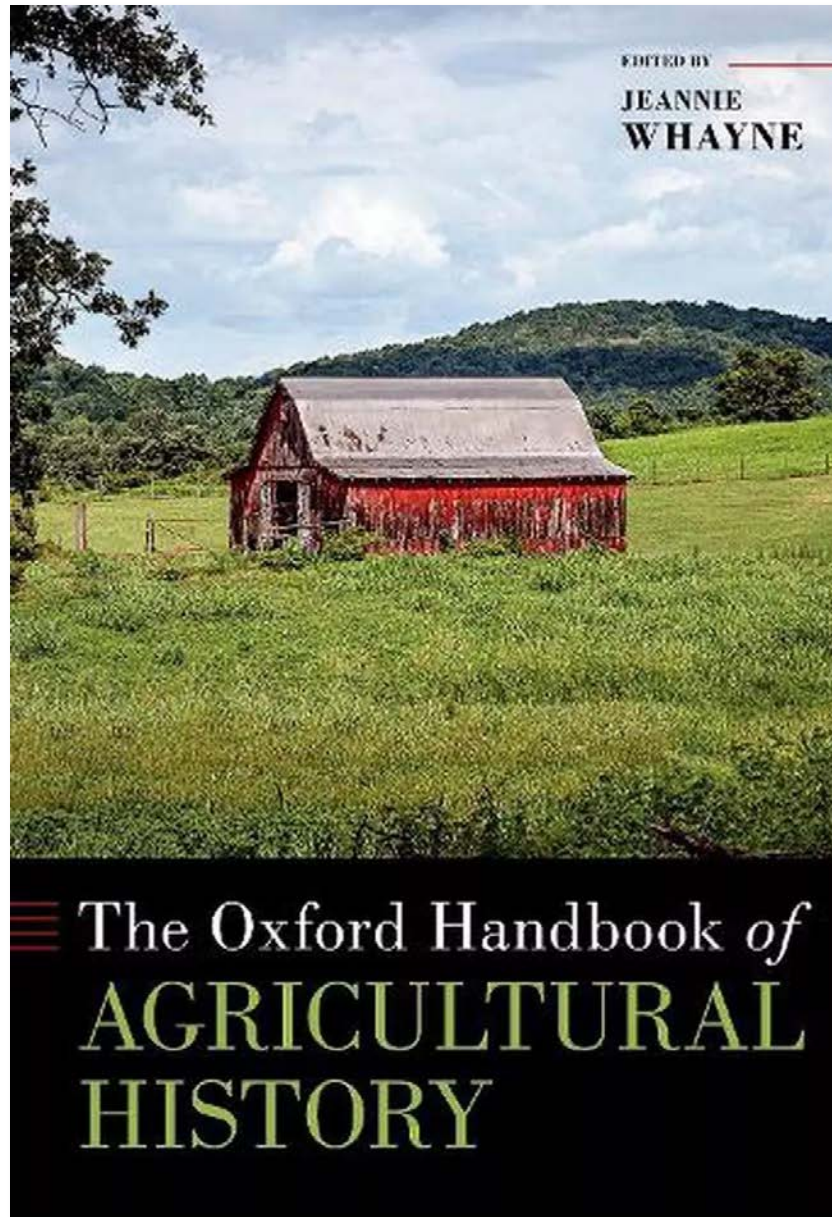
European Union (1993):

- Neoliberalism (firms & civil society)
- Aims: market-dependent income & food security
- CAP reform: direct payments & post-/neo-productivism
- Trade: European integration, deregulation (WTO) & reregulation (agrarian support)

Managing the current polycrisis – but how?

- **Neoliberal** strategy (e.g., WTO): adopting the agro-industrial model (‘feeding the world’)
- **Reformist** strategy (e.g., FAO): food aid and greening of conventional agriculture
- **Progressive** strategy (e.g., fair trade): niches of justice and sustainability
- **Radical** strategy (e.g., *La Via Campesina*): strengthening of food sovereignty

Further reading



CHAPTER 17

SOY

ERNST LANGTHALER

We live in a world of soy.¹ Nearly each of us takes some of the bean's ingredients again and again—either directly, as tofu in a veggie burger, or indirectly, as a chop of meat on the grill. Since the main sites of consumption and production are widely spread, soy's trade flows span the globe. Indeed, soy is the world's leading agricultural commodity. Since 2009, soybeans have ranked first in trade value, followed by wheat and wine. Together with the bean's products, the extracted oil and the residual cake, soy's top position in agricultural trade, amounting to \$86 billion in 2016, becomes even more impressive, compared to wheat (\$36 billion) and wine (\$32 billion). Soy's dominance is astonishing, given that wheat was the undisputed leader in agricultural world trade for a long time. In 1929, for instance, wheat with a trade value of 3.43 billion *Reichsmark* (RM) surpassed soybeans (0.46 billion RM, excluding oil and cake) more than sevenfold, followed by sugar (3.02 billion RM) and coffee (2.35 billion RM). Before the onset of the world trade after the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, soybeans, soyoil, and soycake were solely produced, distributed, and consumed in East and Southeast Asia. Soy had only attracted Western travelers, writers, and scientists as an exotic plant from the Far East. For instance, the Austrian botanist Friedrich Haberlandt envisioned the transfer of the soybean plant to Central Europe as a basis of domestic agriculture and nutrition in the 1870s. Since then, however, soy has emerged as a global cash crop, affecting large tracts of society and nature. With regard to its tremendous socio-natural impacts, it is far from an exaggeration to call the late Anthropocene "Soyacene."²

Soy's emergence as a global commodity involved a multitude of conditions, drivers, and actions. From an anthropocentric perspective, soy was inserted in global food regimes that coordinated capital accumulation along transnational commodity chains "from farm to fork," regulated by actors such as nation states, capitalist enterprises, or social movements. Food regimes tended to expand their frontiers to labor and natural resources not yet incorporated in commodity chains. Commodity frontiers were expanded *externally*, through extensive incorporation of new spaces ("broadening," e.g., conversion of grasslands into fields), *internally*, through more