

# Reestimating the Availability of Food in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Bernard Harris

During the last decade, a variety of authors have sought to estimate the number of calories available to the British population at different points in time. Floud, Fogel, Harris and Hong (2011) suggested that average calorie availability increased from just over 2200 calories per head in 1700 to just under 3000 calories per head on the eve of the First World War but other authors have published radically different estimates (see also Kelly and Ó Gráda 2013). Broadberry *et al.* (2015) calculated that average calorie availability remained at just under 2200 calories per head throughout the eighteenth century, whereas Meredith and Oxley (2014) claimed that calorie availability peaked at 3271 calories per head in 1770 and Muldrew (2011) claimed that the true figure was as high as 5047 calories.

Harris, Floud and Hong (2015) have recently revisited their earlier estimates. Their new paper incorporates a correction to their original data and uses a different methodology to allow for the effects of seeding, the consumption of grains by animals, processing, distribution and wastage. It also includes an extended discussion of the issues surrounding potato consumption and introduces new data on the number of calories supplied by Irish imports. These revisions have added significantly to the estimated number of calories available for human consumption during the eighteenth century and early-nineteenth centuries.

This presentation summarises some of these revisions and considers their implications for previous arguments about the adequacy of individual diets during the eighteenth century and the overall trend in food availability during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

## *References*

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