



Volume 7. Nazi Germany, 1933-1945
The Hereditary Farm Law (September 29, 1933)

Even before Hitler's seizure of power, German farmers occupied a special place within the Nazi worldview [*Weltanschauung*], which saw in them the core of racial and economic stability. The later Reich Farm Leader Richard Walther Darré (1895-1953) was particularly active in propagating this "blood and soil ideology," which propounded a general turning away from "Jewish-corrupted" industry and the return to an agrarian economy. After September 1933, Darré pursued the goal of national self-sufficiency through the so-called Reich Food Estate [*Reichsnährstand*], which oversaw the National Socialist "coordination" [*Gleichschaltung*] and planning of German agriculture in its entirety. The Hereditary Farm Law of September 29, 1933, was a first step toward state control of the agrarian economy and was intended to protect German farmers against the unpredictable vagaries of the modern market economy, industrialization, and urbanization. Although Hitler shared Darré's "blood and soil" ideas and envisaged massive settlement projects for farmers in Eastern Europe as the existential basis for Germans in the future, his first priority was rapid economic revitalization for the purpose of rearmament and warfare. For this he depended on industry, which quickly took precedence over Darré's plans for reactionary agrarianism.

The national government wishes to preserve the peasantry through the ancient German method of inheritance as the blood source of the German people.

The farms [covered by this law] shall be protected against excessive debts and breakdown through inheritance, in order that they remain permanently as heritages of the clan and in possession of free peasants.

Attempts will be made to assure a healthy partition of the large landed estates, because the existence of many prosperous small and medium-sized farms, distributed as equally as possible over the entire country, offers the best guarantee for a vigorous people and state.

The National Government has, therefore, decided on the following law. The fundamentals are:

Land and forestry property of a minimum size of one soil subsistence and a maximum of 125 hectares [just under 309 acres] makes up a Hereditary Farm, if it is in possession of an individual belonging to the peasant class.

The owner of a Hereditary Farm is called a peasant.

A peasant must be a German citizen, of German or kindred blood, and is a man of honor.

The Hereditary Farm passes without being divided to the heir apparent.

All claims of joint heirs are limited to the remaining property of the peasant. Those descendants who are not classed as heirs apparent are to be given vocational training and a status consonant with the capabilities of the farm; [. . .].

Article 2. [. . .] (2.) The exact amount of land is to be regarded as a soil subsistence necessary to feed and clothe a family independently of market conditions and the general economy and to maintain the economic life of the farm. [. . .]

Article 15. The peasant must be an honorable man. He must be able to work his farm in orderly fashion. [. . .]

Article 20. The heirs to the farms are designated in this order:

1. The sons of the testator (the sons and grandsons take the place of a deceased son);
2. The father of the testator;
3. The brothers of the testator (the sons and grandsons take the place of a deceased brother);
4. The daughters of a testator (the sons and grandsons take the place of a deceased daughter);
5. The sisters of the testator (the sons and grandsons take the place of a deceased sister);
6. The female descendants of the testator and their descendants. [. . .] He who is closer to the male line of the testator excludes anyone who is more remote. In all other cases the male line has preference. [. . .]

Article 31. The surviving spouse of the testator may, when self-support is impossible, demand from the heir lifelong support on the farm in the customary circumstances. [. . .]

Source of English translation: Louis L. Synder, ed., *Hitler's Third Reich: A Documentary History*. Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1988, pp. 143-44.

Source of original German text: *Reichsgesetzblatt*, vol. I, No. 108, September 30, 1933; reprinted in Gustavo Corni, „*Blut und Boden*“: *Rassenideologie und Agrarpolitik im Staat Hitlers*. Idstein: Schulz-Kirchner, 1994, pp. 104-09.