A number of structural changes, most of them related to legislative reforms, affected the size of farms during the 20th century. In the early 20th century, the proportion of small farms increased notably after the Land Acquisition Act. The share of the largest farms diminished respectively. Again, after the Second World War, the share of the largest farms diminished notably as a result of the Land Acquisition Act. It was not until the 1960s that the proportion of farms in the largest size category (over 30 hectares) reached the same level as in 1900. During the 1960s and the early 20th century, there has been a rapid change as the share of the largest size category has increased.

Scarcity of land was a significant constraint on the expansion of agriculture in many European countries, but was not, however, the case in Finland. On the contrary, forests and marshland were still being cleared for cultivation even in the late 19th century. The area of arable land in use increased especially from the beginning of the 19th century up to the 1920s, although the growth diminished between the World Wars. The size of the agricultural labour force has decreased from the mid-20th century on owing to the reduction in the use of outside labour after the Second World War. The number of farms, however, decreased only from the 1960s on, when there was migration from rural to urban areas.
Figure 3.3 Production indices of total crop yield and milk production in Finland, 1800–2000 (1950 = 100)

Sources: See Figure 3.2

The figure is based on the combined crop yield of wheat, rye, barley, and oats in kilograms, and the production of milk in litres. The milk production for the years 1800–1980 has been taken from Villa (1969), and from official statistics thereafter. The crop yield of slash-and-burn cultivation is not included as it does not show up in the statistics. Further details available from the authors by request.

Figure 3.4 Estimated productivity indices in Finnish agriculture 1800–2000 (1950 = 100)

Sources: See Figure 3.2

Up to the mid-20th century, the growth in production in agriculture mainly resulted from increases in inputs (especially the area of arable land and the labour force), while the impressive productivity increase after the Second World War was a result of the more intensive use of resources, in terms of both labour and land productivity. On the whole, as a result of the decreasing size of the labour force and increased yields, the growth in productivity, especially during the latter part of the 20th century, has been enormous.