

### ■ 13E Important economic legislation passed during Elizabeth's reign

Date	Act	Details	Significance
1563	Act for Maintaining Tillage	All land which had been under tillage for four years since 1528 must remain under tillage. No land currently under tillage could be converted to pasture. This Act was against depopulation.	The government's dislike of enclosure was based on the fear not only of social unrest but also that the number of tenants available for military service might decline.
1563	Statute of Artificers	This was an attempt to regulate both industry and agriculture. It fixed maximum but not minimum wage rates. The standard wage rate was to be assessed by JPs and to be kept in line with prices.	A landmark in economic legislation, it recognised the right to work and focused on young, single, full-time labourers. All able unemployed persons were obliged to seek work in either farming or domestic service. Employers were to provide their employees with training and annual contracts were to be issued. However, the Act did not live up to its expectations because it failed to take into account the increasing level of unemployment caused by inflation. Instead, by fixing a maximum wage, it held down wages at a time when the number of people looking for waged employment rose. It therefore indirectly contributed to the growth of poverty.
1563	Act for the Maintenance of the Navy	This Act included a clause which raised the price limit on the amount of grain that could be exported to ten shillings a quarter.	A series of good harvests enabled the government to concentrate on expanding the food supply.
1592-93	Statute Regarding the Export of Corn	A price limit was set on corn at twenty shillings a quarter. Export of corn was permitted when the price fell below this.	During good years, farmers were allowed to export surplus corn. This is an indication that corn was in sufficient supply even for the growing population.
1592-93		The 1563 Act for Maintaining Tillage, preventing the conversion of tilled land to pasture, was repealed.	This followed a series of good harvests between 1587 and 1593 when there was a surplus of grain.
1598	Statute Against Conversions to Pasture Statute Against the Engrossing of Farms	These Acts were designed to prevent further conversion of tillage into pasture.	The Parliament of 1598 was panicked into these measures by a spate of enclosures between 1591 and 1597. In some areas, such as Staffordshire in 1592-94, enclosures caused real distress. There were four disastrous harvests between 1594 and 1597 which led to revolts against enclosure and high prices in Oxfordshire in 1596. The number of Acts passed against enclosures and depopulation during the Tudor period shows the difficulty of government in balancing its need for the profits that could be made from the cloth industry with the demands of an increasing population.

#### ACTIVITY

In a group, brainstorm an answer to the following examination question. Display your answer as a chart.

- What were the main changes that took place in the countryside in Elizabeth's reign? (12)
- Why, and with what effect, did the government intervene in the agricultural economy between 1558 and 1603? (8)

