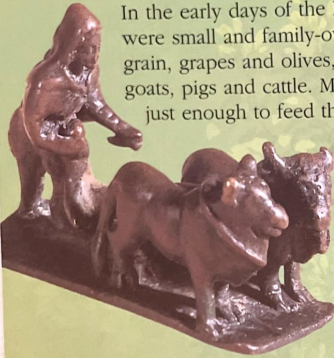


# LIVING IN THE COUNTRY

Although the Roman empire is famous for its towns, most people actually lived in the countryside. Many townspeople saw life in the countryside as a peaceful alternative to living in a crowded city. But the reality was anything but relaxing for most country people, and the slaves who worked on farms had to endure hours of backbreaking toil in the fields.

## EARLY FARMS

In the early days of the Republic, most farms were small and family-owned. Farmers grew grain, grapes and olives, and kept a few sheep, goats, pigs and cattle. Most farmers produced just enough to feed their families, and any leftover crops were sold in local markets.



*This statue shows a Roman farmer using oxen to prepare the land for sowing.*

## THE RISE OF THE LANDOWNERS

In the 3rd century BC, lots of farmers had to leave Italy to go and fight wars overseas. Many of these men never returned, and their farms fell into ruin. Other farms were devastated by wars in Italy itself.

Rich landowners bought up lots of these ruined farms, combined them to make large estates, and used slaves to work on the estates. Farming became very profitable, and the landowners were some of the wealthiest men in the Roman world.

## SLAVES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

By the time of the Empire, almost all farmworkers were slaves, and they did a variety of exhausting jobs. They had to plant and harvest crops with just a few simple tools, chop down trees to clear new fields, and look after animals.

One of the hardest jobs was being a shepherd. Sheep were often kept in remote highland areas, and the shepherd had to cope with loneliness, bad weather and thieves trying to steal his animals.

*A reconstruction of a Roman estate*

*Fish was a very popular food, and many farms had a pond.*

*Shepherds often led lonely, isolated lives.*

*Sheep were kept for their wool and milk.*