

SUPPLYING THE CITIES

Roman cities depended on the countryside for food, building materials, and wood to burn. During the Empire, the most important farm products were grapes and olives - used to make wine and olive oil - and cereals, such as wheat, oats and barley. Farm animals provided townspeople with meat, milk, cheese and wool.



Wine was made by trampling grapes to squeeze out the juice, as shown in this stone carving.

Grapes were a very popular fruit, and were also used to make wine.

Crops such as fruit and vegetables were usually sold to local towns, but olive oil, wine and grain were exported in huge quantities to cities all over the empire. As Rome grew, farms in Italy could no longer provide enough grain to feed everyone. At the height of the Empire, two-thirds of Rome's grain was imported from Egypt.

Slaves cleared woodland to make new fields.

Farmers grew many different vegetables, such as lettuce, radishes, carrots and beans.

Pigeons were kept to use as food during the winter.

Olive oil was made by crushing olives in a machine like this.

Farmers kept flocks of chickens, ducks and geese for their eggs and meat.

Since the Romans had no sugar, food was sweetened with honey made by bees.

Oxen were used to push threshing machines that harvested wheat.

Pork was a popular meat, so farmers kept large herds of pigs.