



Human impacts of droughts, floods and other extremes in South Moravia

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Chronicles and taxation records related to tax relief for farmers whose livelihoods were affected by droughts, floods and other hydrometeorological extremes (HMEs) in South Moravia (the Czech Republic) in the 17th–20th centuries are used to study the impacts of HMEs on the socio-economic situation of the farmers. The first flood event was reported in 1652 on the River Morava and extraordinary dry years were documented since 1718 – in this year the River Dyje totally dried up. Moreover, downpours, hailstorms, windstorms, late frosts and blizzards caused a great damage during the period studied as well and in many cases had a negative effect to human society. The impacts of HMEs are here classified into three categories: agricultural production, material property and the socio-economic situation of individual farmers. Direct impacts took the form of losses to property, supplies and farming equipment, and further of bad field and fruit yields, depletion of livestock, damage to fields and meadows, lack of water for daily use, watermills and transport and increased threat of wildfires. Simple lack of income, debt, impoverishment, reduction in livestock and deterioration in field fertility were among the longer-term effects. Impacts are discussed with respect to approaches to mitigation of the negative effects of HMEs and to problems associated with obtaining support and in terms of a hierarchy of consequent impacts. A great number of records related to HMEs, preserved in the Moravian Land Archives in Brno and other district South Moravian archives, represents a rich source of data allowing re-discovering of historical natural disasters. The paper embodies a methodological approach that is intended for the analysis of HME impacts in South Moravia from the 17th to the 20th centuries.