Transport Improvements

Transport was a key factor in agricultural improvements in the nineteenth century.

The first canal network was useful for getting new crop yields to new developing industrial towns and cities.

Rapidly expanding railway networks during the 1830s meant that agriculture hit a boom period.

How did transport improvements help agriculture to improve?

Using the trains was cheaper than walking cattle to market. It also left more cattle healthy when they got to market.

Trains were speedy and a reliable and fresh produce could be sold further afield.

Trains provided cheap transport for bulky produce. This meant that new cattle breeds could be sold further afield.

Trains took grain to towns further away and this made a good profit. These trains could also bring back manure.

Rapidly expanding railway networks during the 1830s meant that agriculture hit a boom period.
The population grew rapidly during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Britain’s population grew from 18.5 million to 26 million between 1841 and 1871.

As more of this population moved to towns and away from farms, food had to be imported from the countryside in order for people to survive in England.

Town dwellers lived in cramped conditions and they did not have any garden – yet they still needed food.

By 1851 over half of the British population now lived in towns and they all needed feeding.

Victorian workers also had neither the time, energy or opportunity to grow food.
Drainage Improvements

Draining was one of the most important developments of the Agricultural Revolution.

There were improvements in pipe-making techniques.

Technology, using steam power, allowed farmers to dig ditches more easily.

Thousands of acres of water-logged and badly drained land could now be used thanks to new drainage solutions.

The Drainage Act of 1846 allowed farmers to borrow money at low interest rates.

The cost of drainage pipes went from 50 shillings for 100 to 20 shillings for 1000.

Drainage was expensive but the government helped people to afford drainage.

The price of drainage fell dramatically during the Golden Age of Farming thanks to new technology.
New ways to keep the land fertile.

People discovered that chemicals could be used to fertilise land. These were known as nitrates and phosphates. Artificial fertilisers were now invented.

Pastoral farming began to develop as new food was created for animals to eat.

Selective breeding took off like never before and new cattle were bred quickly.

Scientific advancement meant that farmers could specialise better.

New Model Farms were created and people could go and visit them.

The Royal College of Agriculture was founded in 1838.

People could now choose to decide whether to breed cattle or grow crops.
New Machinery

The new Iron Industry meant that machines could be built quicker and faster than ever before.

By 1850 steam engines were reliable enough to use on farms. But they were expensive.

Machines existed for ploughing and reaping but they were not always effective.

Beet slicers and wheat threshers were an enormous advancement but they did cost people jobs.

Steam engines came into their own elements during harvest time.

Horse powered machines were still far simpler and much more reliable.

Many British fields were too small to use these fantastic new machines on.