

Summary

We have sought an explanation for the striking peak in the number of corn mills on the Schermereiland. We found a clear, albeit changing relationship over time between population size and number of grain mills (a total of eleven including a maximum of six simultaneously) in that area. An analysis of the ratio of inhabitants per corn mill in Dutch cities and regions showed that this ratio is almost a factor of fifteen ranged from over four hundred to six thousand, and could be linked to, for example, the production of biscuits and starch, the presence of brewers and large-scale livestock-farming or the emergence of the potato as a staple food. But we were also at relatively low to very low ratios for certain other Dutch regions and provinces but explanations were not found because of lack in further information and remains in stabbing assumptions. The number of corn mills was especially influenced by economic factors and government policy. What was striking for the Netherlands was the early introduction in the first decades of the seventeenth century on an extra pair of millstones at grist mills in Graft, Alkmaar and De Rijk. In 1612 a post corn mill in Alkmaar appeared to be equipped even with three pairs of millstones. This tour de force mill engineering seems to be linked with the start of the windmill industry and hence the millwright's craft in Alkmaar and surroundings in the decades around 1600.