

**Topic:**

**Potato famine role in the evaluation of extension system in Ireland**

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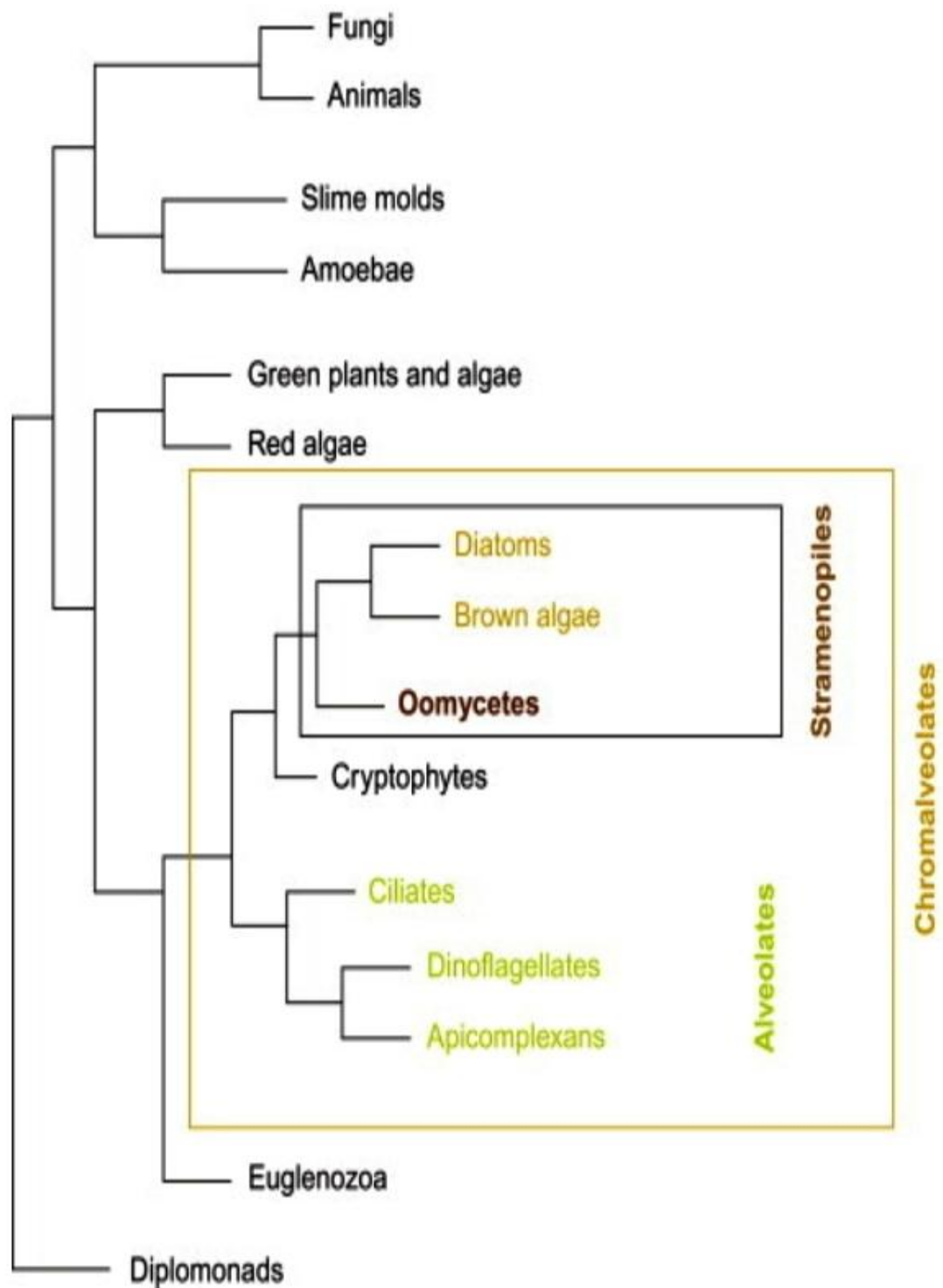
Great Famine, also called Irish Potato Famine, Great Irish Famine, or Famine of 1845–49, famine that occurred in Ireland in 1845–49 when the potato crop failed in successive years. The crop failures were caused by late blight, a disease that destroys both the leaves and the edible roots, or tubers, of the potato plant.

The Irish Famine caused the first mass migration of Irish people to the United States. The effects of the Irish Potato Famine continued to spur on Irish immigration well into the 20th century after the devastating fungus that destroyed Ireland's prized potato crops died out in 1850.

## **1 Introduction to Oomycetes**

Phylogeny, Habitats, and Properties *Phytophthora infestans* caused the Irish in 1840s and continues to devastate potatoes and tomatoes worldwide, resulting in billions of dollars annually in losses and control costs (Fry & Goodwin, 1997). During the past three decades, the difficulty in suppressing late blight has increased because of the recent worldwide distribution of diverse populations of *P. infestans* from Mexico, the center of genetic diversity of the organism. These populations contain both the A1 and A2 mating types (previously, only the A1 mating type had a worldwide distribution; Fry et al., 1993). Metalaxyl, a pesticide that was once very effective against late blight, has been overcome by resistant strains in most locations (Goodwin, Sujkowski, & Fry, 1996).

potato famine phototrophs. However, analysis of the genomes of *P. sojae* and *P. ramorum* found numerous genes with likely phototroph origins, suggesting that, including oomycetes, the stramenopiles evolved from a photosynthetic ancestor (Tyler et al., 2006).



The famine and its effects permanently changed the island's demographic, political, and cultural landscape, producing an estimated two million refugees and spurring a century-long population decline. For both the native Irish and those in the resulting diaspora, the famine entered folk memory.



Rioters in Dungarvan attempt to break into a bakery; the poor could not afford to buy what food was available. (The Pictorial Times, 1846).

Throughout the entire period of the Famine, Ireland was exporting enormous quantities of food. In the magazine *History Ireland* (1997, issue 5, pp. 32-36), Christine Kinealy, a Great Hunger scholar, lecturer, and Drew University professor, relates her findings: Almost 4,000 vessels carried food from Ireland to the ports of Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool, and London. The clause mentioned in the previous section, the "Gregory Clause" of the Poor Law Extension Act (June 1847) denied aid to anybody owning over a quarter of an acre of land. Another clause,

the £4 clause, made the landlord responsible for the all landholding tax on any holding valued at under £4. This latter clause covered most landholdings in Connaught. These two clauses effectively defined smallholders as parasites. For many Landlords it was a ticket to clear their estates. While many cleared the tenants so as to avoid paying these duties, many were nearly bankrupt anyway, due to the effects of the famine. It is estimated that during the entire famine period 500,000 people were evicted.

Landholding. In Ireland, the small farmers, such as cottiers, that virtually vanished in the years after the famine. As the





THE IRISH FAMINE: SCENE AT THE GATE OF A WORKHOUSE.

NM graph shows, farms under 5 acres accounted for 45% of all farms in 1841, but only 15% a decade later. Many of those who had been evicted emigrated or became paid labourers for other farmers. Many other farms were purchased by large-scale farmers. In general, living conditions seem to have improved, (although it should be stated that some researchers disagree). Before the famine, a third of people lived in fourth-class (the worst) housing. By 1851, it was 10%. Literacy and personal savings also increased. At the opposite end of the social scale, the famine ultimately sounded the deathknell of the Landlord. Many landlords had seen their incomes fall during the famine and, having removed many of their tenants, many more went bankrupt due to lack of rentals. Over the next half century, most of these estates were sold, their owners encouraged by agrarian laws. The Encumbered Estates Act of 1849 was one law which encouraged farmers to buy land from Landlords. By 1914, two-thirds of Irish tenants owned their own land. Some Landlords survived by diversifying away from potato-growing tenancies and rented out land to graziers. By the end of the 19th century, large parts of

Connemara had become grazing areas. As the population continued to fall, agriculture could become less and less intensive, until previously high-yield areas needed only to yield low crops. The potato yields per acre before the famine were never again achieved. The strong farmer became the ultimate beneficiary of the famine. With both a weakened cottier class and a weakened Landlord class, they were able to acquire lands and add them to their holdings. The number of farms over 15 acres increased from 19% in 1841 to 51% of all holdings a decade later. In retrospect, this can be regarded as a non-violent Peasant revolution, spurred by the famine, and resulting in most farmers changing from being tenants to being landowners. The very nature of the agricultural divisions in Ireland, as existed before the famine, became meaningless in the years afterwards. The pastoral (grazing) sector overtook the arable sector in this period. Between 1851 and 1911, arable land in Ireland halved from 1.8 million hectares to 0.9 million. Simultaneously, grazing increased dramatically. Many railways had been built in the famine period, as part of work schemes, and these allowed live cattle exports to Britain to increase. From 50,000 animals in the 1820s, exports reached 200,000 during the 1840s. This rose to 400,000 by the 1860s and 800,000 by.