

Farm Structure Survey in Ireland - 2007

93% of Irish farms are livestock specialists

This Statistics in Focus is part of a series of country-specific publications on the results of the Farm Structure Survey (FSS) 2007. It provides a brief but nevertheless comprehensive insight into the farm structure in Ireland.

128 200 agricultural holdings were recorded in Ireland in the 2007 Farm Structure Survey which represents a 3% decrease since 2005. The farms with at least 1 European Size Unit (ESU) have suffered a more significant reduction (6%). This drop affects all size classes, but with greater impact on the farms under 5 ha (-21%).

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Due to the different coverage of the FSS across Member States, the total number of surveyed farms is not comparable between countries. This is why the present analysis focuses on holdings of at least one European Size Unit (ESU). See the methodological notes for more information on the concept of ESU.

In 2007, **117 900 agricultural holdings** had an economic size of at least 1 ESU, compared to 125 500 in 2005 (a 6% reduction). The increase in the number of farms with less than 1 ESU was 44% from 2005 to 2007.

They made use of **4.02 million ha of utilised agricultural area- UAA**, (3% less when compared with 4.16 million ha in 2005), which is on average about 34 ha per holding;

These holdings employed **141 000 AWUs** (annual work units), the equivalent of 141 000 people working full time, a decrease of 5 % since 2005;

They had **5.9 million livestock units** (LSU) in 2007, 5 % less than in 2005.

Amongst these **117 900** agricultural holdings:

33 % made use of less than one AWU, while another 15 % made use of 2 or more AWUs;

39% used less than 20 ha, while 4% used 100 ha or more;

93% of Irish farms specialize in livestock;

54% specialised in rearing and fattening cattle;

21% were engaged in breeding sheep, goats and other grazing livestock;

16% specialize in dairy farming.

Amongst the sole holders:

10% were women in 2007;

50% were aged 55 or more and 7% were younger than 35 years;

43% of sole holders had another gainful activity in 2007 (compared to 37% in 2005);

In Ireland in 2007, 81% of the agricultural area was farmed by its owners.

The family labour force regularly employed has decreased by 5% from 2005 to 2007. But it counts for 93% of the total agricultural labour force.

The number of holdings with dairy cows decreased by 11%. The number of farms specialised in dairy cows also registered a 9% reduction.

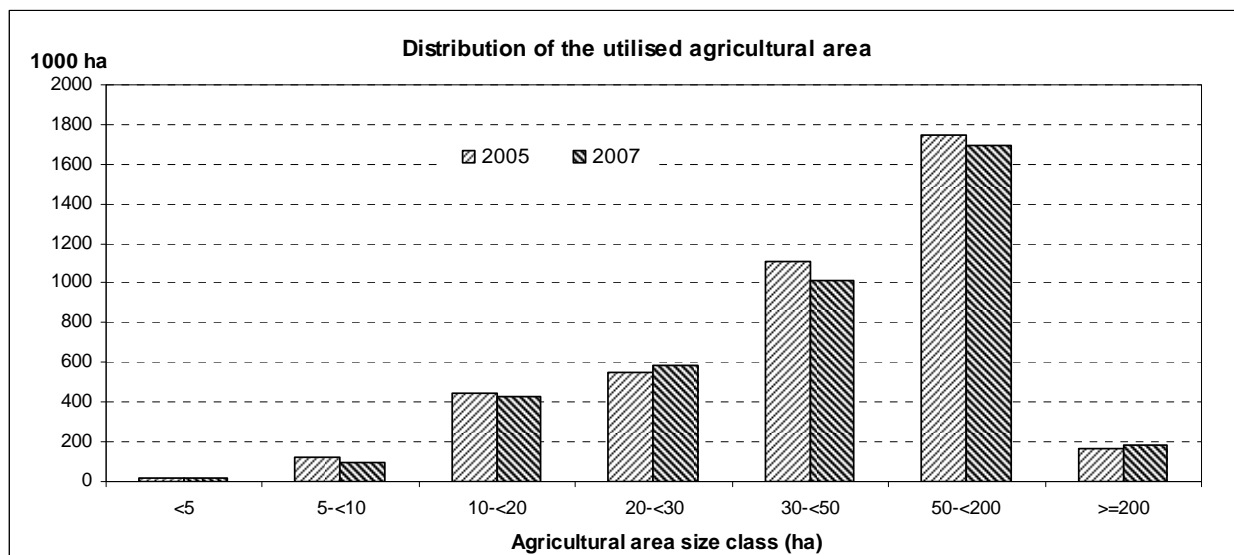
The 2007 FSS results show a general decrease in livestock units, this tendency is more evident in the number of sheep (-15%) and goats (-13%).

75% of the UAA in Ireland is permanent grassland and meadow.

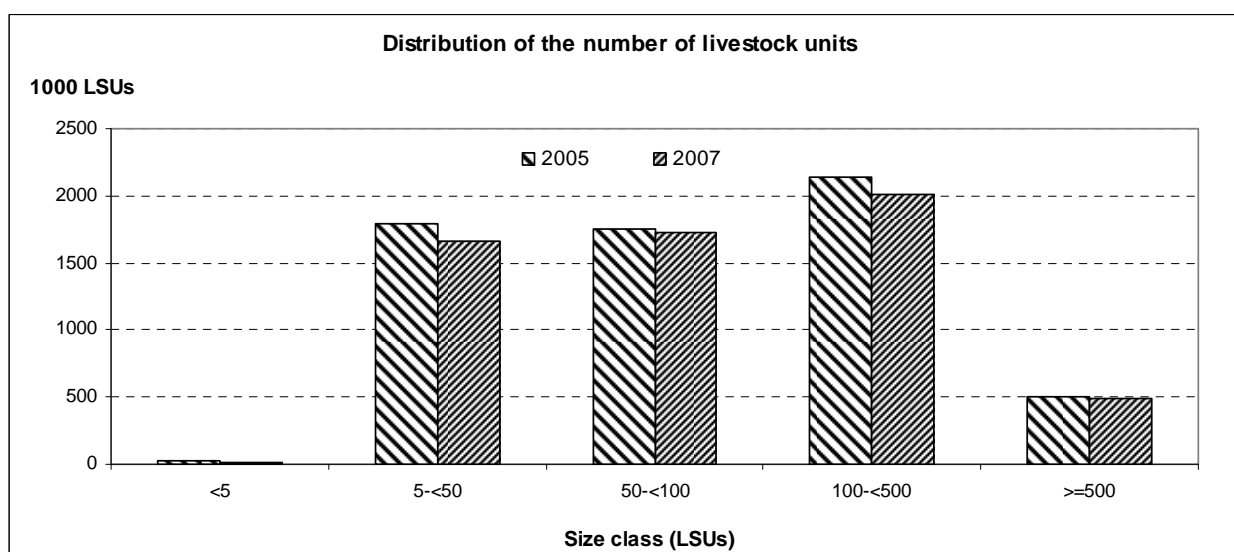
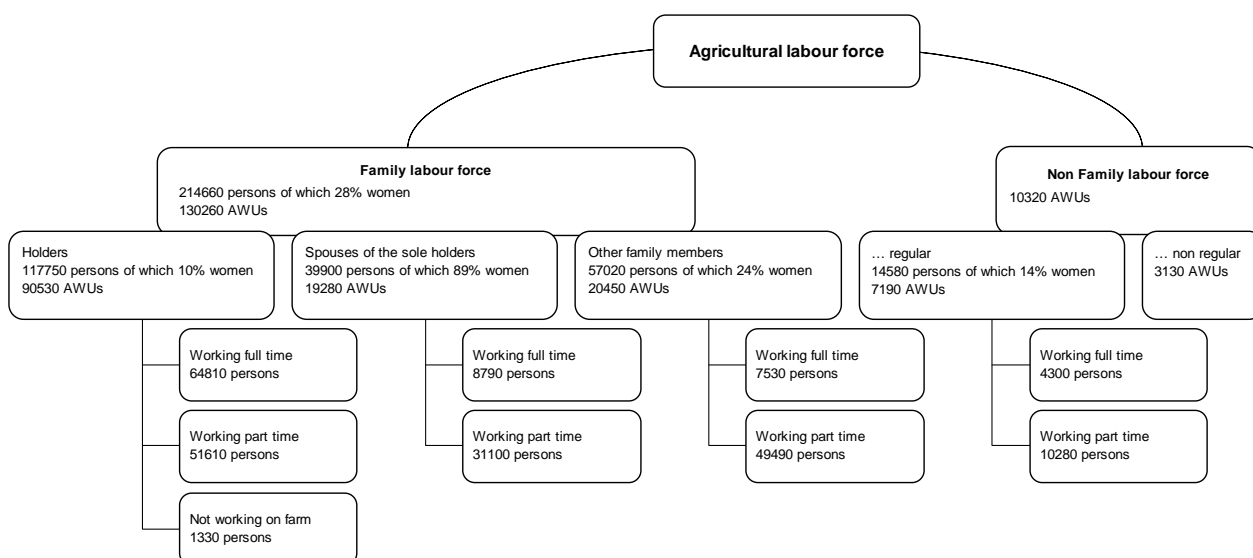
The area of forage plants decreased by 14% since 2005, that corresponds to less than 2% of the UAA.

91% of the Irish farm animals are grazing livestock.

The area of organic farming showed a slight increase (15%), but its impact still remains small on the overall UAA (0.54%). The number of organic farms is stable since 2005.



Description of the Labour Force in Ireland



*LSUs = Livestock Uni

Table 1 – Labour force by size of the farms

Size of the farms	Agricultural area (ha)				All farms	Livestock (LSU*)				
	<20	20-<50	50-<100	>=100		0	>0-<50	50-<100	>=100	
Total labour force										
1000 annual work units	42.9	61.0	27.7	9.1	140.6	3.9	78.5	34.6	23.6	
Family labour force										
1000 persons	75.9	92.7	36.6	9.4	214.7	4.9	132.3	49.1	28.4	
1000 annual work units	40.9	58.1	24.6	6.7	130.3	2.6	75.3	32.5	19.8	
Non-family labour regularly employed										
1000 persons	3.4	4.7	3.9	2.6	14.6	1.3	5.5	3.1	4.7	
1000 annual work units	1.5	1.7	2.1	1.9	7.2	1.0	2.0	1.2	3.0	
Non regular non family labour force										
1000 annual work units	0.5	1.2	0.9	0.4	3.1	0.2	1.2	0.9	0.9	
Holding managers	1000	46.1	49.3	18.0	4.5	117.9	3.0	76.9	24.8	13.2
- women	(%)	12.9	8.8	6.2	5.3	9.9	8.6	11.9	6.7	4.2
- part-time: - under 50 %	(%)	31.7	14.2	7.9	6.7	19.8	37.4	25.4	7.9	5.6
- 50 % and over	(%)	30.8	22.2	11.7	10.7	23.5	16.8	29.4	14.7	7.2
Sole/main holders	1000	46.1	49.3	17.9	4.4	117.7	3.0	76.9	24.7	13.1
- women	(%)	12.8	8.7	5.8	5.1	9.7	8.8	11.9	6.2	4.1
-distribution by age	(%)									
- under 35 years		6.2	7.2	8.1	8.0	6.9	11.2	6.2	7.8	8.9
- from 35 to 44 years		14.5	19.0	23.4	23.1	18.0	19.1	15.5	21.2	26.8
- from 45 to 54 years		23.8	25.4	25.4	23.8	24.7	24.7	23.9	26.5	26.2
- from 55 to 64 years		26.6	25.9	24.9	26.9	26.1	25.8	26.6	26.0	23.3
- 65 years and over		28.9	22.6	18.3	18.3	24.2	19.2	27.9	18.5	14.7
- part-time: - under 50 %	(%)	31.8	14.2	7.9	6.7	19.8	37.5	25.4	7.9	5.6
- 50 % and over	(%)	30.8	22.2	11.7	10.7	23.5	16.8	29.4	14.7	7.2
- with another gainful activity ¹	(%)	55.1	40.2	25.3	23.1	43.1	51.5	51.1	30.8	17.9
- as a main occupation		39.3	21.6	8.4	6.3	25.9	31.5	33.9	12.0	4.4
- as a subsidiary occupation		15.7	18.6	16.9	16.8	17.2	19.9	17.1	18.8	13.5
Spouse of sole holder	1000	13.0	17.8	7.2	1.9	39.9	0.7	23.7	9.7	5.8
- women	(%)	84.8	89.9	95.1	95.1	89.4	88.8	86.3	92.9	96.4
-distribution by age	(%)									
- under 35 years		4.4	4.8	5.5	6.2	4.9	6.6	4.4	4.9	6.5
- from 35 to 54 years		48.7	50.4	54.5	52.3	50.7	50.1	48.6	52.2	56.8
- 55 years and over		46.9	44.8	40.0	41.4	44.4	43.5	47.0	42.9	36.7
- part-time: - under 50 %	(%)	62.7	52.4	49.4	45.4	54.9	62.1	59.1	48.6	47.2
- 50 % and over	(%)	19.9	24.4	24.8	26.0	23.1	17.8	21.8	25.1	25.6
- with another gainful activity	(%)	75.0	67.3	64.1	63.1	69.0	68.7	72.4	64.3	63.2
Other members of the holder's family working on the holding	1000	16.8	25.6	11.5	3.1	57.0	1.1	31.8	14.6	9.5
- women	(%)	24.3	23.5	23.8	21.1	23.7	21.2	23.9	23.8	22.9
- part-time: - under 50 %	(%)	74.8	71.9	63.1	50.2	69.8	62.8	74.5	68.8	56.4
- 50 % and over	(%)	17.5	17.2	16.2	15.4	17.0	12.5	17.4	16.9	16.1
- with another gainful activity	(%)	89.1	86.6	76.8	64.5	84.2	71.7	89.1	83.3	70.5

*LSU = Livestock unit

¹ Only holders who are also farm managers

"0" less than a half of the unit or nil

Size of the farms	Agricultural area (ha)				All farms	Livestock (LSU)				
	<20	20-<50	50-<100	>=100		0	>0-<50	50-<100	>=100	
Holdings										
- total number	1000	46.1	49.3	18.0	4.5	117.9	3.0	76.9	24.8	13.2
- by legal personality of the holder	(%)									
- sole holder		99.9	99.9	99.8	99.2	99.9	99.8	99.9	99.9	99.5
- legal person		0.1	0.1	0.2	0.8	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.5
- group holders		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- by employed labour force	(%)									
- under 1 AWU		51.9	26.0	12.4	8.8	33.4	47.2	43.5	14.5	6.7
- from 1 to less than 2 AWU		40.9	58.6	60.3	46.2	51.5	36.0	47.1	64.8	55.4
- from 2 to less than 3 AWU		6.2	13.4	21.4	27.0	12.3	9.0	8.3	17.2	27.3
- 3 AWU and over		1.0	2.0	5.8	18.0	2.8	7.8	1.1	3.4	10.6
- by economic size	(%)									
- from 1 to less than 8 ESU		81.9	26.5	6.7	4.7	44.4	25.9	66.9	0.2	0.2
- from 8 to less than 16 ESU		13.4	34.8	12.4	8.0	22.0	23.4	25.7	21.5	0.6
- from 16 to less than 40 ESU		4.0	27.3	35.8	16.4	19.1	26.7	6.8	55.2	20.8
- from 40 to less than 100 ESU		0.5	11.2	39.4	39.3	12.3	15.7	0.5	22.8	61.3
- 100 ESU and over		0.2	0.3	5.7	31.6	2.3	8.3	0.1	0.3	17.1
- by type of farming (top 5 + 'other')	(%)									
... specialist cattle – rearing and fattening		61.2	56.7	37.2	28.8	54.4	0	62.3	50.6	28.2
... sheep, goats and other grazing livestock		29.6	15.7	14.1	20.8	21.1	0	27.8	10.1	7.3
... specialist dairy farming		4.1	20.4	35.0	23.6	16.4	0	4.9	33.9	54.2
... specialist cereals, oil seed and protein crops		2.0	2.8	4.9	12.8	3.2	84.7	1.4	0.3	0.2
... field crops – grazing livestock combined		0.9	2.1	4.3	6.4	2.1	0	2.1	2.6	1.8
Other types of farming		2.3	2.2	4.4	7.6	2.8	15.3	1.5	2.5	8.3
- by farming methods	(%)									
- organic farming		0.4	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.2
- irrigating		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- with crops under glass		0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.1
- with another gainful activity than agricultural production:	(%)									
Tourism		3.5	5.4	8.1	11.1	5.3	16.9	4.1	6.5	7.0
Handicraft		0.8	1.0	1.3	1.8	1.0	1.7	0.9	1.1	1.3
Processing of farm products		0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
Processing of farm products		0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.3
Wood processing		0.2	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1
Aquaculture		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0.1	0	0.1
Renewable energy production		0.1	0.1	0.3	0.9	0.2	1.2	0.1	0.2	0.3
Contractual work		0.8	2.3	4.0	5.6	2.1	10.9	1.3	3.0	3.1
Other gainful activities n.a.e		1.5	1.8	2.3	3.1	1.8	4.2	1.6	2.0	2.0

*LSU = Livestock unit

"0" less than a half of the unit or nil

Size of the farms	Agricultural area (ha)				All farms	Livestock (LSU)				
	<20	20-<50	50-<100	>=100		0	>0-<50	50-<100	>=100	
Area	(1000 ha)									
Total area of agricultural holdings	600.1	1704.7	1260.6	715.2	4280.6	160.1	1833.8	1184.0	1102.7	
• H. Other area	57.3	104.8	59.9	39.6	261.6	8.7	129.1	68.6	55.2	
Wooded area	23.3	46.7	29.4	21.7	121.0	4.0	59.2	30.5	27.3	
• Agricultural area	542.9	1599.9	1200.7	675.6	4019.0	151.5	1704.6	1115.4	1047.5	
- D. Arable land	99.5	343.8	314.5	231.4	989.3	134.7	319.9	249.9	284.8	
Cereals	12.0	57.7	89.2	116.2	275.2	107.1	77.1	42.6	48.4	
<i>Common wheat and spelt</i>	2.0	9.2	21.7	51.0	83.9	39.2	20.6	8.6	15.4	
<i>Durum wheat</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Rye</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Barley</i>	9.1	44.1	60.5	54.9	168.5	58.4	50.3	30.6	29.2	
<i>Oats</i>	0.8	3.8	6.0	9.0	19.7	8.6	5.5	2.7	2.8	
<i>Grain maize</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Dried pulses	0	0.2	0.6	1.0	1.9	0.9	0.6	0.2	0.2	
Root crops	0.9	4.0	6.9	10.3	22.2	7.5	4.8	4.5	5.3	
<i>Potatoes</i>	0.5	1.4	2.2	6.1	10.3	5.6	2.0	1.8	0.9	
<i>Sugar beet</i>	0.1	0.3	0.6	0.5	1.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	
<i>Fodder root</i>	0.3	2.3	4.2	3.7	10.5	1.5	2.5	2.3	4.1	
Industrial crops	0.1	0.8	1.8	5.3	8.1	3.9	2.3	0.7	1.1	
<i>Tobacco</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Hops</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Cotton</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Rape and turnip</i>	0.1	0.8	1.8	5.3	8.1	3.9	2.3	0.7	1.1	
<i>Sunflower</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Soya</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Fresh vegetables, melons, strawberry	0.5	0.9	1.1	1.7	4.2	2.5	0.8	0.7	0.2	
<i>outside</i>	0.5	0.9	1.1	1.7	4.2	2.5	0.8	0.7	0.2	
<i>under glass</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Flower and ornamental plants	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.6	2.0	1.2	0.4	0.3	0.1	
<i>outside</i>	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.6	2.0	1.2	0.4	0.3	0.1	
<i>under glass</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Forage plants	85.0	278.0	211.8	92.5	667.2	7.9	231.1	199.9	228.3	
Fallow land	0.1	0.8	2.0	3.1	6.0	3.0	1.6	0.4	1.0	
- E. Kitchen garden	0	0.1	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0	0	
- F. Permanent pasture and meadows	443.1	1255.8	885.7	443.8	3028.4	16.1	1384.4	865.4	762.5	
- G. Permanent crops	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	1.2	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.2	
Fruit and berry plantation	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.2	
Citrus plantation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Olive trees	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Vineyard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Ratios										
Agricultural area per holding	(ha)	11.8	32.4	66.8	151.0	34.1	49.9	22.2	45.1	79.4
Agricultural area...	(%)									
... own farmed		89.9	84.9	78.4	71.2	81.3	64.7	87.0	81.5	74.3
... in less favoured or mountain area		83.9	75.2	61.3	54.3	68.7	18.8	82.4	69.3	53.0
... organic farmed		0.4	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.1	0.8	0.4	0.3
... irrigated		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*LSU = Livestock unit

": not available

"0" less than a half of the unit or nil

Size of the farms	Agricultural area (ha)				All farms	Livestock (LSU)			
	<20	20-<50	50-<100	>=100		0	>0-<50	50-<100	>=100
Total livestock (1000 LSU)	930.4	2376.9	1816.0	776.3	5899.6	0	1680.0	1726.6	2492.9
of which grazing (%)	83.6	95.0	92.5	85.9	91.2	:	99.8	99.7	79.5
Grazing livestock (1000 heads)									
Equidae	30.9	29.4	20.0	10.2	90.5	0	54.4	19.1	17.0
Bovine animals	870.4	2808.7	2086.2	789.9	6555.2	0	1942.3	2133.8	2479.1
Under 1 year	214.3	693.2	518.2	178.8	1604.5	0	508.9	505.2	590.4
From 1 to less than 2 years	228.0	681.6	532.2	220.8	1662.6	0	486.8	525.7	650.1
Dairy cows	40.0	428.9	445.9	143.4	1058.2	0	82.6	374.2	601.4
Other cows	211.0	531.7	270.5	95.5	1108.7	0	522.8	355.8	230.0
Other bovine animals 2 years and older	177.2	473.2	319.3	151.5	1121.2	0	341.2	372.8	407.2
Sheep	1359.6	1922.0	1297.2	721.1	5300.0	0	2748.1	1354.6	1197.3
Goats	5.9	2.6	0.5	0.9	9.9	0	7.4	0.8	1.7
Granivores									
Pigs (1000 heads)	368.0	327.1	479.0	431.3	1605.4	0	2.5	3.1	1599.8
Piglets < 20 kg	102.6	96.8	144.1	109.9	453.4	0	0.7	0.9	451.9
Breeding sows	35.2	34.2	52.1	42.7	164.1	0	0.2	0.4	163.6
Other pigs	230.3	196.0	282.8	278.7	987.9	0	1.7	1.9	984.3
Poultry (million heads)	5.3	4.2	2.3	0.1	11.9	0	0.1	0.4	11.4
Broilers	3.4	3.0	1.8	0.1	8.3	0	0	0.2	8.1
Laying hens	1.0	0.8	0.5	0	2.4	0	0.1	0.1	2.2
Other poultry	0.8	0.3	0.1	0	1.2	0	0	0	1.1
Rabbits, breeding females (1000 heads)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beehives (1000)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average size of herds* (head/holding)									
Equidae (head/holding)	4.9	5.0	6.9	12.7	5.7	:	5.2	5.7	8.7
Cattle (head/holding)	24.2	62.9	127.7	216.1	65.1	:	30.6	87.9	191.6
Dairy cows (head/holding)	18.0	39.6	64.3	109.1	49.7	:	19.0	41.5	75.8
Other cows (head/holding)	9.0	17.3	25.2	39.1	16.5	:	11.9	22.7	29.8
Sheep (head/holding)	89.4	134.2	221.3	411.1	142.6	:	102.9	191.7	354.1
Goats (head/holding)	9.1	7.1	3.2	23.6	8.2	:	8.0	4.2	17.2
Pigs (head/holding)	1383.6	1303.2	2314.0	10781.7	2101.3	:	9.4	34.6	3930.7
Breeding sows (head/holding)	305.7	244.5	382.8	1219.0	385.2	:	2.5	9.3	519.3
Other pigs > 20 kg (head/holding)	865.8	787.3	1379.7	6967.4	1299.8	:	6.2	21.6	2436.4
Rabbits, breeding females (head/holding)	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Laying hens (1000/holding)	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.4	:	0	0.1	2.6
Broilers (1000/holding)	8.6	10.1	11.6	4.6	9.5	:	0.1	1.7	30.7
Beehives (hive/holding)	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:

*LSU = Livestock unit

		Absolute figures			% of total	
		Total	< 1 ESU	>= 1 ESU	< 1 ESU	>= 1 ESU
Regular Labour force	(1000 pers)	244.3	15.1	229.2	6.2	93.8
Regular labour force	(1000 AWU)	144.3	6.9	137.4	4.8	95.2
Holder with...	(1000)	128.1	10.3	117.7	8.1	91.9
... at least 65 years		31.9	3.3	28.6	10.4	89.6
... another gainful activity		57.1	6.2	50.8	10.9	89.1
Number of sole holdings	(1000)	128.2	10.4	117.9	8.1	91.9
... producing mainly for own consumption		0.0	0.0	0.0	:	:
... producing mainly for direct sales		0.0	0.0	0.0	:	:
SGM	(1000 ESU)	2486.0	4.3	2481.7	0.2	99.8
Agricultural area	(1000 ha)	4139.2	120.2	4019.0	2.9	97.1
... own farmed		3377.2	108.5	3268.7	3.2	96.8
Livestock	(1000 LSU*)	5918.3	18.7	5899.6	0.3	99.7

*LSU = Livestock Unit

► METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The 2007 survey on the structure of agricultural holdings in Ireland was carried out with the reference day on the 1st June 2007. The reference period for labour force was the preceding 12 months.

Prior to this survey a full-scale agriculture census was carried out in 2000 and it was the main source for the Farm register. The EU sample surveys in 2003, 2005 and 2007 were based on it. The farm register is regularly updated with administrative sources and other national farm surveys (with a much smaller scope and covering approximately 20% of the population frame) that are held every year.

The target population was the agricultural holdings recorded in the farm register. No threshold was applied in advance to define the holding (a single unit, both technically and economically, which has a single management and which produces agricultural products), but the surveyed farms with less than 1 ha, less than 1 livestock unit and not engaged in any specialist activity were excluded.

The sampling frame for the 2007 FSS was 132 284 holdings. 76 969 farms were sampled using a regional breakdown and 10 different strata regarding the typology and the size (economic and area). A specific stratum for the new farms was also included. Two thirds of the sampled units matched with the ones from the 2005 or 2006 surveys.

The questionnaires were printed and mailed. A pre-printed barcode on the first page was used to identify each survey form, which was then scanned and electronically transferred to the farm register.

The check of the data was assisted by software which detects the missing values and unrecognisable digits.

The compiled dataset was checked by other built-in validations. The response rate for the surveys was 72%. Partial non-response was, in some cases, imputed using previous survey results.

Between FSS 2005 and 2007 "maintaining land in good agricultural and environmental conditions" (GAEC) became an agricultural activity and the involved land has been included in the agricultural area. In Ireland it covers 10 425 ha, 94% being in farms with at least 1 ESU.

For each activity ('enterprise') on a farm (for instance wheat, dairy cow or vineyard), a SGM is estimated, based on the area (or the number of heads) and a regional coefficient. The sum of such margins in a farm is its economic size, expressed in European Size Units (ESU, 1 ESU is a 1200-euro standard gross margin).

An Annual work unit (AWU) is equivalent to a worker employed on a full time basis for one year. In Ireland it is 1800 hours (225 working days of 8 working hours per day).

A Livestock Unit (LSU) is equivalent to a dairy cow. The number of animals (number of heads) is converted into LSU using a set of coefficients reflecting the feed requirements of the different animal categories.

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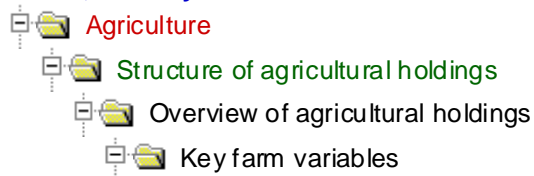
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Further information

Data: [Eurostat Website: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat)

Data: [EUROSTAT Website/Agriculture, forestry and fisheries](#)

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Journalists can contact the media support service:

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