

Twenty years of European agriculture: Proportion of young people in agriculture remains stable

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Although the number of people working in agriculture is steadily declining, the proportion of young people¹ has remained around 20%. However, this stability conceals different trends depending on the Member State, the type of farming or the status of the persons concerned. The proportion of young people in agriculture is lowest in the southern Member States. Three out of four young people work part time. Since 1989/90, the proportion of young managers has been falling slightly, down to 8% in EU-15 in 1997. They have been specialising to a greater extent in more intensive or high-value-added animal production. Since 1981, these developments in production have benefited from specific Community aid. More than 260 000 young farmers received such aid between 1990 and 1997.

One person in five younger than 35

According to the Farm Structure Survey, between 1979/80 and 1997² the volume of labour input by workers under 35 (in AWU³) fell by an average of 2.4% per year in EU-9*. This rate was the same as the rate of reduction in agricultural labour as a whole (*Statistics in Focus, Theme 5, 14/2001, "Changes in Agricultural Employment"*). The proportion of young people stayed fairly stable in terms of AWU at around 22% from 1979/80 to 1997 in EU-9*. In terms of the number of persons, a similar trend was observed, with figures between 20% and 21%. In EU-15 in 1997, young people accounted for 21% of the total workforce, both in AWU and in number of persons. The work performed by these 3 million young people corresponds to 1.4 million AWU (**Figure 1**).

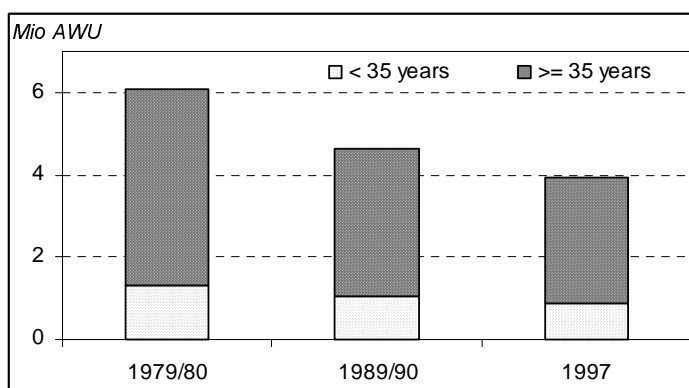


Figure 1: Permanent agricultural workforce, EU-9*

¹ The "young population" is here taken to mean persons aged under 35.

² "EU-9" means the Europe of the Nine (B, DK, D, F, IRL, I, L, NL, UK), and "EU-12" the Europe of the Twelve (EU-9 + EL, E, P). So as not to have to analyse variations resulting from the unification of Germany, "EU-9*" and "D*" mean that the territory of the former GDR has been left out of account

In 1997, the permanent workforce for NL, S and UK was partially estimated on the basis of the values for 1995.

³ AWU: Annual Work Unit.

Statistics in focus

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

THEME 5 – 7/2002

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In EU-15 in 1997, family workers were very much in the majority among both young people and the rest of the population (**Table 1**). Farms are almost always passed on in the direct line. Young people, on the other hand, are outnumbered threefold by their seniors as *holders*. They also account for a much larger proportion of non-family workers (12.5% compared with 5.4%). Older *holders* remaining active and the high costs of starting up discourage young people from setting up on their own. In EU-9* between 1979/80 and 1997, the proportion of family workers remained stable among both young people and the rest of the population. Nor did the distribution of young workers over the different categories change.

Workforce categories	Persons	
	< 35 years	≥ 35 years
Family workers	87.5%	94.6%
Holders	17.2%	54.6%
Spouses	9.1%	25.6%
Other family workers	61.2%	14.4%
Non-family	12.5%	5.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Table 1: Breakdown of workforce⁴, EU-15, 1997 (% persons)

In EU-12 between 1989/90 and 1997, the proportion of part-time work remained relatively unchanged overall in the case of both young persons and their seniors, despite the reduction in part-time work involving more than half the standard working hours (**Figure 2**). In 1997, in both EU-12 and EU-15, three out of four young people worked part time, despite differences between categories of workers and Member States. Among young people, part-time work increased among *other members of the holder's family*, fell among *holders* and remained constant among their *spouses* and *permanent paid workers*. In EU-15 in 1997, six out of ten young people who were *holders* worked part time, and nine out of ten *spouses* and *other family members*.

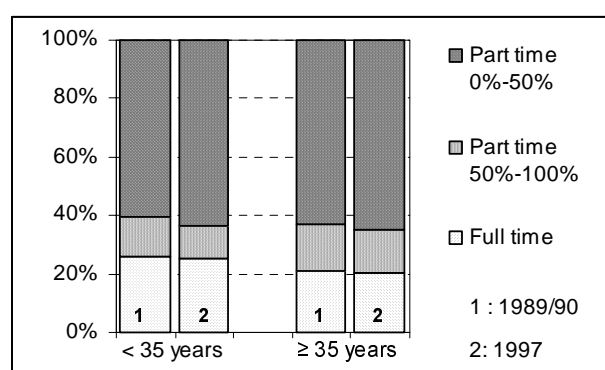


Figure 2: Working hours, EU-12 (% persons)

An old and ageing workforce in Southern Europe

Three major factors explain the trend towards an older or younger agricultural workforce (**Figure 3**): methods of land use and acquisition, demographic trends and mobility of workers, and training systems.

Between 1979/80 and 1997, the proportion of workers aged over 55 increased from 32% to 36% of the total workforce in EU-9*.

In the **United Kingdom** the average age of the agricultural workforce increased markedly. The proportion of young workers decreased, while the proportion of workers aged over 55 increased. The workforce nevertheless remained younger than the European average. The average age fell most sharply in **Denmark**, which now has the youngest agricultural workforce in EU-9*. This is in contrast with EU-9* as a whole, where the proportion of young

workers has remained fairly constant. The average age also fell, but less sharply, in the **Netherlands**. In **Belgium**, the proportion of young workers remained fairly constant but the proportion of workers aged over 55 peaked at 37% in 1989/90. Since then, many of these people, born before 1936, have retired, with the result that this group accounted for only 28% by 1997. In **France** and **Luxembourg** the average age dropped slightly, while the proportion of older workers also fell. Since 1979/80, the workforce in those countries has in any case continued to be younger than the European average. In **Germany***, the proportion of workers aged under 35 remained stable, while the proportion aged over 55 increased, thus raising the average age. The same trend could be observed in **Italy** and **Ireland**. At any rate, in EU-9*, the Italian workforce continues to be one of the oldest, with 47% aged over 55.

⁴ Seasonal work, representing 7% of the total volume of work in EU-15 in 1997, has not been taken into account.

The average age of the agricultural workforce is also increasing in the three countries that joined the EU in the 1980s (EL, E, P). The greatest age increase between 1989/90 and 1997 was in **Portugal**, which has the oldest workforce in EU-12* with more than 52% of workers aged over 55. There was also a more rapid reduction in the young workforce than in the other EU-12* countries (-55%). A similar situation can be observed in **Greece**, but with a more moderate increase in average age. The proportion of young workers in **Spain** remained fairly constant and near to the European average.

In **Finland** and **Austria**, the proportion of young workers fell slightly between 1995 and 1997, while the proportion of workers aged over 55 remained constant.

In 1997, largest proportion of young workers was in Denmark (36%) and the smallest in the southern Member States (17% in Greece, Italy and Portugal and 20% in Spain) and Sweden (17% in 1995).

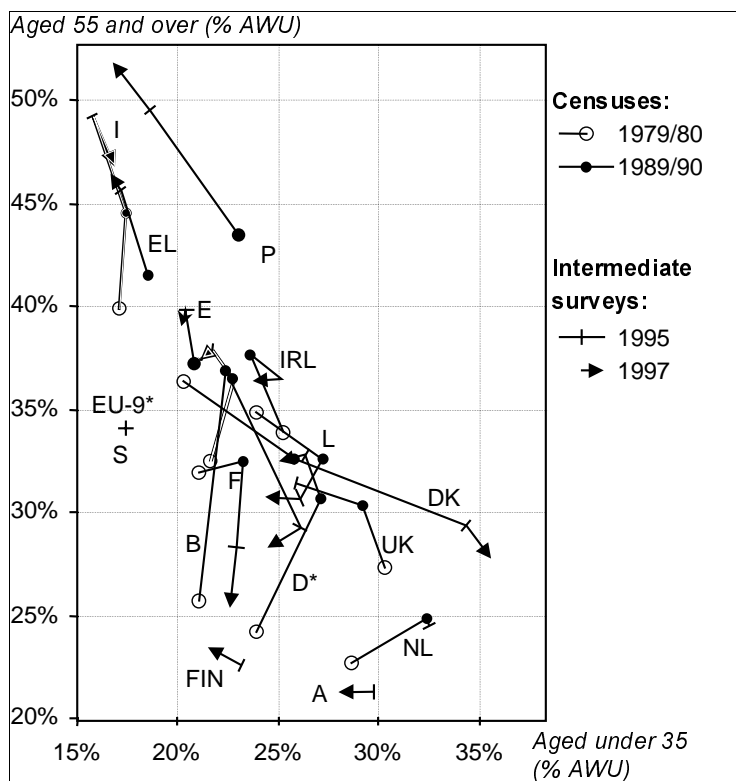


Figure 3: Trend in age of permanent workforce

One in twelve holdings run by a young person

In EU-15 in 1997, over 15% of managers in Austria, Germany and Luxembourg were young. The proportion was under 8% in the southern Member States and the Netherlands. In the *Bayern* region (D), it was 19%, compared with less than 3% in *Algarve*, *Centro* (P), *Ipeiros* and *Ionia Nisia* (EL) and *Lazio* (I) (**Figure 4**). This is partly explained by the tendency of farmers on small holdings to remain active until a fairly advanced age (particularly in the south of Europe).

In EU-12, the proportion of young managers fell from 8.9% to 7.8% between 1989/90 and 1997. In **Portugal**, **Italy** and **Greece**, managers tend to be older and the average age increased most sharply in **Portugal** and **Greece** (**Figure 5**). The proportion of young people in those two countries fell by 3% between 1989/90 and 1997 while the proportion of managers aged over 55 increased to more than 60%. A similar but less pronounced ageing pattern can be observed in the **Netherlands**.

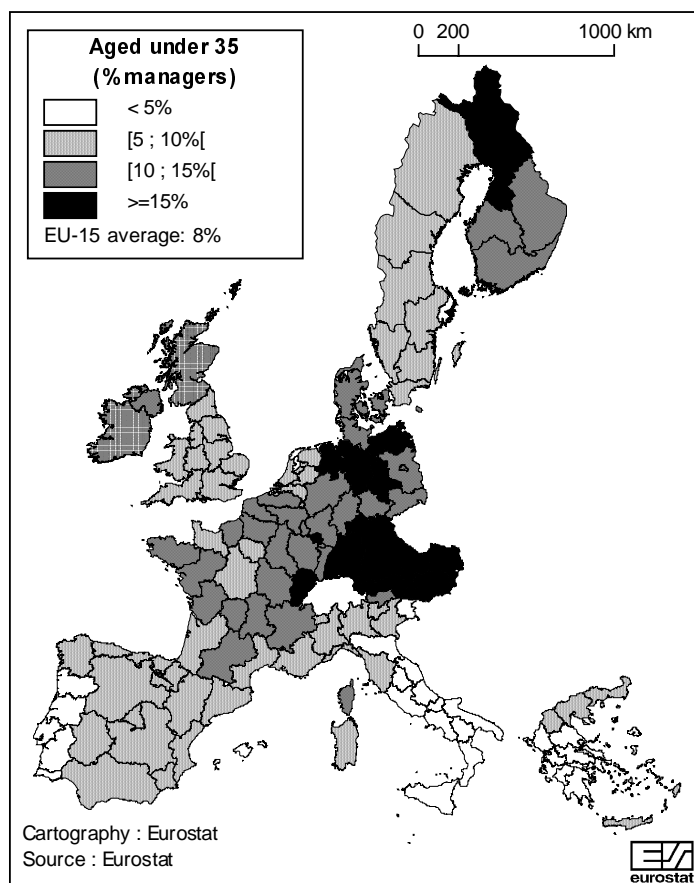


Figure 4: Proportion of young managers, 1997

The average age dropped considerably in **Belgium** and **Luxembourg**, while the number of young people remained relatively constant in the other Member States of EU-12. In EU-15 in 1997, **Germany** and **Austria** stood out with 17% and 18% respectively of managers aged under 35, compared with the European average of 8%. In **Spain**, the proportion of old or young managers was near to the EU-15 average.

Measures specifically geared to young farmers have been taken under the Common Agricultural Policy in connection with these phenomena (**Box page 7**).

There are three types of age pyramid for managers in the various Member States (**Figure 6**). The "inverted" pyramid is characteristic of the southern Member States, where the number of managers increases with age. The "flattened" pyramid represents comparable numbers for the different age categories. The "lozenge" pyramid represents the largest number in the intermediate age categories. There were four types of trend in EU-12 between 1989/90 and 1997:

- the pyramid flattened out (B, L),
- the pyramid remained symmetrical (DK, D, F, NL, UK),
- the inverted form became more pronounced (EL, E, I, P),
- the pyramid remained flattened (IRL).

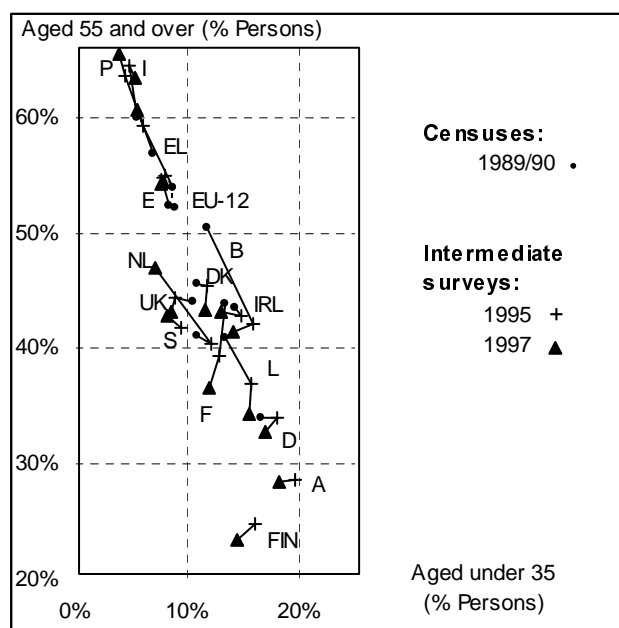


Figure 5: Trend in proportion of managers

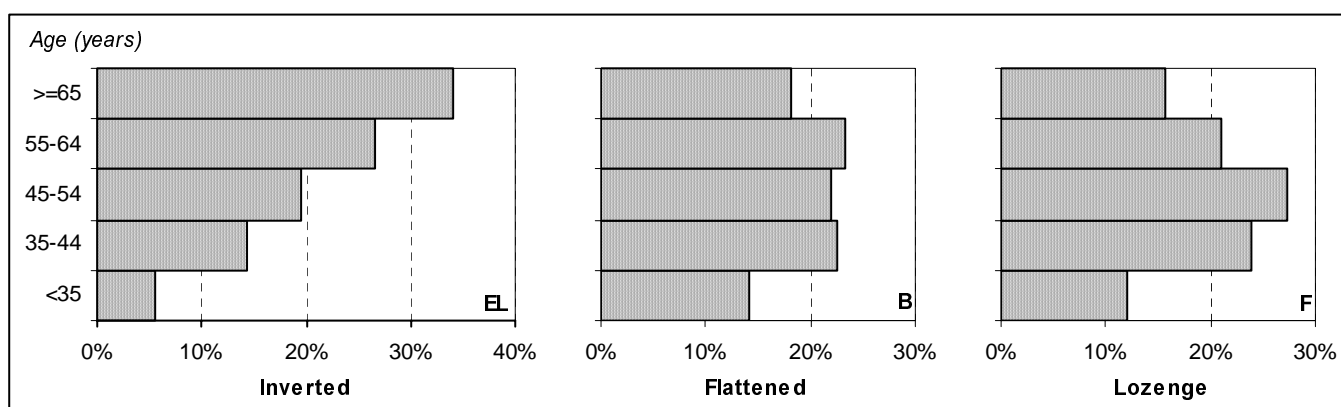


Figure 6: Types of age pyramid, (young managers, % persons, 1997)

Young managers generated 13% of the total standard gross margin⁵ in EU-15^{-D[6]} in 1997. The average physical and economic sizes of holdings run by young managers are greater than those of other holdings and are also increasing more rapidly. In EU-15^{-D} in 1997, the average physical and economic sizes were 29 ha and 26 ESU respectively in the case of holdings run by young managers compared with 16.6 ha and 14.7 ESU in the case of other holdings.

There was the greatest concentration of means of production and economic potential among young managers. The SGM/ha of holdings was high in the Netherlands (6.27 ESU/ha), Belgium and Denmark, and low in Ireland and Spain (0.50 ESU/ha), irrespective of whether the manager was old or young. Intensification, as reflected in the SGM/ha, is determined primarily by national farming patterns and is little influenced by the age of the holders or managers.

⁵ Standard Gross Margin (SGM), expressed in "Economic Size Units"^{*} (ESU). This makes it possible to compare the activities of different types of farm.

⁶ "EU-15^{-D}" and "EU-12^{-D}" mean EU-15 and EU-12 excluding Germany (no data available).

In EU-12^D, the size of holdings run by young managers (proportion of UAA⁷ and total SGM) has been stable since 1989/90 (Table 2), with a substantial increase in Belgium and Luxembourg and a considerable reduction in the Netherlands. In 1997, more than a fifth of the total SGM in Luxembourg and Austria was generated by young managers.

In EU-15 in 1997, more than one in three holdings run by a young manager was larger than 20 ha, compared with fewer than one in five in the case of managers aged over 35 (Table 3). In EU-12, the proportion of holdings larger than 20 ha managed by a young person increased from 29% to 35% between 1989/90 and 1997. In Portugal, Greece and Italy, more than twice as many holdings of 20 ha and over were run by young managers as by people in other age groups.

In EU-15 in 1997, one in five holdings run by young persons was larger than 40 ESU, compared with a mere one in ten in the case of other managers (Table 4).

In EU-12 between 1989/90 and 1997, the proportion of holdings larger than 40 ESU which were run by young persons rose from 12% to 21%, but the increase was only from 6% to 10% in the case of other holdings (Figure 7).

	% total SGM		% total UAA		SGM per holding		UAA per holding	
	1990	1997	1990	1997	1990	1997	1990	1997
B	16%	20%	14%	17%	39	67	19	25
DK	14%	15%	14%	13%	46	74	41	49
EL	10%	7%	10%	7%	5	7	5	5
E	11%	11%	10%	11%	7	15	18	30
F	18%	17%	18%	17%	32	49	41	59
IRL	17%	16%	16%	15%	14	23	28	34
I	8%	10%	8%	9%	11	15	8	11
L	19%	24%	19%	23%	32	54	44	63
NL	12%	7%	9%	5%	56	89	14	14
P	10%	8%	10%	8%	6	14	10	18
UK	14%	11%	14%	10%	48	64	88	88
EU-12^D	13%	12%	13%	12%	17	27	22	30
A	:	21%	:	18%	:	13	:	16
FIN	:	18%	:	17%	:	29	:	28
S	:	11%	:	10%	:	29	:	42
EU-15^D		12%		12%		26		29

Table 2 : UAA (ha) and SGM (ESU) of holdings run by young managers

Classes of UAA	Managers		% <35 years
	< 35 years	≥ 35 years	
< 5 ha	36,7%	57,5%	5,4%
5-20 ha	28,7%	23,7%	9,8%
> 20 ha	34,6%	18,8%	14,1%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	8,2%

Table 3: Physical size of holdings, EU-15, 1997

Classes of SGM	Managers		% <35 years
	< 35 years	≥ 35 years	
< 4 ESU	30,4%	52,3%	4,9%
4-40 ESU	49,4%	38,0%	10,4%
> 40 ESU	20,2%	9,7%	15,7%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	8,2%

Table 4: Economic size of holdings, EU-15, 1997

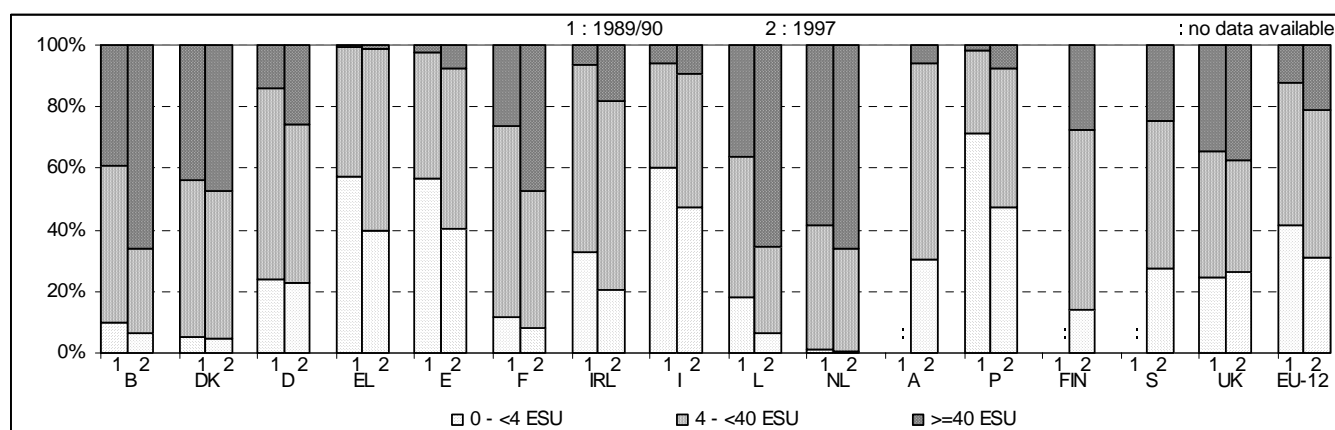


Figure 7: SGM of holdings, young managers, EU-12

⁷ UAA: Utilised Agricultural Area.

One in seven young managers specialises in dairy production. In EU-15 in 1997, holdings run by young people differed from others in that there was more specialisation in animal production (**Figure 8**). This specialisation was geared to three types of farming (TF): cattle breeding (41 to 43), horticulture (20) and non-grazing livestock (50). These types of production lend themselves more to intensification

and generate more added value. This specialisation was at the expense of permanent crops (31 to 34) and mixed cropping (60). In EU-15 in 1997, therefore, specialisation in dairy-cattle breeding (41) became predominant (15% of holdings) among young managers, while accounting for barely 7% of holdings among their seniors. This has been the trend since 1989/90 in EU-12.

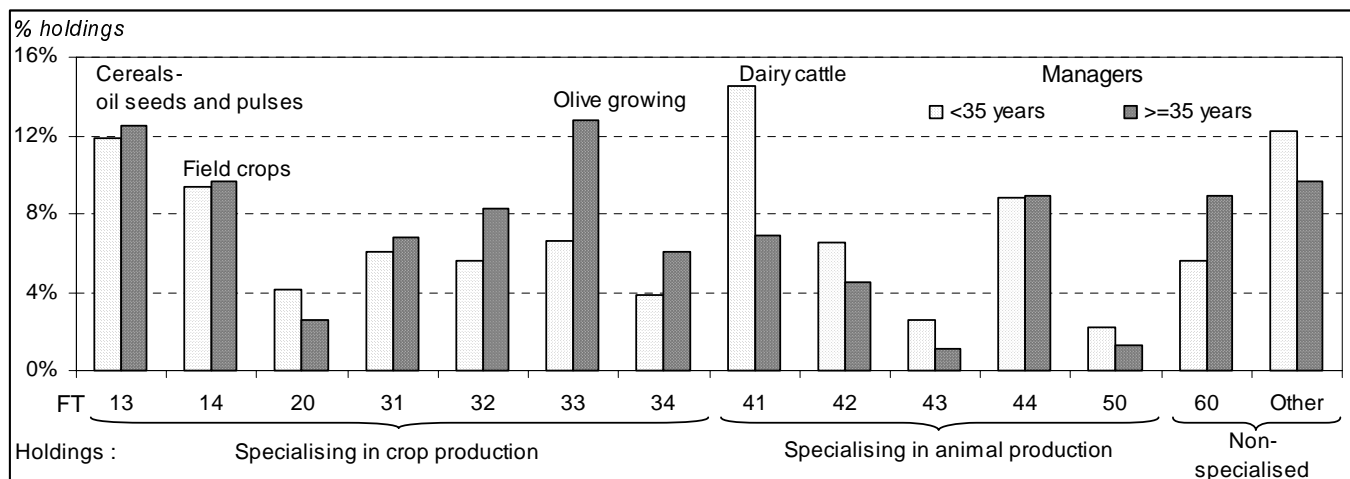


Figure 8: Type of farming, EU-15, 1997

Reduction in part-time work. In EU-12, the proportion of young managers working part time fell slightly between 1989/90 and 1997. In EU-15, as in EU-12, six out of ten young managers were working part time in 1997. The proportion of people working part time on holdings increases overall with age. Thus, if people continue to work until relatively advanced ages, they also tend to work fewer hours.

Multiple incomes. The tendency for young managers to have **more than one job** reduced slightly between 1989/90 and 1997 in EU-12 (**Figure 9**). In 1997, in both EU-15 and EU-12, the rate was more than 40%. Multiple incomes are still essential for the viability of agricultural holdings, but fewer people had more than one job, particularly in Italy, where the proportion fell from 53% to 40%. In EU-15 in 1997, multiple jobs were particularly common in Sweden, Germany and Finland, but relatively uncommon in Belgium and Luxembourg.

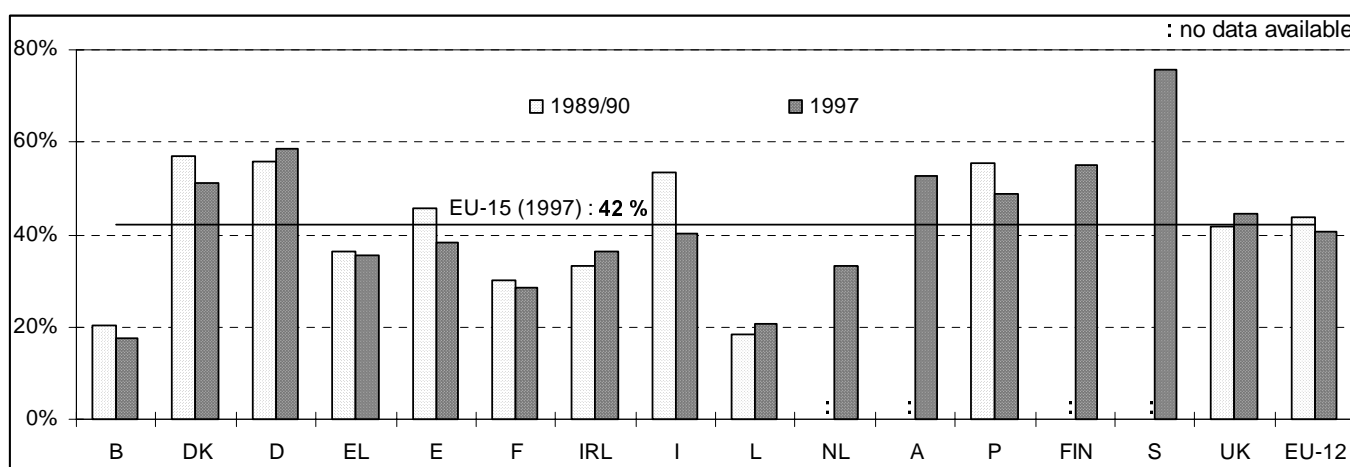


Figure 9: Other gainful activity of young managers (% persons)

European aid for young farmers...

Setting-up aid and supplementary investment aid appeared at Community level in 1981 (Directive 81/528/EEC). These measures, which were amended in 1985, 1991 and 1997, are currently defined in Regulations (EC) No 1257/1999 and (EC) No 1750/1999:

- **Setting-up aid for young farmers.** Persons setting up for the first time may be granted a premium and an interest subsidy, both amounting to a maximum of € 25 000. The recipients must be aged under 40, possess adequate occupational skill and competence, and be setting up for the first time as the manager of an economically viable agricultural holding that meets the minimum standards regarding the environment, hygiene and animal welfare.

- **An increased rate of aid to investment in agricultural holdings.** The total value of the aid, expressed as a percentage of eligible investment, may be increased for young farmers for a period of five years after setting-up. Public aid (national and Community) may, therefore, be as much as 55% (rather than 50%) of the eligible volume of investment in less-favoured areas and 45% (rather than 40%) in other areas.

Young farmers may also benefit from:

- **other rural development measures**, including in particular aid for vocational training. They benefit indirectly from early-retirement aid (for holders and agricultural workers aged over 55) because of the land that this frees up. Certain Member States make this measure conditional upon use by young farmers of the areas that become available.

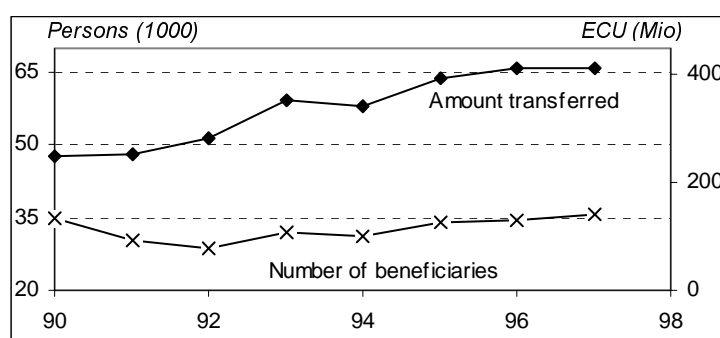
- **privileged access to certain quotas or production rights (milk, wine-growing)**, following a decision by the Member States and under the corresponding Common Organisations of the Markets.

Young people (and hence young farmers in particular) are also one of the groups at which the Community initiative programme LEADER + (2000-2006) is aimed.

... constantly increasing but unevenly used

Between 1990 and 1997, more than 260 000 young farmers benefited from European aid. The annual amount paid out increased by almost two-thirds, reaching a total of ECU 2.7 billion over the period. This growth stemmed partly from the inclusion of the new German Länder and the enlargement of 1995. More than 90% of the aid transferred was setting-up aid. The average number of beneficiaries per year remained fairly constant at around 33 000. The aid was concentrated on a few countries, France accounting for more than half the total aid transferred and more than one third of the beneficiaries.

In Belgium, Sweden and France, the annual amount received by each beneficiary was more than 50% higher than the European average. Some countries did not apply Community aid (the United Kingdom does not apply setting-up aid and Sweden does not increase the rate of investment aid) or stopped applying it (the Netherlands stopped applying setting-up aid in 1992) (Figure 10, Table 5).



Italy: no data for 1996, 1997.

Figure 10 : Annual European aid balance sheet

	Number of beneficiaries	Amount of aid paid out	Annual total per beneficiary (1000 ECU)
B	4.4%	7.3%	17
DK	2.6%	1.4%	6
D	13.3%	7.0%	5
EL	4.5%	4.4%	7
E	18.3%	12.5%	7
F	36.5%	56.6%	17
IRL	2.6%	1.1%	5
I	6.1%	2.4%	4
L	0.4%	0.3%	11
NL	0.4%	0.5%	4
A	2.7%	1.3%	5
P	7.3%	5.0%	7
FIN	0.7%	:	:
S	0.2%	0.3%	16
UK	0.1%	0.0%	4
EU-15	100 %	100 %	10

Table 5: Cumulative balance sheet, EU-15, 1990-1997

Source : Agriculture Directorate-General – Directorate F Horizontal aspects of rural Development.

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