

Structure of agricultural holdings in the EU

by age of holder

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The 1999-2000 Community survey on farm structure farms reveals that:

- On average in the European Union, almost 30% of the individual holders were at least 65 years of age (almost 40% in Italy and in Portugal).
- 52% of the individual holders in the European Union are 55 years old or older. The share of holders aged 55 or more is greatest (60%) for holdings specialised in permanent crops (vines, olive groves, orchards, etc.) and mixed cropping. As these crops are mainly concentrated in the Southern regions of the European Union, it is not surprising that overall the proportion of holders aged 55 or more is highest in Italy (62%) and Portugal (65%).
- 8% of the individual holders in the European Union are less than 35 years old. The share of young farmers is greatest (13%) for holdings specialised in horticulture or in pig or poultry production.



Figure 1: Population pyramid of family labour input (in millions people)

Statistics in focus

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

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Table 1 – Distribution of individual holders by age and according to farm type (FT)

			EU-15	B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL
All farm types	Number of holdings (1000)		6,481.0	59.3	57.3	440.1	813.5	1,236.0	538.0	141.3
	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	8	11	9	16	9	9	10	13
		35-44 years	17	25	24	29	15	16	22	22
		45-54 years	23	23	25	26	20	22	30	26
		≥ 55 years	52	41	42	28	56	53	38	40
FT 1 Specialist field crops	Number of holdings (1000)		1,342.3	8.3	28.5	104.6	189.6	189.1	103.2	5.3
	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	8	7	9	16	11	10	10	14
		35-44 years	17	19	22	31	17	16	24	23
		45-54 years	23	22	23	27	22	21	33	28
		≥ 55 years	51	52	47	26	50	52	34	35
FT 2 Specialist horticulture	Number of holdings (1000)		172.3	4.4	1.1	9.5	13.8	52.8	11.6	0.5
	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	13	15	8	11	15	19	11	14
		35-44 years	22	29	22	31	20	23	25	30
		45-54 years	25	27	26	27	24	22	32	30
		≥ 55 years	40	29	44	32	41	36	32	26
FT 3 Specialist permanent crops	Number of holdings (1000)		2,358.1	2.4	0.6	38.7	429.6	606.9	97.4	0.2
	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	6	14	5	11	7	8	9	14
		35-44 years	14	26	19	24	14	15	19	25
		45-54 years	21	24	30	24	20	21	26	26
		≥ 55 years	60	36	46	42	59	56	45	35
FT 4 Specialist grazing livestock	Number of holdings (1000)		1,366.5	27.8	11.3	161.2	49.0	178.9	208.7	130.5
	Distribution par âge (%)	< 35 years	11	11	10	17	15	12	11	13
		35-44 years	22	23	27	29	17	20	24	22
		45-54 years	26	22	28	26	19	24	32	26
		≥ 55 years	42	44	35	27	48	45	34	40
FT 5 Specialist granivores	Number of holdings (1000)		85.1	3.8	3.5	6.5	3.0	20.7	8.5	0.6
	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	13	16	17	17	9	14	16	16
		35-44 years	25	35	31	27	17	23	35	26
		45-54 years	27	24	24	26	23	27	33	28
		≥ 55 years	35	25	27	30	51	37	15	31
FT 6 Mixed cropping	Number of holdings (1000)		525.4	1.6	1.4	20.0	71.2	86.2	26.8	0.1
	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	5	13	6	17	7	6	7	15
		35-44 years	13	27	21	29	14	13	17	25
		45-54 years	20	26	23	24	20	21	24	29
		≥ 55 years	61	34	50	30	59	61	53	31
FT 7 Mixed livestock holdings	Number of holdings (1000)		171.0	3.3	1.1	21.0	15.5	35.5	26.7	0.4
	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	8	16	8	18	8	6	6	12
		35-44 years	17	32	22	29	14	13	17	29
		45-54 years	23	25	25	24	18	22	25	25
		≥ 55 years	52	27	45	28	60	59	52	34
FT 8 Mixed crops - livestock	Number of holdings (1000)		415.0	7.6	9.9	78.6	41.9	52.0	54.6	3.9
	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	10	10	9	18	10	8	10	14
		35-44 years	20	23	23	30	16	15	22	24
		45-54 years	24	23	26	26	20	22	31	27
		≥ 55 years	46	44	43	26	54	55	37	36

Table 1 – Distribution of individual holders by age and according to farm type (FT)

I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK			
2,136.2	2.8	95.1	194.9	409.3	75.7	75.9	205.6	Number of holdings (1000)		
5	11	7	16	4	11	7	5	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	All farm types
12	23	21	29	11	27	19	18		35-44 years	
20	26	25	26	20	36	28	26		45-54 years	
62	40	46	29	65	25	46	52		>= 55 years	
520.4	0.2	13.0	33.7	35.4	36.2	39.9	35.0	Number of holdings (1000)		
5	4	5	15	5	10	7	4	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	FT 1 <i>Specialist field crops</i>
12	9	19	30	13	25	18	19		35-44 years	
19	16	26	27	19	37	27	26		45-54 years	
63	71	50	28	63	28	49	50		>= 55 years	
44.4	0.0	12.2	1.5	12.3	3.3	0.8	4.3	Number of holdings (1000)		
10	19	11	14	7	10	5	4	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	FT 2 <i>Specialist horticulture</i>
19	23	25	29	14	26	21	16		35-44 years	
24	12	28	29	20	38	30	26		45-54 years	
47	46	36	28	58	26	44	53		>= 55 years	
1,012.1	0.5	4.8	19.8	141.5	0.4	0.4	3.0	Number of holdings (1000)		
4	6	12	13	3	9	5	2	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	FT 3 <i>Specialist permanent crops</i>
12	21	24	26	9	21	13	17		35-44 years	
20	26	26	26	17	36	27	27		45-54 years	
63	47	39	35	71	35	55	54		>= 55 years	
220.4	1.5	47.1	104.4	48.6	27.4	18.5	131.4	Number of holdings (1000)		
8	13	5	16	9	13	8	6	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	FT 4 <i>Specialist grazing livestock</i>
15	26	20	28	18	29	23	17		35-44 years	
22	29	25	26	23	35	31	26		45-54 years	
55	32	51	29	50	23	38	51		>= 55 years	
9.4	0.1	8.0	6.9	6.6	1.4	0.7	5.4	Number of holdings (1000)		
9	6	11	17	7	14	9	5	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	FT 5 <i>Specialist granivores</i>
17	32	30	30	18	32	31	20		35-44 years	
22	28	26	27	27	36	28	27		45-54 years	
53	34	32	25	49	18	32	48		>= 55 years	
218.3	0.0	2.2	5.8	87.1	1.5	1.1	2.2	Number of holdings (1000)		
4	14	8	15	3	10	9	6	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	FT 6 <i>Mixed cropping</i>
11	14	24	29	10	29	20	20		35-44 years	
20	29	28	30	19	38	30	25		45-54 years	
65	43	41	26	69	23	42	50		>= 55 years	
21.1	0.1	3.3	7.2	32.5	0.4	0.6	2.3	Number of holdings (1000)		
6	14	5	18	4	14	8	5	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	FT 7 <i>Mixed livestock holdings</i>
13	36	24	29	13	27	23	24		35-44 years	
22	26	25	26	23	34	25	27		45-54 years	
59	24	46	27	61	25	44	44		>= 55 years	
71.4	0.3	4.5	15.4	45.2	5.2	12.9	11.8	Number of holdings (1000)		
7	11	5	17	4	12	7	4	Distribution by age (%)	< 35 years	FT 8 <i>Mixed crops - livestock</i>
14	18	18	30	12	28	20	20		35-44 years	
21	21	24	27	20	36	28	29		45-54 years	
59	50	54	26	65	24	46	47		>= 55 years	

Table 2 – Size and other characteristics of individual holdings according to age of holder

	Age of holder	EU-15	B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL
Total labour force		0.9	1.2	1.1	1.3	0.7	0.8	1.4	1.2
	< 35 years	1.0	1.3	1.0	1.1	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.0
(AWU/hold)	35-44 years	1.0	1.3	1.2	1.1	0.8	0.8	1.2	1.1
	45-54 years	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.1	0.8	0.8	1.2	1.2
	>= 55 years	0.7	0.9	1.1	1.1	0.6	0.6	0.8	1.3
AA		18.7	22.6	45.7	37.1	4.4	20.3	42.0	31.5
	< 35 years	20.4	28.1	45.9	28.2	6.4	18.0	38.5	34.6
(ha/hold)	35-44 years	20.9	29.0	51.7	30.2	5.4	17.5	39.3	33.3
	45-54 years	18.0	26.2	49.9	28.9	4.9	16.3	36.9	31.9
	>= 55 years	10.5	14.5	38.7	21.6	3.6	12.6	16.8	29.1
Livestock		17.5	70.6	75.4	41.8	3.1	11.6	36.0	45.5
	< 35 years	22.7	102.7	98.5	38.1	5.2	13.1	34.3	50.6
(LSU/hold)	35-44 years	22.8	98.4	94.3	37.8	4.2	11.7	34.4	49.1
	45-54 years	17.8	76.0	81.8	35.9	3.5	10.3	30.0	46.0
	>= 55 years	7.5	37.0	53.2	26.0	2.0	5.0	10.6	40.9
Economic size		18.7	52.9	61.8	41.4	6.3	11.9	43.4	20.7
	< 35 years	21.3	72.7	69.9	32.2	8.6	12.1	35.1	22.8
(ESU/hold)	35-44 years	22.4	69.7	72.5	36.1	7.8	11.4	36.4	23.1
	45-54 years	18.6	58.6	67.1	34.5	7.2	10.7	34.1	21.9
	>= 55 years	10.2	28.5	47.3	26.9	5.2	7.5	15.0	17.7
Share of AA in owner-farmed		57	32	75	36	70	67	36	81
	< 35 years	44	18	70	38	54	38	22	71
(%)	35-44 years	50	24	71	44	63	46	30	78
	45-54 years	58	34	74	49	68	60	41	83
	>= 55 years	73	46	80	54	79	75	59	87
Holdings practising organic farming		1.8	0.9	4.3	2.0	0.2	1.3	1.0	1.1
	< 35 years	2.6	1.3	5.2	2.1	0.2	1.4	1.4	1.0
(%)	35-44 years	2.7	1.4	7.4	2.9	0.2	1.5	1.6	1.2
	45-54 years	2.1	1.1	5.4	2.0	0.2	1.3	1.1	1.3
	>= 55 years	1.2	0.3	1.7	1.2	0.2	1.2	0.3	0.9
Holdings keeping agricultural accounts		:	40	97	37	1	11	50	58
	< 35 years	:	69	97	34	3	15	60	69
(%)	35-44 years	:	60	98	38	2	13	55	65
	45-54 years	:	41	97	38	2	11	46	59
	>= 55 years	:	16	98	30	1	6	20	49

• Holdings are generally smaller when the farmer is older. Thus, the holdings held by a person aged 55 or more occupy on average 0.7 annual work units (AWU) and 10 hectares of agricultural area (AA), against 1.0 AWU and 21 hectares of AA on average for the holdings held by a person of less than 45 years old. On average, the older farmers also hold far fewer the animals than younger farmers (7.5 livestock units large by a holder aged 55 or more, against 23 units by a holderr of less than 45 years old).

Table 2 – Size and other characteristics of individual holdings according to age of holder

I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK	Age of holder	
0.6	1.6	2.0	0.9	1.3	1.3	0.9	1.5		Total labour force
0.9	1.8	1.8	0.9	1.3	1.3	0.8	1.3	< 35 years	
0.7	1.6	1.9	1.0	1.2	1.2	0.9	1.5	35-44 years	(AWU/hold)
0.7	1.7	1.9	1.1	1.3	1.2	0.9	1.5	45-54 years	
0.6	1.3	1.7	0.7	1.2	1.1	0.7	1.4	>= 55 years	
6.1	45.4	20.0	17.0	9.3	27.3	37.7	70.2		AA
9.4	64.0	15.1	15.4	13.6	32.6	38.4	74.8	< 35 years	
7.6	53.6	20.1	15.5	10.6	31.0	41.2	78.6	35-44 years	(ha/hold)
5.7	49.2	21.1	15.5	8.0	26.3	38.5	70.8	45-54 years	
4.5	29.7	18.5	11.2	6.4	21.2	27.3	57.3	>= 55 years	
4.6	61.3	72.4	13.4	6.1	14.6	24.3	73.2		Livestock
10.2	92.7	79.0	16.0	10.0	19.0	25.4	74.1	< 35 years	
7.6	74.6	86.0	15.3	7.8	16.8	27.7	82.9	35-44 years	(LSU/hold)
4.8	67.4	73.7	14.9	6.2	13.8	24.1	72.6	45-54 years	
2.7	36.3	56.8	9.5	3.0	9.6	14.1	30.6	>= 55 years	
8.9	35.9	89.6	11.4	6.4	23.2	26.2	49.5		Economic size
15.6	51.2	94.1	12.6	10.8	27.8	26.7	46.0	< 35 years	
12.8	44.0	96.5	12.7	8.2	25.9	29.0	55.8	35-44 years	(ESU/hold)
9.4	40.1	90.0	12.7	6.3	22.0	26.3	48.9	45-54 years	
6.5	20.9	68.4	8.3	4.2	16.5	16.2	36.1	>= 55 years	
76	46	71	76	72	69	54	66		Share of AA in owner-farmed
54	38	60	66	51	59	46	62	< 35 years	
62	40	66	70	57	64	55	60	35-44 years	(%)
73	50	70	74	68	71	59	62	45-54 years	
84	56	74	78	80	79	65	68	>= 55 years	
2.1	0.8	0.7	9.7	0.2	6.1	11.0	0.8		Holdings practising organic farming
3.7	0.3	0.8	11.0	0.4	6.0	14.5	0.7	< 35 years	
3.1	1.2	1.1	11.5	0.3	7.6	14.5	1.4	35-44 years	(%)
2.4	0.7	0.9	10.1	0.2	6.6	13.6	0.9	45-54 years	
1.7	0.7	0.3	6.7	0.1	3.9	7.4	0.6	>= 55 years	
31	42	100	5	93	20	:	:		Holdings keeping agricultural accounts
51	66	100	7	80	25	:	:	< 35 years	
41	55	100	6	88	23	:	:	35-44 years	(%)
33	47	100	5	93	19	:	:	45-54 years	
26	25	100	3	97	15	:	:	>= 55 years	

• The holders aged 55 or more are owners of 73% of the areas that they use, against 44% for the holders of less than 35 years old.

• More of the younger holders keep agricultural accounts. More of them also practise organic farming.

Population Pyramids



*Figure 2: Population pyramid of family labour input
(in millions of people)*



*Figure 3: Population pyramid of family labour input
(in millions of AWU)*

Definitions

Holding: Single unit, both technically and economically, which has a single management and which produces agricultural products.

Agricultural area (AA): Total area taken up by arable land, permanent pasture and meadow, land used for permanent crops and kitchen gardens.

Standard gross margin (SGM): Difference between gross production and specific fixed costs.

Economic size: For each production, the area (or herd) is multiplied by the product's SGM coefficient. These estimated figures are added together to obtain the **economic size** of the holding. It is expressed in European size units (ESUs), each equivalent to €1200. The relative importance of the SGMs of the various productions makes it possible to classify holdings by **type of farming (FT)**.

Holder: Natural person, group of natural persons or the legal person on whose account and in whose name the holding operated and who is legally and economically responsible for the holding, i.e. who takes the economic risks of the holding.

Sole holder: Natural person who is the sole holder of a holding, which is not linked to any holdings of other holders, either by common management or by other arrangements.

Farm labour force: All persons having completed compulsory education (having reached school-leaving age) who carried out farm work on the holding under survey during the 12 months up to the survey day.

Annual Work Unit (AWU): An annual work unit corresponds to the work performed by a person undertaking full-time agricultural work for the holding. 'Full-time' means the minimum hours required by the national provisions governing contracts of employment. If these do not indicate the number of annual hours, then 1800 hours is to be taken as the minimum figure (225 working days of 8 hours per day).

Livestock Unit (LU): A livestock unit corresponds (in terms of quantity of food energy needed) to a dairy cow producing 3000 kg of milk a year.

Organic farming: According to certain set standards and rules laid down and specified in Council Regulation (EC) No 2092/91 of 24 June 1991, as last amended by Commission Regulation (EC) No 1488/97 of 29 July 1997 or, where applicable, the most recent legislation, on "organic production on agricultural products and indications referring thereto on agricultural products and foodstuffs" and/or the equivalent Community or national rules for organic production of livestock.

Further information:

➤ Databases

NewCronos, Eurofarm Domain

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