

Farm structure survey – common land

Statistics Explained

This article presents the methods of recording agricultural [common land](#) in the [farm structure surveys \(FSS\)](#) by countries in the [European Union \(EU\)](#) . It highlights problems of comparability across countries and between FSS 2010 and [FSS 2013](#) . The analysis and findings are based on the [national methodological reports \(NMRs\)](#) . The article is part of an [online publication](#) on methodological articles dealing with the farm structure survey.

Methods used by countries to record common land

[Common land](#) has not been consistently covered by all countries in the FSS before 2010 (see Table 1), despite it having been covered by legislation since at least 1988. [Regulation \(EC\) No 1166/2008](#) made it clearer that the data on the [utilised agricultural area \(UAA\)](#) should cover common land in all countries.

Common land:	Method A: Area of common land rented by, or allotted to the agricultural holding (evidence of written or oral agreement) (*)	Method B: Area of common land neither rented by, nor allotted to the agricultural holding; actual common land		
		Option 1: Allocated to agricultural holdings	Option 2: Common land units – local units managing the common land	Option 3: Common land units – aggregates of common land at regional level
included in FSS even before 2010	Spain, Italy, Latvia, Poland	Germany (excl. Bavaria), Cyprus, Ireland, Norway	Germany (excl. Bavaria), Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Austria, Portugal, Romania	-
included in FSS since 2010 (*)	Hungary, Iceland, Serbia	Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro	Belgium, France, Serbia	Ireland, Greece, Croatia (2013 only), Hungary, United Kingdom
does not exist		Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden		
exists but is not (all) included in the FSS				
(*) Not considered common land in statistics				
(*) Serbia carried out the 2010 FSS in 2012				

Table 1: Methods to include common land in FSS 2013

Therefore, since the 2010 FSS, common land has been included in the surveys by countries in a more harmonised way.

Where common land is clearly rented by or allotted to an agricultural holding (based on written or oral agreement), this land is not considered any more common land in statistics, but land normally used by the agricultural holding, see *Method A* .

Where common land is neither rented by, nor allotted to the agricultural holding, this land is actual common land in statistics and 3 different options (or some combination of these) to record common land areas have been used, see *Method B* .

Method A. Area of common land rented by, or allotted to the agricultural holding — not considered common land in statistics

- In Latvia, common land is all attributed to the agricultural holdings as rented or allotted area.
- In Spain, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Iceland and Serbia, common land is partly attributed as rented or allotted area to the agricultural holdings.

In Latvia, formerly common land now leased out to several agricultural holdings is regarded as land used by the respective holdings. In Spain, if during the agricultural production year, the owner leases or freely assigns all or part of the land to a single holding, the transferred/leased part is allocated to the holding that individually works this land. In Italy, part of the common land is allotted to agricultural holdings in a specific and

formal way. Hungary stressed that it does not define common land exclusively used by a holding as common land. Poland also includes common land area in the leased land of the holdings. In Iceland, common land on the lowland (private properties) is accounted for under the UAA of the agricultural holdings. Finally, Serbia mentioned that part of common land is leased or transferred to agricultural holdings.

Method B. Area of common land neither rented by, nor allotted to the agricultural holding — actual common land

This is the so-called **common land** over which common grazing rights are enjoyed. The following 3 different ways to include such common land were agreed and used by the countries (combinations of these 3 different options are possible as well):

Option 1 - Common land was included in the land use data of the agricultural holdings making use of the common land, using a statistical method

Under this option, statistical bodies allocate the common land to agricultural holdings, usually proportionally on acreage or livestock basis (for example, in Slovenia) or on the basis of a model (for example, in Montenegro).

- Poland, Slovenia, Norway and Montenegro included all actual common land in the area of the agricultural holdings which make use of the common land.
- In Germany, Croatia and Cyprus, a part of the actual common land was included in the area of the holdings making use of the common land.

While common land is included in the area of the agricultural holding making use of the common land, the livestock grazing on the common land belonging to the agricultural holding is included in the number of livestock (LSU) of the same agricultural holding. Thus, there is a direct relation between the common land used by a specific agricultural holding, the number of livestock using this common land and the farm manager making use of the common land.

Option 2 - Common land was included by means of common land units representing local units managing the common land

Countries that used this option to include common land, sent not only records with data representing agricultural holdings, but also records representing common land units. These are legal units, municipalities, parishes etc. that manage and offer services to agricultural holdings. Common land units are not agricultural holdings as they do not produce agricultural products; they provide a service to agricultural holdings. The records representing the common land units should contribute only to the total areas and not to the number of holdings or other indicators. In the FSS data transmitted to Eurostat, records referring to this type of farms are marked in a special field.

- Bulgaria, Spain, France, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Romania and Serbia recorded all actual common land as belonging to the common land units.
- In Germany and Cyprus, a part of the actual common land is recorded in common land units.

Common land is recorded in common land units providing the service to agricultural holdings with livestock, while the livestock grazing on these areas is recorded in the numbers of livestock of the agricultural holdings which are making use of the common land. There is no direct relation between the common land used by a specific agricultural holding, the number of livestock grazing on this common land and the characteristics of the farm manager making use of the common land.

Option 3 - Common land was included by means of common land units representing aggregates of common land at regional level

Countries which used this option sent not only records with data representing agricultural holdings, but also records representing neither a holding nor even an administrative unit, but a regional sum of the common land. Initially, countries applying this method were asked to specify the regional common land in a separate table. This approach was changed and now Eurostat receives records representing common land units at regional level, which are formatted and included in the datasets. The regional records should contribute only to the total areas and not to other indicators. In the FSS data transmitted to Eurostat, records referring to this type of farm are marked in a special field.

- In Ireland, Greece, Hungary and the United Kingdom, all actual common land was aggregated in records at regional level.
- In Croatia, only a part of the actual common land was delivered in records at regional level.

The area of common land is recorded in specific records at regional level, while the livestock grazing on these areas is recorded in the number of livestock of the agricultural holdings making use of the common land. There is no direct relation between the common land used by a specific agricultural holding, the number of livestock grazing on this common land and the characteristics of the farm manager making use of the common land.

By country, more detailed information on common land methods used until the FSS 2013 is further presented.

Bulgaria

In the previous census in 2003, as well as in the sample surveys in 2005 and 2007, such information was not collected. Common land in Bulgaria was included for the first time in the 2010 census and then in 2013 in the form of 264 common land units at municipality level i.e. Local Administrative Units 1 (LAU 1). In Bulgaria, common land is always permanent grassland (pasture and meadow and rough grazing).

In 2010, the information on common land was obtained from different administrations, which managed 858 563 hectares of utilised agricultural common land:

- 264 municipal administrations for Municipality Land Fund – 599 141 hectares.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food State Land Fund – 90 467 hectares.
- Executive Forestry Agency for forest area not planted and allowed for grazing – 168 995 hectares.

According to the 2010 census, 191 000 holdings collectively used common area for animal grazing in Bulgaria.

Compared to the 2010 survey, the area of common land remained practically stable at 856 026 hectares in 2013. Common land is expected to decrease in the future as administrative steps are under way in order to allocate common land to holdings with animals for individual use.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Bulgaria in 2010 and 2013.

Germany

Common land is not very widespread in Germany and consists mainly of permanent grassland.

Part of the common land is allocated to holdings. The other part is recorded under common land units (however, they are not marked and cannot be identified in the FSS dataset). Statistics on common land are not reported in the national methodological report. The common land belonging to alpine pasture cooperatives in Bavaria is not included.

See the [national methodological reports](#) of Germany in 2010 and 2013.

Ireland

UAA data for the FSS reference years prior to 2010 always excluded common land. The area of common land for 2007 was however estimated. Common land data for the FSS carried out in 2010 and 2013, as well as the estimate for the FSS 2007, are based on the same methodology: commonage areas were grouped at the level of [NUTS 4](#) regions to 27 records marked in a special field. These records showed that in Ireland in 2010 and 2013, common land is always permanent grassland - rough grazing.

The estimates of 421 041 hectares for 2007, 422 415 hectares for 2010 and 423 020 hectares for 2013 were obtained from the [agriculture ministry \(DAFM\)](#). These data are the most accurate data in the state for declared commonage and follow a year-long review undertaken by DAFM of all declared common land in Ireland. This comprehensive review consisted of physical inspections of the areas and/or a review of the ortho-imagery. It involved excluding all ineligible features such as scrub, rock, roadways, forests, etc. to construct accurate areas. The information on commonage land is the total eligible area of all commonages declared for the purposes

of all area-based schemes (e.g. [Single Payment Scheme](#) , [Disadvantaged Area Scheme](#) , [Rural Environment Protection Scheme](#) , [Agri-Environment Options Scheme](#) etc.) operating in Ireland. The areas were established following a comprehensive review carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture during 2009 and 2010. The review was undertaken under the provisions of [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 73/2009](#) , [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1698/2005](#) , [Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 1122/2009](#) and [Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 1975/2006](#) (now replaced by [Commission Regulation \(EU\) No 65/2011](#)).

There were 13 578 agricultural holdings which indicated on the questionnaire that common land was used in 2010. In the FSS 2007, there were about 9 700 agricultural holdings using common land.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Ireland in 2010 and 2013.

Greece

Common land was included for the first time in 2010. In both 2010 and 2013, Greece recorded all common land in the form of 51 records at regional level, representing the 51 NUTS 3 regions of the country. Common land in Greece consists only of permanent grassland - rough grazing, used as pasture for cattle, sheep and goats.

In 2010, the statistical correspondents in municipalities, in cooperation with the staff of ELSTAT's Regional Statistical Offices, filled in the questionnaires at the level of Communal Department (LAU 2). The permanent grassland area collected with this common land survey was compared with the data from the Annual Agricultural Statistical Survey. However, the data from the Annual Statistical Survey were available as aggregations of grassland areas, and were not broken down by type of grassland, tenure status, or whether it was used for grazing.

The utilised agricultural common land was 1 699 580 hectares in 2010 and 1 475 268 hectares in 2013 (a decrease by 13 %). However, compared to the 2010 survey, in the FSS 2013, the common land collection methodology changed from the collection through a survey questionnaire from statistical correspondents in the municipalities (LAU 2 level), to the collection of common land data from the Payment and Control Agency for Guidance and Guarantee Community Aid (OPEKEPE) which, in turn, collected the data from applicants for Community Aid (farm holders) under its competence as the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS) operator. While the overall decrease in common land is partially justified by the decrease in the livestock units, this methodological change could also have a partial influence on the decrease in common land that was reported between the years 2010 to 2013.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Greece in 2010 and 2013.

Spain

- If during the agricultural production year, the owner leases or freely assigns all or part of the land to a single holding, the transferred/leased part is allocated to the holding that individually works this land.
- In the case of common land used jointly by several holdings, since it is not possible to assign a specific section to each farmer, the common land is considered a separate unit and all the land (without the cattle grazing on it) is counted in that unit. The relevant common or local authority (state, autonomous community, neighbourhood community, parish, etc.) is listed as an owner of the unit.

As concerns the second case, in the 2010 FSS, there were 4 696 common land units covering 4 205 593 hectares of total area, of which 1 727 617 hectares were UAA, while in the 2013 FSS, there were 3 803 common land units covering a total area of 3 511 487 hectares, of which 1 605 369 hectares were UAA. This means a 7 % decrease in UAA in 2013 compared to 2010. This decrease is caused by a different assignment of the land between holdings.

Common land units in Spain usually record permanent grassland (used as pasture for cattle), but also [arable land](#) , [permanent crops](#) and land not forming part of the utilised agricultural area such as wooded area and other land. In most cases, arable land and permanent crops are not considered part of common land.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Spain in 2010.

France

Common land was integrated in the FSS for the first time in 2010. It is mainly pastures where stockbreeders of herbivores can send livestock for a period during the year.

Common land was managed by various types of units employing 1 800 people for 676 [annual work units](#) (AWU) in 2010 and 2 019 people for 624 AWU in 2013. These units were paid by stockbreeders for the service, they filled in declarations for [Common agricultural policy](#) (CAP) subsidies (about grassland) and gave back those subsidies to the stockbreeders proportionally to the number of animals they sent to the common land unit and the duration of the grazing period.

In 2010, there were 1 410 common land units managing and providing common land covering 749 492 hectares of UAA, of which 99.6 % was permanent grassland and meadows. Similarly, in 2013, there were 1 272 common land units providing common land covering 675 128 hectares of UAA, of which 99.2 % was permanent grassland and meadows. Thus, in 2013, the number of common land units as well as the UAA used by these units dropped by 10 % compared to 2010. This trend can be partially explained by the fact that some investigators and farmers may have misunderstood the definition of common land during the FSS 2010 when this concept was introduced for the first time.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of France in 2010 and 2013.

Croatia

Use of common land is a frequent practice in Croatia. However, common land has been included in the FSS only since 2010.

In 2010 and 2013, common land was allocated to farmers on the basis of a model, as farmers usually have problems to estimate the share of common land they are actually using. For the model calculation, the number of animals which grazed the common land and the number of months when animals grazed the common land was needed (they were both included in the questionnaire). Other technical coefficients were needed as well: daily intake of grass expressed in hay by different kind of livestock (obtained from livestock specialists) and data on average yield of hay on pastures (obtained from annual survey on yields of crops). As reference, 12 kg of hay as daily intake for cattle (life weight 500 kg), 1.5 kg for sheep (life weight 60 kg) and 1.2 kg for goats (life weight 50 kg) were used. The following formula was applied: *area of common land used by the farm = (number of cattle * daily intake of hay + number of sheep * daily intake of hay + number of goats * daily intake of hay) * number of days on common land / average yield of hay from pasture .*

In 2013, besides the common land estimated through the model, Croatia included common land areas (rough grazing areas) obtained from administrative sources, in the form of 14 regional records (at NUTS 3 level, same as LAU 1 - counties).

For 2010 and previous survey years, it is not possible to identify common land in the data. In 2013, only the common land in the regional records could be identified.

Compared to the 2010 survey, when the total common land estimated based on the model accounted for 160 000 hectares, in the FSS 2013, the additional 278 891 hectares from administrative sources increased the total common land to 438 891 hectares. Therefore, a calculated increase by 174 % or 278 891 hectares over the years would obviously be determined by the change of methodology rather than by the increase of common land.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Croatia in 2010 and 2013.

Italy

In Italy, two different situations exist:

- The area is allotted to agricultural holdings, in a specific and formal way. The common land allotted is recorded by each beneficiary farm as any other type of land. The common land of these holdings cannot be distinguished in the data. In the land ownership section of the questionnaire, the common land of these holdings has been indicated as rented or in free use in accordance with the kind of formal agreement between the institution/municipality and the farm. The "free use" is a particular form of contract where the holder gets to use the land as a "loan for use" but the land remains the property of the owner.
- The area of common land is not allotted to an agricultural holding but it is at the disposal of the individuals having right of use. The institution or the municipality managing the common land is treated as common land unit. The common land units have in some cases not only common land but also agricultural land and livestock of their own.

Declared common land covers only utilised agricultural area, mainly permanent grassland and meadow. Other land, such as the non-utilised agricultural areas, wooded areas and non-agricultural areas belonging to common land units are not regarded as common land.

Although in both census years (2000 and 2010) common land has been included in the population using the same data collection methodology, in 2010 a pre-survey on the Regions and on the “Consulta delle Proprietà Collettive” was carried out to identify all common land units existing in the country. This operation was not done in 2000. The 2010 NMR mentions that this change could have had an impact on permanent grassland area (and consequently on UAA and total area) in the time series.

The 2010 census recorded 2 233 common land units, managing 610 165 hectares of utilised agricultural common land (5 % of the total UAA). Compared to 2010, in 2013 the number of common land units dropped to 1 447 units managing 285 266 hectares, which would mean a decrease of common land by 53 %. Italy changed the [survey coverage](#) between 2010 and 2013, by not covering the smallest holdings/units in 2013. However, the change in coverage does not explain the trend in common land, being known that common land units have usually very big areas. Possible reasons are some problems that hindered in 2013 the identification of common land units (the questions addressed to the public bodies proved to be insufficient to allow identification of all of those having common land).

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Italy in 2010 and 2013.

Cyprus

Common land was included in all survey years with the same methodology that was used in the FSS 2013:

- Common land was collected as agricultural land with different exploitation status and was added to the land of the agricultural holding. This part of common land cannot be identified in the data.
- A proportion of common land that could not be attributed to the agricultural holdings making use of the common land was included in special common land units (354 in 2010 and 226 in 2013). The common land is only UAA (including permanent grassland and meadow), even if the common land units include also e.g. unutilised agricultural area. In 2010, the utilised agricultural common land counted on these units was 805 hectares (1 % of total UAA in Cyprus). In 2013, the UAA on common land units dropped by 64 %, i.e. to 292 hectares, out of which 13 % was permanent grassland, 58 % was arable land, the remaining 29 % was mainly permanent crops and a non-significant share was kitchen gardens. The changes in the number of common land units and in the common land are mostly attributed to better explanations and clarifications given to the enumerators and hence to the holders providing the information. Also, holders seem to prefer, more and more, to use their own land for cultivating crops or for animal grazing, even though land could be rented from someone else.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Cyprus in 2010 and 2013.

Latvia

In Latvia, common land existed in the 90s but since 2000 all such land is distributed to user holdings and is defined as “agricultural area utilised for farming by tenant”. The area of common land thus cannot be identified in the FSS dataset.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Latvia in 2010 and 2013.

Hungary

In Hungary common land was included for the first time in 2010 data.

- Data on common land exclusively used by a single agricultural holding was included in the land of the agricultural holdings making use of the common land and cannot be identified in the dataset.
- Data on common land used by several agricultural holdings was collected with a simplified questionnaire from local municipality governments, educational and social institutions, parks of municipality governments, the Ministry of Defence, the Hungarian railway, the National Land Fund Management Organisation and parishes. The data on common land were aggregated at NUTS 3 level and 20 records were added to datasets in 2010 and 2013, representing the aggregated common land at regional level. In total, in 2010,

these 20 records covered 73 975 hectares of common land recorded as permanent grassland and meadow - rough grazing. Compared to 2010, for the same number of NUTS 3 records, a decrease of 9 % in the common land was recorded in 2013, resulting in a total of 67 228 hectares of common land. The common land units also record forestry and/or unutilised agricultural area, but common land is considered only permanent grassland and meadow – rough grazing.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Hungary in 2010 and in 2013.

Austria

Common land has been included in all FSS surveys in the form of common land units.

The national body responsible for common land is an agrarian community. In Austria an agrarian community is described as an association of real estate property owners, who have a common right of ownership over a piece of land, the so-called common land. The agrarian community is a public body and thus an independent legal body, which can acquire a title and incur debts. Each agrarian community must have a chairman, the plenary assembly of all members is the most substantial decision-maker and often there is also an executive committee or a committee. There are different possibilities to manage the common land. Predominantly, the area is managed jointly (in one unit). But the area could also be physically divided, with individual members managing assigned parts independently. Some agrarian communities are a few centuries old, but the legal form “agrarian community” has only existed for some decades. Previously they were organized in other legal forms. The historical development of the individual agrarian communities can be quite different. Mostly they resulted from common property of farmers of one village in alpine pastures or forests.

The UAA of the common land units is predominantly made up of grassland. Only very few agrarian communities own arable land (about 50 units with arable land in 2013). Agrarian communities can also own some wooded areas and other land. In most cases those common land units are situated in the alpine region; so practically the “other land” comprises infertile land, heaths, rock, scree, marshland, tracks etc. Machinery in the possession of the agrarian communities is irrelevant. Work is mostly done by the members of the agrarian community. Sometimes a herder, milker, or cheese maker is paid.

In 2010 there were 2 715 common land units which had 252 872 hectares of utilised agricultural common land. Compared to 2010, the number of common land units increased in 2013 by 59 units, i.e. to total of 2 774 common land units. In contrary, the UAA covered by these units decreased by 20 % to 202 133 hectares in 2013. The decline of permanent grassland is caused by various reasons (e.g. an increase of permanent grassland no longer used for production, scrub encroachment and forest growth etc.). Alpine pastures often have a gradual transition to wooded area or unproductive area (heaths, rock, scree, marshland etc.). It is difficult to distinguish these areas from the forage areas. With the progressive use of GIS-tools and aerial photographs, this separation of areas is done more accurately than in the past.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Austria in 2010 and 2013.

Poland

In Poland, the significance of common land is low. Therefore, Poland did not include a separate question on the area of common land in the questionnaire. However, where an agricultural holding grazed animals on common land (even outside a written or oral agreement), Poland recorded this area as leased land area of those holdings that used the common land. Thus common land cannot be identified in the FSS dataset.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Poland in 2010 and 2013.

Portugal

In Portugal, common land has been recorded as belonging to common land units. Common land is owned and managed by local communities. Common land is common adjacent grounds for agricultural, forestry, silvo-pastoral or apicultural uses, notably cattle grazing, cultivation, harvesting of wood and scrub, etc. For the purpose of representation, planning, management and auditing, local communities have an assembly of counterparts, a governing board and an auditing commission. In general, the governing board is composed of a group of inhabitants of the commune where the common land is located, and may also be managed by the commune office. As a rule, it has no permanent workers or livestock.

In 2010, 368 common land units covered an area of 171 351 hectares, of which 127 660 hectares were UAA. In 2013, 245 common land units covered an area of 129 951 hectares, of which 102 239 hectares were UAA. In 2010 and 2013, almost all UAA recorded under the common land units was permanent grassland. About 7 % in 2010 and about 6 % in 2013 of the total permanent grassland in Portugal was common land. Besides UAA, common land units also included unutilised agricultural area, wooded area and other land. However, only the UAA recorded under the common land units is regarded as common land.

In comparison with 2010, the common land area decreased by 20 % in 2013. Comparisons should take into account, besides the sampling errors in 2013, that it is often very difficult for the common land governing board to indicate the area in a precise manner as common land extends through large open hilly mountainous areas, with poor soils and pastures or forest land.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Portugal in 2010 and 2013.

Romania

Since 2007, common land has been recorded using the same methodology, i.e. common land units. In Romania, the common land represents the area of pastures and meadows in the administration of local councils (commune halls) and is used in different forms: rental, lease, or against a fee. The local councils can be seen as common land units and the whole area with pasture and meadows used in common by different agricultural holdings within the locality was registered. These common land units can, however, encompass other land, which is not regarded as common land, but is recorded under relevant headings (e.g. arable land, permanent land, unutilised agricultural land, wooded land etc.). Some of these units also had livestock. All common land units were legal persons.

In 2010, the total number of common land units with common land was 2 651 and the total area with pasture and meadows identified as common land was of 1 497 764 hectares. Other land of common land units included unutilised agricultural land of 156 203 hectares, wooded area of 358 407 hectares and other land of 49 960 hectares.

In 2013, the number of common land units increased by 73, reaching a total of 2 724 common land units that covered 1 514 634 hectares of common land (reported all under "permanent grassland and meadow"). In comparison with 2010, the common land area remained practically stable.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Romania in 2010 and 2013.

Slovenia

Until 2010, common land was not included in the UAA data sent to Eurostat. Estimates of common land however exist for previous survey years (see Table 2). However, as it proved difficult to provide data on common land used by each agricultural holding when conducting surveys, only data at national level are available until 2010. In 2010 and 2013, data on common land were gathered from administrative data; common land was assigned proportionally to agricultural holdings on the basis of the LSU and was added to the total UAA of the agricultural holdings making use of the area. The area of common land consists only of pastures (rough grazing).

In 2010, common land covered 8 221 hectares (i.e. 2 % of UAA). The NMR 2013 indicates that there were 1 807 holdings using in total 8 733 hectares of common land in 2013, i.e. 6 % increase compared to 2010.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Slovenia in 2010 and 2013.

United Kingdom

Common land was not included in the FSS until 2010. Estimates of common land at national level, however, exist for previous survey years (see Table 2).

In 2010 and 2013, common land was included in 106 records at NUTS 3 level with the same total of 1 195 246 hectares. Common land is always permanent grassland - rough grazing.

Much of the common land is found in remote upland areas, and even when the land is not so, it has usually received no inputs to improve its agricultural quality. In many instances the land has at least one special designation that prevents agricultural improvement of the land. Thus common land is (almost) exclusively

rough grazing (and not pastures or meadows). The method used to derive common land estimates varies slightly throughout the United Kingdom. In Wales and Northern Ireland, the statisticians were able to use data from administrative systems, which capture the area of common land upon which subsidy payments are made. They were then able to aggregate this to NUTS 3 level estimates. In Scotland and England this data is not readily available, making the situation slightly more complex. Details of the methodologies employed in these two countries are presented in the [national methodological reports](#) of the United Kingdom in 2010 and 2013.

Iceland

In Iceland, common land includes mainly heathland areas belonging to the municipalities or under their supervision and is used for grazing of livestock during the summer. Information concerning the size of this land is not collected yet and efforts are being undertaken to record these data under special common land units in the future.

Some proportion of common land on the lowland (private properties) is, however, accounted for under the UAA of agricultural holdings.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Iceland in 2010 and 2013.

Norway

The extent of common agricultural land is insignificant in Norway and unknown. As far as common agricultural land exists, it is distributed among the users and thus included in agricultural holdings as type of UAA “for tenant farming”.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Norway in 2010 and 2013.

Switzerland

In Switzerland, common land mainly refers to summer grazing pastures, however no information on the area and number of holdings using common land is currently collected.

Montenegro

In Montenegro common land was included in the FSS 2010. Common land (mountain land) was assigned to agricultural holdings. The model calculation of common land used the number of livestock grazing on common land and the number of days of grazing. These data were collected by the census. Other necessary data were daily consumption of grass expressed in the form of hay for different types of livestock, and average hay harvested from pasture land. The following quantities were included for the calculation: 12 kg of hay daily for bovines (live weight 500 kg), 1.5 kg of hay for sheep (live weight 60 kg), and 1.2 kg for goats (live weight 50 kg). The average yield of hay from pastures of 200 kg/hectares is from regular statistical survey. The average yield of hay from pasture is yield of grazing presented in the form of hay. The formula used for the calculation is: *Utilised common land area = ((number of bovines * daily hay consumption) + (number of sheep * daily hay consumption) + (number of goats * daily hay consumption) + (number of horses * daily hay consumption)) * number of days on the common land / average yield of hay from pasture*. The data on used common land received in this manner were added to the holdings' pasture area. Implicitly, this area was included in the total utilised agricultural area, as well as in the total available area of the agricultural holdings. The total area of common land cannot be identified in the dataset delivered to Eurostat.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Montenegro in 2010.

Serbia

The local government bodies (municipalities) in charge of common land (common pastures and grassland) which is neither let on lease nor transferred to another agricultural holding, but is rather used for practising rights of common pasture, are regarded as common land units. Data on common land were obtained on the basis of the agricultural census questionnaire filled in by municipalities. According to the results obtained in Serbia, in total 158 common land units used 200 156 hectares of common land in 2010, which represents 28 % of the total area of permanent grassland.

For more information, see the [national methodological reports](#) of Serbia in 2010.

Statistics on common land

Table 2 shows the data corresponding to *Methods B*, between 2000 and 2013. These data are identifiable in the dataset and/or are reported in the [national methodological reports](#) (NMRs). The common land area can be identified in the data only when corresponding to *Method B option 2* or *Method B option 3*. Common land assigned to agricultural holdings (*Method B option 1*) cannot be identified. Even when common land units record land other than UAA, only the land which is part of UAA is reported as common land in Table 2 (in line with the definition of [common land](#)).

Country	2000	2003	2005	2007	2010	2013	% UAA 2010	% UAA 2013
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	858 563	856 026	19	18
Germany	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ireland	-	-	-	421 041 e	422 415	423 020	8	9
Greece	-	-	-	-	1 699 580	1 475 268	33	30
Spain	2 554 595	2 367 515	2 353 229	2 246 267	1 727 617	1 605 369	7	7
France	-	-	-	-	749 492	675 128	3	2
Croatia	-	-	-	-	160 000	438 891	12	28
Italy	653 113 e	655 791 e	635 393 e	637 210 e	610 165	285 266	5	2
Cyprus	-	1 007 e	386 e	334 e	805	292	1	0.5
Hungary	-	-	-	-	73 975	67 228	2	1
Austria	413 659 e	-	370 663 e	240 468	252 872	202 133	9	7
Portugal	70 690 e	124 489 e	147 900 e	161 748 e	127 660	102 239	3	3
Romania ⁽¹⁾	-	2 484 922 e	939 755 e	734 535 e	1 497 764	1 514 634	11	12
Slovenia	22 786 e	22 786 e	22 786 e	9 062 e	8 221	8 733	2	2
United Kingdom	199 474 e	1 207 450 e	207 142 e	209 205 e	1 195 246	1 195 246	7	7
Iceland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Norway	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Switzerland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Montenegro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Serbia	-	-	-	-	200 156	-	6	-

Note: The table presents the part of the common land data which can be identified in the dataset or is reported in the NMRs

Special values:

- Common land data were not collected in the FSS.
- : Common land data were collected in the FSS but exact figure is unknown.
- e National estimate of common land

⁽¹⁾ Only the permanent grassland is considered common land.

Table 2: Common land (recorded using Method B), 2000-2013 (hectares)

In 2013, the identified common land covered approximately 9 049 629 hectares, i.e. about 7 % of the total UAA of the 15 countries for which common land is presented in Table 2. For Serbia, which carried out the FSS census in 2012 and did not carry out the 2013 FSS survey, common land was considered to have the same area in 2010 and 2013.

The largest areas of common land, and in fact more than 50 % of the total identified common land for the 15 countries, could be found in the following three Member States: Spain (18 %), Romania (17 %) and Greece (16 %). Together with the United Kingdom (13 %), these four countries covered about 64 % of the total identified common land in 2013.

As concerns the individual Member States, the highest shares in the national UAA were reported by Greece (30 %), Croatia (28 %), Bulgaria (18 %) and Romania (12 %).

Between 2010 and 2013, the total identified utilised agricultural common land decreased by 6 %, from 9 584 531 to 9 049 629 hectares.

Comparability of common land data across countries

The way common land has been included in the survey has an impact on the comparability of number of holdings, average size of holdings and livestock densities across countries and by dimensions within each country.

Only countries using exclusively *method A* and/or *method B exclusively option 1* (Latvia, Poland, Slovenia, Norway and Montenegro) are comparable between them and to countries without common land as there is a direct relation between the livestock grazing on the common land, the common land and the farm manager of the livestock, while the common land is treated as any other type of area of an agricultural holding. Additionally, livestock densities can be calculated at any dimension (regional level, farm type, size of the holding, age of the

farmer etc.) for these countries (and for countries without common land).

However, countries using *method B option 2* (Bulgaria, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Austria, Portugal, Romania and Serbia) or *method B option 3* (Ireland, Greece, Croatia, Hungary and the United Kingdom) have a different population and their number of holdings and average size of holdings should not be directly compared between these countries and against those countries without common land or countries where common land is included in the agricultural holdings as the only method. Moreover, as there is no direct relationship between the common land and the livestock making use of the common land, a meaningful analysis of livestock densities is only possible at regional level.

In general, comparability problems involving a country arise when the number of common land units in that country is high.

Comparability of common land data between 2010 and 2013

The user should interpret with caution the trend of common land data between 2010 and 2013 because of the following methodological reasons:

- Greece changed the methodology of collection of information on common land: a special questionnaire was used in 2010, while the IACS administrative source was used in 2013, which had a partial influence on the decrease of common land between years.
- The decreasing trend of common land in France can be partially explained by the fact that some investigators and farmers may have misunderstood the definition of common land during the FSS 2010 when this concept was introduced for the first time.
- In 2010, Croatia estimated the common land based on a model, while in 2013 additional common land was included by using administrative sources.
- In 2013, Italy had problems that hindered the identification of common land units (the questions addressed to the public bodies proved to be insufficient to allow identification of all of those having common land).
- In Cyprus, the changes in the number of common land units and in the common land are mostly attributed to better explanations and clarifications given to the enumerators and hence to the holders providing the information.
- Portugal stresses that it is often very difficult for the common land governing board to indicate the area in a precise manner as common land extends through large open hilly mountainous areas, with poor soils and pastures or forest land.
- Iceland made changes (improvements) in the 2013 questionnaire to prevent double counting of common land. In the 2010 census, there was some double counting, which now has been removed.

Conclusions

Common land is a problematic characteristic when it comes to data comparability between countries and over time. Eurostat and countries are working together to improve the methodology of recording common land in statistics. For now users should pay attention to the comparability problems presented in this article.

Source data for tables and graphs

- [Farm structure survey - common land: tables](#)

See also

- [Family farming in the EU](#)
- [Farms and farmland in the European Union - statistics](#)
- [Farm structure survey \(FSS\) — glossary](#)
- [Standard Output — glossary](#)

Dedicated section

- [Farm Structure Survey](#)
- [Agriculture](#)

Publications

- [News release on Farm structure survey 2013](#)
- [Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics — 2016 edition](#) (Statistical book)
- [Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics — 2015 edition](#) (Statistical book)
- [Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics — 2014 edition](#) (pocketbook)

Methodology

- Farm structure ([ESMS metadata file](#))
- [National methodological reports 2013](#)
- [National methodological reports 2010](#)
- [Farm structure survey — methodological articles](#)
- [Farm structure — Methodology of Community surveys](#)

Legislation

- [Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 1200/2009](#) implementing Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008 as regards livestock unit coefficients and definitions of the characteristics
- [Regulation \(EC\) No 1166/2008](#) on farm structure surveys and the survey on agricultural production methods
- [Summaries of EU Legislation: EU integrated farm statistics](#)
- [Council Regulation \(EEC\) No 571/1988](#) on the organisation of Community surveys on the structure of agricultural holdings

External links

[European Commission — Common agricultural policy](#)

[European Commission — Rural Development Policy](#)