

Agricultural production - livestock and meat

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in October 2025.

Planned article update: 27 October 2026.

Highlights

At the end of 2024, there were 132 million pigs, 72 million bovine animals and 67 million sheep and goats in the EU.

The EU's pigmeat production in 2024 was 2.2% higher than in 2023 at 21.1 million tonnes, albeit this being 9.8% less than the peak in 2021.

Poultrymeat production in 2024 jumped to a new high, an estimated 14.1 million tonnes.

This article presents information on livestock and [meat production](#) in the [European Union \(EU\)](#).

Editorial note: Throughout this article, which deals with time periods when the United Kingdom was a Member State of the European Union, the acronym EU, however, refers to EU-27, the post-Brexit composition of the European Union as of 1 February 2020.

The livestock population at any given moment describes the production system through the stocks of animals being farmed. The duration of a production cycle indicates how long is needed so that animals are ready to slaughter for meat, whilst others are being reared, or to give birth and in the case of cows, some sheep and goats can be milked.

The typical life-span of each of these groups in the cycle varies. For example, veal calves will typically be slaughtered within 8 months, beef cattle within the first 2 and a half years and dairy cows within 5 years.

Detailed figures on the age, sex, category and type of animals in production cycles are collected at a regional and national level. This is done through livestock surveys that are either carried out once or twice a year.

In this article, only aggregated data for national livestock herds are analysed. More detailed figures for analysis are available in Eurostat's free, [online database](#). It should be noted that the livestock section of this article does not include poultry populations, which are considered as domestic fowl. [Poultry statistics](#) and the structure of hatcheries are covered in a separate article.

Livestock population

Majority of EU livestock populations held in just a few countries

The EU has a substantial livestock population: by the end of 2024, there were 132 million head of pigs, 72 million bovine animals and 67 million sheep and goats.

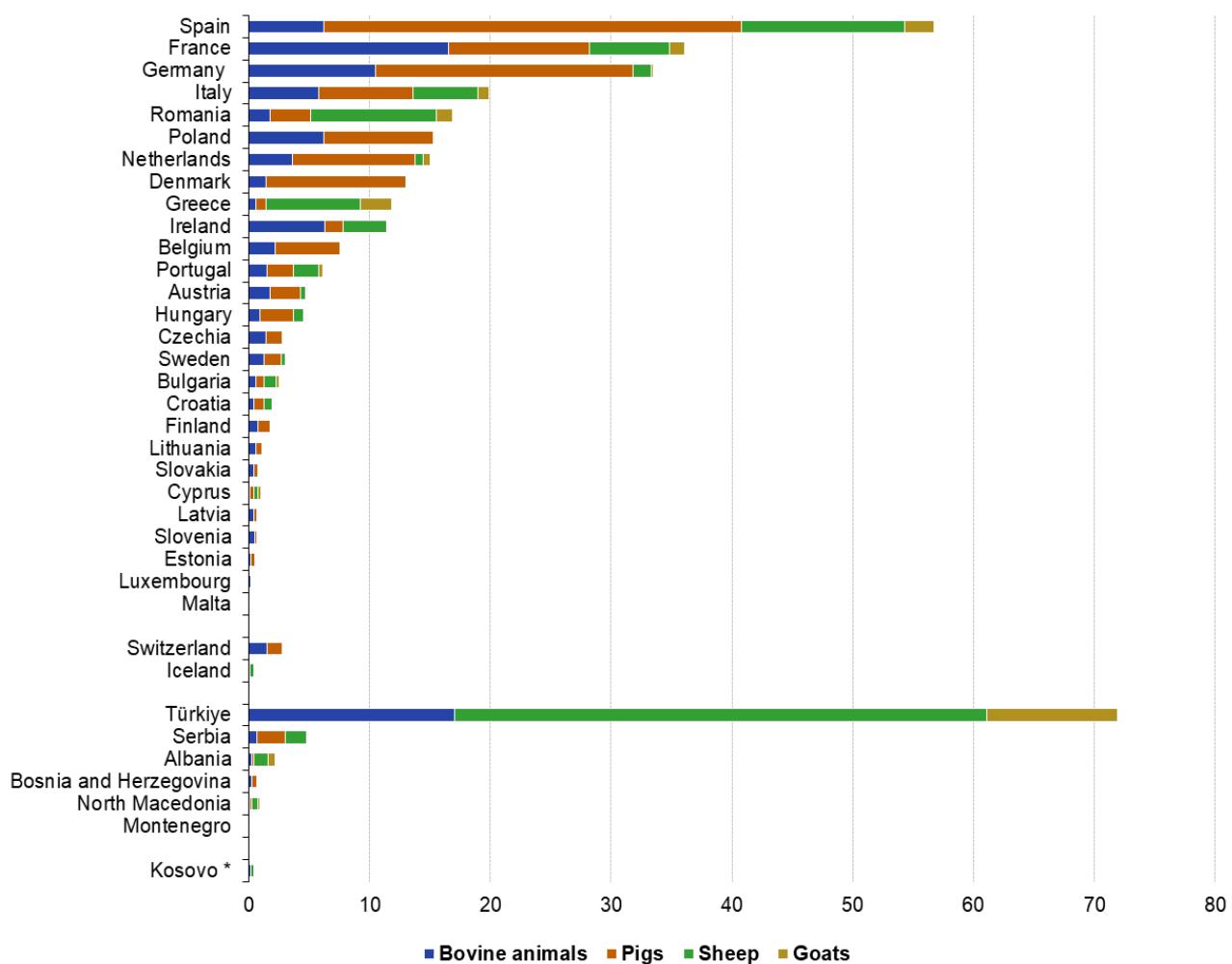
Most of the EU's livestock is held in just a few countries (see Figure 1).

In 2024, Spain accounted for roughly one quarter of the EU's pig (26.2%) and sheep (23.8%) populations. Greece had a similar share of the EU's goat population (24.6%) and France a somewhat smaller share (22.9%) of the bovine population.

Several EU countries are relatively specialised in their livestock farming. For example, Ireland accounted for 8.8% of the EU's bovine population in 2024 - slightly exceeding the shares of both Spain and Italy), while Denmark accounted for 8.8% of the EU's pig population, just less than the share for France. After Spain, the second and third largest sheep populations in the EU were in Romania (18.5% of the EU total) and Greece (13.8%).

Livestock populations

(million head, 2024)



Note: includes estimates and provisional data.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status,
and is in line with UNSCR 124 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: apro_mt_lscatl, apro_mt_lspig, apro_mt_lssheep, apro_mt_lsgoat)

eurostat

Figure 1: Livestock populations (million head, 2024) Source: Eurostat (apro_mt_lscatl), (apro_mt_lspig), (apro_mt_lssheep) and (apro_mt_lsgoat)

Downward trend in livestock populations

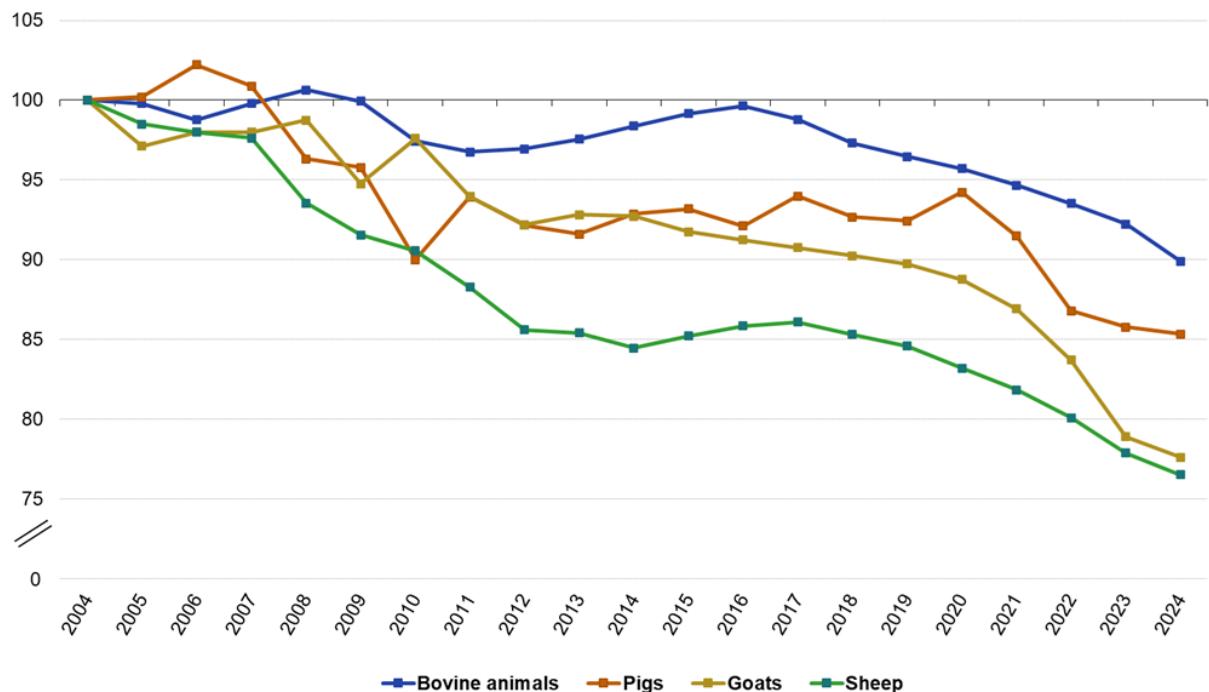
Over the past 2 decades, livestock numbers across the EU have declined sharply (see Figure 2). Between 2004 and 2024, each major livestock population decreased: the sharpest declines in percentage terms were recorded for the number of sheep (about 23%) and goats (about 22%), followed by pigs (about 15%), while the smallest was in

bovine animal numbers (about 10%).

Looking at the most recent developments, from 2023 to 2024, the EU populations of all livestock categories continued to decrease. The sharpest estimated rate of decline was for bovine animals (-2.5%), followed by sheep (-1.7%), goats (-1.6%) and pigs (-0.5%).

Developments of livestock populations

(index 2004=100 based on head of animals, EU, 2004-2024)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: apro_mt_lscatl, apro_mt_lspig, apro_mt_lssheep and apro_mt_lsgoat)

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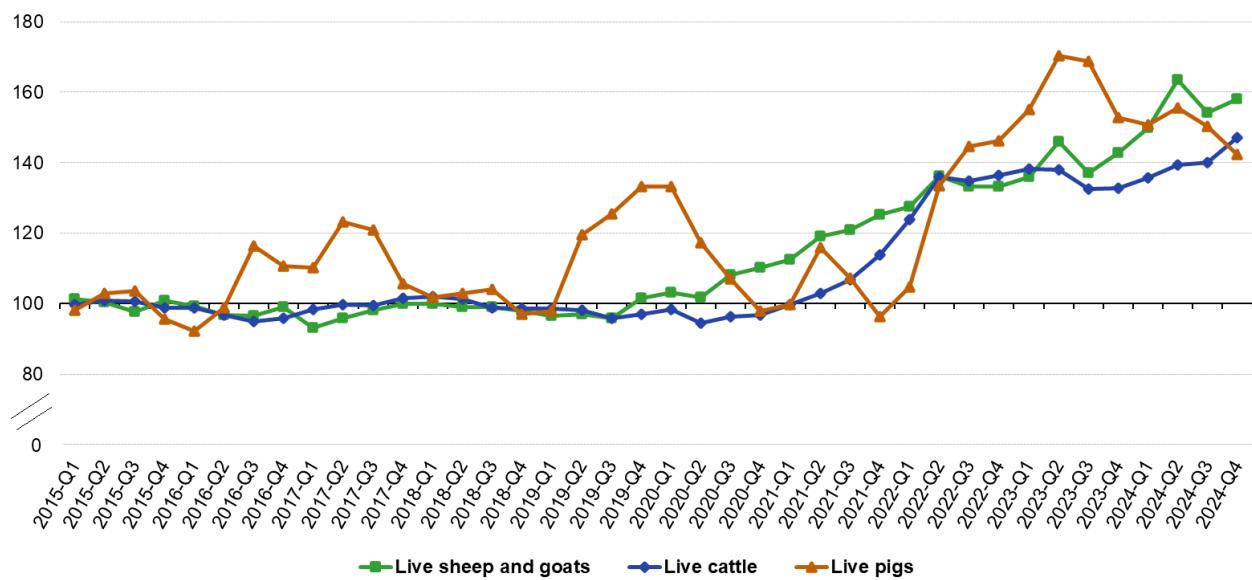
Figure 2: Developments of livestock populations (index 2004=100, based on head of animals, EU, 2004-2024)
Source: Eurostat (apro_mt_lscatl), (apro_mt_lspig), (apro_mt_lssheep) and (apro_mt_lsgoat)

Between 2015 and 2020, prices for live cattle and for live sheep and goats remained relatively stable for the EU as a whole. By contrast, prices for live pigs were more cyclical and volatile (see Figure 3).

However, through much of the period between 2021 and 2024 prices for all livestock rose sharply. The price of sheep and goats rose 13.4% in 2021, 10.4% in 2022, 6.1% in 2023 and a further 11.4% in 2024. The price of cattle rose 9.7% in 2021, 25.8% in 2022, 2.0% in 2023 and 3.9% in 2024. The volatility in the price of pigs was even more exaggerated in this period, with rises of 25.3% in 2022 and 22.8% in 2023 sandwiched between declines in 2021 (-8.3%) and 2024 (-7.4%).

Developments of output price indices for animals

(index 2015=100, EU, 2015-2025)



Note: a rebasing of prices to 2020 = 100 is available: apr_pi20_outq.
For this analysis, the percentage changes in the indices with base year 2020 = 100 have been spliced into the 2015= 100 series.

eurostat

Figure 3: Developments of output price indices for animals (index 2015=100, EU, 2015-2024) Source: Eurostat (apr_pi15_outq)

Meat production

Within the context of the EU's [Vision for Agriculture and Food](#), the European Commission underlines the importance of enhancing animal welfare across all stages of production to align with consumer expectations and ethical considerations. Robust animal welfare standards not only improve the well-being of animals but also contribute to the overall quality and marketability of European animal products.

Data is collected on the number and weight of carcasses at slaughterhouses, whose meat is deemed fit for human consumption. In this article, 'meat' should be understood as the carcass weight from slaughterhouses.

Pigmeat

Pigmeat production: modest upturn from relative low

In 2024, the EU produced a provisional 21.1 million tonnes of pigmeat, marking a 2.2% increase compared to the relative production low in 2023. Nevertheless, production remained 2.3 million tonnes below the peak in 2021 (see Figure 4), the equivalent of a 9.8% decline.

The 2 main pigmeat producing countries in the EU are Spain (5.0 million tonnes in 2024) and Germany (4.3 million tonnes) - see Figure 5. Production in both countries picked up slightly in 2024 (1.7% and 1.9% respectively). In the case of Germany, this upturn came after 7 consecutive years of decline; pigmeat production in 2024 remained 1.3 million tonnes less than in 2016.

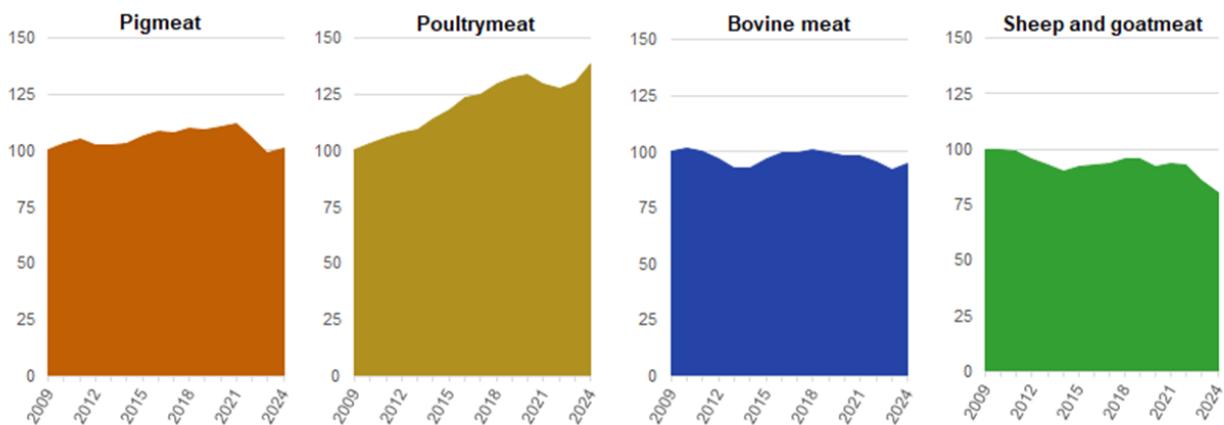
Most of the other main EU producer countries also had higher pigmeat production in 2024, the strongest rate of increase being in Poland (up 7.7%). The main exception was in the Netherlands, where production continued to decline sharply (-5.2%).

Poultrymeat

Poultrymeat production at a new high in 2024

In 2024, the EU produced an estimated 14.1 million tonnes of poultrymeat, which was the equivalent of a marked 6.0% increase compared to 2023. This sharp increase highlights the upward trend in EU production, with production in 2024 exceeding that of 2009 by 3.9 million tonnes.

Developments of the quantity of meat production (2009 = 100 based on tonnes, EU, 2009-2024)



Note: estimates made for the purpose of this publication.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: apro_mt_pann)

eurostat

Figure 4: Developments of the quantity of meat production (2009 = 100 based on tonnes, EU, 2009-2024)
Source: Eurostat (apro_mt_pann)

In 2024, the main poultrymeat producers in the EU were Poland (accounting for 20.5% of EU production, with 2.9 million tonnes), Spain (12.8%, with 1.8 million tonnes), France (12.2%, with 1.7 million tonnes), Germany (10.9%, with 1.5 million tonnes) and Italy (9.8%, with 1.4 million tonnes). With the exception of Germany, there were higher production levels of poultrymeat in 2024 in each of these principal producer countries, the sharpest rate of increase being in France (a provisional +12.3%).

Veal and beef

Beef is the meat from the slaughter of bovine animals of at least 1 year old. Certain cattle breeds are reared specifically for their beef, although beef can also come from dairy cattle. In this article veal is considered as the meat from bovine animals younger than 1 year (usually male calves and young cattle). Male calves from dairy cows are of no use for producing milk and their growth potential for producing beef meat is not optimal.

Higher bovine meat production in 2024

In 2024, the EU produced a provisional 6.6 million tonnes of bovine meat (beef and veal carcasses). This was about 200 000 tonnes more than in 2023, equivalent to an increase of 3.1%. This marked an upturn in production after 5 consecutive years of decline (see Figure 4).

A little over three-quarters of the EU's beef production in 2024 came from 6 countries: France (20.0%), Germany (16.9%), Poland (11.1%), Ireland (10.5%), Italy (9.9%) and Spain (9.4%).

About three-quarters of the EU's veal meat was produced in 4 countries: the Netherlands (27.3%), Spain (21.6%), France (17.4%) and Italy (10.4%).

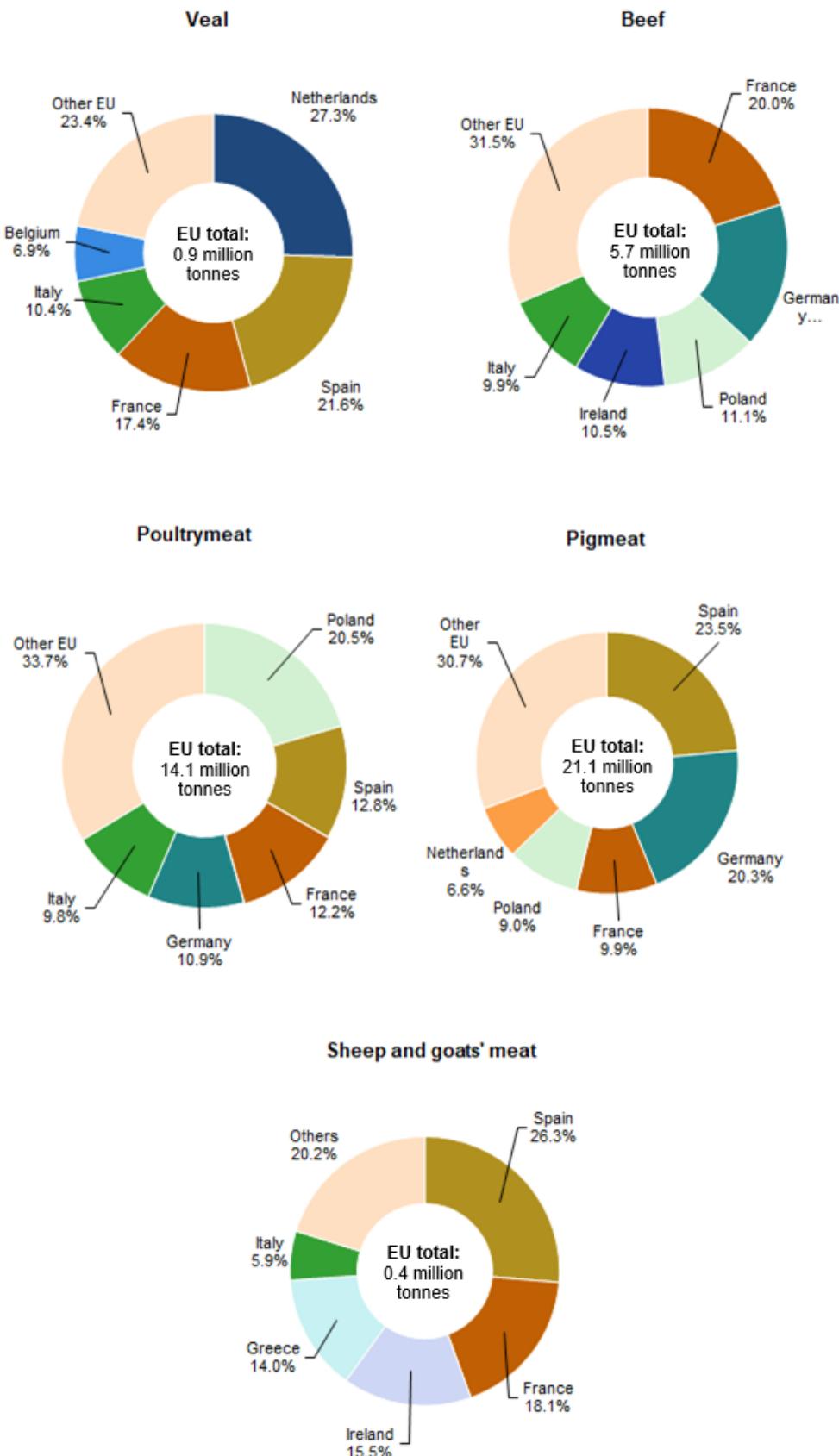
Sheep and goat meat

Continued sharp decline in production in 2024

The EU produced an estimated 0.4 million tonnes of sheep and goats' meat in 2024, an estimated 6% less than in 2023. Sheepmeat accounted for the vast majority (about 91%) of the combined total output.

In 2024, three quarters of the EU's sheepmeat and goatmeat was produced in 4 countries: Spain (26.2%), France (18.1% and almost entirely sheepmeat), Ireland (15.4% and exclusively sheepmeat) and Greece (14.0%).

Share of quantity of EU meat production (%, 2024)



Note: estimates made for the purpose of this article.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: apro_mt_pann)

eurostat

Source data for tables and graphs

- [Download Excel file](#)

Data sources

Livestock and meat statistics Livestock and meat statistics are collected by EU Member States under Regulation (EC) No 1165/2008, which covers bovine, pig, sheep and goat livestock; slaughtering statistics on bovine animals, pigs, sheep, goats and poultry; and production forecasts for beef, veal, pig meat, sheep meat and goat meat. Livestock surveys cover sufficient agricultural holdings to account for at least 95% of the national livestock population, as determined by the last survey on the structure of agricultural holdings.

Bovine and pig livestock statistics are produced twice a year, with reference to a given day in May/June and a given day in November/December. Those EU Member States whose bovine animal populations are below 1.5 million head or whose pig populations are below 3.0 million head may produce these statistics only once a year, with reference to a given day in November/December. The November/December results are available for all EU Member States and are used in this article.

Sheep livestock statistics are only produced once a year, with reference to a given day in November/December, by those EU Member States whose sheep populations are 500 000 head or above; the same criteria and thresholds apply for statistics on goat populations.

Agricultural price statistics

EU agricultural price statistics are based on voluntary agreements between Eurostat and the Member States.

National statistical institutes or Ministries of Agriculture are responsible for collecting absolute prices and calculating corresponding average prices for their country, as well as for calculating price indices and periodically updating the weights.

Price indices are reported quarterly and annually. Absolute prices are reported annually. The agricultural prices expressed in national currency are converted into euro by Eurostat using fixed exchange rates or average financial market exchange rates (annual), in order to allow comparisons between the Member States. Eurostat is responsible for calculating indices for the EU.

Context

Statistics on livestock and meat production (based on the slaughter of animals fit for human consumption) give some indication of supply-side developments and adjustments, which are important for monitoring the common agricultural policy (CAP).

One of the objectives of the first CAP was to secure the availability of food supplies for the then European Economic Community. The CAP has evolved, requiring more agricultural market transparency for all actors and EU citizens. Statistics for livestock and meat, as with other agricultural products, help provide feedback on market signals.

In order to limit uncertainty, the EU institutions in charge of market support interpret market signals using livestock numbers for their forecasts. The number of breeders (for dairy or meat production) as well as animal stocks being grown and fattened, contribute to preparing measures that ensure a more stable — or at least more secure — market, which aims to benefit both EU consumers and farmers.

The EU has introduced a range of legislation covering the traceability of livestock, in part as a response to various food safety concerns. For most animal species, this traceability concerns a system of identification — usually through ear-tags or tattoos — coupled with a national register that details animals as they are reared, held or handled at each stage of the food chain. The European Commission has been active in harmonising animal health measures and systems of disease surveillance, diagnosis and control; it has also developed a legal framework for trade in live animals and animal products. Ensuring the high quality of food is one of the various challenges to be

met in order to secure this food supply.

These laws and others are based on rules for animal welfare that reflect freedom from hunger and thirst: freedom from discomfort: freedom from pain, injury and disease: freedom to express normal behaviour, and: freedom from fear and distress.

Explore further

Other articles

- [Agricultural production — orchards](#)
- [Agricultural production — crops](#)

Database

- [Agriculture \(agr\)](#) , see:

Agricultural production (apro)

Poultry farming (apro_ec)

Livestock and meat (apro_mt)

Meat production (apro_mt_p)

Livestock (apro_mt_ls)

Structure of rearing (apro_mt_str)

Thematic section

- [Agriculture](#)

Publications

- [Key figures on the European food chain – 2024 edition](#) (key figures)

Selected datasets

- [Agriculture \(t_agr\)](#) , see:

Agricultural production (t_apro)

Livestock and meat (t_apro_mt)

Agricultural prices and price indices (t_apri)

Producer price indices, animals and animal products (tag00050)

Methodology

- [Animal production](#) (ESMS metadata file — apro_anip_esms)

External links

- European Commission — Agriculture and rural development — food, farming, fisheries
- European Commission — Agriculture and rural development — beef
- European Commission — Agriculture and rural development — pork
- European Commission — Agriculture and rural development — poultry
- European Commission — Agriculture and rural development — lamb, mutton and goatmeat
- European Commission — Agriculture and rural development — short- and medium term outlook and market reports for EU arable crops, dairy and meat markets

Legislation

- Regulation (EC) No 617/2008 of 27 June 2008 laying down detailed rules for implementing Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 as regards marketing standards for eggs for hatching and farmyard poultry chicks
- Regulation (EC) No 1165/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 concerning livestock and meat statistics
- Summaries of EU Legislation: Statistics — livestock and meat under the common agricultural policy

Visualisation

- Eurostat Statistical Atlas (Chapter 13: Agriculture)
- Regional Statistics Illustrated — Agriculture