

Milk and milk product statistics

Statistics Explained

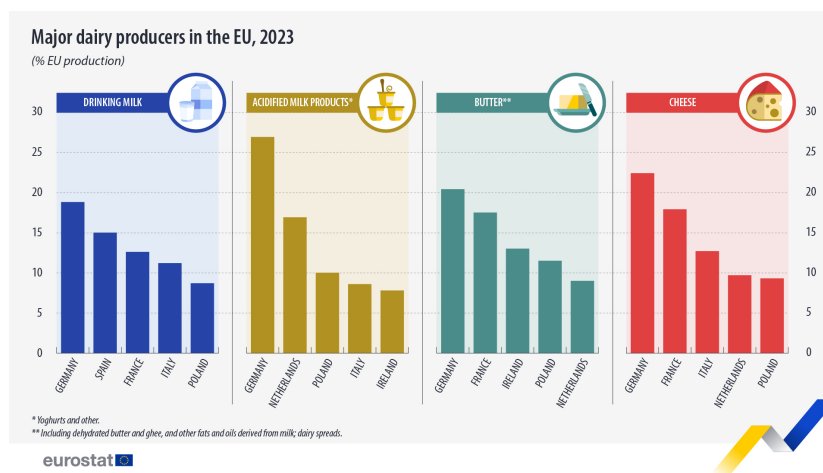
Data extracted in November 2024.
Planned article update: 20 November 2025.

Highlights

" The EU produced 160.8 million tonnes of raw milk in 2023."

" The average apparent milk yield per cow in the EU reached 7 791 kg in 2023."

" The price of milk paid to farmers in the EU fell back (an average -6.5%) after rocketing in 2022."



This article presents information and statistics on [milk](#) and milk products 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.

Milk production

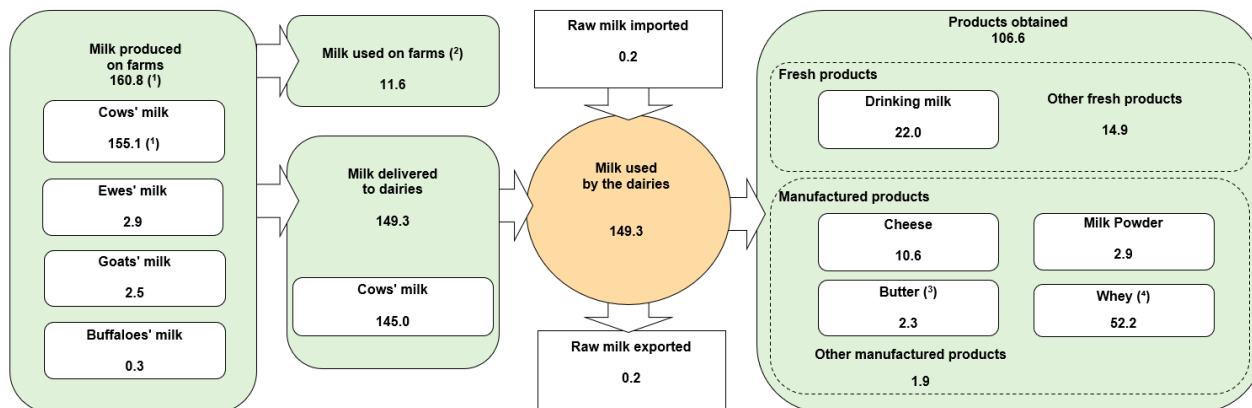
Raw milk production of 160.8 million tonnes in 2023, 96% of which was cows' milk

The production of raw milk on the EU's farms was an estimated 160.8 million tonnes in 2023, which would

represent a year-on-year increase of 0.8 million tonnes.

In 2023, the vast majority of raw milk was delivered to dairies; only 11.6 million tonnes were used on farms, either being consumed by the farmer and his family, sold directly to consumers, used as feed or processed directly. Of the 149.3 million tonnes of milk delivered to dairies, 145.0 million tonnes were cows' milk, the rest being ewes' milk, goats' milk, or buffaloes' milk (see Figure 1).

Production and use of milk
(million tonnes, EU, 2023)



(¹) The 160.8 million tonnes of EU milk production on farms in this Figure also includes the estimated quantity of cows' milk produced in one Member State but delivered to another, which corresponds to an additional 0.8 million tonnes.
(²) In whole milk equivalent.
(³) Includes other yellow fat dairy products, expressed in butter equivalent.
(⁴) In liquid whey equivalent.
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: apro_mk_pobta and apro_mk_farm)



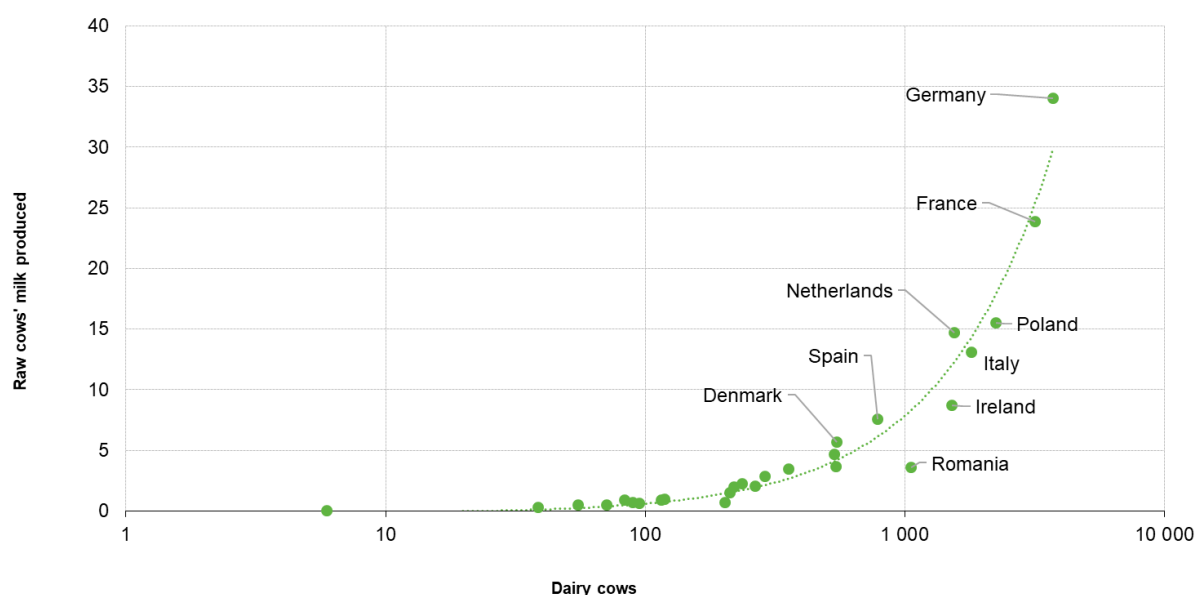
Figure 1: Production and use of milk (million tonnes, EU, 2023) Source: Eurostat (apro_mk_pobta) and (apro_mk_farm)

The average apparent milk yield per cow across the EU still rising

There are a number of factors that can impact a countries' apparent annual milk yields per dairy cow, including the structure of the dairy herd. In the EU, the apparent annual milk yield continued to rise, reaching 7 791 kg per dairy cow in 2023. As a national average, apparent annual yields were highest in Estonia (10 728 kg per cow) and Denmark (10 400 kg per cow) and lowest in Bulgaria (3 591 kg per cow) and Romania (3 425 kg per cow). Among the main cows' milk producing Member States, apparent yields were above the EU average in the Netherlands and Germany but slightly below average in France, Poland and Italy.

Dairy cows, milk production and the apparent milk yield

(thousand head and million tonnes, 2023)



Note: The line represents the average apparent milk yield across the EU (7 791 kg per cow) for a variable herd size. Countries above the line had a higher apparent yield per cow than the EU average, and vice-versa.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: apro_mk_farm and apro_mt_lscatl)



Figure 2: Dairy cows, milk production and the apparent milk yield (million tonnes and thousand head, 2023)

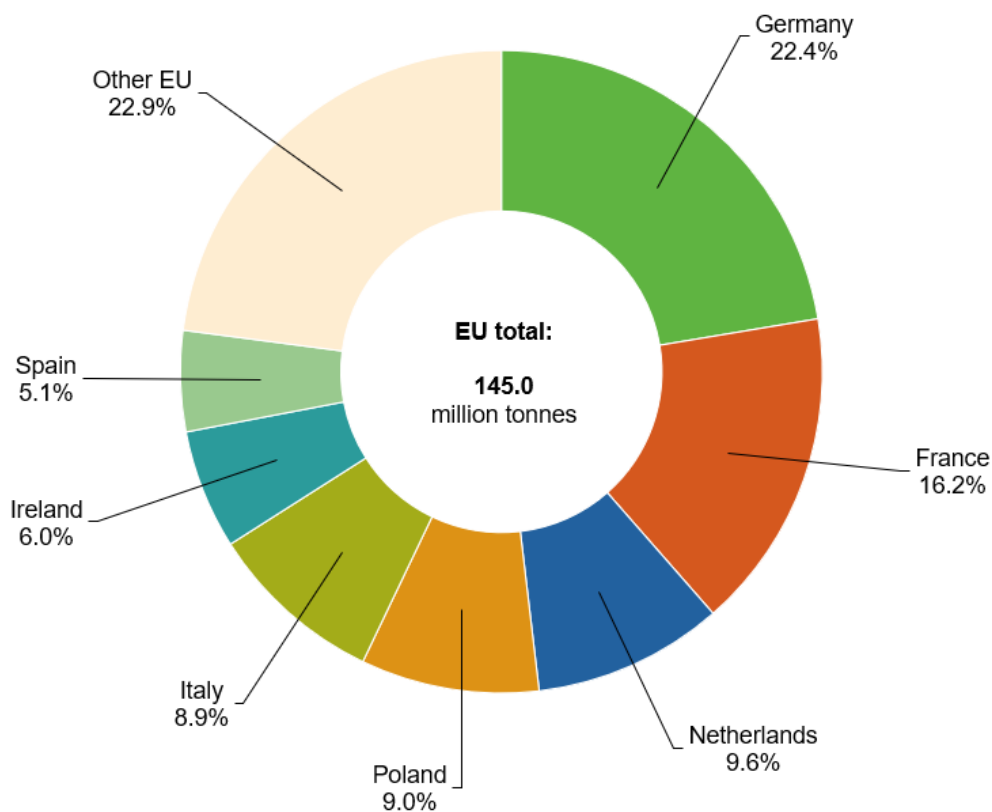
Source: Eurostat (apro_mk_farm) and (apro_mt_lscatl)

A little more than one-fifth of the EU's cows' milk was collected by dairies in Germany

Traditionally, hygiene rules have required that the collection of milk has been frequent and moved over a short distance between farms and dairies. However, the development of cooling tanks on farms and of bigger milk tankers have made this sanitary issue less critical. Meanwhile, the erosion of market restrictions has contributed to cross-border milk flows between farms and dairies or between dairies.

In 2023, a little more than one-fifth (21.9%) of the EU's raw cows' milk was produced on farms in Germany and a similar proportion (22.4%) was processed by German dairies. Indeed, just as Germany, France, Poland, the Netherlands and Italy together provided about two-thirds (65.2%) of the EU's raw cows' milk in 2023, so they also accounted for two-thirds (66.0%) of the cows' milk collected by dairies (see Figure 3).

Collection of cows' milk by dairies (%, 2023)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: apro_mk_pobta)

eurostat 

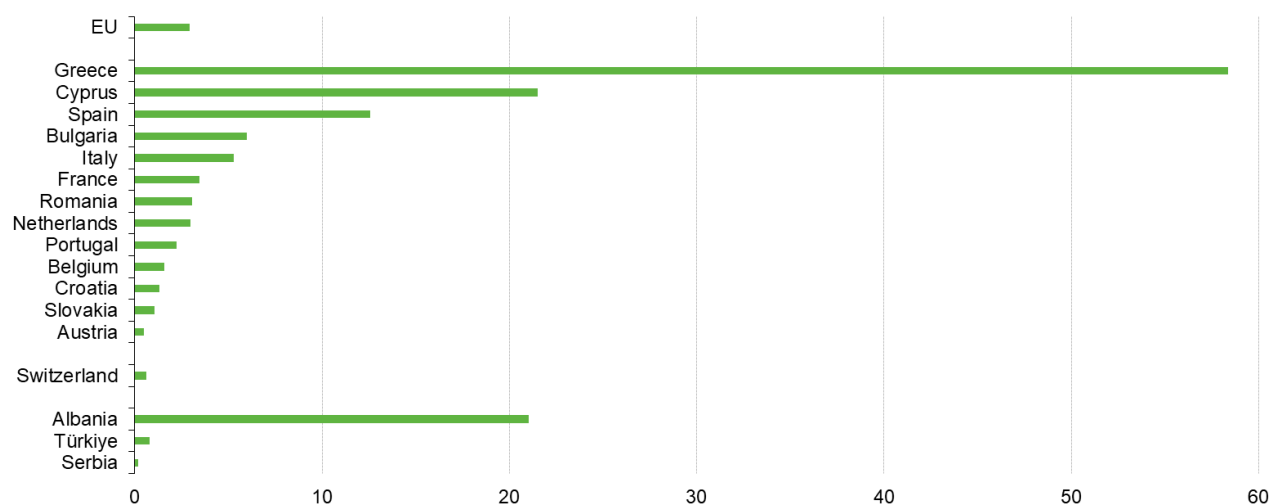
Figure 3: Collection of cows' milk by dairies, 2023 (% of EU total, tonnes) Source: Eurostat (apro_mk_pobta)

There are a few EU Member States where livestock other than cows make an important contribution to overall milk production; this is the case in many rural or arid regions, particularly in the Mediterranean area. In 2023, Spain produced 1.1 million tonnes of milk from ewes and goats, with Greece producing 0.9 million tonnes and France 0.8 million tonnes. Italy produced 0.7 million tonnes of milk from animals other than cows and this included almost all of the EU's production of milk from buffaloes.

Cows' milk accounts for the vast majority of the milk delivered to dairies across most of the EU Member States. Nevertheless, a majority (58.4%) of the milk delivered to dairies in Greece in 2023 came from ewes and goats, as did about one-fifth (21.5%) in Cyprus (see Figure 4).

Milk collection from animals other than cows

(% of total milk delivered to dairies, 2023)



Note: Little or no milk from animals other than cows is produced in the Member States that are not shown in this Figure.

EU estimate made for the purpose of this article. Spain, France and Switzerland, provisional data.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: apro_mk_pobta)

eurostat 

Figure 4: Milk collection from animals other than cows (% of total milk delivered to dairies, 2023) Source: Eurostat (apro_mk_pobta)

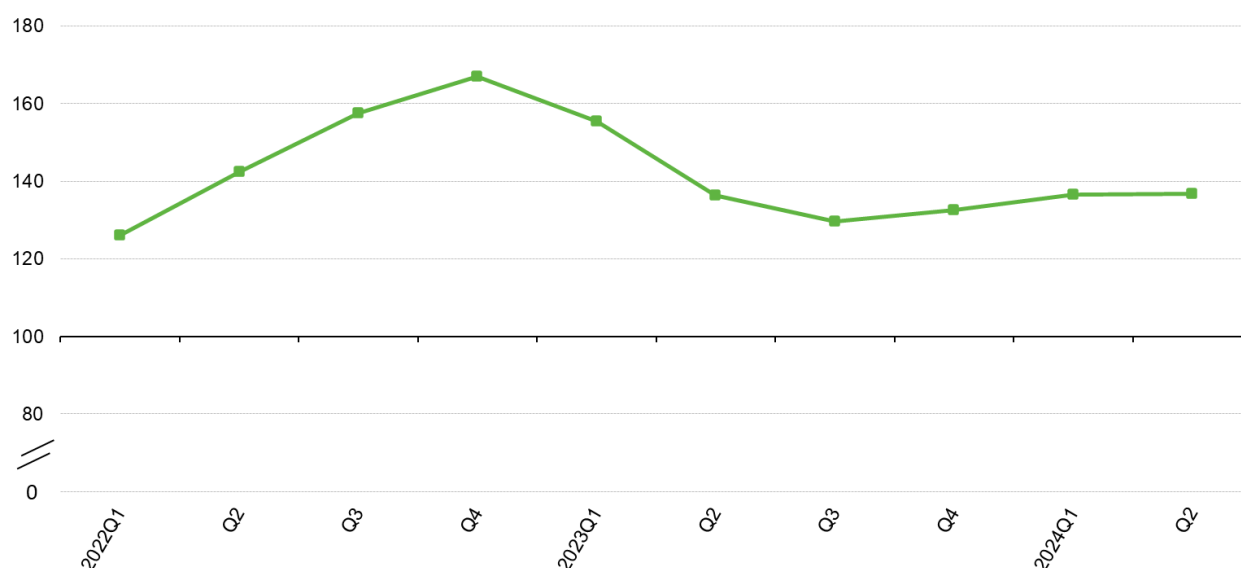
Decline in 2023 milk prices from highs in 2022

There was a decline in the price of milk paid to farmers in 2023, with the average price over the year being an estimated 6.5% less than the average in 2022. This represented a fall back from a relative high, after the strong price increases of the previous 3 years, and particularly the rise in 2022 (an average +36.6%). These latest changes underline the sharp fluctuations in the average price of milk (see Figure 5).

Among some of the principal milk-producing Member States, there were estimates of even stronger-than-average declines in the price of milk in 2023: in Ireland (-27.1%), the Netherlands (-18.4%), Germany (-14.2%) and Poland (-9.4%). By contrast, there were higher prices in Spain (+21.2%) and France (+5.7%), among others.

Development of price indices for milk

(2020 = 100, EU, 2022-2024 Q2)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: apri_pi20_outq)

eurostat

Figure 5: Development of price indices for milk (2020 = 100, EU, 2022-2024 Q2) Source: Eurostat (apri_pi15_outq)

Milk products

About 70% of all whole milk available to dairies in the EU is used to make cheese and butter

The milk delivered to dairies is processed into a number of fresh and manufactured products. Dairy products are recorded in terms of their weight. It is thus difficult to compare the quantities of various products (for example, tonnes of fresh milk and of milk powder). The volume of whole or skimmed milk used in dairy processes provides more comparable figures¹.

In 2023, 149.3 million tonnes of the whole milk available to the EU's dairy sector was processed.

The production of 2.3 million tonnes of butter and so-called 'yellow products' (such as butteroil and rendered butter) in the EU in 2023 required 45.4 million tonnes of whole milk (see Table 1). The production of butter and yellow products also generated 42.4 million tonnes of skimmed milk. A further 13.8 million tonnes of skimmed milk were generated through the fabrication of cream and 0.8 million tonnes from other fresh products. The skimmed milk generated was used with 84.9 million tonnes of whole milk for the processing of other dairy products.

Indeed, 17.4 million tonnes of skimmed milk together with 58.2 million tonnes of whole milk were used to produce 10.6 million tonnes of cheese in the EU in 2023. Together, the production of cheese and butter used 69.4% of all the whole milk available to dairies in the EU.

¹Two dimensions (quantities of whole and skimmed milk used) reflect the material balance of the valuable milk components, especially fat (in whole milk only) and protein (in total milk used).

Utilisation of milk and dairy products obtained

(million tonnes, EU, 2023)

	Utilisation of milk		Product obtained
	Skimmed milk	Whole milk	
Total	0.0	149.3	-
Sub-total of processes generating skimmed milk	-57.0	64.4	7.0
Butter and yellow products	-42.4	45.4	2.3
Cream	-13.8	16.3	2.5
Other fresh products	-0.8	2.7	2.2
Sub-total of processes consuming skimmed milk	57.0	84.9	46.9
Drinking milk	9.6	12.7	22.0
Powder products	19.2	5.1	2.9
Concentrated milk	1.2	1.4	1.1
Acidified milk	1.8	6.1	7.8
Buttermilk	0.4	0.1	0.4
Cheese	17.4	58.2	10.6
Milk based drinks	1.1	0.7	1.9
Caseins	6.4	0.6	0.2

Source: Eurostat (online data code: apro_mk_pobta)



Table 1: Utilisation of milk and dairy products obtained (million tonnes, EU, 2023) Source: Eurostat (apro_mk_pobta)

The EU also produced 22.0 million tonnes of drinking milk, from 9.6 million tonnes of skimmed milk and 12.7 million tonnes of whole milk. Drinking milk accounted for 8.5% of all the whole milk used by dairies in 2023.

In 2023, 2.9 million tonnes of dairy powder products were produced in the EU from 19.2 million tonnes of skimmed milk and 5.1 million tonnes of whole milk.

Germany produced more drinking milk, whey, butter and cheese than any other EU country. It produced 2.4 million tonnes of cheese (about 22% of the EU total), the other main cheese producing Member States being France (1.9 million tonnes, about 18% of the EU total), and Italy (1.3 million tonnes, about 13% of the EU total).

The Netherlands had the second highest level of production for whey (about 17% of the EU total) and the fourth highest for cheese (about 10% of the EU total), while Ireland accounted for the third highest share of butter produced (about 13% of the EU total).

Source data for tables and graphs

- [Milk and milk product statistics: tables and figures](#)

Data sources

Milk and milk product statistics

Milk and milk product statistics are collected under Decision 1997/80/EC and implementing Directive 1996/16/EC. They cover farm production and the utilisation of milk, as well as the description (structure), collection and production activity of dairies. Due to the small number of dairy enterprises, national data are often subject to statistical confidentiality. Thus, providing EU totals in this context is a challenge and some of the information

presented in the analysis is based on partly provisional data. On the one hand, statistics from these few enterprises provide early estimates on trends. On the other, a complete overview of the dairy sector requires detailed information from farms and this means that the final figures on milk production are only available at an EU level about 1 year after the reference year.

Dairy products are recorded in terms of weight. It is thus difficult to compare the various products (for example, fresh milk and milk powder). The volume of whole or skimmed milk used in the dairy processes provides more comparable figures.

Livestock statistics

The number of dairy cows that was used in the analysis was drawn from the livestock population in November/December 2023.

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 financial market exchange rates, in order to allow comparisons between the Member States. Eurostat is responsible for calculating indices for the EU.

Context

The abolition of milk quotas in 2015 resulted in a restructuring and further modernisation of the sector, including a re-orientation towards the most productive herds, more intense cross-border milk flows and increased production. Over recent years, milk prices have followed the global milk fat market.

There is no 'typical' European dairy cow breed, though the Friesian-Holstein is prevalent.

Notes

Explore further

Other articles

- [Agricultural production — livestock and meat](#)
- [Agricultural production — crops](#)
- [Agricultural production — orchards](#)

Database

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

Agricultural production (apro)

Milk and milk products (apro_mk)

Fat contents and protein contents (cow's milk) - annual data (apro_mk_fatprot)

Milk collection (all milks) and dairy products obtained - annual data (apro_mk_pobta)

Cows' milk collection and products obtained - annual data (apro_mk cola)

Cows' milk collection and products obtained - monthly data (apro_mk_colm)

Production and utilization of milk on the farm - annual data (apro_mk_farm)

Dairies structure - triennial (apro_mk_str)

Dedicated section

- [Agriculture](#)

Publications

- [Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics — 2020 edition](#) (statistical book)

Main tables

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

Agricultural production (t_apro)

Milk and milk products (t_apro_mk)

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 — milk and dairy products](#)
- [European Commission — Agriculture and rural development — short- and medium term outlook and market reports for EU arable crops, dairy and meat markets](#)

Legislation

- [Commission Decision 1997/80/EC](#) of 18 December 1996 laying down provisions for the implementation of Council Directive 96/16/EC on statistical surveys of milk and milk products (Text with EEA relevance)
- [Directive 1996/16/EC](#) of 19 March 1996 on statistical surveys of milk and milk products
- [Summaries of EU Legislation: Statistical surveys of dairy products](#)

Visualisation

- [Eurostat Statistical Atlas \(Chapter 13: Agriculture\)](#)
- [Regional Statistics Illustrated — Agriculture](#)