

# Farm structure survey - definition of agricultural holding

Statistics Explained

The statistical unit in the [farm structure survey \(FSS\)](#) is the agricultural holding. The EU definition of the [agricultural holding](#) is set out in [Regulation \(EC\) No 1166/2008](#) .

This article discusses minor problems of comparability between national definitions and the EU definition in the [FSS 2013](#) , as well as comparability of national definitions between the [FSS 2010](#) and the [FSS 2013](#) . The article is part of an [online publication](#) on methodological articles dealing with the farm structure survey. The analysis and findings are based on the [national methodological reports \(NMRs\)](#) .

## Comparability of national definitions with respect to the EU definition in the FSS 2013

All countries based the definition of agricultural holding on the definition given in Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008. However, the level of compliance, and thus the data comparability, differ from country to country.

In fact, only a few countries (e.g. Germany, Ireland, Romania and Slovenia) applied the definition of agricultural holding completely (literally) as established by Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008.

On the other hand, some countries (e.g. Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Malta and Slovakia) mentioned in their NMRs only that the definition of agricultural holding is in line with Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008, without illustrating this with the national definition.

For some other countries, the national definitions showed an overall lack of common terminology. Various terms are used, for example, farm, holding, undertaking, unit, private holding, horticultural enterprise. Many countries provided a definition which does not clarify that all economic activities required by legislation are covered, nor that both primary and secondary activities were considered. Many countries included thresholds in the definition of agricultural holding, rendering it less understandable. Actually, an agricultural holding remains an agricultural holding regardless of the thresholds. The thresholds delimit the [FSS coverage](#) .

For the following countries, slight deviations in the national definitions compared to Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008 were observed.

### Belgium

In a few cases, the data recorded in a single record (agricultural holding) cover more than one agricultural holding. This occurred because the sampling frame included a few farmers who made one declaration for several holdings. However, the reverse situation also happened.

### Denmark

According to the national definition, the agricultural activities of a holding include the breeding of fur animals other than rabbits. The 2013 population of holdings in Denmark include 545 holdings having no agricultural activities other than breeding fur animals other than rabbits. As this activity is not agricultural according to Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008, these holdings are ineligible for the reference period and were removed from the data disseminated

on Eurostat's website.

## **Croatia**

The Croatian definition of agricultural holding specifies, among others, that the scope of the survey also includes all non-profit institutions (schools, hospitals, prisons, churches, etc.) that perform agricultural activities as additional or supplementary activity and whose production might be of significant volume. This is not in contradiction with Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008, as long as such institutions fulfil the other criteria defining an agricultural holding.

## **Hungary**

The definition also covers holdings with only forests, fish ponds, reeds and/or fur animals other than rabbits. Therefore, in order to ensure data comparability with other countries, all holdings having no agricultural activities other than forests, fish ponds, reeds and/or fur animals other than rabbits were removed from the data disseminated by Eurostat. They accounted for 4 573 holdings in the 2013 population of 491 335 holdings (almost 1%).

## **Netherlands**

The national census covers holdings breeding fur animals other than rabbits, but this activity is not eligible according to Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008. However, the number of holdings which have no agricultural activities other than breeding fur animals other than rabbits is extremely low (only 44 such holdings out of 67 481 in the 2013 population i.e. 0.07%).

## **Austria**

The national methodological report informs that the statistical units in the Austrian survey include forestry holdings with at least three hectares of wooded area. As holdings with only forestry activity are not eligible according to the Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008, the same report states that such holdings were excluded from the data transmitted to Eurostat. Therefore, the comparability of the Austrian data with the data from other countries published by Eurostat is maintained.

## **Poland**

The national definition of agricultural holding in Poland also includes holdings with fur animals. However, holdings with only fur animals (other than rabbits) are not sent to Eurostat. Therefore, the comparability of the Polish data with data from other countries published by Eurostat is ensured.

## **Finland**

The national methodological report states that beekeeping is not considered for the Finnish definition of a farm; in Finland beekeeping is a non-significant activity and most beekeepers practice the activity as a hobby (not as an economic activity).

## **Sweden**

The national methodological report states that Sweden also includes holdings with only energy forests. However, because these areas are kept in good agricultural and environmental conditions, such holdings are eligible to be included in the survey.

## **United Kingdom**

There are many holdings in the national population (1 495 holdings out of a total of 185 193 holdings in 2013 i.e. almost 1%) which were temporarily out of farming during the reference period (for example, because all the land was rented out on a short-term basis). These were removed from the data disseminated by Eurostat.

## **Norway**

There is one mentioned difference between the national definition and the EU definition of the holding: the Norwegian definition does not include the cultivation of Christmas trees. According to Norwegian legislation, the area for cultivation of Christmas trees is defined as forestry area and Christmas trees is a characteristic which is not collected.

## Comparability of national definitions between 2010 and 2013

This section presents some aspects in the national definitions affecting comparability between the two most recent farm structure surveys, i.e. 2010 and 2013.

### Belgium

The number of holdings in the population decreased from 42 854 to 37 761 (by 11.9%) due to the normal decrease, as well as to the change of registers. While in 2010 the list of surveyed holdings was drawn up from a farm register, in 2013 the Integrated Administrative and Control Systems (IACS) was used as a survey frame. The IACS does not cover numerous very small holdings (mostly retired farmers). Additionally, as in the IACS declarations, farmers might submit one declaration for several single units, the data recorded in a single record might cover more than one agricultural holding.

### Denmark

In 2010 as in 2013, the national definition of agricultural holdings also covers holdings which exclusively keep fur animals other than rabbits (NACE Rev 2 01.49) and which were excluded from the data disseminated by Eurostat. Removal of such holdings from both years ensures comparability.

### Hungary

Also in 2010, the national definition covers holdings with only forests, fish ponds, reeds and/or fur animals other than rabbits. Such holdings were removed from the data disseminated by Eurostat. Removal of such holdings from both 2010 and 2013 maintains the comparability between years.

### United Kingdom

Also in 2010, there are many holdings in the national population (1 592 holdings out of a total of 186 795 i.e. almost 1%) which were temporarily out of farming during the reference period (for example, because all the land was rented out on a short-term basis) and which were removed from the data disseminated by Eurostat. Removal of such holdings from both 2010 and 2013 maintains the comparability between years.

## Conclusions

Following the removal of ineligible holdings from the 2010 and 2013 data disseminated by Eurostat for Denmark, Hungary and the United Kingdom, the remaining deviations of national definitions are minor and have a negligible impact on comparability across countries and over time for 2010-2013.

## See also

- [Family farming in the EU](#)
- [Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics](#)
- [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](#)