

Farm structure survey - reference periods

Statistics Explained

This article presents the reference periods set in the legislation applicable to the farm structure survey (FSS). It discusses minor problems of comparability of reference periods between countries in the FSS 2013 and with respect to the legislation, as well as comparability of national reference periods 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 \(NMRs\)](#) .

Definitions of reference periods in legislation

The definitions of farm structure survey reference periods are provided in Article 8 of the [Regulation \(EC\) No 1166/2008](#) as follows:

- for land characteristics specified in Annex III of the same Regulation, a period of 12 months ending on a reference day between 1 March and 31 October of the survey year;
- for livestock characteristics specified in Annex III, a reference day between 1 March and 31 December of the survey year;
- for labour force characteristics specified in Annex III, a period of 12 months ending on a reference day between 1 March and 31 October of the survey year;
- for rural development measures specified in Annex III, a period of three years ending on 31 December of the survey year.

Moreover, Article 16 of the same Regulation provides derogations for Greece, Spain and Portugal, where the references to the year 2010 are replaced by references to the year 2009.

Comparability of reference periods across countries and with respect to the legislation, in FSS 2013

Countries generally applied the reference periods and/or days within the limits set by Article 8 of Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008 . However, there is a broad diversity in the nationally applied reference periods, both in the level of detail as well as in the justifications provided, thus rendering the comparability between countries rather complex. Below, the analysis of the national reference periods in the FSS 2013 is provided according to the groups of characteristics covered.

Land characteristics

Concerning the reference period used for land characteristics (see Table 1), the earliest reference periods are used in Belgium (March 2013 for Wallonia and April 2013 for Flanders) and Luxembourg (from 2 April 2012 to 1 April 2013), whereas the latest reference period allowed by Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008 (from 1 November 2012 to 31 October 2013) was applied in France, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia and Sweden. Germany applied the 2013 calendar

year so as to have the period for the land characteristics harmonised with the reference period of the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS), which is used to take the values of the land characteristics. Iceland also applied the 2013 calendar year to ensure the comparability of the data with other data collected within Statistics Iceland, which are usually performed on a yearly basis.

Country	Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008 - FSS 2013 Land characteristics (a period of 12 months ending on a reference day between 1 March and 31 October 2013)
Belgium	March for Wallonia, April for Flanders
Luxembourg	2 April 2012 - 1 April 2013
Denmark	September 2012 – August 2013 For green house crops and for holdings not applying for subsidies: 13 May 2013
Netherlands	16 May 2012 - 15 May 2013
Hungary	31 May 2013
Croatia, Lithuania	1 June 2012 - 31 May 2013
Ireland, Poland, Slovenia	2 June 2012 – 1 June 2013 (in Ireland, except for data from administrative source, for which it is 1 June 2012 - 31 May 2013)
Latvia, United Kingdom	1 July 2012 - 30 June 2013
Finland	30 June 2012 - 1 July 2013 for arable land, 1 May 2013 for land characteristics other than arable land
Norway	31 July 2013
Cyprus, Malta	1 September 2012 - 31 August 2013
Estonia	2 September 2012 - 1 September 2013
Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Austria, Romania	1 October 2012 - 30 September 2013
France, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden	1 November 2012 - 31 October 2013
Germany, Iceland	2013

Table 1: The reference periods for land characteristics in FSS 2013

While Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008 requires a period of 12 months for land characteristics, a few countries deviate from this requirement. More specifically, Belgium applied a single-month reference period, while Hungary and Norway used a single reference day. However, it is assumed that the land characteristics indirectly refer to a 12-month period, given their definitions, while the data are collected on the indicated day.

Livestock characteristics

Regarding livestock characteristics, all reporting countries used a reference day between 1 March and 31 December 2013 in compliance with Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008 with the exception of Portugal, which used the day of interview, i.e. a reference day between November 2013 and May 2014 (see Table 2). Portugal, however, indicated in the 2013 NMR that the deviation is minimal, because the likelihood of changes in the livestock number in the winter season is quite low. Nevertheless, this should be considered when comparing the FSS data with other countries. More generally, the diversity of the reference days used for livestock characteristics is clearly shown by the fact that the earliest reference day, already on 1 March 2013, was applied by Germany and the latest reference day of 31 December 2013 was used in Romania.

Country	Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008 - FSS 2013 Livestock characteristics (a reference day between 1 March and 31 December 2013)
Germany	1 March 2013
Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Finland (horses, pigs and poultry)	1 April 2013
Finland (cattle, sheep and goats)	1 May 2013
Denmark (except cattle)	13 May 2013
Belgium	15 May 2013
Denmark (cattle), Ireland, Croatia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, United Kingdom, Norway (sheep)	1 June 2013
Sweden	5 June 2013
Latvia	1 July 2013
Norway (except sheep)	31 July 2013
Estonia, Malta (cattle, sheep, goats and poultry)	1 September 2013
Czech Republic, Spain	30 September 2013
Cyprus, Slovakia	1 October 2013
Iceland	31 October 2013
Bulgaria, Greece, France	1 November 2013
Portugal	On the day of interview (data collection started on 1 November 2013)
Italy, Malta (pigs)	1 December 2013
Romania	31 December 2013

Table 2: The reference days for livestock characteristics in FSS 2013

Labour force characteristics

As concerns labour force characteristics, all reporting countries used a reference period of 12 months ending on a reference day between 1 March and 31 October 2013 in compliance with Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008 (see Table 3). The earliest reference period was applied in Germany (ending in February 2013) and in Norway (ending on 1 March 2013).

Country	Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008 - FSS 2013 Labour force characteristics (a period of 12 months ending on a reference day between 1 March and 31 October 2013)
Germany	March 2012 - February 2013
Norway	2 March 2012 - 1 March 2013
Netherlands	1 April 2012 - 30 March 2013
Luxembourg	2 April 2012 - 1 April 2013
Belgium	1 May 2012 - 30 April 2013
Denmark	14 May 2012 - 13 May 2013
Croatia, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia, Sweden	1 June 2012 - 31 May 2013
Ireland, Poland	2 June 2012 - 1 June 2013
Latvia, United Kingdom	1 July 2012 - 30 June 2013
Cyprus, Malta, Finland	1 September 2012 - 31 August 2013
Estonia	2 September 2012 - 1 September 2013
Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Romania	1 October 2012 - 30 September 2013
France, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Slovakia, Iceland	1 November 2012 - 31 October 2013

Table 3: The reference periods for labour force characteristics in FSS 2013

Germany indicates in the NMR 2013 that the reference period for the labour force employed by agricultural holdings started in March 2012 and ended in February 2013, the duration of which actually falls one day short of the requirement set forth in the above Regulation. Nevertheless, such a difference may be considered negligible. The latest reference period, i.e. ending on 31 October 2013, was applied in six countries (France, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Slovakia and Iceland).

Rural development measures

Regarding the rural development measures specified in Annex III of Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008, a period of three years ending on 31 December 2013 should be applied in the FSS 2013. Only a few countries applied a slightly different reference period compared to the above Regulation, namely the Netherlands (a three year-period ending in March 2013) and Slovenia (a three year-period ending on 31 May 2013). It should be noted that these countries used administrative sources to obtain the requested data on rural development measures. Additionally, three other countries used a different period in 2013 than the one requested in the above Regulation. Cyprus, Hungary and Malta referred to the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. Hungary and Malta used administrative sources to obtain the requested data on rural development measures.

Comparability of the reference periods between 2010 and 2013

The following countries did not modify the reference periods between the 2010 (2009) and 2013 surveys: the Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, the United Kingdom and Iceland. Changes occurred in the following countries:

Belgium

Compared to the reference periods/days used in the FSS 2013, the reference periods/days used in the 2010 census were slightly different. The reference period used for crop characteristics was a single reference day (1 May) in 2010 compared to March (for Wallonia) and April (for Flanders) in 2013, while for livestock characteristics the difference is only 15 days (1 May 2010 compared to 15 May 2013).

Bulgaria

In 2013, Bulgaria modified the reference period/day for livestock and labour force characteristics. As concerns livestock characteristics, the data referred in 2010 to 31 August, i.e. to a reference day two months earlier than the one used in 2013 (1 November 2013), while the reference period for labour force characteristics ended on 31 August 2010, i.e. it ended one month earlier than in 2013.

Denmark

In Denmark, practically no difference exists as the reference day of the 2013 survey was set to 13 May and in 2010 it was 14 May.

Italy

Compared to the reference day of 1 December 2013 applied to the livestock characteristics in the FSS 2013, in 2010 Italy used 24 October 2010 as the reference day for livestock.

Cyprus

The reference periods/days applied in 2010 were slightly different compared to those used in 2013. Concerning the land and labour force characteristics, the period from 1 October 2009 to 30 September 2010 was applied in the 2010 census, while for livestock characteristics the reference day was 1 November in 2010. This, however represents a difference of only one month compared to the FSS 2013, where for land use and labour force characteristics the period from 1 September 2012 to 31 August 2013 was used and for livestock the reference day used was 1 October 2013.

Luxembourg

Instead of the 12-month period ending on 15 May used in 2010, Luxembourg applied the reference period of 12 months ending a month and a half earlier, i.e. on 1 April for labour force characteristics in the FSS 2013.

Poland

With the exception of the rural development characteristics, for all other groups of characteristics, i.e. land, livestock

and labour force, the reference days/periods applied in the FSS 2013 were set one month earlier than in the 2010 census.

Romania

The reference period applied for livestock characteristics was set one month earlier in 2010 compared to the FSS 2013, i.e. 1 December 2010 instead of 31 December 2013.

Sweden

There was a negligible difference of five days applied to the reference day for livestock characteristics, i.e. in 2010 the reference day was 10 June while in the 2013 survey it was 5 June.

Norway

The reference period applied in Norway to labour force characteristics began five months earlier in the FSS 2013 compared to the 2010 census. Instead of the 12-month period prior to 31 July 2010, the 12-month period prior to 1 March 2013 was used.

Conclusions

The slightly different reference periods/days across countries in 2013, generally within the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008, might affect the comparability of data across countries to a certain extent for specific characteristics. It is, however, difficult to measure the impact on the data for specific characteristics.

The changes of the national reference periods/days between 2010 and 2013 were mostly minor and most probably had only a negligible impact on the number of holdings. However, for specific characteristics such as pigs, the modification of the reference period/day, for example from 1 December 2010 to 31 December 2013, has some effect on data comparability over time.

Source data for tables and graphs

- [Farm structure survey - reference periods: tables](#)

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](#)