Performance of the agricultural sector

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in 30 October 2025.
Planned article update: November 2026.

Highlights

The EU's agricultural industry created an estimated gross value added of € 228.6 billion in 2024.

Agriculture contributed 1.2% to the EU's GDP in 2024.

Agricultural income per annual work unit is estimated to have risen very slightly for the EU as a whole in 2024 (+0.6%), to a level that was 37.6% higher than the index level in 2015.

This article gives an overview of the economic and resource performance of agriculture in the European Union (EU) . It uses indicators on agricultural output, agricultural income and agricultural prices in the EU for economic performance and indicators on agricultural output and intermediate consumption for resource performance. The data are extracted from Eurostat collections of agricultural statistics: economic accounts for agriculture (EAA) , agricultural price indices (API) and agri-environmental indicators (AEIs).

Value of agricultural output

Agriculture is an activity that falls within the primary sector of the economy, which is concerned with the extraction or harvesting of products from the earth. In an accounting context, an industry is a branch of economic activity. The term 'agricultural industry' is used to describe the branch of agricultural production, but it should not be understood as inferring that agriculture is industrialised or that it is about the processing of raw materials.

In this article, the term 'agricultural industry' is used only where precise accounting terms are required, with 'agricultural sector' being used elsewhere.

Agriculture contributed 1.2% to the EU's GDP in 2024, about the same share as fifteen years earlier.

Agricultural production by the millions of predominantly small farms in the EU adds up to being big business, even without considering its importance as the key building block for the downstream food and beverage processing industry. The agricultural sector contributed an estimated € 223.3 billion towards the EU's overall GDP in 2024. To put this in some context, the contribution of agriculture to the EU's economy was very similar to the GDP of Greece in 2024, the 16th largest economy among the EU countries.

This contribution (gross value added at producer prices, which is comparable to GDP at market prices), is the difference between the value of agricultural output and the value of various input costs built up in the production process, adjusted for taxes and subsidies on products. It is therefore interesting to look at the structure and composition of the value of agricultural production and the various inputs used.

The agricultural industry created added value of € 228.6 billion in 2024

The gross value added by the EU's agricultural industry, which is the difference between the value of everything that

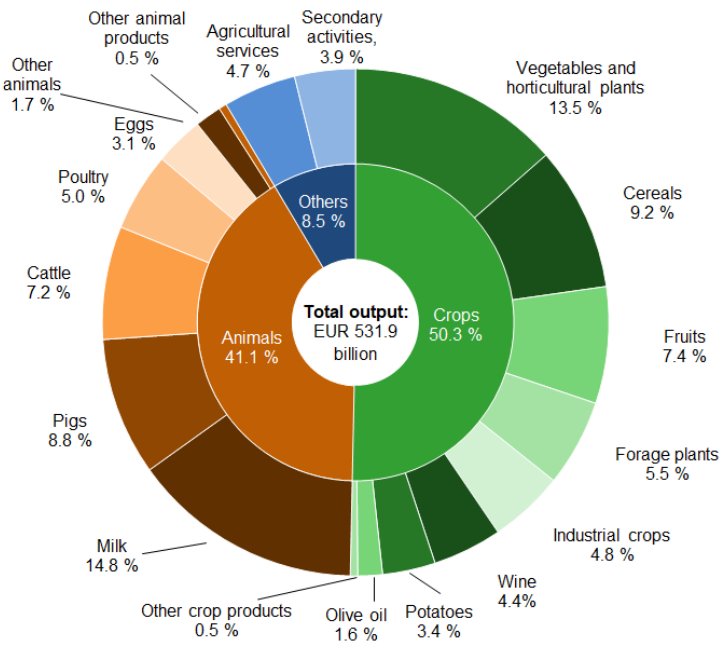
the EU's primary agricultural sector produced and the costs of the services and goods used in the production process, was an estimated € 228.6 billion in 2024. One way of looking at this is that for every € 1 spent on the cost of goods and services used in the production process (known as intermediate consumption), the EU's agricultural industry created added value of € 0.75. This relative value added increased sharply in 2024, and was only a little less than the medium-term high of € 0.77 in 2017.

The value of the output produced by the EU's agricultural industry was € 531.9 billion in 2024

The value of everything that the EU's agricultural industry produced in 2024 was an estimated € 531.9 billion; this includes the value of crops, of animals, of agricultural services, as well as some goods and services that were not strictly agricultural, but which could not be separately measured.

One half (50.3%) of the estimated value of the total output of the EU's agricultural industry in 2024 came from crops (€ 267.7 billion), within which vegetables and horticultural plants, and cereals were the most valuable crops (see Figure 1). Slightly more than two-fifths (41.1%) of total output came from animals and animal products (€ 218.8 billion), a majority coming from milk and pigs. Agri-
cultural services (€ 24.8 billion) and inseparable non-agricultural activities (€ 20.6 billion) contributed the rest (8.5%).

Output of the agricultural industry
(% of total output, EU, 2024)



Note: values at basic prices. Due to rounding, the aggregate shares for Crops, Animals and 'Others' do not add up to 100.0%.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: aact_eaa01)

Figure 1: Output of the agricultural industry Source: Eurostat (aact_eaa01)

Contributions from EU countries varied significantly, reflecting differences in volumes produced, prices received, as well as the mix of crops grown, animals reared, animal products collected, and services offered. A clear majority (56.9%) of the estimated total output value of the EU's agricultural industry came from the 'big four' of France (€ 88.3 billion), Germany (€ 75.5 billion), Italy (€ 70.2 billion) and Spain (€ 68.7 billion). The next grouping of EU countries was the Netherlands (€ 41.3 billion), Poland (€ 39.5 billion), and Romania (€ 20.2 billion).

Three-quarters (75.9%) of the estimated total value of EU's agricultural output in 2024 came from these 7 EU countries.

Intermediate consumption for the EU's agricultural industry was € 303.3 billion in 2024

Producing all this output incurred costs. Farmers had to make purchases of goods and services to be used as inputs in the production process; they bought items like seeds, fertilisers, animal feedingstuffs and fuel for their tractors as well as veterinary services, among other things. Overall costs fell back again in 2024 (driven by reduced spending on feedingstuffs, fertilisers and energy and lubricants), after being pushed up sharply in 2022 by the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and resulting instability on markets. These input costs are termed 'intermediate consumption' in an accounting context. Intermediate consumption for the agricultural industry is estimated to have been € 303.3 billion for the EU as a whole in 2024, some € 17.6 billion less than in 2022.

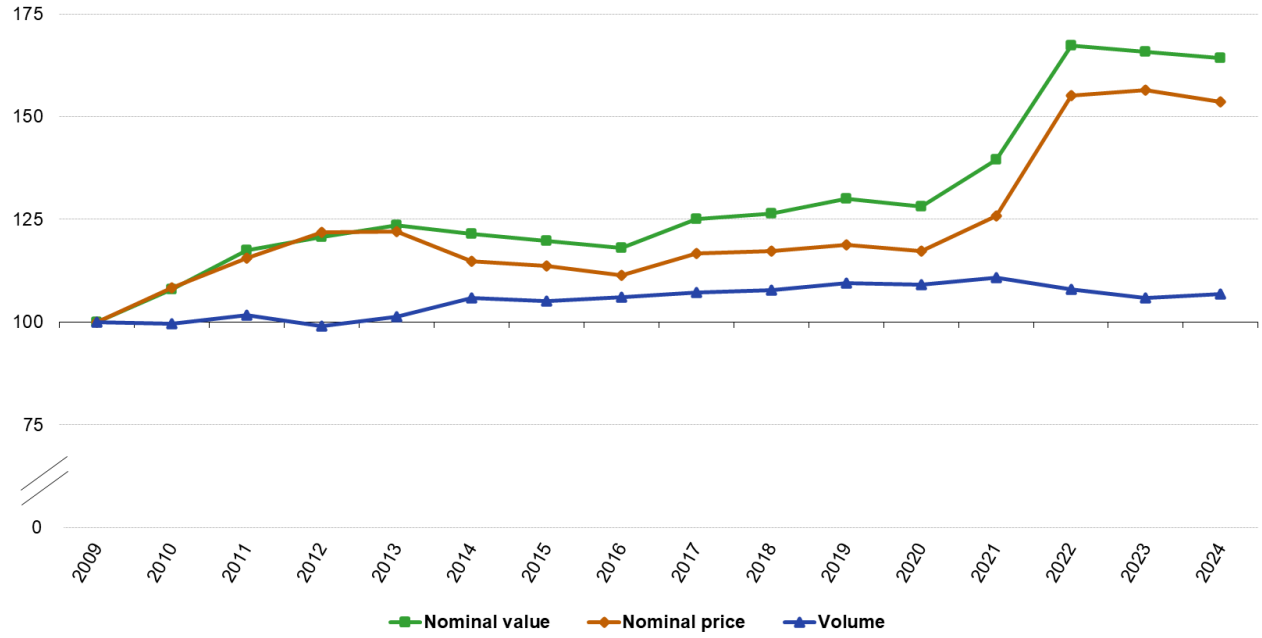
After the rapid increase in the overall price of goods and services consumed in agriculture in 2022 (+31.1%), there was a moderate decline in 2023 (-4.7%) which gained momentum in 2024 (-6.1%). This sharper downturn in 2024 was driven by lower prices for fertilisers and soil improvers (-17.6%), animal feedingstuffs (-10.5%), and energy and lubricants (-8.4%). Nevertheless, prices continued to rise the maintenance of materials (+4.6%), the maintenance of buildings (+3.2%), veterinary expenses (+3.1%) and seeds and planting stock (also +3.1%).

Some costs are associated with the farming of animals; they required feed. This accounted for an estimated 37.0% of total intermediate consumption, and veterinary services (a further 2.3%). Likewise, some costs are associated with crop farming; farmers required seeds and plants (an estimated 5.1% of total costs) and many used plant protection products, herbicides, insecticides and pesticides (a further 4.8%) as well as fertilisers and soil improvers (an estimated 7.3%). Other costs are common to all types of farms, independent of whether specialist or mixed type.

The value of the output produced by the EU's agricultural industry in 2024 continued to fall back slightly from the peak recorded in 2022

In 2024, the estimated value of agricultural output was -0.9% less in nominal terms than in 2023, which was itself less (-0.9%) than the peak value of output in 2022 (see Figure 2). The change in nominal value in 2024 reflected the balance of a small increase in
the volume of output (+1.0%) and decline in the nominal price for agricultural goods and services as a whole (-1.8%).

Developments in output of the agricultural industry
(2009 = 100, basic prices, EU, 2009-2024)



Note: indices originally compiled with n-1 = 100; chain linked to reference year 2009 = 100.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: aact_eaa05)

Figure 2: Developments in output of the agricultural industry Source: Eurostat (aact_eaa05)

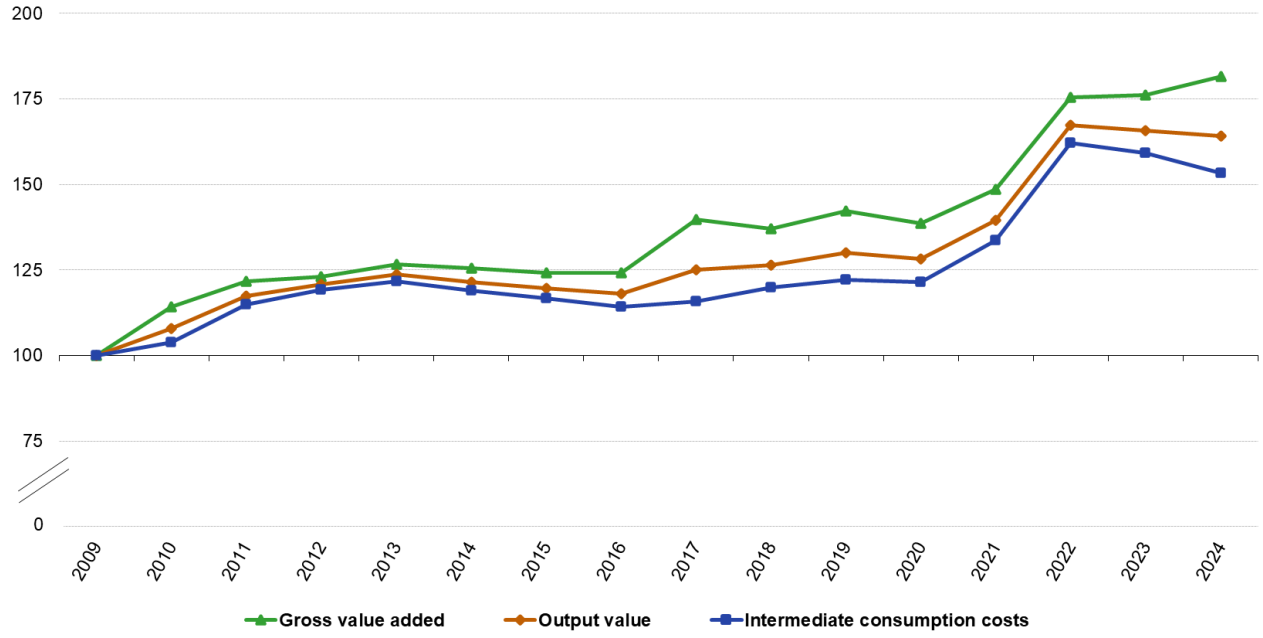
The slight decline in the output value of the EU's agricultural industry in 2024 reflected stark contrasts among EU countries. The sharpest rates of decline in value were in Romania (-9.0%), France (-8.9%), Hungary (-8.6%) and Bulgaria (-8.0%). However, there were also sharp increases in value, in Ireland (+8.8%), Croatia (+8.8%) and Poland (+7.3%).

The gross value added generated by the EU's agricultural industry in 2024 continued its upward trend

In 2024, the gross value added generated by the EU's agricultural industry increased by 3.1% compared to the level in 2023. This resulted from the value of intermediate goods and services declining at a faster rate (-3.7%) than the value of agricultural output (-0.9%).

This increase in gross value added continued the upward trend since 2010.

Developments in output and consumption of the agricultural industry
(2009 = 100, basic prices, EU, 2009-2024)



Note: indices originally compiled with n-1 = 100; chain linked to reference year 2009 = 100.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: aact_eaa05)

Figure 3: Developments in output and consumption of the agricultural industry Source: Eurostat (aact_eaa05)

Agricultural labour productivity

The economic performance of the agricultural industry can be measured in terms of net value added at factor cost, which is gross value added adjusted for the consumption of fixed capital and subsidies and taxes on production. It is also known as factor income, as it is the remuneration available for all the factors of production (land, capital and labour).

Factor income in the EAA can be expressed per full-time labour equivalent. As such, it is considered a partial labour productivity measure; it is a measure of the net value added by the equivalent of each full-time worker in the agricultural industry. This productivity indicator is measured in real terms (adjusted for inflation) and expressed as an index (called Indicator A). It should not be confused with total income of farming households or the income of a person working in agriculture.

To understand the development of this agricultural income measure, it is first necessary to understand the development of the agricultural labour amongst which this remuneration is notionally shared. With so much part-time, seasonal and unsalaried labour input in agriculture, the amount of work actually carried out in farming activities is best described when using a unit called the annual work unit (AWU). This unit expresses the volume of work done in full-time work equivalents.

Downward trend in the volume of agricultural labour in the EU continued in 2024

Agricultural labour input in the EU was the equivalent of 7.5 million full-time workers in 2024. A majority of total agricultural labour input is non-salaried labour; it was the equivalent of 5.2 million full-time workers in 2024. Salaried labour was the equivalent of 2.3 million full-time workers.

There is a long-established downward trend in the number of people working in the EU's agricultural sector. During the period between 2009 and 2024, there was a loss equivalent to 3.6 million full-time workers across the EU, corresponding to an annual average rate of decline of 2.6% per year. The downward trend continued in 2024, albeit estimated at a slower pace (-1.3%).

Less total agricultural labour input was used in most EU countries in 2024 than in the preceding year, with particularly stark and renewed contractions in Hungary (-9.2%) and Bulgaria (-8.1%). By contrast, there were some countries where the volume of labour used in 2024 was estimated to have been higher; the strongest upturn was in Malta (+7.6%), with smaller rates of increase in Cyprus (+1.2%), Spain (+0.9%), Italy (+0.6%), Slovakia (+0.6%) and Czechia (+0.3%).

In a few EU countries, particularly Malta, Italy and Czechia, more salaried agricultural labour was used in 2024 than in 2023 (see Figure 4), in part reflecting an increase in hiring requirements at seasonal peaks. In Germany, Portugal, France, Belgium and Sweden, the greater amounts of salaried labour input contrasted with the overall decline in the total amount of agricultural labour used.

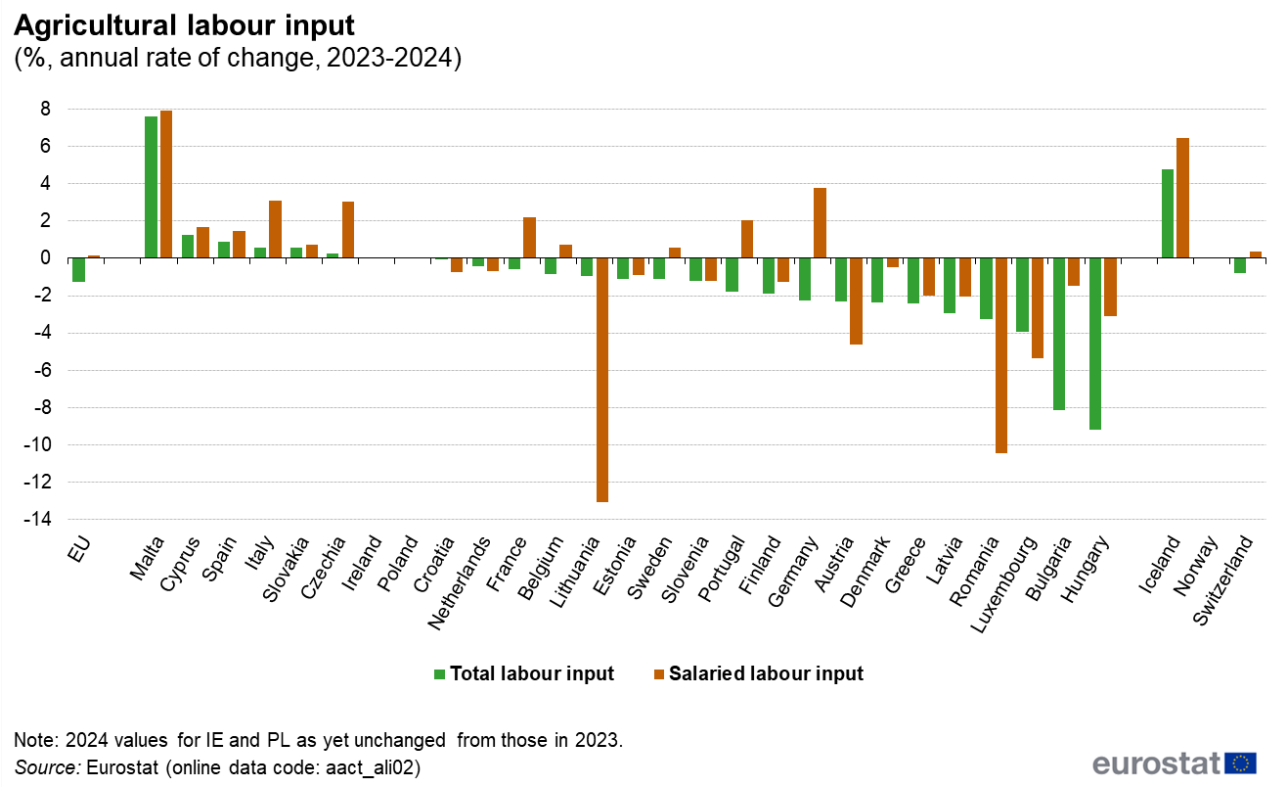


Figure 4: Agricultural labour input Source: Eurostat (aact_ali02)

Over the long-term, the amount of agricultural labour used has been in steady decline

Total agricultural labour input declined sharply in almost all EU countries during the fifteen-year period between 2009 and 2024 (see Figure 5); the sharpest rates of decline were in Bulgaria (an average -7.7% per year), Slovakia (-5.7% per year), Romania (-4.5% per year), Hungary (-3.8% per year) and Estonia (-3.8% per year). This contraction in the agricultural labour force reflected both push and pull factors; there have been great strides in mechanisation and efficiency on the one hand and, on the other, a wider choice of attractive job opportunities in other sectors of the economy. The main exceptions to this general trend were Malta (+3.3% per year on average), Ireland (+0.9% per year on average) and the Netherlands (+0.1% per year on average).

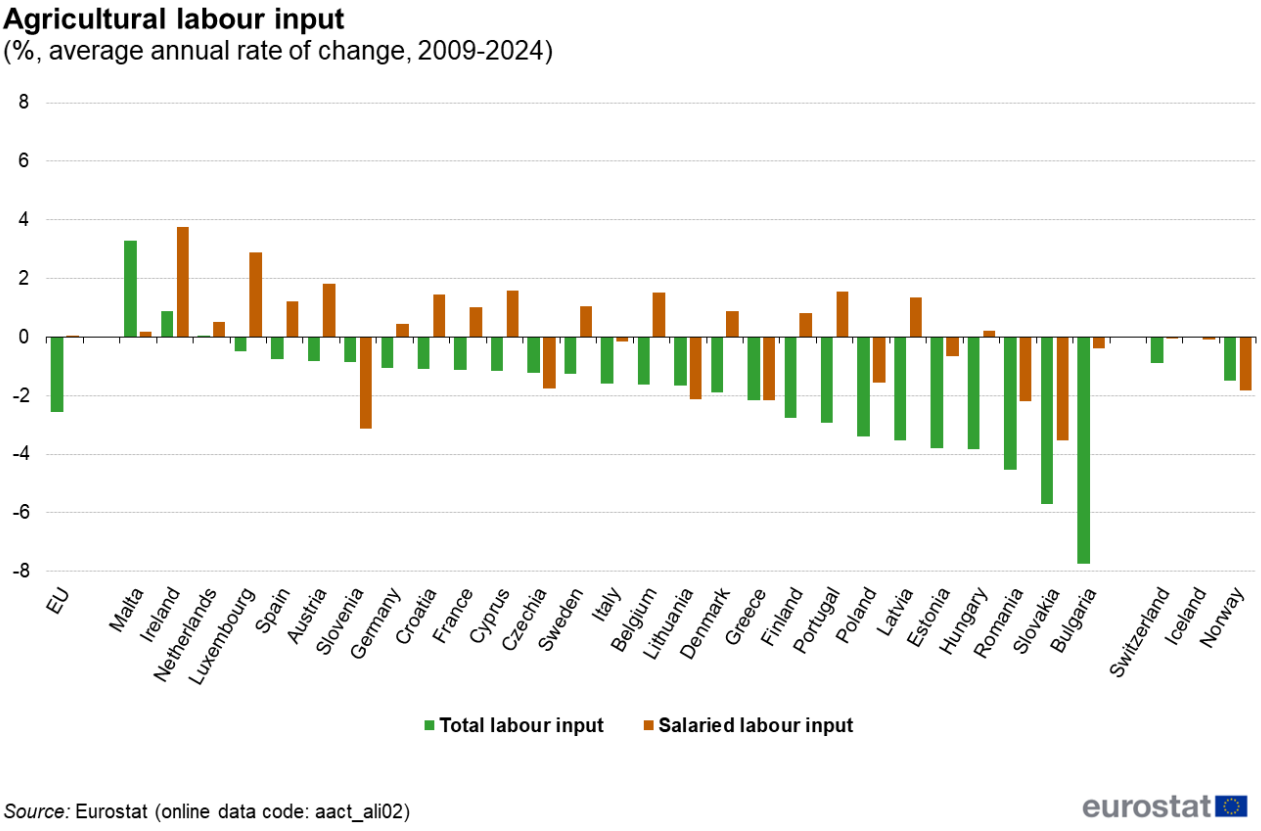


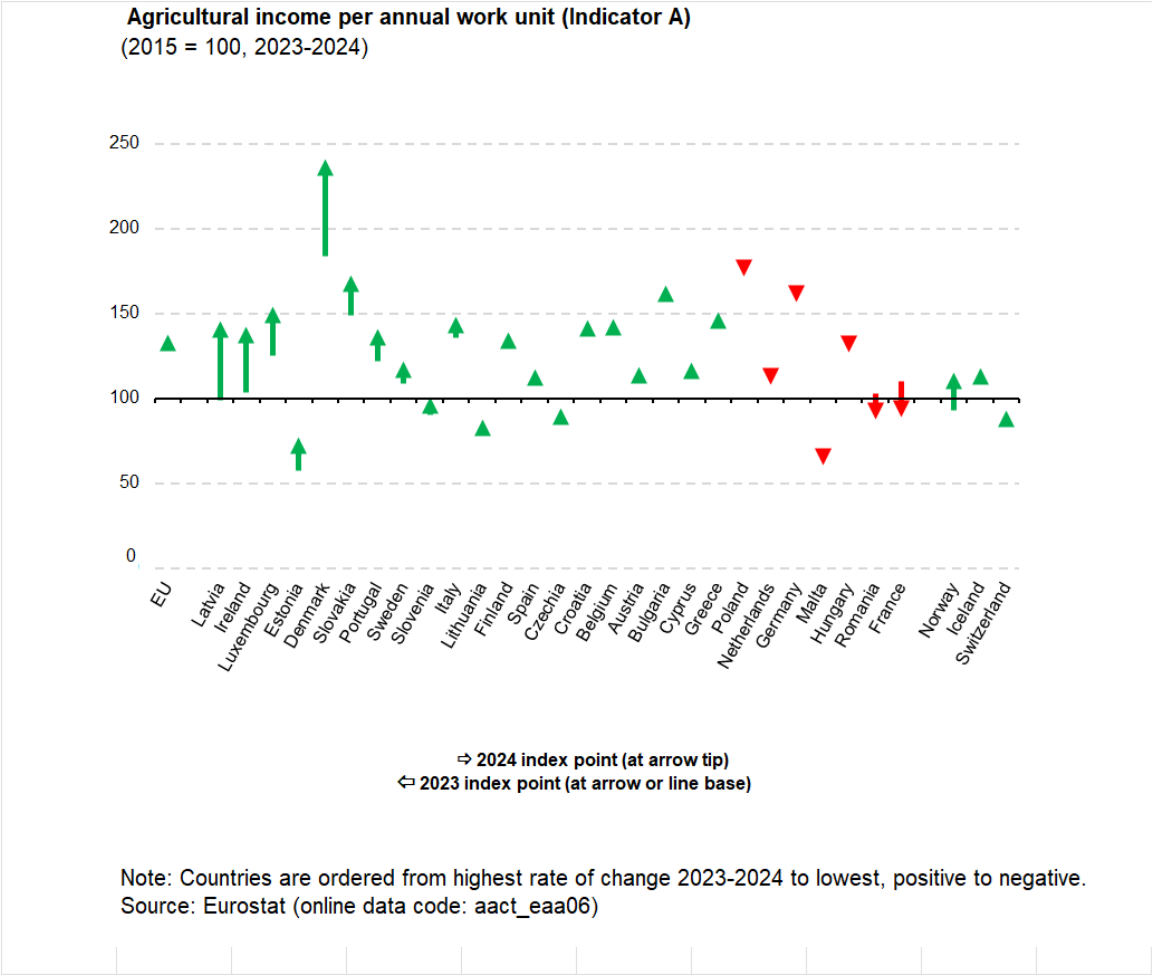
Figure 5: Agricultural labour input Source: Eurostat (aact_ali02)

The contraction in the EU's total work input from non-salaried labour between 2009 and 2024 (-3.4% per year on average) contrasted with the stability in EU's work input from salaried labour (±0.0% per year on average). Over this period, there was growth in the use of salaried labour input in Ireland (+3.8% per year), Luxembourg (+2.9% per year on average), Austria (+1.8% per year on average), Cyprus (+1.6% per year on average), and Belgium and Portugal (both +1.5% per year on average), among other EU countries. By contrast, there were relatively sharp contractions in the use of salaried labour input in Slovakia (-3.5% per year on average), Slovenia (-3.1% per year on average), Greece and Romania (both -2.2% per year on average), and Lithuania (-2.1% per year on average).

Agricultural income as defined by real factor income per AWU increased very slightly for the EU as a whole in 2024 (an estimated +0.6%)

Agricultural income, as defined by deflated (real) factor income per AWU and expressed as an index (called indicator A), for the EU as a whole in 2024 was an estimated 0.6% higher than in 2023. This reflected a slightly lower level of factor income compared with 2023 (-0.7%) that was notionally achieved by a smaller total agricultural labour input (down -1.3%).

A majority of EU countries estimated increases in this index of agricultural income per AWU in 2024 (see Figure 6), underpinning the overall rise at the level of the EU as a whole. The sharpest rates of increase were in Latvia (+46.8%), Ireland (+38.9%), Estonia (+33.2%), Denmark (+31.0%) and Luxembourg (+24.2%). Among the minority, where this index of agricultural income decreased in 2024, the sharpest rates were in France (-19.1%), Romania (-14.7%) and Hungary (-5.3%). As well as France and Romania, the index also declined in another three of the seven biggest agricultural producing EU countries: Germany (-2.5%), the Netherlands (-1.6%) and Poland (-1.3%).



Note: Countries are ordered from highest rate of change 2023-2024 to lowest, positive to negative.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: aact_eaa06)

Figure 6: Agricultural income per annual work unit (Indicator A) Source: Eurostat (aact_eaa06)

2024 estimates confirm the upward trend in the index of agricultural income for the EU

Agricultural income per AWU for the EU as a whole is estimated to have risen slightly in 2024 (+0.6%), following a relatively sharp contraction in 2023 (-6.4%). This latest development reaffirmed the upward trend since a relative low in 2009 (see Figure 7).

Over the period as a whole, this upward development reflected growth in factor income accompanied by a continuing contraction in agricultural labour input. Agricultural income per AWU for the EU as a whole was an estimated 93.6% higher in 2024 than fifteen years previously in 2009. Over the same period, factor income was an estimated 31.1% higher but agricultural labour input had shrunk by an estimated 32.3%.

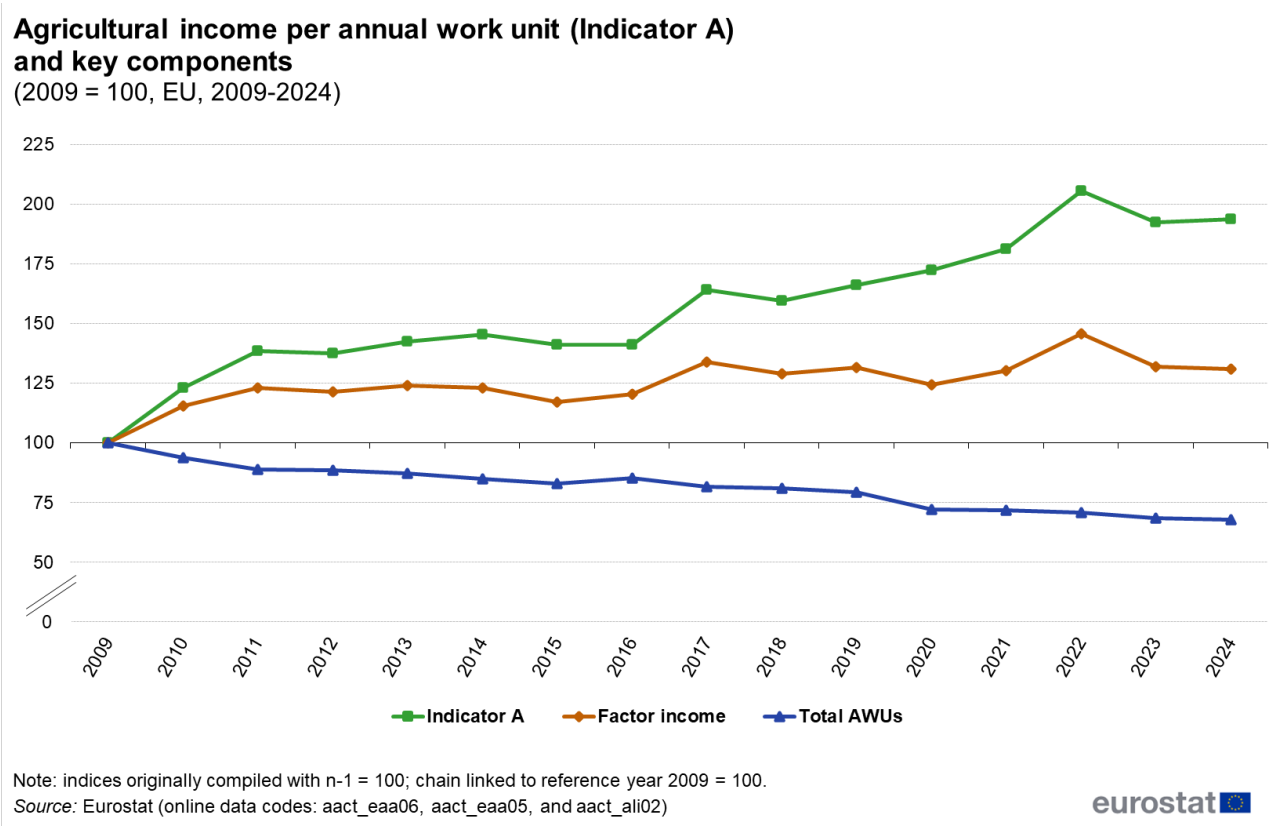


Figure 7: Agricultural income per annual work unit (Indicator A) and key components Source: Eurostat (aact_eaa06), (aact_eaa05) and (aact_ali02)

Source data for tables and graphs

- Download Excel file

Data sources

The EAA are an extended account of the European system of accounts (ESA 2010). They cover the agricultural products and services produced over the accounting period sold by agricultural units, held in stocks on farms, or used for further processing by agricultural producers. The concepts of the EAA are adapted to the particular nature of the agricultural industry: for example, the EAA includes not only the production of grapes and olives but also the production of wine and olive oil by agricultural producers, if produced from own grapes and olives. It includes information on intra-unit consumption of crop products used in animal feed, as well as output accounted for by own account production of fixed capital goods and own final consumption of agricultural units.

The EAA comprises a production account, a generation of income account, an entrepreneurial income account and some elements of a capital account. For the production items, EU Member States transmit to Eurostat values at basic prices, as well as their components (values at producer prices, subsidies on products and taxes on products).

The output of agricultural activity includes output sold (including trade in agricultural goods and services between agricultural units), changes in stocks, output for own final use (own final consumption and own-account gross fixed capital formation), output produced for further processing by agricultural producers, as well as intra-unit consumption of livestock feed products. The output of the agricultural industry is made up of the sum of the output of agricultural products and of the goods and services produced in inseparable non-agricultural secondary activities; animal and crop output are the main product categories of agricultural output.

Three indicators are computed in relation to agricultural income

- an index of real income of factors in agricultural activity per AWU (Indicator A)

- an index of real net agricultural entrepreneurial income, per unpaid AWU (Indicator B)
- and the net entrepreneurial income of agriculture (Indicator C)

The information presented on agricultural income relates to indicator A (the real income of factors in agriculture per AWU). This indicator corresponds to the real (deflated) net value added at factor cost of agriculture per AWU and is expressed as an index. Net value added at factor cost is calculated by subtracting from the value of agricultural output at basic prices the value of intermediate consumption, the consumption of fixed capital and adding the value of (other) subsidies less taxes on production.

Agricultural price statistics provide information on the development of producer (output) prices for agricultural products and purchaser prices for the means of agricultural production (the intermediate consumption of goods and services within the production process). Data on prices are available for single commodities and for larger aggregates in the form of absolute prices and price indices.

The index of producer prices for agricultural products is based on sales of agricultural products, while the input index (for intermediate goods and services) is based on purchases of the means of agricultural production. Prices should be recorded at points which are as close as possible to those of the transactions which the farmer actually undertakes. This means that product prices should be recorded at the first marketing stage to best indicate the actual producer prices received by farmers. Similarly, the prices paid by farmers for their means of production should be recorded at the last marketing stage, that at which the items arrive on the farm, to best indicate the purchase prices paid by farmers. It is assumed, by convention, that the fertilisers and feeding stuffs purchased are used in the same production period and that there are no stocks on farm.

As regards spatial comparisons, the structure of the weights with respect to products and means of production reflect the value of the sales and purchases in each country during the previous year (currently 2020 = 100); the weights therefore differ from one country to another.

Context

The performance of the agricultural sector has traditionally been about how successful farming is in delivering primary agricultural products and services.

The European Commission's new Vision for agriculture and food aims to foster trust and dialogue across the entire chain. It aims to build an attractive agri-food sector, foster a competitive and resilient sector, provide the conditions for a future-proof sector, and focus on food, fair living and working condition in rural areas. Vision for agriculture and food]' aims to foster trust and dialogue across the entire chain. It aims to build an attractive agri-food sector, foster a competitive and resilient sector, provide the conditions for a future-proof sector, and focus on food, fair living and working condition in rural areas.

Among other things, the vision looks to

- secure farmers' future to make agriculture financially viable and fighting back unfair practices: attract incomes from multiple sources, foster a fairer position in the food chain to enable farmers to thrive and earn a fair revenue
- properly reward ecosystem services
- create opportunities for young people in rural areas: encourage future generations to choose agricultural careers, harness the agri-food sector's entrepreneurial potential for a new wave of innovative agri-food businesses
- develop resistance to geopolitical changes: diversify trade relations, create new export opportunities, pursue international partnerships
- ensure products all have the same standards: align standards for imported products to guarantee EU's ambitious standards do not lead to a competitive disadvantage, fully enforce food safety as it remains a non-negotiable priority

- increase the resilience of the agri-food sector: innovate and maintain leadership in global markets, protect the interests of European farmers, and reduce critical import dependencies

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Assessing the performance of the agricultural sector matters for a number of reasons

- farming is a cornerstone of the rural community, one on which a number of 'upstream' sectors (such as machinery, animal healthcare and input businesses) and 'downstream' sectors (such as food processing, packaging and transport businesses) depend

- farming is about providing a stable supply of safe, quality food

- farming has a key role to play in preserving landscapes and biodiversity

- farming has a key role to play in climate change action

- to support this, there is a need to ensure a fair income for farmers

Economic impacts on farmers therefore not only influence future farming business decisions but also wider ecological and environmental business decisions and behaviour.

The performance of the agricultural sector as a whole can be assessed by bringing the information about the volume and price changes for agricultural goods and services under the umbrella of an accounting structure. To this end, the economic accounts for agriculture (EAA) provide a set of comparable data that provide an insight into

- the economic viability of agriculture

- the income generated by farmers through agricultural activity

- the structure and composition of agricultural production and the inputs used in that production

- the relationships between prices and quantities of both outputs and inputs

Footnotes

Explore further

Other articles

- Agricultural production — livestock and meat
- Agricultural production — crops
- The EU potato sector — statistics on production, prices and trade
- The fruit and vegetable sector in the EU — a statistical overview

Database

- Agriculture (agri) , see:

Economic accounts for agriculture (aact)

Economic Accounts for Agriculture (aact_eaa)
Agricultural Labour Input Statistics (aact_ali)
Unit value statistics for agricultural products (aact_uv)

Agricultural prices and price indices (apri)

Selling prices of agricultural products (absolute prices), land prices and rents (apri_ap)
Price indices of agricultural products (apri_pi)

- Agriculture (t_agr) , see:

Economic accounts for agriculture (t_aact)

Agricultural prices and price indices (t_apri)

Thematic section

- Agriculture

Publications

- Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics — 2024 edition (statistical book)

Methodology

- Absolute agricultural prices (ESMS metadata file — apri_ap_esms)
- Economic accounts for agriculture (ESMS metadata file — apri_ap_esms)
- Manual on the economic accounts for agriculture and forestry EAA/EAF 97 (Rev. 1.1)
- Price indices of agricultural products (ESMS metadata file — apri_ap_esms)
- Target methodology for agricultural labour input (ALI) statistics (Rev. 1) (ESMS metadata file — aact_esms)

External links

- European Commission — Agriculture and rural development — food, farming, fisheries
- European Commission — a European Green Deal
- European Commission — farm to fork strategy

Legislation

- Regulation (EC) No 138/2004 of 5 December 2003 concerning economic accounts for agriculture
- Summaries of EU Legislation: Economic accounts for agriculture