

Changes in land cover and land use

2. Some findings

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At European level, there are not so many data available to chart changes in land cover and use. However, some countries have compiled national indicators of changes in land cover and/or use. France has produced maps based on the indicators generated by the TERUTI survey. Switzerland has carried out a detailed investigation of changes in land use, making a distinction between plains and mountains. Great Britain has charted changes in semi-natural habitats by means of the Countryside Survey.

Statistics in focus

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

THEME 5 – 5/2002

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Surface studies in the EU-15

All Member States have data on changes in land cover and use (*Statistics in Focus, Theme 5 No. 4/2002, Changes in land cover and use - methods and tools*). This information is centralised at European level in the New Cronos database. Initial studies show an ongoing loss of permanent grassland, basically to other types of land cover. (Figure 1) [1]. However, the methods used to acquire information may vary from one Member State to the next, as may the classifications used.



Sources: Zpa1, Regio (D* 1998), Forest (DK, IRL, I, UK 1998)

Figure 1: Changes in major land use categories in EU-9*¹

Some countries have more sophisticated tools for charting changes in land cover and use. As from 2003, the LUCAS survey (2001 and 2003) and the CORINE Land Cover project (CLC and CLC 2000) will provide high-quality homogeneous data on the changes at the first level². They will thus allow superior quality indicators to be compiled.



¹ EU-9 was the Europe of nine countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom). In order to avoid variations due to German unification, EU-9* and D* are understood as not including the ex-GDR.

² At the first level, only surfaces are calculated for each category in a given territory. At the second level, the flux between categories can be identified.

100 000 hectares of farmland disappear each year in France

The TERUTI survey is a two-stage sample survey of land use in France. It is based on 550 000 points that are surveyed each year. Since this systematic sample is fixed, changes in land use can be charted over time (**Box 1**). Continuous series are available for the years 1982-1990 and 1992-1999.

Over the latter period, farmland decreased by 720 000 ha, i.e. by an average of 100 000 ha (-0.34%) per year, whereas the countryside and non-natural areas increased by 269 000 ha and 451 000 ha respectively over the same period [2]. These overall balances must be examined in greater detail, due account being taken of the flows entering and leaving farmland.

Between 1992 and 1999, almost one million hectares of French farmland was restored to the countryside. Most of this abandoned land has become fallow or heath or has been afforested - either artificially or naturally (**Table 1**). Most of this farmland has disappeared in the French heartland, comprising rural land not used for intensive farming (**Figure 2**). Over the same period, farmland has claimed 620 000 ha of countryside, especially heath and fallow. For every 10 ha of this type of land, four are used for pasture, three for annual crops and three are not directly involved in production - access roads and hedges, for example.

Non-natural areas have swallowed up almost half a million hectares of farmland. This has happened mostly around the major conurbations of Paris, Lille and Lyon, along the coast and along the major communication arteries (**Figure 3**). They have also freed 140 000 ha of waste land, depots and storage areas that have been recultivated.

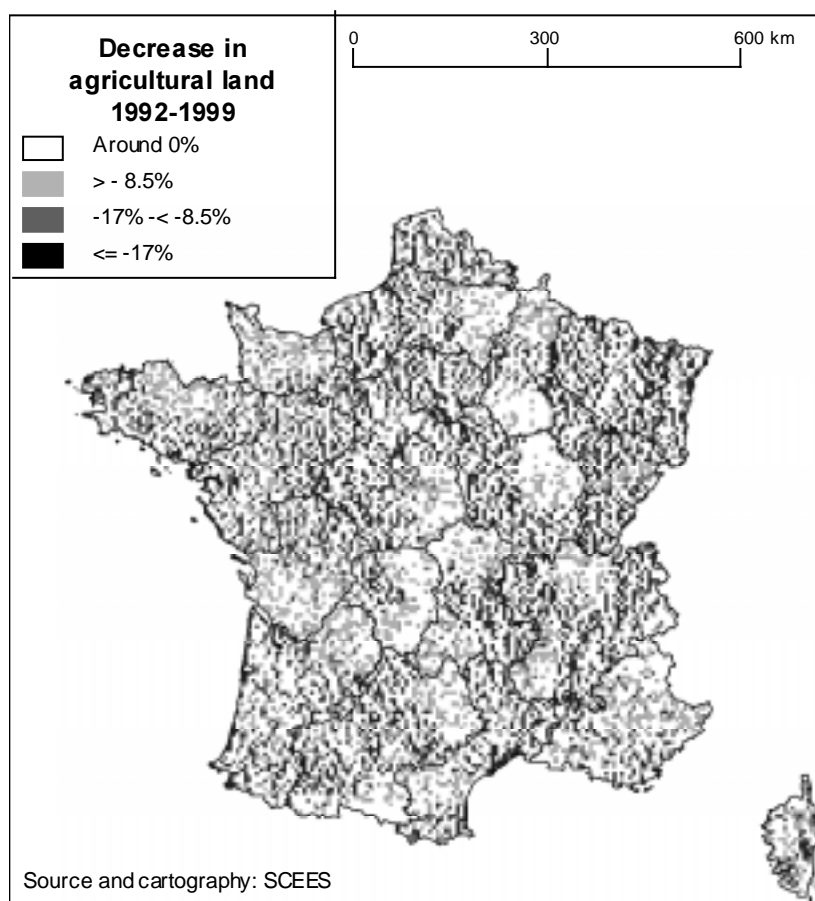


Figure 2: Agricultural land 1992-99, rates of decrease (in %) Source SCEES

Former use ►	Pasture	Hedges and access roads	Annual crops	Vineyards and orchards	...	Area 1999	Change 1992-1999
New use ▼							
Heath, grazing, alpine meadows	393	64	145	45	...	4 203	-300
Forest	70	177	44	10	...	15 006	+584
Rock, ice and water	21	14	11	0.6	...	1 824	-14
...
Area 1992	11 689	2 067	15 156	1 319	...	54 919	
Change 1992-1999	-675	-169	+162	-38	...		

Table 1: Changes in farmland returned to natural habitats between 1992 and 1999 (1000 ha) - Source SCEES

Box 1: TERUTI and its many uses

TERUTI is an annual sample survey of land use. It employs 15 500 areas of 1 800 m square (324 ha) spread over the entire country at 6 km intervals. Each of these contains a grid of 36 points spaced at 300 m intervals.

Data from the TERUTI survey are used in a number of ways ([3] to [6]). Most importantly, they have helped with the compilation of the three following indicators, which exist in map form for France as a whole:

- a predominant cover indicator
- a spatial organisation indicator
- a temporal trend indicator

To calculate these indicators, the 550 000 survey points are grouped into three categories (natural, agricultural, non-natural). Each of the 36-point grids constitutes a landscape unit. This is mapped using a pixel whose colour represents the value of the indicator in question.

- For the predominant cover indicator, a grid is deemed to have predominant cover if more than 50% of its points belong to a specific type of cover.
- For the spatial organisation indicator, each grid section is considered singly and, using a statistical method based on co-occurrence matrices, the number of proximities between the three classes is determined. Depending on the predominant proximities, each grid's land cover is classified as homogeneous or heterogeneous and a type of spatial organisation is suggested (closed area, boundary, neglected area, open area, etc.). This method has a low sensitivity threshold and allows small changes in land cover to be detected.
- For the trend indicator, standard trends are defined according to changes in the frequency and homogeneity of the three components. Here, homogenisation of a natural area is a "closure", that of an agricultural area an "opening" and that of a non-natural area a "settlement" (in the forest context). If an agricultural area becomes heterogeneous as a result of an increase in natural area, this is known as "decline". If non-natural land is the cause, this is known as "spoiling".

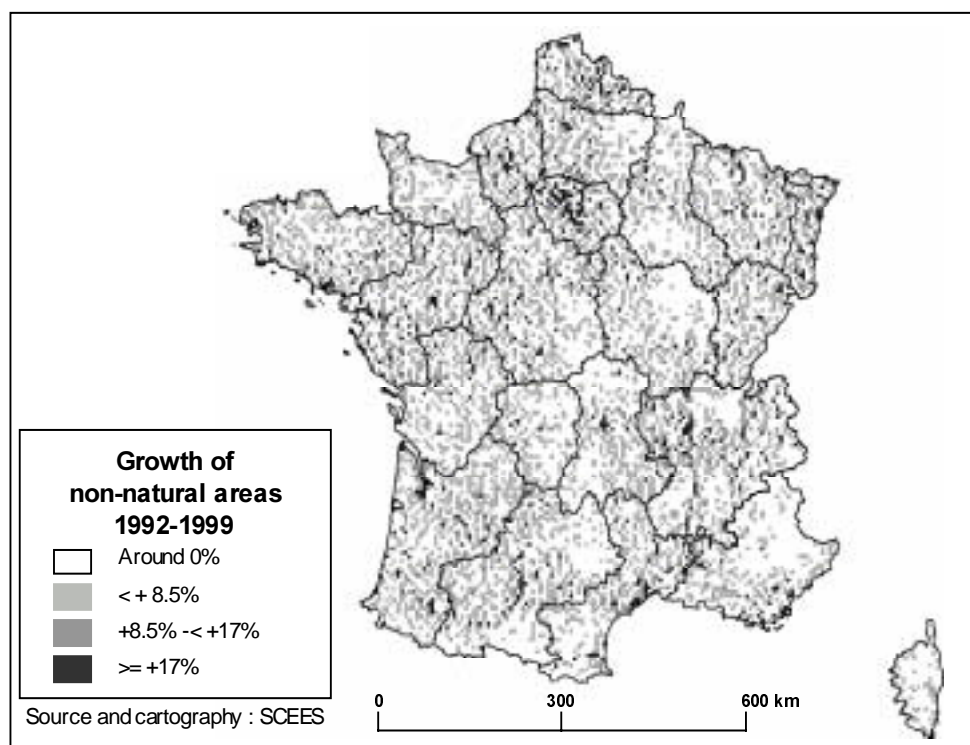


Figure 3: Rates of increase in non-natural areas between 1992 and 1999 (in %)

Changes in broad habitats in Great Britain

The Countryside Survey 2000 (CS2000) allows a matrix to be drawn up of changes in land use for the broad habitats found in Great Britain (**Table 3**). Changes in semi-natural habitats² allow an environmental constant to be compiled [7]. In 1998, these habitats accounted for more than a quarter of the area of Great Britain (26%) and over half that of Scotland (54%).

The numerous changes in land use have been between *improved grassland* and *arable and horticultural* land (1.15 million ha). 85% of the changes in *arable and horticultural* land, and 63% of those in *improved grassland* have resulted in the transformation of almost 120 000 ha of *improved grassland* into *arable and horticultural* land. Over 95% of this loss has been offset by improvements to *acid grassland*. Overall, however, *improved grassland* has decreased by over 100 000 ha, 45 000 ha having been transformed into *neutral grassland*, 17 000 ha into *fen, marsh, and swamp* and a full 40 000 ha into *built-up areas and gardens*.

Though 100 000 ha of land have changed between *acid grassland* and *bogs*, these changes cancel each other out, the balance being zero. Overall, *acid grassland* decreased by 150 000 ha between 1990 and 1998 (-11%) in spite of the conversion of

25 000 ha of *coniferous woodland* and 10 000 ha of *dwarf shrub heath*. In addition to improvement, 14 000 ha became *neutral grassland*, transformation to *bog* (27 000 ha) or *fen, marsh, and swamp* (17 000 ha) enhancing the disappearance of *acid grassland*.

The most stable types of use were as follows:

- surfaces under water (97% à 100%), defined by sole use,
- *woodland* and *bogs* (93%),
- *borders* and *linear elements* (92%), together with *built-up areas and gardens* (96%), which give structure to the landscape.

In relative terms, *fen, marsh, and swamp* areas have increased by 22% (almost 100 000 ha). There has been little in the way of disappearance, whereas 63 000 ha of grassland and 25 000 ha of *bog* have become *fen, marsh, and swamp*. Though the area accounted for by *inland rock* has increased by one-eighth, the total area in question is not significant (7 000 ha).

Relatively speaking, *calcareous grassland* has decreased by 18%, almost all of this being lost to other types of grassland.

Land use	Polarised uses			% change (ha)	
	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	1st+2nd+3rd
Arable and horticultural	Improved grassland	Neutral grassland	Woodland (broadleaved)	88.5%	96.0%
Improved grassland	Arable and horticultural	Neutral grassland	Acid grassland	63.3%	86.8%
Neutral grassland	Improved grassland	Arable and horticultural	Fen, marsh, and swamp	54.4%	74.9%
Calcareous grassland	Improved grassland	Arable and horticultural	Neutral grassland	51.3%	86.7%
Unknown	Improved grassland	Acid grassland	Built-up areas and gardens	48.4%	75.0%
Bog	Dwarf shrub heath	Acid grassland	Fen, marsh, and swamp	37.2%	83.1%
Built-up areas and gardens	Improved grassland	Neutral grassland	Woodland (broadleaved)	36.4%	73.9%
Rivers and streams	Standing open water and canals	Acid grassland	Fen, marsh, and swamp	35.5%	67.7%
Dwarf shrub heath	Bog	Acid grassland	Bracken	33.7%	82.4%
Bracken	Acid grassland	Dwarf shrub heath	Woodland (broadleaved)	31.2%	72.1%
All				54.0%	79.8%

Uses are only shown for which the three preferential destinations represent more than 2/3 of the changes.

Source: change matrix (Table 3, DETR)

Table 2: polarisation of changes in land use

Certain changes are highly **polarised**, i.e. they are towards specific types of use. One feature of this polarisation is the importance of the main new use in the changes of land use within a given category (**table 2**). This is true for the changes between *arable*

and *horticultural* land and *improved grassland*. The changes with the main type of use concerned account for over half of total changes on their own. This demonstrates the relevance of the classification chosen to highlight such changes.

² "Semi-natural" habitats comprise acid and calcareous grasslands, fen, marsh and swamp, bogs, dwarf shrub heath and bracken.

Table 3: Matrix of changes to broad habitats in Great Britain (including semi-natural habitats) between 1990 and 1998 (1000 ha)

	Land use 1998 ▶	Land use 1990 ▼																		TOTAL 1990		
	Broadleaved, mixed, yew woodland	Coniferous woodland	Boundary and linear features	Arable and horticultural	Improved grassland	Neutral grassland	Calcareous grassland	Acid grassland	Bracken	Dwarf shrub heath	Fen, marsh, and swamp	Bogs	Standing open water and canals	Rivers and streams	Montane habitats	Inland rock	Built up areas and gardens	Coastal areas	Sea	Unknown		
Broadleaved, mixed, yew woodland	1272.2	13.4	2.5	4.1	18.1	10.6	1.0	10.1	8.2	4.1	6.7	1.1	0.7	0.1	-	1.0	9.3	0.3	-	0.4	1364.0	
Coniferous woodland	26.8	1279.6	3.2	0.5	8.4	5.9	-	19.2	1.7	6.4	9.2	5.9	0.6	-	-	0.5	1.4	0.0	-	-	1369.3	
Boundary and linear features	12.1	0.9	462.8	4.3	10.1	6.0	0.0	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	-	-	4.0	0.2	-	0.1	502.2	
Arable and horticultural	27.1	1.6	2.6	4639.1	516.3	37.3	2.0	0.7	0.3	-	0.5	-	1.0	-	-	2.1	14.6	0.6	-	0.2	5246.1	
Improved grassland	26.2	7.9	5.0	634.6	4578.2	170	0.5	9.0	9.5	0.4	41.4	0.5	0.5	0.0	-	1.4	47.5	0.6	-	5.3	5538.6	
Neutral grassland	22.0	2.4	8.0	28.7	125.0	303.1	0.2	5.4	4.5	2.9	36.6	2.1	0.5	0.1	-	1.3	24.0	2.7	-	0.1	569.5	
Calcareous grassland	0.7	0.4	0.2	2.2	11.1	3.6	62.7	0.1	0.4	0.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.0	-	0.0	81.4	
Acid grassland	15.3	8.7	0.0	10.2	123.5	19.6	0.1	1115.8	46.3	38.8	38.7	48.4	-	0.0	0.0	3.0	1.5	0.3	-	0.7	1470.9	
Bracken	14.7	7.1	0.2	1.3	7.4	1.1	-	19.3	366.0	29.4	3.8	6.1	0.0	-	-	0.1	0.2	0.2	-	-	456.9	
Dwarf shrub heath	4.2	20.3	0.0	-	1.2	1.6	0.0	61.7	33.6	1290.6	4.5	65.6	-	0.0	-	3.1	0.3	0.3	-	-	1487.1	
Fen, marsh, and swamp	4.1	2.0	0.1	1.0	24.2	8.3	-	21.5	2.5	5.8	376.2	8.2	0.6	0.1	-	0.7	0.4	0.2	-	0.6	456.4	
Bogs	2.9	15.0	0.1	-	0.7	0.7	-	48.7	11.1	47.3	33.6	2136.2	0.3	-	-	0.1	0.0	0.4	-	0.1	2297.3	
Standing open water and canals	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.1	-	0.0	-	0.0	0.6	0.1	204.3	0.8	-	0.0	1.1	0.0	-	0.0	208.4	
Rivers and streams	0.2	-	0.1	-	0.1	0.2	-	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.3	64.6	-	0.0	-	0.1	-	0.0	66.7	
Montane habitats	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	49.8	-	-	-	-	-	49.8	
Inland rock	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.4	1.7	0.2	-	1.6	0.1	1.2	1.9	2.6	0.0	-	-	42.9	0.3	0.1	-	-	53.6	
Built up areas and gardens	14.1	0.1	2.3	5.6	6.7	8.3	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.7	-	-	4.1	1186.3	0.0	-	1.2	1230.4	
Coastal areas	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.5	0.0	0.6	0.4	1.8	0.6	1.2	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	266.6	0.0	0.0	274.1	
Sea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.7	297.8	-	298.5	
Unknown	0.3	-	-	0.9	0.9	0.4	-	1.5	-	-	-	0.1	-	-	-	-	0.0	-	-	69.8	73.9	
TOTAL 1998	1443.4	1360.2	487	5333	5435.5	578	66.7	1316	485	1430	554.9	2278	210	65.7	50	60.2	1291	273	298	79	23095	
Source DETR																						
1000 ha	Total 1990	1364.0	1369.3	502.2	5246	5538.6	569.5	81.4	1470.9	456.9	1487.1	456.4	2297.3	208.4	66.7	49.8	53.6	1230.4	274.1	298.5	73.9	23094.9
	Stability	1272.2	1279.6	462.8	4639.1	4578.2	303.1	62.7	1115.8	366	1290.6	376.2	2136.2	204.3	64.6	49.8	42.9	1186.3	266.6	297.8	69.8	20064.6
	Appeared (1)	171.1	80.5	24.3	693.8	857.2	275.4	3.9	200.5	119.1	139.1	178.8	142.1	5.6	1.1	0.0	17.4	104.6	6.7	0	8.7	3029.9
	Disappeared (2)	91.7	89.7	39.3	606.9	960.3	266.5	18.7	355.1	90.9	196.4	80.3	161	3.9	2.0	0.0	10.7	44.2	7.5	0.7	4.1	3029.9
	Change (1) - (2)	+79.4	-9.1	-15.2	+86.9	-103.1	+8.8	-14.6	-154.4	+28.2	-57.3	+98.5	-18.8	+1.4	-1.0	0.0	+6.6	+60.5	-0.8	-0.7	+4.7	-
% of 1990 total	Stability	93.3	93.4	92.2	88.4	82.7	53.2	77.0	75.9	80.1	86.8	82.4	93.0	98.1	97.0	100.0	80.0	96.4	97.3	99.8	94.5	80.0
	Appeared (3)	12.5	5.9	4.8	13.2	15.5	48.3	4.8	13.6	26.1	9.4	39.2	6.2	2.7	1.7	0.0	32.5	8.5	2.4	0.0	11.8	12.1
	Disappeared (4)	6.7	6.6	7.8	11.6	17.3	46.8	23.0	24.1	19.9	13.2	17.6	7.0	1.9	3.0	0.0	20.0	3.6	2.7	0.2	5.5	12.1
	Change (3) - (4)	+5.8	-0.7	-3.0	+1.7	-1.9	+1.6	-18.2	-10.5	+6.2	-3.9	+21.6	-0.8	+0.8	-1.4	0.0	+12.5	+4.9	-0.3	-0.2	+6.2	-

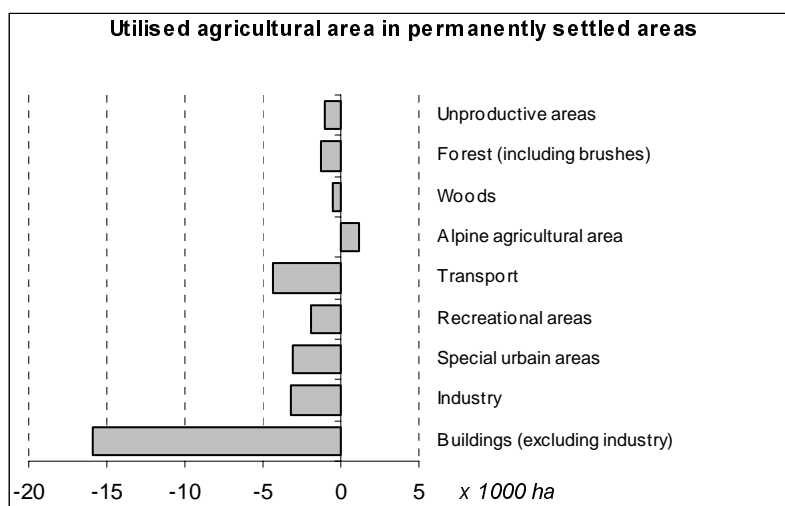
Arable land losing ground in Switzerland too

For the first time, a comparison of land use between 1979/85 and 1992/97 gives a detailed picture of the changes that have taken place in Switzerland (**Box 2**) [8]. In twelve years, residential areas and infrastructure components have increased by 13.3% (+ 327 km²). However, the scale of this phenomenon varies from region to region, being most marked on the densely populated "plateau"³. The most significant development has been in private housing (+25.4%) and industrial areas. Since the country has long had a comprehensive transport network, the increase here has been less significant (+9.6%).

Arable land, which accounts for 36.9% of Swiss territory, has decreased by 3.1%. This is due to two quite separate phenomena (**Figures 4 and 5**) - a loss of arable land to permanent residential areas (-285 km²) and abandonment of mountain pastures (-179 km²).

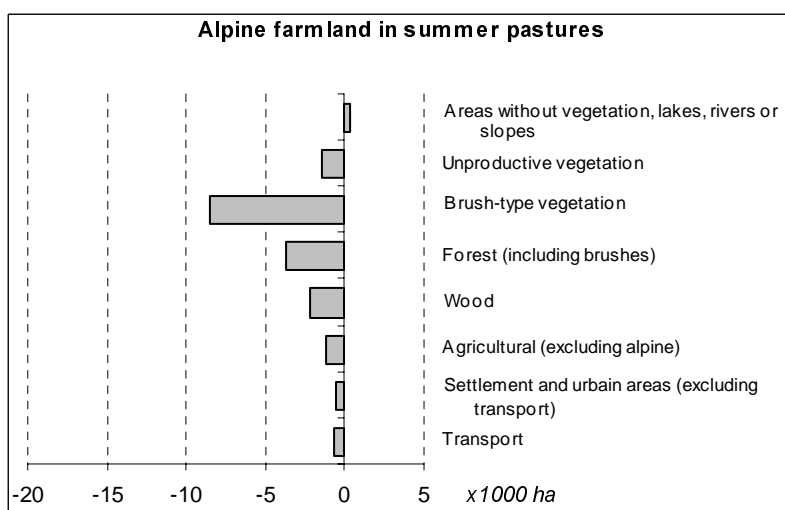
In spite of the damage caused by natural disasters over extensive areas that were subsequently reclaimed, areas under forest have increased slightly (+1.4%). Most of the afforestation (86.8%) has been natural. Most of the planned afforestation has been on steep slopes to protect against natural disasters.

Unproductive areas account for 10 526 km² and decreased by 15 km² (-0.15%). This apparent stability is the result of two phenomena: the conversion of alpine pastures and meadows into unproductive areas (+159 km²) and the conversion of unproductive areas (often agricultural fallow) into forest (-174 km²). For unproductive areas as a whole, man-made features account for 0.2% of the area (avalanche and flood defences etc.)



Source: Swiss land use statistics, Swiss Statistical Office

Figure 4: Changes in arable land in permanently settled areas 1983-1995



Source: Swiss land use statistics, Swiss Statistical Office

Figure 5: Changes in mountain arable land 1983-1995

³ The "plateau", Switzerland's most productive region, accounts for 27% of the territory. Varying between 50 km and 100 km in width, it extends from the foothills of the Jura and the Alps (lake Geneva) towards the north east and lake Constance.

Box 2: Over 4.1 million sampling points for interpreting land use in Switzerland

In order to produce national maps, the Federal Topography Office uses panchromatic aerial photographs at a scale of 1:13 000, covering the entire national territory over a period of six years (most recent coverage: 1992-97). The Federal Statistical Office uses these photographs to determine land use in Switzerland. A digital terrain model is used to overlay the 2 900 or so photographs with transparencies marked with a grid of dots spaced equidistantly at 100 m. The FSO then determines land use for each dot and allocates it a two-digit code corresponding to one of 74 classification headings. During the analysis of populated areas, infrastructure and farmland, attention is paid chiefly to function. For forested areas and non-productive areas, by contrast, it is land cover that receives attention. Each of the 4.1 million dots is qualified twice by stereoscopic observation. Checks are carried out in the field where there are doubts. Satellite images are sometimes used, particularly for forests.

The transparencies, together with identification codes for each dot, are put into the GEOSTAT GIS (federal service for spatial data). Since a similar procedure was followed for the 1979/85 survey, land use changes can be determined for each dot. The dense mesh of the network means that it can be used for all sorts of purposes. Studies can be carried out of administrative or geographical zones (catchment areas, wetlands, etc.).

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