

Farm Structure Survey in Belgium - 2007

More than half of Belgian farms are specialized in livestock.

This Statistics in Focus is part of a series of country-specific publications on the results of the Farm Structure Survey (FSS) 2007. It provides a brief but nevertheless comprehensive insight into the farm structure in Belgium.

48 000 agricultural holdings were recorded in Belgium in the 2007 Farm Structure Survey (7% fewer than in 2005). The average farm used 30 ha, had 108 livestock units and used 1.4 annual work units.

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Due to the different coverage of the FSS across Member States, the total number of farms is not comparable between countries. This is why the present analysis, including Tables 1-4 and the graphs focus on holdings of at least one European Size Unit (ESU). See the methodological notes for more information on the concept of ESU.

In 2007, 96% **agricultural holdings** (46 100) had an economic size of at least 1 ESU, compared with 49 600 in 2005 (a 7% reduction).

They used about **1.37 million ha of utilised agricultural area** (UAA), a decrease of nearly 1% compared with 2005. In Belgium the average area per holding was around 30 ha (compared with 28 ha in 2005);

These holdings employed **64 700 AWUs** (annual work units), the equivalent of 64 700 people working full time; (6% less than 2005). The average area per AWU was 21 ha (around 1 ha more than in 2005);

They had **3.8 million livestock units** (LSU) in 2007, slightly less (-2%) than in 2005. From 2005 to 2007 the number of farms with livestock decreased by 7%.

Amongst these **46 100** agricultural holdings:

26% made use of less than one AWU, while another 23% made use of 2 or more AWUs;

11% used less than 2 ha, while 19% used 50 ha or more;

51% of Belgian farms specialised in livestock.

18% of the holdings specialised in cattle rearing and fattening;

14% specialised in dairy farming;

14% of the holdings were engaged in general field cropping.

The family labour force decreased by 7% from 2005 to 2007 and represented 79% of the total labour force in Belgium.

Amongst the sole holders:

14% were women;

43% were aged 55 or more and 6% were younger than 35 years (this younger class of farmers fell by 24%).

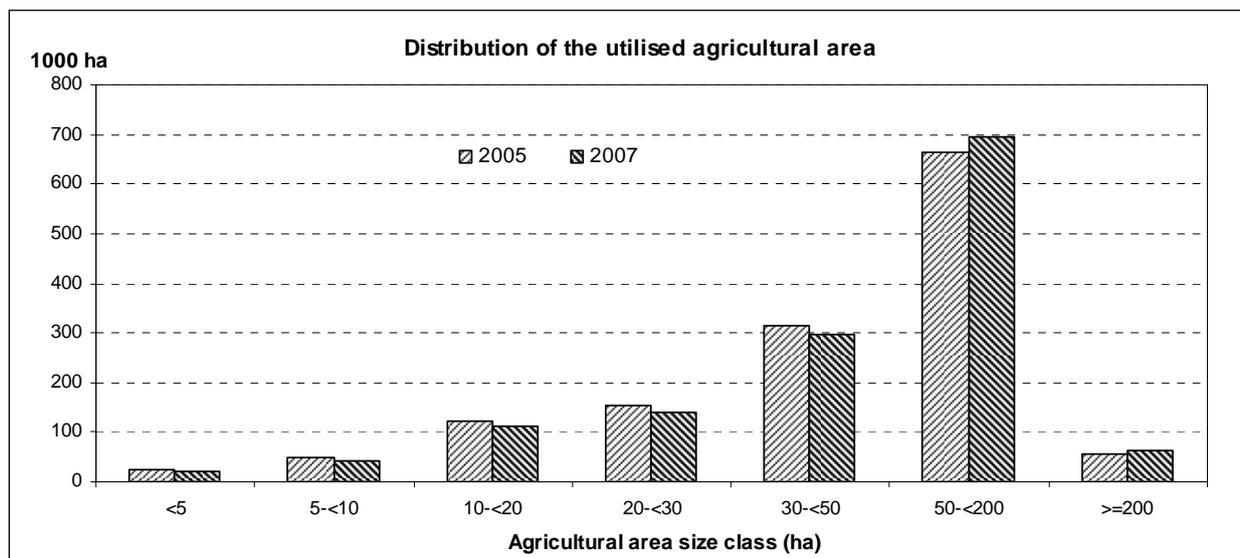
14% of the sole holders had another gainful activity in 2007.

In Belgium in 2007, 32% of the agricultural area was farmed by its owners.

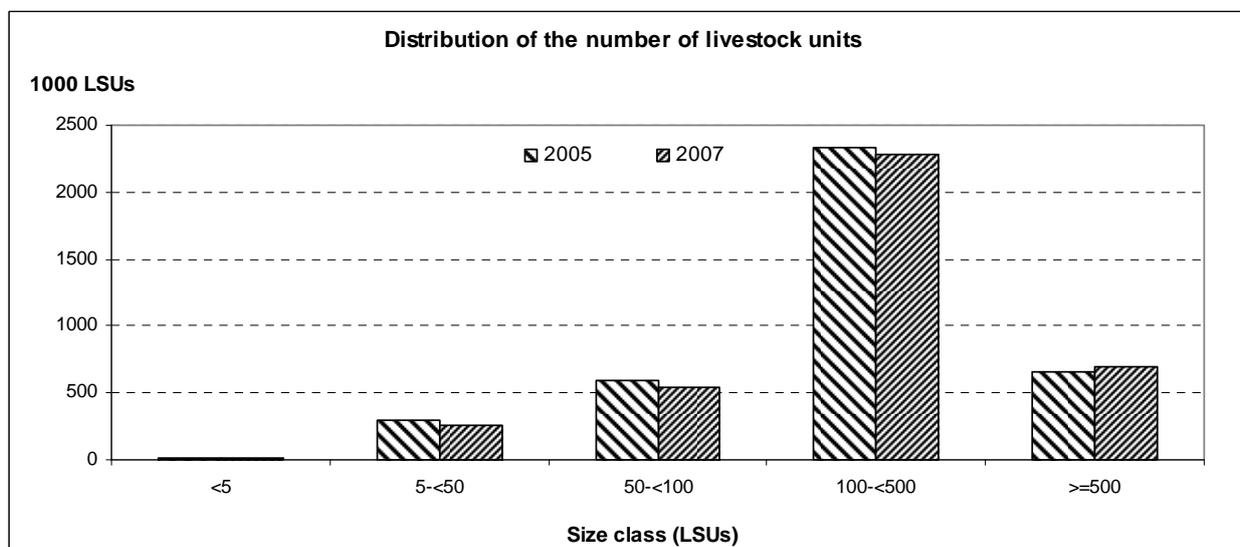
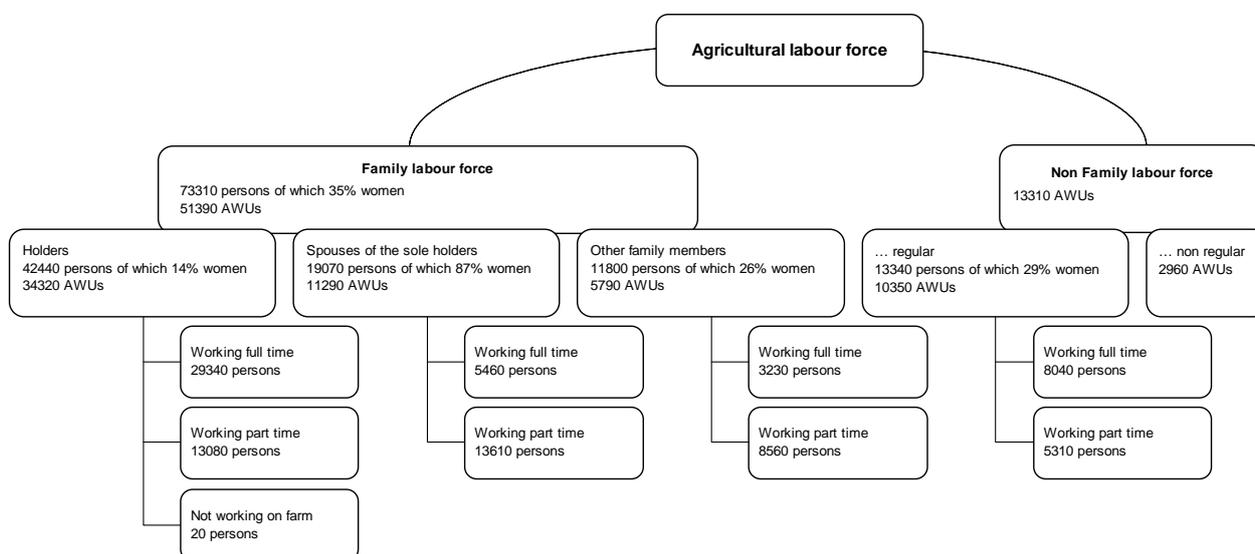
The rape and turnip area almost doubled from 2005 to 2007 (a 92% increase), going from 14% of the arable land in 2005 to 29% in 2007. On the other hand, the area sowed with industrial plants fell by 16%.

The number of dairy cows fell by 5%, while the number of other cows, (bovine 2 years old and over) increased by 2%. The average number of LSU per holdings with livestock rose from 103 to 108 between 2005 and 2007.

In Belgium the average SGM per holding increased from 68 ESU in 2005 to 73 in 2007.



Description of the labour force in Belgium



*LSUs = Livestock Unit

Size of the farms	Agricultural area (ha)				All farms	Livestock (LSU*)				
	<20	20-<50	50-<100	>=100		0	>0-<50	50-<100	>=100	
Total labour force										
1000 annual work units	29.2	20.0	11.5	4.0	64.7	19.5	15.1	10.4	19.6	
Family labour force										
1000 persons	34.3	23.0	12.4	3.6	73.3	16.1	22.6	12.7	21.9	
1000 annual work units	21.0	17.5	10.0	3.0	51.4	10.5	13.5	9.8	17.6	
Non-family labour regularly employed										
1000 persons	8.6	2.2	1.4	1.1	13.3	8.0	1.9	0.8	2.6	
1000 annual work units	6.8	1.6	1.1	0.9	10.4	6.5	1.3	0.6	2.0	
Non regular non family labour force										
1000 annual work units	1.5	0.9	0.4	0.1	3.0	2.5	0.2	0.1	0.1	
Holding managers	1000	24.0	13.3	6.8	2.0	46.1	11.2	15.7	7.4	11.8
- women	(%)	19.0	11.8	8.1	6.3	14.7	15.7	19.7	11.3	9.4
- part-time:										
- under 50 %	(%)	36.1	8.3	3.8	4.2	22.0	31.2	36.8	4.8	4.3
- 50 % and over	(%)	12.5	7.8	4.3	4.4	9.6	10.0	14.0	6.5	5.2
Sole/main holders	1000	21.9	12.6	6.3	1.6	42.4	9.6	15.0	7.1	10.8
- women	(%)	19.0	11.2	7.5	5.3	14.4	16.0	19.7	10.8	8.1
-distribution by age	(%)									
- under 35 years		4.2	7.7	8.8	6.9	6.0	5.2	3.3	7.2	9.7
- from 35 to 44 years		16.2	27.0	31.5	30.2	22.2	19.8	13.4	27.6	33.1
- from 45 to 54 years		24.4	32.7	34.8	38.5	28.9	25.8	24.0	34.5	34.9
- from 55 to 64 years		23.0	24.5	21.0	20.3	23.0	23.8	24.8	24.2	19.2
- 65 years and over		32.2	8.1	3.9	4.1	19.8	25.4	34.5	6.4	3.1
- part-time:										
- under 50 %	(%)	39.7	8.9	4.1	5.1	23.9	36.5	38.6	5.0	4.7
- 50 % and over	(%)	13.7	8.3	4.7	5.4	10.4	11.7	14.7	6.7	5.7
- with another gainful activity ¹	(%)	19.1	10.4	7.2	6.3	14.3	16.3	21.7	8.6	6.1
- as a main occupation		12.5	3.8	0.9	0.8	7.8	9.9	13.9	2.3	1.1
- as a subsidiary occupation		6.6	6.6	6.3	5.5	6.5	6.4	7.8	6.3	5.0
Spouse of sole holder	1000	8.3	6.5	3.4	0.9	19.1	3.9	5.0	3.5	6.7
- women	(%)	81.5	89.6	93.2	95.2	87.0	86.3	77.7	89.0	93.1
-distribution by age	(%)									
- under 35 years		5.2	9.4	9.1	7.2	7.4	6.3	3.3	7.4	11.2
- from 35 to 54 years		48.8	63.7	69.0	71.2	58.5	53.9	41.2	63.8	71.2
- 55 years and over		45.9	26.8	22.0	21.5	34.1	39.8	55.5	28.8	17.6
- part-time:										
- under 50 %	(%)	52.0	40.0	33.7	31.0	43.7	44.7	59.3	42.8	32.1
- 50 % and over	(%)	25.0	30.4	29.7	24.1	27.6	25.2	22.6	29.6	31.8
- with another gainful activity	(%)	19.7	20.4	18.2	15.6	19.5	16.9	22.2	22.6	17.4
Other members of the holder's family working on the holding	1000	4.1	3.9	2.7	1.1	11.8	2.6	2.6	2.1	4.4
- women	(%)	28.8	25.4	23.0	20.0	25.6	30.1	24.6	23.1	24.6
- part-time:										
- under 50 %	(%)	70.5	63.0	48.6	31.4	59.5	59.4	74.8	63.5	48.6
- 50 % and over	(%)	12.2	14.4	13.7	10.4	13.1	13.6	11.5	13.1	13.7
- with another gainful activity	(%)	35.7	27.8	21.5	13.2	27.8	26.8	39.7	27.9	21.4

*LSU = Livestock unit

¹ Only holders who are also farm managersSource: Eurostat ([ef_ov_lfft](#))

": not available

"0" less than a half of the unit or nil

Size of the farms		Agricultural area (ha)				All farms	Livestock (LSU)			
		<20	20-<50	50-<100	>=100		0	>0-<50	50-<100	>=100
Holdings										
- total number	1000	24.0	13.3	6.8	2.0	46.1	11.2	15.7	7.4	11.8
- by legal personality of the holder	(%)									
- sole holder		91.1	94.3	93.2	82.7	92.0	85.4	95.3	95.9	91.2
- legal person		8.9	5.7	6.8	17.3	8.0	14.6	4.7	4.1	8.8
- group holders		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- by employed labour force	(%)									
- under 1 AWU		42.8	11.0	4.7	3.5	26.3	35.5	44.8	6.8	5.1
- from 1 to less than 2 AWU		40.9	65.0	59.9	44.3	50.8	36.7	45.8	71.8	57.7
- from 2 to less than 3 AWU		10.4	20.0	29.9	35.7	17.2	14.4	7.7	19.2	31.1
- 3 AWU and over		5.9	4.0	5.5	16.5	5.7	13.4	1.6	2.3	6.1
- by economic size	(%)									
- from 1 to less than 8 ESU		36.6	0.1	0	0	19.1	26.0	35.9	0.6	1.8
- from 8 to less than 16 ESU		18.0	2.8	0	0	10.2	12.5	19.7	0.6	1.3
- from 16 to less than 40 ESU		18.2	22.0	2.3	0	16.2	18.0	26.2	14.1	2.5
- from 40 to less than 100 ESU		14.5	49.5	38.5	5.0	27.7	19.9	14.1	67.6	28.4
- 100 ESU and over		12.6	25.6	59.2	95.0	26.8	23.5	4.2	17.1	66.1
- by type of farming (top 5 + 'other')	(%)									
... specialist cattle – rearing and fattening		21.5	15.1	15.1	12.6	18.3	0	33.3	20.9	14.0
... specialist dairy farming		4.9	26.0	25.7	9.1	14.2	0	8.9	38.8	19.5
... general field cropping		12.2	12.5	15.2	31.0	13.5	33.2	13.5	3.4	1.2
... field crops – grazing livestock combined		7.3	10.5	17.4	23.1	10.4	2.6	15.7	16.2	7.2
... specialist horticulture		14.9	1.5	0.4	0.3	8.3	28.6	3.5	0.4	0.3
Other types of farming		39.3	34.4	26.3	23.9	35.3	35.6	25.1	20.4	57.8
- by farming methods	(%)									
- organic farming		0.5	1.3	2.2	2.7	1.1	0.7	1.0	1.7	1.1
- irrigating		2.3	2.0	1.2	1.3	2.0	4.4	1.1	1.4	1.4
- with crops under glass		13.1	1.4	0.5	0.8	7.3	24.0	3.2	1.0	1.0
- with another gainful activity than agricultural production:	(%)									
Tourism		0.5	1.1	1.4	2.2	0.9	0.4	0.9	1.2	1.0
Handicraft		0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.2
Processing of farm products		0.4	1.0	1.4	1.6	0.8	0.3	0.7	1.5	1.0
Wood processing		0.1	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
Aquaculture		0	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0
Renewable energy production		0	0.1	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Contractual work		0.7	1.3	1.4	2.5	1.1	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.0
Other gainful activities n.a.e		1.7	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.5	2.0	1.8	0.9	0.9

*LSU = Livestock unit

Source: Eurostat ([ef_ov_kvaesu](#))

": not available

"0" less than a half of the unit or nil

Size of the farms	Agricultural area (ha)				All farms	Livestock (LSU)				
	<20	20-<50	50-<100	>=100		0	>0-<50	50-<100	>=100	
Area	(1000 ha)									
Total area of agricultural holdings	189.7	447.1	472.3	293.5	1402.6	218.5	265.3	311.5	607.3	
· H. Other area	12.0	9.2	5.9	2.9	30.0	6.4	8.2	5.9	9.5	
Wooded area	2.6	1.5	1.4	1.1	6.6	1.6	2.3	1.8	0.9	
· Agricultural area	177.6	437.9	466.4	290.6	1372.6	212.1	257.0	305.6	597.8	
- D. Arable land	97.5	265.3	275.7	203.1	841.5	178.6	153.0	169.9	340.0	
Cereals	39.0	94.4	106.2	90.1	329.8	83.9	68.8	59.6	117.5	
<i>Common wheat and spelt</i>	16.2	53.4	74.5	65.9	210.0	54.2	43.6	42.0	70.2	
<i>Durum wheat</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Rye</i>	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3	
<i>Barley</i>	4.9	11.7	15.4	16.6	48.6	14.1	11.2	9.1	14.2	
<i>Oats</i>	0.6	1.3	1.7	1.5	5.1	0.9	1.3	1.1	1.8	
<i>Grain maize</i>	15.8	25.1	12.5	4.8	58.2	13.8	11.0	5.5	28.0	
Dried pulses	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.7	1.7	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.8	
Root crops	13.8	44.5	52.3	43.3	154.0	41.9	31.7	29.2	51.2	
<i>Potatoes</i>	7.2	20.7	22.1	17.9	67.9	18.5	13.4	11.6	24.4	
<i>Sugar beet</i>	5.7	22.3	29.3	25.3	82.7	23.3	17.3	16.7	25.4	
<i>Fodder root</i>	0.9	1.5	0.8	0.2	3.4	0.1	1.0	0.9	1.3	
Industrial crops	1.5	5.6	11.6	16.7	35.4	13.5	6.5	6.1	9.2	
<i>Tobacco</i>	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	
<i>Hops</i>	0	0.1	0	0	0.2	0.1	0	0	0.1	
<i>Cotton</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Rape and turnip</i>	0.4	1.4	3.1	6.0	10.8	4.0	1.6	1.6	3.6	
<i>Sunflower</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Soya</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Fresh vegetables, melons, strawberry	8.3	12.7	10.7	8.8	40.6	16.0	7.5	4.7	12.4	
<i>outside</i>	7.0	12.6	10.7	8.8	39.1	14.8	7.3	4.7	12.3	
<i>under glass</i>	1.3	0.1	0	0	1.4	1.2	0.2	0	0	
Flower and ornamental plants	1.5	0.2	0.1	0.1	1.9	1.6	0.2	0	0.1	
<i>outside</i>	0.9	0.2	0.1	0.1	1.3	1.0	0.1	0	0.1	
<i>under glass</i>	0.6	0	0	0	0.6	0.6	0	0	0	
Forage plants	31.5	103.3	84.6	32.3	251.6	11.3	33.6	65.8	140.9	
Fallow land	1.7	3.6	8.8	10.5	24.5	9.1	4.3	3.8	7.3	
- E. Kitchen garden	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0	0.1	
- F. Permanent pasture and meadows	71.0	165.2	187.9	85.9	510.0	15.2	102.3	135.4	257.2	
- G. Permanent crops	9.1	7.4	2.8	1.6	20.9	18.3	1.7	0.3	0.6	
Fruit and berry plantation	6.9	6.1	2.3	1.0	16.2	14.3	1.2	0.2	0.5	
Citrus plantation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Olive trees	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Vineyard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Ratios										
Agricultural area per holding	(ha)	7.4	32.8	68.5	146.5	29.7	18.9	16.3	41.4	50.6
Agricultural area...	(%)									
... own farmed		49.1	31.7	28.2	28.5	32.1	35.8	36.9	28.5	30.5
... in less favoured or mountain area		9.5	13.8	27.1	24.6	20.0	3.1	14.4	21.2	27.9
... organic farmed		0.4	1.2	1.8	1.9	1.4	0.3	1.6	2.0	1.5
... irrigated		0.7	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	1.0	0.2	0.3	0.3

*LSU = Livestock unit

Source: Eurostat ([ef_ov_lusum](#))

":" not available

"0" less than a half of the unit or nil

Size of the farms	Agricultural area (ha)				All farms	Livestock (LSU)			
	<20	20-<50	50-<100	>=100		0	>0-<50	50-<100	>=100
Total livestock (1000 LSU)	1226.8	1354.1	880.0	324.9	3785.9	0	271.4	541.4	2973.1
of which grazing (%)	21.5	51.5	76.4	86.6	50.6	:	96.5	92.6	38.8
Grazing livestock (1000 heads)									
Equidae	18.2	10.2	4.7	1.5	34.6	0	21.2	7.2	6.2
Bovine animals	385.1	941.6	923.0	399.0	2648.7	0	330.2	664.4	1654.1
Under 1 year	173.2	250.4	240.6	109.3	773.5	0	78.1	158.5	536.9
From 1 to less than 2 years	61.2	182.8	179.4	85.3	508.7	0	67.9	130.7	310.1
Dairy cows	31.8	236.1	202.1	53.7	523.7	0	40.2	173.4	310.1
Other cows	75.5	166.1	196.6	106.2	544.4	0	94.7	124.1	325.7
Other bovine animals 2 years and older	43.5	106.2	104.3	44.5	298.4	0	49.3	77.7	171.4
Sheep	79.6	34.7	19.9	12.8	147.0	0	83.5	29.2	34.3
Goats	9.8	16.0	2.3	0.7	28.8	0	9.1	9.2	10.5
Granivores									
Pigs (1000 heads)	2967.2	2431.2	718.8	138.3	6255.6	0	39.5	154.4	6061.6
Piglets < 20 kg	747.8	674.2	181.5	34.5	1638.0	0	21.5	59.7	1556.7
Breeding sows	245.3	243.4	69.0	9.9	567.6	0	4.9	23.2	539.4
Other pigs	1974.1	1513.6	468.3	93.9	4050.0	0	13.0	71.5	3965.5
Poultry (million heads)	21.9	6.5	3.2	1.1	32.7	0	0.2	0.6	32.0
Broilers	12.2	4.5	2.5	1.0	20.1	0	0.1	0.3	19.7
Laying hens	9.3	1.9	0.6	0.2	12.0	0	0.1	0.2	11.7
Other poultry	0.4	0.1	0.1	0	0.6	0	0	0	0.6
Rabbits, breeding females (1000 heads)	15.5	4.3	1.0	0.2	21.0	0	17.5	1.9	1.6
Beehives (1000)	2.1	0.2	0.1	0	2.4	1.4	0.8	0.1	0.1
Average size of herds* (head/holding)									
Equidae (head/holding)	5.9	6.3	5.3	4.9	5.9	:	5.8	7.6	4.7
Cattle (head/holding)	37.0	89.9	159.7	262.3	94.0	:	26.9	94.2	187.1
Dairy cows (head/holding)	14.7	36.7	52.4	61.7	39.3	:	14.7	37.5	52.1
Other cows (head/holding)	10.1	25.0	46.8	84.7	27.8	:	10.6	27.9	53.2
Sheep (head/holding)	35.9	43.5	51.1	105.2	41.7	:	36.0	66.2	44.8
Goats (head/holding)	19.5	55.1	16.8	19.6	29.8	:	16.7	51.0	43.7
Pigs (head/holding)	968.7	834.6	840.7	892.2	895.4	:	59.3	183.4	1106.5
Breeding sows (head/holding)	151.1	122.6	129.4	121.9	134.4	:	15.3	50.7	156.6
Other pigs > 20 kg (head/holding)	669.7	537.3	566.3	626.1	600.7	:	23.8	91.6	732.4
Rabbits, breeding females (head/holding)	42.7	35.9	12.3	9.4	35.5	:	43.2	20.0	17.9
Laying hens (1000/holding)	4.7	2.1	1.2	1.5	3.4	:	0	0.4	13.1
Broilers (1000/holding)	22.7	15.2	14.3	15.3	18.8	:	0.5	2.8	27.8
Beehives (hive/holding)	13.3	5.4	7.7	5.6	11.4	22.7	7.1	5.4	5.8

*LSU = Livestock unit

Source: Eurostat ([ef_ov_lssum](#))

		Absolute figures			% of total	
		Total	< 1 ESU	>= 1 ESU	< 1 ESU	>= 1 ESU
Regular Labour force	(1000 pers)	89.1	2.4	86.6	2.7	97.3
Regular labour force	(1000 AWU)	62.6	0.9	61.7	1.4	98.6
Holders with...	(1000)	44.2	1.8	42.4	4.0	96.0
... at least 65 years		9.4	1.0	8.4	10.6	89.4
... another gainful activity		7.1	0.5	6.6	6.5	93.5
Number of sole holdings	(1000)	48.0	1.9	46.1	3.9	96.1
... producing mainly for own consumption		:	:	:	:	:
... producing mainly for direct sales		:	:	:	:	:
SGM	(1000 ESU)	3374.5	1.0	3373.5	0.0	100.0
Agricultural area	(1000 ha)	1374.4	1.8	1372.6	0.1	99.9
... own farmed		441.9	1.4	440.5	0.3	99.7
Livestock	(1000 LSU*)	3787.8	1.9	3785.9	0.0	100.0

*LSU = Livestock unit

➤ METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

In Belgium the Farm Structure Survey has been performed annually since 1960 as an exhaustive survey, including the FSS 2007. The Agricultural Statistics Unit of the General Directorate of Statistics and Economic Information, in coordination with the regional offices and the municipalities, was responsible for carrying out the survey. The reference day for the livestock and the crops was the 1st May, and the 12 months preceding the survey for the labour force related questions.

The FSS relates to agricultural holdings producing agricultural products if they produce for sale. It also incorporates research establishments, nursery services of public bodies producing for their own needs, schools, religious communities, prisons and similar organizations which have at least one are (0.01 ha) or some livestock.

The frame for the survey was taken from the list of holdings that took part in the 2006 agricultural census (49 900 units). The initial number of farms decreased due to the fact that the number of units that ceased their activity was higher than the number of new farms.

The central department in Brussels was in charge of the overall organization of the survey. The checking and encoding of the questionnaires was under the responsibility of four of the regional offices. The municipalities were in charge of conducting the interviews with farmers. The average number of holdings per municipality in 2007 was 83.

The questionnaire could be filled out on paper or on an electronic form. 217 of the 581 Belgian municipalities

chose the electronic form (47% of the declarations). In both cases the questionnaires were pre-filled with the information from the previous survey.

Between FSS 2005 and 2007 "maintaining land in good agricultural and environmental conditions" (GAEC) became an agricultural activity and the concerned land has been included in the agricultural area. In Belgium it covers close to 4 100 ha, 99% in holdings with at least 1 ESU.

For each activity ('enterprise') on a farm (for instance wheat or dairy cow), a Standard Gross Margin (SGM) is estimated, based on the area (or the number of heads) and a regional coefficient. The sum of such margins in a farm is its economic size, expressed in European Size Units (ESU, 1 ESU is a 1200-euro SGM).

An Annual work unit (AWU) is equivalent to a worker employed on a full time basis for one year. In Belgium it is 1856 hours (232 working days of 8 working hours per day).

A Livestock Unit (LSU) is equivalent to a dairy cow. The number of animals (number of heads) is converted into LSU using a set of coefficients reflecting the feed requirements of the different animal categories.

➤ REFERENCE PUBLICATIONS

Website of the Direction Générale Statistique et Information économique: <http://statbel.fgov.be/>
National Methodological Report – FSS 2007 (available on request)

Further information

Eurostat Website: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

Data on "Agriculture Statistics":

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/agriculture/data/database>

More information about "Agriculture Statistics":

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/agriculture/introduction>

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