

## AGRICULTURE: FARMS AND WORKFORCE

This sheet is devoted to the farms and the agricultural workforce, showing the situation at the 15th May 1992 (farming situation; I.N.S. agricultural census). Unless specially mentioned, it is concerned with all farms (full time farmers who can be termed professional as well as those where there is only an occasional, part-time farmer). It is also concerned with the entire agricultural workforce (permanent and temporary). Agriculture, *sensu lato*, includes the cultivation of fields and stock-breeding as well as horticulture and factory farming.

A small number of communes where there is very little agriculture are shown in grey on the map, notably the communes of Brussels-Capital (excepting Anderlecht) and four adjacent communes.

It is to be noted on Maps 1 and 2 that the Flemish region has both a higher density and a much greater number of farms than the Walloon region. In Wallonia, in the Limon Region and in the Condroz, farms are larger and to the south of the Sambre and the Meuse woodland occupies a large area. It goes without saying that the number of farms is much reduced in the regions of dense urban population and the industrial regions.

The pronounced agricultural character of large parts of Western Flanders and the northeast of Eastern Flanders is quite obvious. This is explained by the important part played by arable land in the total surface area. It should also be noted that there is an important number of traditional farms besides horticultural and factory farms. Professional farm businesses are here well represented, but this statement also concerns, though to a lesser extent, the Malines region, the Antwerp Campine and to a still lesser extent the Limon Region and the Pays de Herve where the number of farms is much smaller. What does stand out is the important proportion of part-time farms in the urbanised regions of dense population in Flanders; however, part-time farms are not lacking in Wallonia either.

Between 1977 and 1992 the number of farms markedly diminished (Map 3). There was virtually no increase anywhere. In central Limburg, the northeast of Brabant and the environs of Hocilaart the regression reached more than 60%; in the rest of the country the number of communes with a regression of 20% to 40% was as great as those showing a reduction of 40% to 60%. The regression was much stronger in the zone Ghent-Antwerp-Hasselt-Louvain-Brussels-Geraardsbergen and in what is known as the industrial axis from Borinage to Verviers. The decline was smaller in Western Flanders, the north of Eastern Flanders, the Antwerp Campine and the Limburg Campine, in the rural region of Oudenaarde, the limon regions of Hainaut and Brabant and in Hesbaye. To the south of the Sambre and of the Meuse a diminution of less than 40% prevailed. Thus in the more rural regions the regression is less than in the urbanised regions.

As far as the methods of tenure are concerned (Map 4) there is a strong preponderance of tenant-farming. But as in the past the proportion of land worked by the owner is still important in the Campine and the southeast of Belgium as well as in the Roeselare region.

On Map 5 (average farm areas) the break between Flanders and Wallonia is striking. To the north of the linguistic frontier only the Polder communes have an average area greater than 20 hectares. The average is of less than 10 hectares in the region extending from the environs of Roeselare to central Limburg and southwards (sometimes even below 5 hectares in the horticultural communes). In the Westhoek and in southern Limburg the figure is between 15 and 20 hectares; elsewhere in Flanders the mean farm area oscillates between 10 and 15 hectares (notably in the following regions: the southeast of Western Flanders, the south of Eastern Flanders, the Payottenland, the Tienen-Landen region and Tongeren as well as in the Campine). At the linguistic frontier a few Walloon communes (such as Flobecq and Ellezelles) display a figure slightly lower than the rest of Wallonia. Some Flemish communes (such as Hoegaarden, Tienen, Borgloon, Tongeren) have a figure slightly higher than the rest of Flanders.

In Wallonia there is only the grassland region of Liège and the High Ardenne which remain lower than 20 hectares.

Elsewhere the average farm size is greater than 20 hectares; between 20 and 30 in Hainaut and Ardenne, up to 30 hectares and even to 40 hectares in the agricultural regions of southern Brabant, to the north of Namur, the Liège Hesbaye as well as in the Condroz region.

In the great majority of the country's communes more than half (and often more than 55%) of the farmers are 50 years old or more (Map 6). In Flanders, the communes which have relatively more young farmers are concentrated in the Westhoek and Campine whilst they are older predominantly along the Courtrai-Brussels line and in a circle around Brussels with an extension towards Louvain. In Wallonia, there are more communes with younger farmers.

Since the census, farmers who are 50 years of age or older have been asked if they have a potential successor. They had three possible replies: "yes", "no", "do not know". A subjective response was therefore all that could be expected. The small numbers concerned must be taken into account because they imply that the percentages are of less value and in some cases the census taker might have played a part. However, some conclusions can be made for the future providing prudence is observed.

In Flanders (with the exception of Western Flanders and a few parts of the Campine) the percentage of farms without a potential successor (Map 7) is greater particularly in the more populated and more urbanised regions. The degree of succession is much greater in Wallonia (except in the Liège grassland region and in Ardenne). It is possible to forecast that the number of farms will decline more in Flanders than in Wallonia and consequently the average farm area will increase more in Flanders than in Wallonia.

The area covered by farms without potential successor (Map 8) is much lower than their actual number. This is because there are many small farms where there is no likely successor and which will disappear.

The average farm area with potential successor (Map 15) is quite high. This seems to indicate that the enlargement of farms is still on the increase. Nevertheless, the general shape of this map is little different from that of actual farm areas. As far as farm area is concerned the difference between Flanders and Wallonia will remain (agriculture, horticulture and stock farming are more intensified in Flanders).

Map 9 (workforce) does not demonstrate a large difference between the number of farms considering that there are no great regional differences in the number of people employed per farm. All the same it does demonstrate the large proportion of permanent workers in the Limon Region and in Western Flanders.

The proportion of agricultural workers relative to the total population of the commune (Map 10) shows great differences: from 0 to more than 10%. The map is inversely proportional to that of population density: where the population density is high, there are many other activities and besides there is only a small place for agricultural activities. Employment in agriculture as a proportion of the total actively employed population is no doubt better (but in 1995 the results of the 1991 census of population are not yet available). The method of percentages used gives a good image of the spatial differences.

As far as the changes in the size of the workforce since 1977 is concerned (Map 11) it is noticeable that in a few rare communes there has been any increase - a small one, as a matter of fact so that the general pattern has been of great decrease. The picture given in this map is little different from that of map 3. The decline is at a maximum in the densely populated Walloon industrial regions, in the Limburg industrial centres, to the east and north of Brabant, in the Dender region and in the Ghent region.

There are only a few farms in Belgian agriculture where workforce is not that of the family (Map 12). This is most marked in the scattered horticultural spaces of Roeselare, Ghent, Malines and the Limburg Hesbaye. They are also represented in the remainder of Western Flanders, the north of Eastern Flanders, the Antwerp Campine and in the limon regions of Hainaut, Brabant and Hesbaye where there are large farms. Elsewhere, Belgian agriculture is characterised by being still very much a family activity.

The number of cultivated hectares per employed person (Map 13) again shows the contrast Flanders/Wallonia; nevertheless the interior of these two regions shows characteristic spatial distinctiveness. In Flanders the low figures (less than 5 ha.) are typical of the region Roeselare, Ghent-Dendermonde-Aalst, the Malines region, that to the north of Louvain and Central Limburg. These are horticultural regions with small farms. Higher figures (7.5 to 15 ha.) are found in the Polders, the Ypres region, in the Campine and in a certain number of communes north of the linguistic frontier as if there were a transition towards Wallonia. Figures smaller than 15 ha. are found in the communes of Hainaut on the linguistic frontier and in the whole region east of the line Liège-Bastogne where the farms are generally smaller. Elsewhere in Wallonia more than 15 ha. is the rule and even more than 20 ha. in the regions with the largest farms. The total picture shows a great deal of concordance with map 5.

Women workers are everywhere in the minority (Map 14) and the figure is generally 25 to 35%. They are better represented here and there: Western Flanders is once more noticeable with higher figures as is the High Ardenne. In contrast, Limburg, the Antwerp Campine, the region between Ghent and Brussels and Hesbaye have a rather lower female workforce.