

European Communities – Joint Information Service

**Newsletter on the Common Agricultural Policy**

Weekly No. 7

May 1966

Statistical information on farms in  
the EEC  
based on modern statistical findings

Published by the Division for Agricultural Information in collaboration with the Directorate  
General for Agriculture of the EEC Commission – 12, Avenue de Broqueville, Brussels 15

1966/67: First Community survey of agricultural structure

On 27 May 1966 the EEC Council issued a formal decision providing for a survey on the pattern of farming in the Community. This will be the first Community survey of its kind. The statistical information now available in the several Member States is very disparate, being based on surveys that relate to different periods of time and of which the makeup and value are not comparable. Since information on the structure of farms is essential to the formulation of agricultural policy, however, work to date has had to be carried out with these makeshift data.

The findings of the Community survey, on the other hand, will be comparable in every respect. The survey will cover farms working not less than one hectare of arable land in all EEC member countries. It will also cover holdings with less than one hectare if their sales are in excess of 250 units of account (US dollars) per annum. Identical questionnaires will be sent out to all farms in the six countries, and the results will be published in a series of identical tables. The survey will be carried out by interviewers in order to ensure uniform answers as far as possible. Information will be compiled by district (by department in France, Regierungsbezirk in Germany, region in Italy and province in the other member countries).

The farms will be surveyed between November 1966 and March 1967. Initial results are expected in the course of 1968.

There are two aspects to agricultural structure: the first is the structure of the individual farms, the second is the pattern of agriculture as a whole - which is of great relevance to the economic processes which it is desired to adjust through economic and agricultural policy.

Let us first consider the structure of individual farms. The major bases of production are land, livestock, labour force and ancillary material. The survey will cover the pattern of land use and of livestock husbandry for each individual farm, the structure of the labour force and to a certain extent the pattern of mechanization. Information will also be obtained on the breakdown of arable land by form of tenure.

It is also intended to examine how the various types of farming mesh and to classify farms according to the type they concentrate on. For instance, farms dependent on a single crop will be distinguished from more diversified holdings. This will bring out more clearly the problem of specialization, which is of great importance to the development of agriculture. For diversified farms - such as both raise cattle and grow potatoes and cereals, for instance -

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all the different types of farming will be weighted for their economic importance to the production complex and classified accordingly, so that farms of a similar type can then be grouped together. The survey will thus distinguish between, say, farms whose main crop is citrus fruits and those that mostly grow olives or raise cattle, farms that keep pigs and those that grow grain.

Apart from the links between the various types of farming, however, the survey will also show the relations between labour force and land use and between mechanization and the various types of farming.

The overall pattern of agriculture in a given district will be described partly from these findings. They will be used, for instance, to classify the various survey districts according to the pattern of production on the farms. To facilitate comparison with earlier surveys, investigation of the size of farms will constitute an integral component of the Community survey. However, the questionnaire will also facilitate presentation of the structure of agriculture according to the legal status of whoever is legally responsible for the farm or responsible for its day-to-day operation, the agricultural training of the farmer, methods of accounting and how the farm ties in with non-agricultural sectors of the economy. There will be a question to ascertain what proportion of the farms surveyed is run by persons who employ their workers chiefly in farming or in other occupations, and whether the farm is the only enterprise operated by its owner or whether he also operates other farm or non-farm enterprises. The survey will show how many farms in a given area normally sell their produce or process it on the farm or in ancillary non-agricultural enterprises.

The proportion of farms belonging to co-operatives will be shown separately and subdivided by the type of service provided by these co-operatives. Data will be given on the proportion of farms with forward contracts with other enterprises, i.e. those that sell their produce on fixed terms to other farm or non-farm enterprises. Among these vertically integrated farms, those with contracts involving grain, potatoes and eight other vegetable products and seven livestock products will be listed separately.

The survey will tell us how many farms normally produce for the market and not only for their own consumption. Production for the market is assumed where sales total some 250 units of account per annum.

All this information is expected to become available from the basic survey in a complete programme of surveys on the structure of farming. In pursuance of Articles 1, 14 and 15 of the proposal for a regulation concerning these surveys, a number of special surveys will be carried out in subsequent years. They will cover:

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- (a) Agricultural labour
- (b) Financing and credit
- (c) Land tenure
- (d) Contractual commitments of farms and co-operatives
- (e) Mechanization
- (f) Crop-growing conditions
- (g) Stock-raising conditions.

As these special surveys are not to be carried out immediately, we cannot yet give any details or discuss their outcome.

Once the results of the 1966/67 survey are available, they should make an extensive contribution to decision-making on various aspects of agricultural policy.

The results will of course be made available for other purposes, such as scientific research into agricultural geography, business administration, etc. Its main interest, however, will be for the Community's agricultural policy itself. As regards price policy, for instance, we may expect to be able to forecast the incidence of price changes. If milk prices go up, for example, it will be possible to ascertain how many farms will be affected by the increase, how far the increase accrues to farms in the various districts and how many workers will benefit from the consequent rise in farm income.

It will be possible to allocate expenditure on structural measures in advance and to establish how the various measures will work out in the different areas and groups of farms - whether they are grouped by size or by type of farming.

Another reason why the pattern of agriculture must be investigated is to provide information on the general situation of agriculture in conjunction with the data made available by the information service on farm accounts now being set up in pursuance of Council Regulation No. 79/65/CEE of 15 June 1965.

Where the farm accounts service will provide information derived from the accounts of a certain number of farms, the survey on structure will provide the necessary basis for establishing the frequency of those farms of different sizes and engaging in different types of farming for which operating results have been ascertained by the information service. In conjunction, then, the survey and the information service will provide general information on the business results of farms and consequently on the overall situation of agriculture.