

# Agricultural Census 2020

## Average agricultural area of farms in 2020: 69 hectares in metropolitan France and 5 hectares in the overseas departments

In 2020, there were 389,800 farms in metropolitan France, about 100,000 fewer than in 2010 at the time of the last Census. The average size of farms continues to increase. The number of specialist livestock farms is decreasing more strongly than the number of specialist crop farms. Non-family permanent employees provide the largest share of the annual number of worked hours in farms. In the overseas departments, there are 26,700 farms in 2020.

Between 2010 and 2020, the number of agricultural holdings (simply referred to as farms) in metropolitan France continue to decrease, but at a slower rate than in the previous decade: -2.3% per year, compared with -3.0% between 2000 and 2010. According to the provisional results of the agricultural Census, there are 389,800 farms in

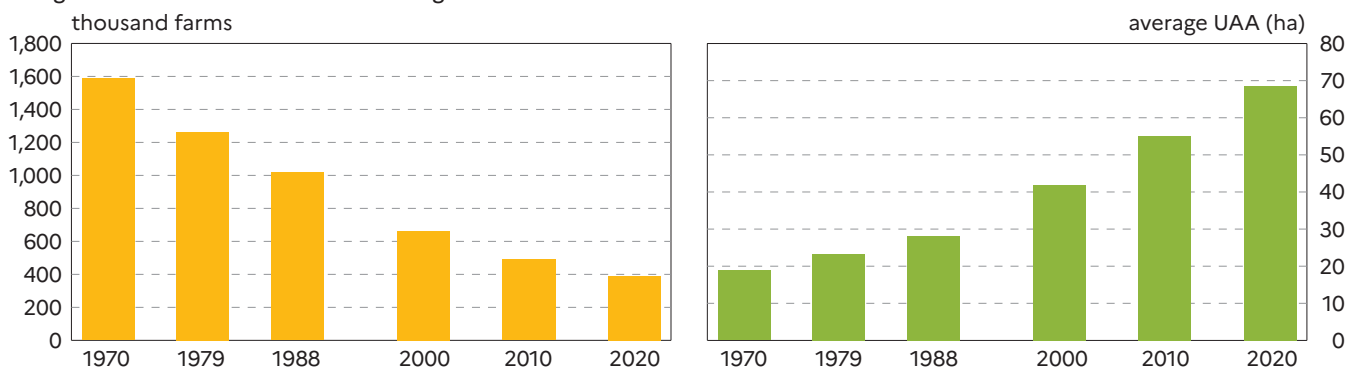
metropolitan France, i.e. around 100,000 fewer than 10 years ago. Utilised agricultural area (UAA) amounts to 26.7 million hectares (-0.8% compared to 2010). The falling number of farms mostly reflects their expansion. In 2020, their average size is 69 hectares (ha), i.e. 14 ha more than in 2010 and 27 ha more than in 2000 (Graph 1). The increase in

agricultural area is larger for livestock farms than for farms specialised in crop production. Thus, from 2010 to 2020, the average area of dairy farms increased from 78 to 105 ha, those of cattle farms from 65 to 85 ha, and those of cereal, oilseed and protein crops producers from 80 to 96 ha.

### Graph 1

In 50 years, the average utilised agricultural area has increased by 50 hectares in metropolitan France

Changes in the number of farms and average UAA



Scope: Metropolitan France, excluding collective grazing.

Source: Agreste - Agricultural Censuses



**Table**  
The Agricultural Census in a few figures for metropolitan France

	2010	2020	Evolution 2020/2010	Difference 2020/2010
Farms	489,977	389,779	-20%	
of which specialist crop farms	45.1%	51.7%		+6.6
specialist livestock farms	42.7%	37.4%		-5.3
mixed farming (mixed crops and/or mixed livestock)	11.8%	10.4%		-1.4
Share of farms with self-employed managers	69.7%	58.4%		-11.3
Share of farms in organic farming <sup>1</sup>	3.7%	12.1%		+8.4
Share of farms with other official quality or origin signs <sup>2</sup>	24.0%	27.3%		+3.2
Share of farms selling in short supply chains <sup>3</sup>	17.5%	23.1%		+5.6
Farm managers (number of persons)	603,884	496,365	-18%	
Heads and joint heads of farms and associates aged 60 or over	20.0%	25.4%		+5.4
Female farm managers	26.7%	26.2%		-0.5
Annual number of worked hours (FTE) <sup>4</sup>	739,697	659,459	-11%	
Total UAA (millier d'ha)	26,963	26,746	-1%	
of which cereals, oilseeds, protein crops	44.0%	42.8%		-1.2
grassland (artificial, temporary, permanent)	41.2%	41.4%		+0.2
permanent crops	3.7%	3.8%		+0.1
Average UAA (ha) <sup>5</sup>	55	69	+25%	
Livestock population (thousand LU)	26,462	24,499	-7%	

1. Certified or undergoing conversion.

2. Red label, protected geographical indication, protected designation of origin, traditional speciality guaranteed.

3. Excluding flowers and plants in 2010.

4. Excluding agricultural service contractors, machinery syndicates...

5. Including farms without UAA.

Scope: Metropolitan France, excluding collective grazing.

Source: Agreste - Agricultural Censuses

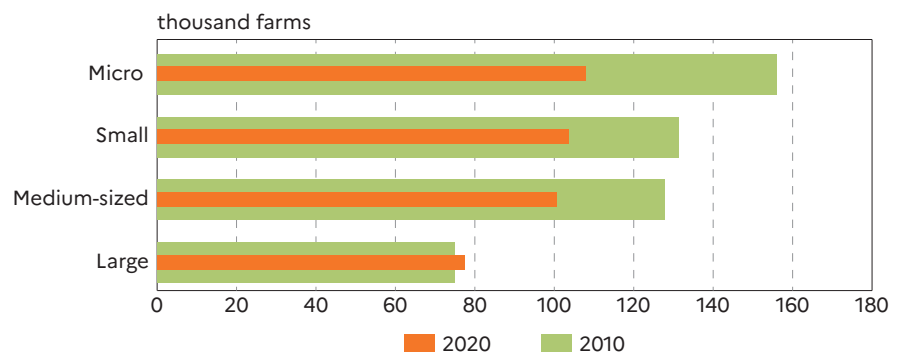
## A greater number of large farms

Large farms, generating more than 250,000 euros per year in standard output (SO) (see definitions), are the only category for which an increase in farm numbers is observed (+3.4%) (Graph 2). They now represent one farm in five. With an average UAA of 136 ha, they represent nearly 40% of the agricultural land and mobilise 45% of the agricultural labour force, i.e. respectively 7 points and 8 points more than in 2010. They are very few in cattle-rearing and fattening, sheep and goats farms, but are very common in the farms specialising in pigs. At the opposite, the number of micro-farms (less than 25,000 euros of standard output) is decreasing at a larger rate than the number of all farms (-31% between 2010 and 2020). Their average size is 12 ha and they represent less than 3 out of 10 farms. These micro-farms

use 5% of the agricultural land in metropolitan France and 10% of the annual number of worked hours.

They are numerous in sheep, goats and other grazing livestock farms, and few among dairy farms.

**Graph 2**  
The number of large farms is increasing  
Economic size<sup>1</sup> of farms in 2010 and 2020

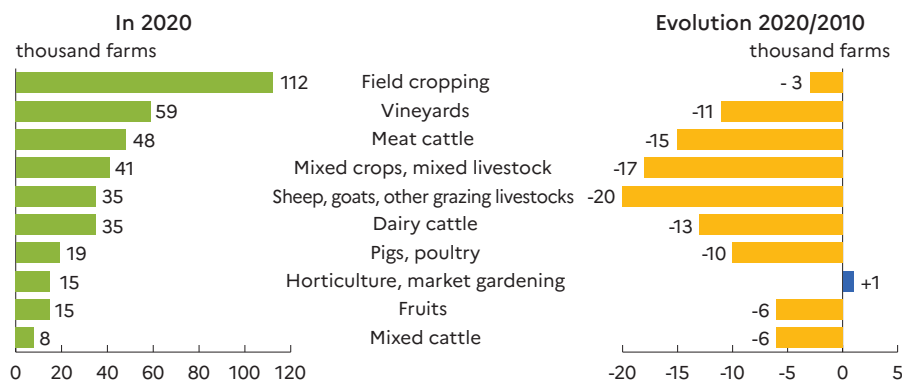


1. Calculated in 2010 and 2020 'at 2017 prices'.  
Scope: Metropolitan France, excluding collective grazing.  
Source: Agreste - Agricultural Censuses

## More than one in two farms specialised in crop production

The number of specialist livestock farms is decreasing the most (Graph 3). Between 2010 and 2020, it is falling by 30% (-63,500). The decline is even larger among cattle farms combining milk and meat production (-40%). The number of specialised in crops production is decreasing less (-9%), despite a decline in wine and fruit growing. As for farms specialised in vegetables and some crops, they are increasing in 10 years. Thus, in 2020, 52% of farms are specialised in crop production compared to 45% in 2010. The number of non-specialised farms is decreasing and now represents 10% of farms.

**Graph 3**  
Three farms out of ten specialised in field crops  
Economic specialisations of farms in 2020 and evolution



Scope: Metropolitan France, excluding collective grazing.  
Source: Agreste - Agricultural Censuses

## 26,700 farms in overseas departments

In French overseas departments, the number of farms in 2020 is 26,700. In all the overseas departments, most of farms are small, with self-employed managers. The average agricultural area is 5 ha and varies from 1.4 ha in Mayotte to 8.2 ha in Martinique.

55,100 persons work permanently in agriculture in the French overseas departments. Half of them are farm managers, 14,600 are non-family employees. Seasonal

workers contribute to 10% of the total agricultural labour force, which amounts to 41,300 full-time equivalents.

More than half of the farms are specialised in crop production. Even if it is not present everywhere, the main crop is, as in 2010, sugar cane, with more than a quarter of the UAA of the overseas departments. Permanent crops (orchards and banana plantations) account for 20% of the UAA.

**Table**  
The agricultural Census in French overseas departments

	2020
Farms	26,657
of which specialist crop farms	57.1%
specialist livestock farms	16.5%
mixed farming (mixed crops and/or mixed livestock)	25.8%
Share of farms with self-employed managers	95.3%
Share of farms in organic farming <sup>1</sup>	2.4%
Share of farms with other official quality or origin signs <sup>2</sup>	0.6%
Share of farms selling in short supply chains	72.0%
Farm managers (number of persons)	27,136
Heads and joint heads of farms and associates aged 60 or over	29.0%
Female farm managers	30.7%
Annual number of worked hours (FTE) <sup>3</sup>	41,304
Total UAA (thousand ha)	134.7
of which sugar cane	28.5%
grassland (artificial, temporary, permanent)	34.8%
permanent crops	18.9%
Average UAA (ha) <sup>4</sup>	5
Livestock population (thousand LU)	168.4

1. Certified or undergoing conversion (official specifications).  
2. Red label, protected geographical indication, protected designation of origin.  
3. Excluding agricultural service contractors, machinery syndicates...  
4. Including farms without UAA.  
Scope: Antilles, La Réunion, Guyane, Mayotte.  
Source: Agreste - Agricultural Censuses

## Growing participation of permanent non-family employees

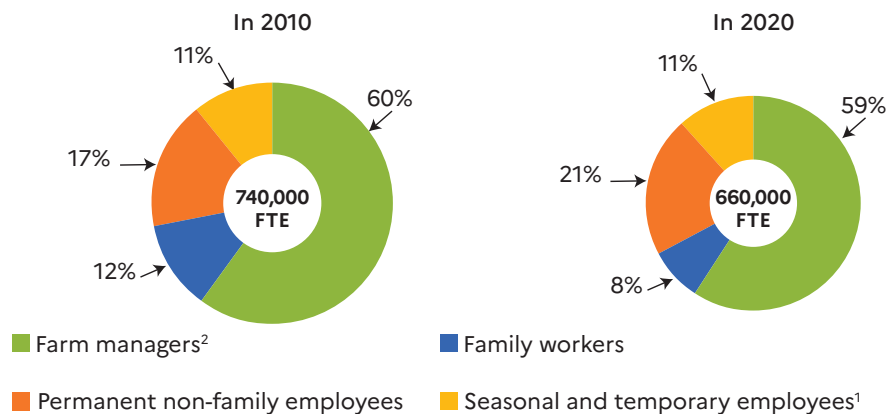
In 2020, 758,300 people had permanent jobs on farms, the equivalent of 583,100 full-time jobs (-12% in 10 years). While the share of farm managers in the total number of hours is stable, the share

of family workers (excluding family co-managers) is decreasing and the share of permanent non-family employees is increasing (*Graph 4*). Seasonal employees provide the rest of the hours worked in the same proportions in 2020 as in 2010. External personnel from agricultural contractors, agricultural equipment cooperatives or employer groups may also be used. The proportion of farms that use them has remained stable over the past 10 years (56%).

### Graph 4

#### Family work still in the majority

Distribution of the volume of work on farms<sup>1</sup> (FTE)



1. Excluding agricultural service contractors, machinery syndicates... 2. Including family co-operators.  
Scope: Metropolitan France, excluding collective grazing.  
Source: Agreste - Agricultural Censuses

### Catherine Barry, Vincent Polvêche

The agricultural Census was conceived and piloted by **M.-S. Dedieu, É. Ambiaud, N. Fauré, V. Polvêche and T. Guillaume.**

## Source and definitions

Carried out every 10 years, the Agricultural Census provides a precise and exhaustive view of agriculture on a fine geographical scale. All agricultural farms are surveyed, i.e. any economic unit meeting the following criteria:

- having an agricultural activity, either production or maintenance of the land in good agricultural and environmental conditions;
- reaching a minimum size, either 1 hectare of utilised agricultural area, or 20 ares of specialised crops, or a production above a threshold (1 cow, 6 mother ewes...);
- having a current management independent of any other unit. The existence of a registration in the Sirene register of companies and establishments or a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) aid application identifier presumes management independence.

**The standard output (SO)**, through a set of coefficients attributed to crops and livestock, gives a value to the potential production of the farms. It allows farms to be classified into different economic sizes. The thresholds have been renewed in 2020: farms with a SO of less than €25,000 are considered as "micro", those with a SO between €25,000 and €100,000 are considered as "small", those with a SO between €100,000 and €250,000 are considered as "medium sized" and those with a SO of more than €250,000 are considered as "large".

The calculation of the SO also allows to classify farms according to their specialisation (or technical-economic orientation). A holding is considered to be specialised in a production when at least two thirds of its SO is generated by this production.

The coefficients used in this publication are calculated on the basis of average prices and yields for the period 2015-2019, which provides the average SO for 2017 (*methodological note* in the associated file).

**A full-time equivalent (FTE)** corresponds to the work of a full-time person for a whole year (one FTE = at least 1 600 hours worked over the year).

**The livestock unit (LU)** is used to compare or aggregate animal numbers of different species or categories. For each type of animal, a coefficient based on its feed requirements is assigned. The livestock unit referred to in this publication is the all-feed livestock unit (AFLU).

**This publication** presents the final results of the 2020 agricultural Census.