

FARMLAND USE AND MEANS OF PRODUCTION

AGRI 1

The utilised agricultural area (UAA) represents the proportion of the territory assigned to agricultural activities. It represents more than 40% of the Walloon area. This sector therefore plays an important role in shaping landscapes, managing natural resources and protecting the environment in rural areas by maintaining specific open and semi-open environments.

A steady decline in the number of farms since 1990

Between 1990 and 2015, the number of farms in Wallonia decreased steadily, from 29,083 to 12,872, a decrease of 55.8%. The phenomenon mainly affected small¹ holdings. The average farm area doubled from 25.9 ha to 55.7 ha. The number of persons employed per farm increased only slightly (1.58 in 1990 and 1.78 in 2013), despite the increase in the average area of farms, illustrating the increasing mechanisation of agricultural work.

Field crops in the north, grasslands in the south

In 2015, the UAA² covered 717,527 ha (42.4% of the territory), a reduction of 4.7% since 1990. The UAA was highest north of the Sambre-et-Meuse line, where the majority of cereals³ and industrial crops were grown. Further south, the (mainly permanent) grasslands dominated. Livestock farming was present in the various agricultural regions, with more specialised areas such as the grassland Region and the High Ardenne for milk production, and the Famenne, Ardenne and Jurassic Region for beef production. Pig breeding was mainly located in the loamy Region, the Condroz and the grassland Region.

Environmental pressures depend on production patterns

Intensive agricultural production patterns are responsible for various pressures on the environment: soil erosion and compaction⁴, water pollution⁵, emissions of air pollutants⁶, erosion of biodiversity⁷, landscape impacts, etc. Various measures have been put in place to reduce these pressures: regulatory measures such as the cross-compliance of agricultural aids⁸, but also voluntary measures, such as agri-environmental and climate measures (AECM)⁹ and organic farming¹⁰. Some of these have recently been modified by the Walloon Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (*Programme wallon de développement rural 2014-2020*) in order to further develop extensive production patterns.

[1] Farms of less than 20 ha of UAA | [2] → Map 13 | [3] → AGRI 2 | [4] → SOILS 3 & SOILS Focus 2 | [5] → WATER 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14 & 15 | [6] → AIR 1, 2, 3 & 4 | [7] → FFH 6, 7 & 8 | [8] → CONTROL 4 | [9] → AGRI 10 | [10] → AGRI 4

Fig. AGRI 1-1 Means of production of the agricultural sector in Wallonia

