

TRENDS IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION: ANIMAL SECTOR

AGRI 3

Livestock farming occupies an important place in the Walloon agricultural landscape. The related pressures (organic effluents, emissions of greenhouse gases and acidifying substances, waste water discharge, faecal contamination of water courses, odours, etc.) depend in particular on the level of intensification of production and the management measures put in place.

Livestock farming present in all regions

Livestock farming is present in the various agricultural regions of Wallonia, 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 farming is mainly concentrated in the loamy Region, the Condroz and the grassland Region, whereas poultry farming is mainly concentrated in the loamy Region and the Condroz.

Fewer cattle but more poultry and pigs

In 2015, poultry accounted for 78.1% of the number of head of the main¹ livestock in Wallonia, with cattle at 16.5% and pigs 5.4%. Over the last 25 years, poultry production in Wallonia has increased significantly (+403%) with livestock increasing from 1,110,289 heads to 5,588,595 heads in 2015, mainly due to the growth of broiler production, which increased by a factor of 6.4. The pig population decreased until 1996 (272,187 heads) and then progressed steadily to 382,973 in 2015, close to the 1990 level. However, for cattle, it is a downward trend, both in the meat and dairy sectors. After reaching a peak of 1,554,525 heads in 1995, the total number of cattle fell steadily to 1,181,385 heads in 2015, a loss of 24%. In the case of dairy cows, this is mainly due to the introduction of milk quotas, increased

animal productivity and uncertainties on the milk market (gradual abolition of quotas², fluctuations in milk prices on the world market). For its part, cattle was hit hard by the mad cow crisis in 2001, which led to a collapse in sales and a partial shift to pork and poultry meat. The decrease in beef and veal consumption in Belgium (-22% between 2005 and 2014)³ may also explain the decline in cattle numbers.

Less organic nitrogen

In 2015, 91% of the organic nitrogen produced by major livestock farms came from cattle, despite a fourfold increase in nitrogen production by poultry since 1990. The reduction in the number of cattle nevertheless led to a 19.2% decrease in total nitrogen production (all major herds combined) compared to 2001.

[¹] Lack of data for Walloon herds relating to sheep, goats, equidae and rabbits at the FPS Economy - DG Statistics | [²] 31/03/2015 was the end of milk quotas. | [³] FPS Economy - DG Statistics, 2016

Fig. AGRI 3-1 Livestock farming in Wallonia

