Agricultural labour in England and the UK
Farm Structure Survey 2016
Introduction

The Farm Structure Survey is a survey conducted across the European Union every three or four years as a sample survey and once every ten years as a census. The latest survey was conducted in 2016. The results are used to assess the agricultural situation across the European Union, to monitor trends in the structure of holdings and to model the impact of external developments or policy proposals. This release presents analyses of the agricultural labour force data.

Defra was responsible for collating data and the provision of the anonymised dataset for the UK to Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. Data was collected by Defra (in England), the Welsh Government (in Wales), the Scottish Government (in Scotland) and DAERA (in Northern Ireland).

All figures quoted in this release relate to England unless otherwise stated. The datasets containing all the results presented here, including both England and UK figures for 2016 and also 2013, are available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/farm-labour-profiles-from-the-england-and-uk-farm-structure-survey

Key findings - England

**Holders:**
- 84% were male
- 40% were aged over 65 (median age was 60)
- 77% of female holders worked on the farm part-time or not at all compared to just over half of male holders
- Compared to other farm types, pigs and poultry farms had the highest proportion of holders aged under 45
- The proportion of holders aged less than 55 increased with the size of the farm

**Managers:**
- 83% were male
- 35% were aged over 65 (median age was 58)
- 84% of farm managers were also the holder
- The proportion of managers aged less than 55 increased with the size of the farm
- 65% of managers had no formal agricultural education but instead had practical experience

**Family and non-family workers:**
- 55% of farm workers were family members
- 45% of family workers were male, compared to 79% of non-family workers
- 30% of the family workforce worked on the smallest farms and 14% on the largest farms
- 16% of the non-family workforce worked on the smallest farms and 47% on the largest farms
Holders

84% of holders in England were male
40% of holders in England were aged over 65
The median age of holders in England was 60

Of the 105 thousand holdings in England, 97% were run by ‘sole holders’ and 3% by limited companies or institutions (equivalently for the UK as a whole). Of those run by sole holders, the holders were predominantly male. 84% of holders were men and 16% were women, this was very similar to the figures for the UK.

Agriculture typically has an aging workforce. In England and the UK, around 40% of all holders were over the typical retirement age of 65 years while the proportion aged less than 35 years was around 2%. This was similar for both men and women in the UK and England.

(Figure 1)

Compared to other farm types, pigs and poultry farms had the highest proportion of holders aged less than 45 (13%), closely followed by mixed livestock farms (11%), grazing livestock (10%) and mixed crops and livestock farms (10%). While holders of field crops and mixed cropping farms were more likely to be aged 65 and over. A similar pattern was seen across the UK as a whole.

(Figure 2)
Holders

40% of holders on the largest farms in England were under 55

23% of female holders in England work full-time vs 47% of male holders

The age profile of holders continues to increase on 2013 figures whilst the gender balance remains the same

Part-time working is of considerable importance in agriculture although proportionally more women are likely to work part-time than men. In both England and the UK, over three-quarters of female holders worked on the holding part-time or not at all compared to just over half of male farm holders.

(Figure 4)

The proportion of holders aged less than 55 increased with the economic size of the farm from less than one-third of holders on small farms to around 40% on the largest farms. This was seen in both England and the UK.

(Figure 3)
For the structure survey each holding has one manager. Most holdings were managed by the holder (84% in England in 2016), while 3% were managed by the holder’s spouse, 7% by another member of the holder’s family, 3% by a person unrelated to the holder’s family and 3% by a manager on behalf of an organisation, i.e. limited companies or institutions.

Like holders, managers were predominantly male (83%) in England. The proportions were slightly different for the UK with 85% of managers being men.

About 35% of all managers in England and the UK were over the typical retirement age of 65 years, a slightly smaller proportion than for holders. The proportion of managers aged less than 45 years was 4%. This was broadly true for both men and women in the UK and England.

About 40% of managers of field crop farms were aged 65 years or more in both England and the UK compared to 25% of managers of pigs and poultry farms in England (23% in the UK). Pigs and poultry farms had the highest proportion of managers aged less than 45 (18%), closely followed by mixed livestock farms (16%).
Like holders, the proportion of managers aged less than 55 increased with the size3 of the farm. In England they made up 31% of managers on the smallest farms, increasing to 53% on the largest farms. This trend was also seen in the UK.

(Figure 7)

In England, 65% of managers had practical experience rather than a formal agricultural education. A further 16% had basic agricultural training and 20% had full agricultural training.

(Figure 8)
In 2016, there were 176 thousand people working on agricultural holdings in England, in addition to holders and/or managers. Of these, 55% were family members. In the UK as a whole, 60% of the workforce were family members.

Of the 97 thousand people in the family labour force in England, 55% were women. This compares to 52% in the UK.

Of the 29 thousand family workers who work full-time on the holding, the majority (63%) were male. Female family workers were most likely to work less than one quarter of a working year on the holding with almost half doing so, compared to just a third of male family workers. A similar pattern was observed for the UK.

(Figure 9)
Women made up more than half of the family workforce across all classified farm types in England. Horticulture farms had the highest proportion of women in the family labour force (60%) and mixed crops and livestock farms the lowest (52%). This finding was similar for the UK.

(Figure 10)

About 30% of the family workforce in England worked on the smallest farms and 14% on the largest farms. Similarly for the UK, around 33% of the family workforce worked on the smallest farms and 11% on the largest farms. In England and the UK, there were fewer women than men in the family workforce on large farms and more women than men in the family workforce on small farms.

(Figure 11)
In 2016, there were 176 thousand people working on agricultural holdings in England, in addition to holders and/or managers. Of these, 45% were non-family workers. In the UK as a whole 40% were non-family workers.

Of the 79 thousand people in the non-family labour force in England, 79% were men. For the UK 81% were men.

Of the 35 thousand non-family workers who work full-time on the holding, the majority (82%) were male. Female non-family workers were more likely to work part-time with almost two thirds doing so, compared to just over half of male non-family workers. A similar pattern was observed for the UK.

(Figure 12)
The majority of non-family workers were men across all farm types in England. Horticulture farms had the highest proportion of women in the non-family labour force (38%), and the lowest proportion was found on field crops farms (14%) and mixed crops and livestock farms (14%). The same pattern of labour was observed for the UK. (Figure 13)

47% of the non-family workforce in England were employed on the largest farms, compared to 43% in the UK. In both England and the UK, the proportion of women in the non-family workforce is greater on smaller farms than larger farms. (Figure 14)

38% of all non-family workers on horticulture farms were women

16% of non-family workers worked on the smallest farms and 47% on the largest farms.

The proportion of the workforce accounted for by non-family members has decreased from 2013.
Introduction

The Farm Structure Survey 2016 was led by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) which was responsible for collating the Farm Structure Survey data from the four constituent countries of the UK: Defra in England, the department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) in Northern Ireland, the Scottish Government Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services (RESAS) and the Welsh Government. The majority of data were collected in each country through the regular June survey of agriculture with administrative sources being used for other data. Further information on the June surveys of agriculture may be found at:


Scotland: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Agriculture-fisheries/PubFinalResultsJuneCensus


Thresholds

From 2010, thresholds were applied to the Farm Structure Survey. A threshold is defined under which a unit does not have significant levels of farming activity (e.g. 5 hectares of UAA). This means that the smallest farms (under the threshold) are not surveyed. The thresholds are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Threshold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilised agricultural area</td>
<td>Arable land, kitchen gardens, permanent grassland, permanent crops &gt;5 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent outdoor crops</td>
<td>Fruit, berry, citrus and olive plantations, vineyards and nurseries &gt;1 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor intensive production</td>
<td>Hops &gt;0.5 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tobacco &gt;0.5 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cotton &gt;0.5 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fresh vegetables, melons and strawberries, which are outdoors or under low (not accessible) protective cover &gt;0.5 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crops under glass or other (accessible) protective cover</td>
<td>Fresh vegetables, melons and strawberries &gt;0.1 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flowers and ornamental plants (excluding nurseries) &gt;0.1 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bovine animals</td>
<td>All &gt;10 Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>All &gt;50 Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breeding sows &gt;10 Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>All &gt;20 Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>All &gt;20 Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>All &gt;1,000 Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardy nursery stock</td>
<td>All mushroom holdings to be included &gt;1 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mushrooms</td>
<td>All mushroom holdings to be included &gt;0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The UK has also included holdings with >5ha temporary let out land or temporarily empty pig or poultry sheds.
### Metadata

**Dataset**


**Footnotes**

1. **Labour force** – The farm labour force includes all persons having completed their compulsory education (i.e. having reached school leaving age) who carried out farm work on the holding during the 12 months up to the data of the survey including holders, even when not working on the holding. The Farm Structure Survey covers family (holder and member of the holder’s family), non family labour (regular and non-regular) and also contractual work (workers not directly employed by the holding).

2. **Farm type** – Each holding is classified to a farm type depending on the main economic activities of the holding. Once the numbers of livestock and hectares of crops have been multiplied by the relevant standard outputs, a farm is allocated to a type according to where most of its total standard output come from. A farm is allocated to a particular type when the contribution of a crop or livestock type (or set of crop and livestock types) comprises more than two-thirds of its total standard outputs.

3. **Standard outputs** – The economic size of the holding is measured using Standard Output (SO). For each activity on a farm (e.g. wheat, dairy cows), a standard output is estimated. The standard output is the average monetary value of the agricultural output at farm-gate price in euro per hectare or per head of livestock and by region and represents the level of output that could be expected on the average farm under “normal” conditions. The sum of all the outputs, for all activities of a given farm, is referred to as the economic size of that farm. The smallest farms were those with standard output of less than 25,000 euros and the largest farms were those with a standard output of 500,000 euros or more.

4. **Annual Work Units** – There is a considerable degree of part-time working in agriculture and the working time of each person who works on the farm is therefore measured in Annual Work Units (AWU). One AWU corresponds to the work performed by a person engaged in full-time agricultural work. The annual working time of such a worker is 1800 hours (225 working days of 8 hours per day).

5. This number of holdings will be lower than the published total from the Defra June survey, this is due to additional holdings being removed from the Farm Structure Survey dataset if they do not meet the Eurostat thresholds.

**Further enquiries**

For further enquiries on this dataset, please contact: Farming Statistics, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Tel: 03000 600 170, email: farming-statistics@defra.gsi.gov.uk