

Agriculture, livestock and fishing

Agricultural holdings

The Agricultural census surveys provide an exhaustive picture of the size and features of the agricultural holdings present in the national territory. In addition to creating a background of crucial information for understanding a sector which is strongly affected by local characteristics, the results are also used for building up a frame of productive units used in the years between each census as a basis for sample surveys, research and studies on the sector.

From 1961 onwards, the Agricultural census surveys have been performed approximately every ten years.

Regarding organisation, the census system has traditionally been structured on several levels, involving Regions, Provinces, Chambers of Commerce and Municipalities. ISTAT directs the technical and methodological coordination of the census network through its own local offices.

The field of observation for the Agricultural census survey takes into consideration all agricultural, forestry and livestock enterprises of any size and type of management (by legal or physical persons), with the exception of small family vegetable growers that consume their own produce. In addition to the figures on the "Italy universe" including all holdings regardless of size, the 2000 Census also provides those from the "EU universe", covering all holdings with at least one hectare of utilized agricultural area (SAU - UAA) and those with an UAA of less than one hectare but with a production value of more than 2,065.83 EUR. The 2010 Census, however, only applied the EU field of observation, introducing minimum physical thresholds on a regional level.

The survey unit for the Census was taken to be an agricultural and livestock holding and a only-livestock holding without arable land. An agricultural and livestock holding was defined as a single unit, both technically and economically, formed of land, even in non-adjointed plots, and possible with various types of plant or equipment in which agricultural or livestock activities are performed as a primary or secondary activity by a single management – physical person, company or institution - who bears the risk, either alone, as a farm-holder or a holder with paid labourers or partners, or as part of a partnership. Agricultural holdings are identified in each Municipality, in particular by the land registry showing the farm headquarter or, in the lack of this, by the land registry record into which most of the plots of the agricultural holding's area fall. "Farm headquarter" is taken to mean the complex of buildings situated in the agricultural holding and associated with the agricultural holding's activities. This corresponds to the place where the agricultural holding is managed from.

For all censuses, the survey method is based on the use of "face to face" interviews during which the enumerators fill out a paper questionnaire containing multiple choice answers. The main variables include the use of land, livestock, the characteristics of the labour force used on the agricultural holding and the general character of the holding (type of management, legal form, sale of products, etc.).

The 6th General agricultural census survey introduced some important new features from an organisational and methodological point of view. The most significant were regarding flexibility in the regional organisational network and the use of administrative sources in constructing the pre-census list and in the data checking and correcting phase. Furthermore, the possibility was introduced for farmers to fill out the questionnaire online and the introduction of an online survey management system.

The time series presented here refer to the figures collected during the five general agricultural census surveys that have not undergone adjustments regarding the values, given that the definitions have remained substantially unvaried over time. With respect to the double survey field introduced in 2000 with the aim of allowing comparisons from different periods, the tables show the figures

relating to the so-called “Italian universe”, including those holdings that would otherwise have been excluded from the survey in line with Eurostat size thresholds.