



Evolution, diversity and typology of pig farms in France: lessons from the 2020 agricultural census



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Every 10 years, the agricultural census provides an overview of agriculture by collecting more than 900 datapoints (land, livestock, labor, production and marketing methods, etc.) from all agricultural holdings (AH). We analyzed individual data from the agricultural censuses of 2020, 2010 and 2000 in France. Farms of significant size were identified by applying livestock size thresholds. Two variables were created to qualify the granivorous and herbivorous activity. They were crossed to distinguish types of livestock farms that are variously specialized or diversified.

Prospects

The French pig farming model (farrow-to-finish, land-related, family run) is efficient and resilient. In the future, diversity in pig farms is expected to continue, contributing to the attractiveness of farms. According to breeders, there is no ideal pig farm model, "the important thing is consistency in fattening, land and work". The issues are handover, generational renewal, attractiveness of the profession and acceptance by society. The risks relate to the supply of piglets. The number of sows could continue to decline with the labor shortage, the search for autonomy in farrowing and fattening and the ban of cages. The emerging solution is the development of collective farrowing units.

Concentration

- In 2020, mainland France has 389,779 AH (-20% in 10 years) of which 167,000 with a significant livestock (-24% in 10 years). 82% rear herbivores without significant granivore production, 10% rear granivores without significant herbivore production, and 8% are mixed.
- The decrease in the number of AH with at least one pig (Figure) is slowing down: 59,549 in 2000, 22,286 in 2010 (-63%), 13,048 in 2020 (-42%). In 2020, **nearly all pigs are reared in 8,448 farms** with more than 100 pigs or 20 sows, of which 4,426 have sows. This number was twice as large in 2000.
- The decrease in the number of pigs has slowed down: 13.3 million pigs in 2020 (-3.5% over 2010-2020 vs. -7.1% over 2000-2010), including 955,795 sows (-14.3% vs. -21.3%). **France lost 1 sow out of 3 over 20 years.**
- With 56.3% of France's pig population, Brittany remains the leading production region, but the decline in the number of pigs was greater there (-4.3% over 2010-2020 vs. -2.5% in the rest of France).

Main structural characteristics

French pig farms are classed as **family farms** by their size, work and capital. In 2020, the average farm size is **214 sows, 102 ha UAA and 2.63 equivalent full time** (Table). The average age of farm managers is nearly 49 in 2020; **a third of pigs is kept by a manager older than 55 compared to 7% in 2000**. **Farrow-to-finish is predominant in France**, with 80% of sows and more than 60% of fattening places. A proportion of the piglets they produced are fattened by contracted finishers.

Table: Average dimensions of the three main types of pig farms in France

	Specialized pig farms		Crops and livestock farms		Mixed (pigs and herbivores) farms		Total
	With sows	Without sows	Pigs only	Pigs and herbivores	With sows	Without sows	
Sows / farm (% of farms with)	287	-	142 (48%)	114 (34%)	141	-	214 (52%)
Fattening pigs / fattening farm	--	1 068	565	460	-	583	691
Agricultural area (ha)/ farm	78	53	114	170	119	98	102
Dairy cows / farm (% of farms with)	-	-	-	95 (49%)	78 (47%)	69 (58%)	82 (24%)
Beef cows / farm (% of farms with)	-	-	-	46 (49%)	44 (51%)	44 (47%)	45 (22%)
Equivalent full time / farm	3,05	1,53	2,32	3,26	3,21	2,20	2,63
% of hired labour	48%	36%	30%	30%	27%	21%	35%

Source : IFIP from SSP, Agricultural census 2020

Diversity

Three main types of pig farms coexist in France:
 i) Specialized in pig production, ii) Mixed cropping-breeding, iii) Mixed pigs and herbivores. Since 2000, the share of specialized pig farms has increased from 33 to 44% of farms and from 54% to 67% of pigs, mixed crop-livestock farms have increased from 15 to 20% of farms and from 9 to 11% of pigs whereas mixed pig-herbivore farms have plummeted from 48 to 29% of farms and from 36 to 21% of pigs. This change reflects the difficulty in reconciling several productive activities, as well as the separation of the activities of farms into different legal structures.

Figure: Evolution of the number of pig farms according to their size

