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AGRICULTURE AS A CREATOR OF JOBS

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Agriculture as a creator of jobs

Introduction (1)

There are some 270 million people living in the European Community. While Europe is the world's largest importer of agricultural and food products, its commercial deficit in agricultural and food products has been halved over the past 20 years. For every 100 people in the Community, 40 people are working to support themselves and the other 60. Of the 40 people in employment 3 are engaged in agriculture, while 2 of the other 60 are also engaged in agriculture without being recorded in the employment statistics. Of the 14 people working in industry, one is working in the industries processing food, drink and tobacco. One more person would probably account for the provision of goods and services to agriculture and non-agricultural goods and services to the industries processing food, drink and tobacco. Excluding those working in distribution and retailing, 7 people are working to meet the bulk of the food requirements of each 100 consumers.

Agriculture

'Agricultural products' may be defined as the products of the soil, of stock-farming and of fisheries and products of first stage processing directly related to these products. Agricultural production depends on the one hand on farming and

(1) The figures quoted relate to the Community of 10 Member States. The sources are either the Statistical Office or the Directorate-General for Agriculture of the Commission of the European Communities. In many cases estimates have been necessary to overcome gaps in the official harmonized statistics.

on the other hand on the industries and services linked to farming. The modernization of farming within the Community, which has taken place in the past 20 years has shifted the balance within the agro-alimentary chain between farming activity and off-farm activity. An illustration is provided by dairying and the sale of dairy products.

The farmer and his suppliers

A typical modern dairy farmer has intensified his farming methods since the 1950s. Nowadays the livestock from which he produces his milk will be genetically superior to the average cow of 30 years ago and hence be more valuable.

As a modern 'small or medium-sized businesman' his capital investment will be substantially higher, and will typically include a modern milking parlour, better provision for feed storage and distribution, adequate cooling equipment for his fresh milk and suitable storage facilities, etc.; all of which implies investment. To operate his business, he will make substantial purchases of feed and he will spend significant amounts of money on improving his pasture, veterinary services, fuel and energy resources as well as on the maintenance of his equipment; the scale of his operation may have grown to the point where he uses a professional accountant and he is likely to make use of the extensive advisory services available.

The farmer and his customers

When it comes to selling his milk, it is improbable that he will retail it himself. Instead a large-scale dairy, which has itself invested in the equipment necessary to meet modern standards of hygiene, will purchase and process his milk to provide a considerably extended range of goods for distribution. A proportion of these goods will be resold to farmers to make up part of their livestock ration; the majority will go on down the distribution chain to consumers.

Jobs in the agro-alimentary chain

These changes which have taken place in the dairy food chain are important. They have altered the relative volume and quality of work of each small link in the chain. This has an effect on employment; jobs are lost, for example there are fewer farmers; jobs are substituted, for example work which used to be done on the farm is now done by non-farmers; new jobs are created, for example in industry supplying specialized buildings and equipment. While these changes are known to have taken place, official statistics are hard to come by and at best provide an incomplete picture of the adaptations which have taken place since the inception of the common market. Such European statistics as do exist, have been published in the various editions of *The Agricultural Situation in the Community—Annual Report* published in conjunction with *The Annual General Report on the Activities of the European Communities*. In particular, the 1982 report contained an article entitled 'The CAP and the food industry', while the chapter on structures contained a section on 'Employment in agriculture'.

Agricultural employment

The question 'How many people work in agriculture?' has different answers according to the criteria used to define the group of people. Employment statistics classify every person who has an employment (1) in one of three economic sectors: agriculture, (2) industry or services. According to this statistic employment in the agricultural sector was 9.3 million people in 1977. It fell from over 19 million in 1960, to 12 million in 1970 and to 8.2 million in 1982; this corresponds to an average loss of one job every minute during 20 years.

However, this statistic excludes many working in agriculture, particularly members of the family working on average less than one third of 'normal' full time

(1) According to the annual employment statistics 'persons employed' includes all persons working for remuneration or self-employment as well as unpaid family workers. Family workers working less than one third of the normal working hours per week are excluded. Persons employed in more than one economic sector are counted only in the sector where they have their more important employment.

(2) The sector 'agriculture' includes: agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing.

on the land. When all persons working on agricultural holdings [1] are considered, the total number of jobs discovered in 1977 was over 15 million. These include a majority who either only work part-time or who have their major employment in another economic sector.

In 1977:

(i) only 37% of farm holders (EUR 9) found full-time employment on their holding;

(ii) only 55% of farm holders (EUR 9) work for more than 50% of normal full working time on their holding.

The total of some 15 million jobs represented the equivalent of between 8 and 9 million full-time jobs.

The other major features affecting the development of agricultural employment are:

(i) the importance of a second income to those working in agriculture—in 1975 it was found that about one quarter of farm holders had a second gainful activity. In this context, it should be borne in mind that the availability of a second gainful activity to part-time farmers varies significantly from region to region—for example, while the majority of part-time farm holders in southern Germany have a second income earned outside their farm, in the Mezzogiorno (southern Italy) few such opportunities exist and most farm holders are underemployed.

(ii) the importance of family labour in the agricultural sector—in 1977 it was found that 92% of jobs (EUR 9) in the farming sector were exercised by the holder or members of his family;

(iii) the age structure of agricultural workers—in 1977 it was found that 24% of farm holders (EUR 9) were aged 65 and over—is such that for demographic reasons alone the reduction of the agricultural population observed over the last two decades is likely to continue, but at a less rapid rate;

(iv) an increasing proportion of agricultural workers have full-time employment in agriculture.

Detailed information about the production of individual farm workers is difficult to obtain. An indication of the diversity of the 5.6 million farm holdings recorded in 1977 is that the number producing cereals was 3.9 million, 2.1 million were

[1] Agricultural holdings: holdings of at least one ha utilized agricultural area (UAA) and holdings of less than one ha UAA if they are economically significant.

producing grapes, and 2.1 million were producing milk. These activities took place on farm holdings of various sizes and with varying degrees of specialization. Farm production varies substantially from region to region and from locality to locality. It reflects the climatic variations, the different soils, and the different traditional patterns of supply and demand throughout the Community and the different degrees of support offered by the various market organizations for agricultural products. Therefore Europe's 5 or 6 million farmers are working in different circumstances and are engaged in very varied activities.

The industries and services linked to agriculture

The statistics for the Community for the industries and services linked to agriculture are incomplete. The most comprehensive indication of the interrelationship between the agricultural sector and the rest of the economy is available from the input-output tables of the national accounts. The most complete statistics relate to the year 1975 and are available for eight Member States. For the Community (not including Luxembourg and Greece) the following flows [1] of goods intended for intermediate consumption were identified as being amongst the more significant which are often overlooked:

(i) 5% of the purchases of the agricultural branch were made from the branch 'Petroleum and natural gas' (Code 70 in the table on p. 4), which represented 4% of the sales of that branch;

(ii) 15% of the purchases of the agricultural branch were made from the branch 'Chemical products' (Code 170), which represented 8% of the sales of that branch.

On the other hand some 80% of agricultural sales are made to the food processing industry (Codes 310,330,350), with a further 5% of sales going to the beverage and tobacco industries. While agriculture accounts for around 80% of the purchases of the meat and dairy industries it only accounts for 31% of purchases of the other food industries (Code 350).

(1) Excluding sales between agricultural enterprises.

Input-output table for the Community

Code	Branch	Purchases by the agricultural branch: % of agricultural purchases [1] from within the Community	Purchases by the agricultural branch: importance (in %) of the sales of each branch	Sales by the agricultural branch: % of agricultural output [1] sold to this branch	Sales by the agricultural branch: importance (in %) of agriculture in the purchases of each branch
10	Agriculture	×	22	×	35
30	Coal	0	0	0	2
50	Coke	0	0	0	0
70	Petroleum & natural gas	5	4	0	0
90	Electricity, gas, steam, water	3	2	1	0
130	Ferrous and non-ferrous metals	1	0	0	0
150	Non-metallic minerals	1	1	0	0
170	Chemical products	15	8	1	1
190	Metal products	1	1	0	0
210	Machines	3	4	0	0
230	Office machines, etc.	0	0	0	0
250	Electronic goods	0 } 1	0 } 2	0	0
270	Motor vehicles	0	0	0	0
290	Other transport equipment	0	1	0	0
	Food, drink and tobacco industries				
310	Meat and meat products	0	0	37	82
330	Milk and dairy products	2	15	21	78
350	Other food products	35	32	23	31
370	Beverages	0	1	3	20
390	Tobacco products	0	1	2	42
410	Textiles, clothing	1	1	2	3
430	Leather, footwear	0	1	0	3
450	Timber, wooden products	0	1	3	11
470	Paper and printing	1	0	1	2
490	Rubber and plastic	1	1	0	1
510	Other manufacturing products	0	0	0	1
530	Building and construction	3	3	0	0
570	Wholesale and retail trade	11	7	0	0
590	Lodging and catering services	0	1	4	9
610	Inland transport	2	3	0	0
630	Maritime and air transport	2	4	0	0
670	Communication services	1	1	0	0
690	Credit and insurance	2	1	0	0
730	Marketing services of education and research	0	1	1	3
790	Other market services	7	2	1	1
810	Public administrations	:	:	2	2
990990	Total	100	5	100	8

Source: Statistical Office of the EC, input-output tables (1975) of intermediate consumption of domestic origin, valued at factory-gate price (net of VAT) for eight Member States (excluding Luxembourg and Greece).

(1) Excluding sales between agricultural enterprises.

The major supplier of goods and services to agriculture and the main purchaser of agricultural produce is the food, drink and tobacco industry (defined as the 5 branches with codes 310 to 390). Employment in this sector is of the order of 3 million people, a figure which is only a little lower than in 1960. This is the only related industry for which reasonably extensive statistics are available. This is because the food, drink and tobacco industry accounts for over 10% of industrial net value added, and is the largest of the Community's industries identified in statistics. Detailed statistics concerning the other braches of the economy which are linked to the production of the agro-alimentary chain are incomplete.

However, two categories in particular are worthy of mention. First, the cooperative, or mutual, movement has expanded considerably since the 1950s. Agricultural cooperatives, covering the range of activities linked to the agro-alimentary chain (purchasing groups, co-ownership groups, storage and processing groups, etc.) now have some 10 million members; many farmers are of course members of more than one cooperative. Their impact on price formation is considerable, since in many Member States more than 50% of sales of a particular agricultural product pass via a cooperative. The scale of operation has now grown to the extent that the agricultural cooperative movement now employs over half a million people.

Second the role and scale of activity of public administrations, in relation to the agro-alimentary chain has expanded. While it has not proved possible to estimate the number of public servants whose work is directly linked to the agro-alimentary branches they probably exceed 1 million in number. It seems likely that the intensification and expansion of these branches has created greater employment in public administrations both at national and regional level.

The agro-alimentary sector

The 'agro-alimentary' sector covers those branches of the economy providing goods and services to agriculture, agriculture itself and the industries which process agricultural products. The output of the agriculture and food branches has grown considerably over the past 20 years.

Complete comparable statistics for such a long period do not exist. On the basis of available statistics for gross value-added at market prices it would appear that the volume of agricultural output has increased by on average 1.5 to 2.0% per annum over the past 20 years, while the comparable rate of growth for the food industry was 3.0% to 4.0% per annum in volume. The increased emphasis in the agro-alimentary chain, on high value-added output from the food industry has raised the value of the food industry to the same level as the agricultural branch.

The combined branches of agriculture and the food industry have undergone a substantial transformation over the past 20 years. This has been due in part to two related phenomena:

(i) the concentration of production units whether at farm or plant level, and

(ii) the marked increase in labour productivity.

The growth of their combined output has not been as rapid as that of the rest of the economy. Nevertheless, the output of this sector still represents 6 to 7% of gross domestic product. The shares of gross capital formation and intermediate consumption are similar.

Between 1963 and 1972, the development of trade in agriculture and food products increased but less rapidly than the trade in other goods. Since 1972, the development of the trade in agricultural and food products, particularly the exports of food products which more than doubled, have led to a situation where the traditional trade deficit in agricultural products is partially offset by a favourable trading balance in food products. This increase in the volume of trade has either created additional jobs in transport and distribution or protected jobs where improved labour productivity would otherwise have resulted in lower levels of employment.

Community trade in agriculture, food and all goods — EUR 10
(USD 1 000 million at 1975 prices and exchange rates)

	1963	1972	1981
Imports			
Agriculture	17.7	20.2	21.2
Food products	10.1	11.4	11.0
Agriculture and food products	27.8	31.5	32.2
All goods	86.1	156.3	189.5
Exports			
Agriculture	1.9	3.4	6.8
Food products	4.1	7.4	15.9
Agriculture and food products	6.0	10.8	22.7
All goods	63.7	123.0	202.4
Commercial balance			
Agriculture	−15.8	−16.8	−14.4
Food products	− 6.0	− 4.0	5.0
Agriculture and food products	−21.8	−20.8	− 9.5
All goods	−22.5	−33.3	12.8

Source: Statistics of trade in volume terms provided by the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs.

Agriculture and employment

Despite the tendency for investment to grow steadily, necessitating larger areas if profits are to be made, and therefore a relative decline in the number of persons employed, a number of changes are occurring which could well bring to a halt the drift from the land:

(i) The expansion of relief services, facilitating, at local level, the gradual establishment of young farmers and allowing of an important innovation—the creation of a right to paid holidays for farmers, financed by contributions.

(ii) A large number of 'local initiatives' creating jobs in farming, the variety and vigour of which have been pinpointed in a consultation programme executed by the Commission.

(iii) Policies being implemented in another Member State designed either to facilitate the establishment of young farmers or to encourage those concerned to take more than one job and to avoid specialization in agriculture, especially in the most difficult areas.

All in all, employment in agriculture or linked with agriculture can be developed only if diversity of approach is encouraged and if incentives are given to the expansion alongside capital-intensive farming to diversified farming of a type helping to conserve the countryside and at the same time offer a response to changing consumer expectations.

Recent developments in Community policy

The Commission adopted two important policy measures designed to improve living standards in less-favoured rural areas. The first initiative consists of taking an 'integrated' approach to rural development; the second initiative concerns the 'integrated Mediterranean programmes'. Behind both policy initiatives lies the recognition that action focused exclusively on farming activities is incomplete and that appropriate resources have also to be devoted to the other economic activities of the region concerned if one is to promote the economic development of the region.

The original 'integrated' development programmes for the Lozère, the Western Isles (Scotland) and the less-favoured areas of Belgium (1) are to be extended to the Mediterranean area. The proposed integrated development programmes for Mediterranean areas (2) reflect the objectives of improving both the level of employment and the income situation of rural areas. To achieve these aims, it is not sufficient to support the development of farming activity but it is also necessary to develop the infrastructure of the area by improving facilities for transportation (i.e. local roads), electrification and drinking water. In addition to these actions and actions intended to promote the development of agriculture itself, the economic development of sectors compatible with the economic infrastructure of the area is envisaged. As an illustration, the stimulation of forestry activity in a number of areas should provide a number of long-term benefits in addition to the advantages for the environment. The development of forestry activities should provide a source of complementary income due, on the one hand to an increased demand for the provision of labour and/or equipment and on the other hand to improved conditions for exploiting woodland on farms.

In the light of the analysis set out in this section it is reasonable to hope that resources devoted both to farming and related sectors will stimulate economic

(1) Regulations (EEC) Nos 1939, 1940 and 1941/81, OJ L 197, 20.7.1981.
(2) COM(83)495 final, 16.8.1983.

development. In particular the non-farming economic activities linked to agriculture offer a more viable economic prospect than economic activities totally unconnected with the existing economic situation of rural regions. As a result the Commission has proposed that Community support should be given to the development of the under-utilized economic capacity of certain regions of the Community, in sectors consistent with their economic resources. These developments may take place in the sectors directly linked to agriculture (for example, food processing) or may be part-time or seasonal activities which exploit the underemployment of the available labour force (for example, tourism).

Perspectives

It is clear that the developments observed in regions where the modernization of agriculture is incomplete will continue, either under their own impulsion or with the aid of Community-supported schemes such as the socio-structural directives or the wider 'integrated' programmes referred to above. These developments will contribute on the one hand to a continued reduction in the workforce directly engaged in farming, counterbalanced on the other hand by an expansion of the related economic activity which takes place off the farm. The increase in off-farm activity should result in both greater job security for those engaged in tasks linked to agricultural activity and create new job opportunities.

In the future, two developments may be anticipated which may qualify the above. Agricultural production will be adapted to correspond more closely to demand, i.e. in some regions the production of commodities in persistent surplus such as soft wheat will give way to the production of commodities such as maize where domestic supply is insufficient to meet demand. Such adaptations will have a bearing on the economic development of the branches of economic activity linked to agricultural production.

In addition, in most industrialized countries, some effort is being directed to increasing the agricultural contribution to energy conservation and the production of alternative sources of energy. A recent OECD report has concluded that there is 'probably little to be expected ... as regards net job creation'. However, it is expected that if the use of wastes and residues were to increase as suggested by the work done for the Commission's FAST (forecasting and assessment in the field of science and technology) programme, such a trend would help to sustain local production and maintenance capacities which would construct and repair conversion equipment such as boilers. In addition, in the case of energy crops, jobs can be created at all stages of the fuel production chain. While increases in farm labour are dependent on the cultivation of previously unused land or crops requiring a greater labour input (for example 1 000 ha of beet requires four to five man-years more labour than 1 000 ha of wheat), the manufacture and operation of energy conversion plants and the services connected with these activities would create new employment.

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Newsletter on the common agricultural policy

No.		Linguage :
165	15 years of Green Europe	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
166	Milk : problem child of european agriculture	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
167	EEC agriculture : the world dimension	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
168	European agriculture 1979	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
169	European agriculture into the nineteen-eighties	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
170	Agriculture and the problem of surpluses	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
171	EEC food imports : the New Zealand file	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
172	Wine in the eighties	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL
173	The agricultural aspects of enlargement of the European Community : Greece	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL
174	The agricultural aspects of enlargement of the European Community : Spain	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
175	The common agricultural policy and world food shortages - Food aid	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
176	Aspects of the common agricultural policy of concern to consumers	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
177	Policy for animal feedingstuffs : the case of cereal "substitutes"	FR
178	The enlargement of the Community	FR
179	The Community's agricultural and food exports	FR
180	A new common organization of the markets in sugar as from 1 July 1981	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
181	A new common agricultural structure policy	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL

Nº		Linguage :
182	Financing the market side of the common agricultural policy - EAGGF-Guarantee	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
183	Co-ordination of agricultural research in the Community	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
184	Community food aid	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
185	The contribution of the common agricultural policy to the economic development of the Community	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
186	The development of veterinary legislation	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
187	The Community's agricultural policy and policy on trade in agricultural products	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
188	Mechanisms of the common organization of agricultural markets - Livestock products	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
189	Mechanisms of the common organization of agricultural markets - Crop products	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
190	The agricultural aspects of enlargement of the European Community Portugal	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
191	State aids and the common agricultural policy	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL
192	The common agricultural policy and agricultural trade with the developing countries	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL
193	Prevention of frauds against the agricultural fund	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL
194	Implications for the agricultural sector of the lack of a matching degree of integration in the other areas of Community policy	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL
195	Agriculture and energy: current problems and future outlook	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL
196	The common agricultural policy and the food industry	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL
197	For the Southern Regions of the Community - The integrated mediterranean programmes -	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL
198	The miracle of the CAP	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL

Nº		Language
199	The new common agricultural structures policy	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL
200	Agriculture in the United States and in the European Community: a comparison	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL
201	Sheepmeat	DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL, EL

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