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A National Statistics  
publication for Scotland



# June Agricultural Census 2020

Final results  
15 December 2020



# June Agricultural Census 2020

## Introduction

### Main Findings

The number of cattle in Scotland continues to decline. The long term trend shows the number of dairy cows remains relatively stable, whilst the number of beef cows continues to fall.

Lamb numbers continue to recover from the storm in 2018, and are two per cent higher than they were in the previous year.

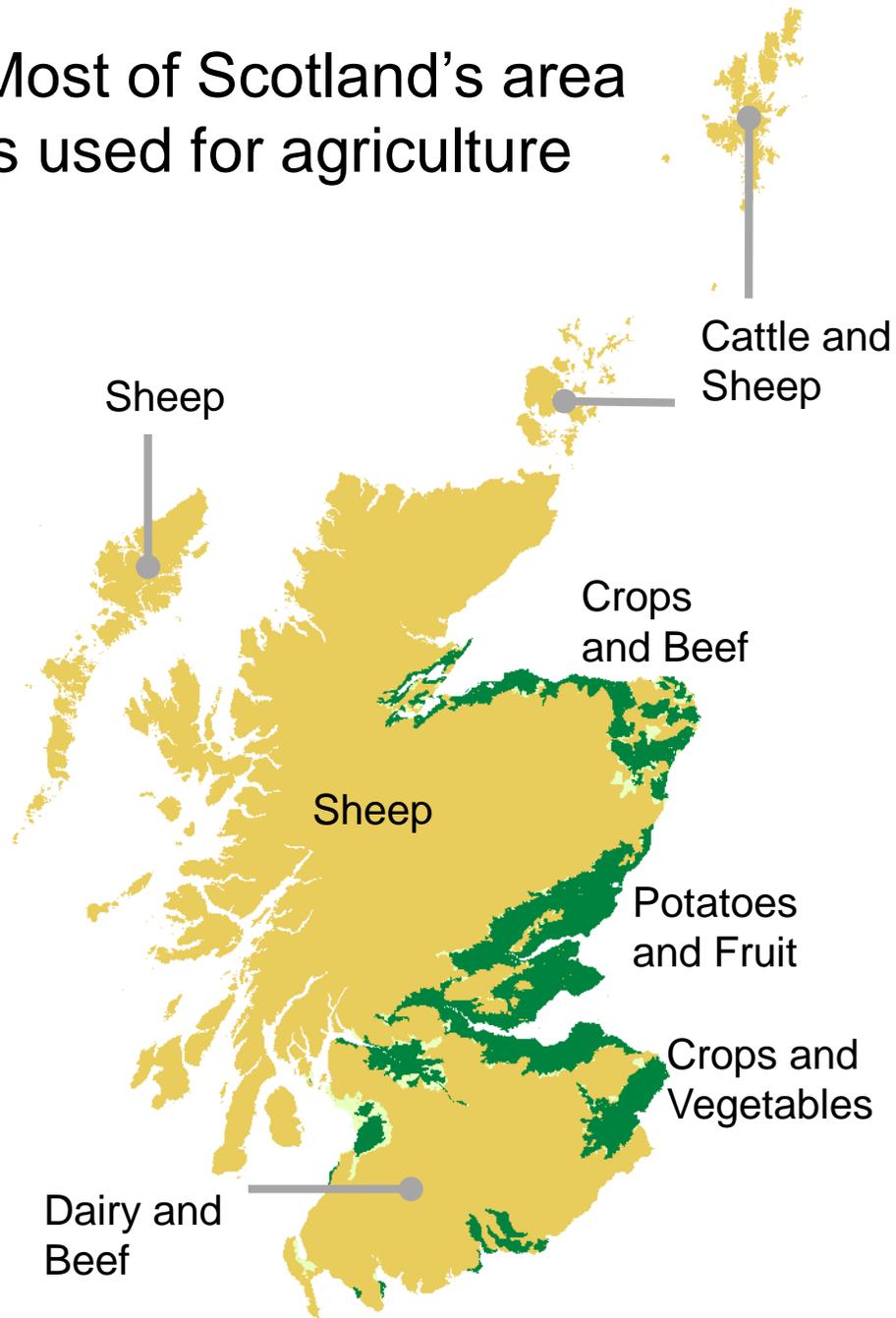
The area used to grow vegetables, excluding potatoes, for human consumption grew by 13 per cent. The area used to grow vegetables for stockfeed remained relatively stable.

A sharp fall in winter planted crops due to wet weather conditions in autumn and winter was followed by an increase in spring planting. The overall area for growing cereals and oilseeds was similar to 2019.

The total workforce on agricultural holdings remained relatively stable at 66,700 people.

This publication contains the final results of the June Agricultural Census 2020 and replaces the provisional figures published on 6th October 2020.

Most of Scotland's area is used for agriculture



Agricultural area 5.64 million hectares

This map shows the main farming types found in each area.

Orange areas have limited growing conditions, usually hilly or rocky land suitable for livestock.

Light green areas have better soil and can support crops usually grown for animal feed.

Dark green areas can support vegetables, fruit and cereal farming for human consumption.

**Hectares (ha)** is the land measurement used in agriculture. One hectare, or 10,000 square metres, is roughly the full size of a rugby pitch.

**Ten-year averages** are used to compare current values to values over the past ten years (2010-2019).

All numbers in this publication are **rounded numbers**. At times, rounded numbers may not add up to the rounded total.

# Sharp fall in winter planting followed by an increase in spring crops



## Spring Planting - Barley & Oats



## Winter Planting - Wheat, Barley & Oats



The area used to grow winter crops fell by 13 per cent compared to the previous year. This is mostly due to a decrease in area used to grow wheat, which also fell by 13 per cent to 93,500 hectares.

The decrease in winter planted crops is linked to wet weather conditions last autumn. This meant that farmers could only plant reduced areas of wheat, barley and oats. Heavy rainfall at the start of 2020 also made planting and growing difficult.

Area used to grow cereals and oilseed rape

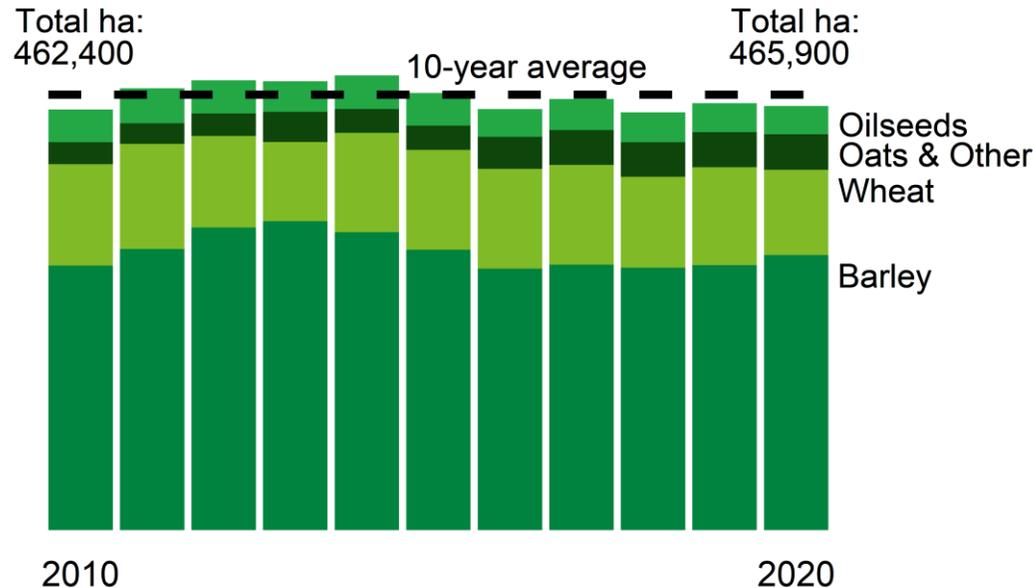


**465,900 hectares**

Winter planted crops are generally sown in autumn and grown during the winter. Spring planted crops are generally sown during the first three months of the year. Extreme weather conditions, such as heavy rainfall, make it difficult for farmers to sow their crops.

The decreased area of winter planted crops and a dry spring resulted in an increased spring planting. Spring planted crops increased eight per cent compared to 2019. This was driven by a 19 per cent increase in oats, and a seven per cent increase in barley.

# Area of cereals and oilseed rape remains stable



Area of  
barley 301,800 ha

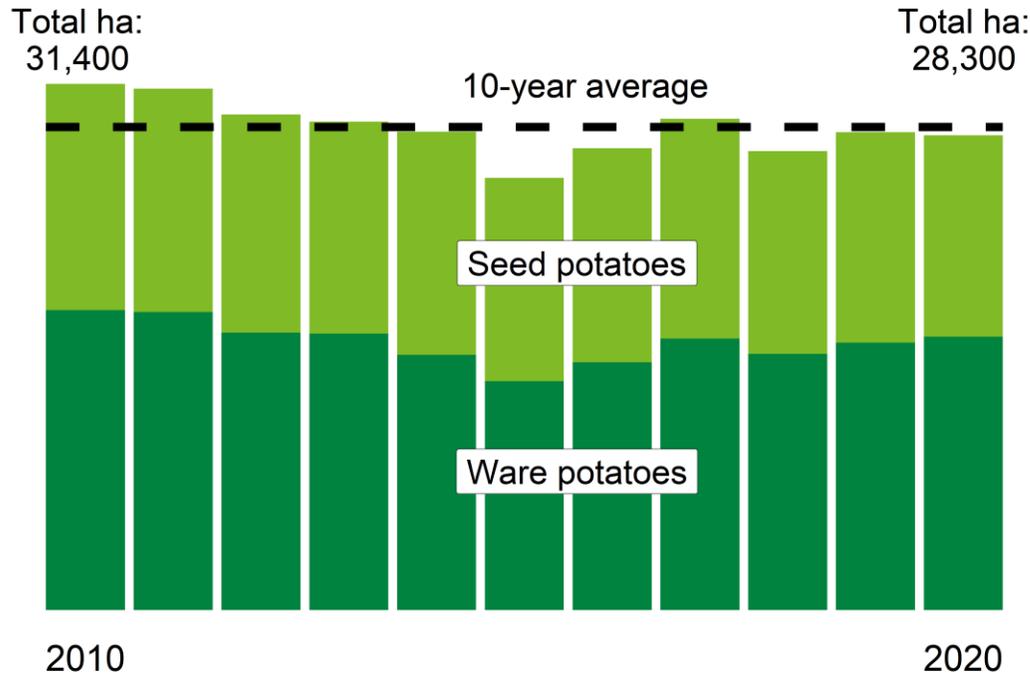
Area of  
wheat 93,500 ha

Cereals have a strong association with the whisky industry. Both barley and wheat, the two biggest crops, are used to make whisky.

Despite the disruptions to winter planting, the total area of cereals and oilseed rape only fell by one per cent. Around 465,900 hectares were used to grow cereals and oilseeds. The total area planted was below the ten-year average. Barley makes up 65 per cent of the total area used to grow cereals and oilseeds, up from 62 per cent in June 2019.

Around 20 per cent of cereal and oilseed area was used to grow wheat, down from 23 per cent in the previous year. The area used to grow oats and other cereals has increased by two per cent, while the area used to grow oilseeds fell by three per cent since June 2019.

# Planted potato area remains steady



The area used to grow potatoes remained relatively stable over the past year, at 28,300 hectares. This is two per cent below the ten-year average. Although the total area remained steady, there was a decrease in seed (planting) potatoes and an increase in ware (eating) potatoes.



Area used to grow potatoes **28,300 hectares**

Scotland has a reputation for growing high quality potatoes, particularly seed potatoes. Scottish seed potatoes are sold all over the world and a register of seed potato producers is kept by Scottish Agricultural Science Agency (SASA).

The area of planted seed potatoes fell by four per cent to 12,000 hectares, whilst the area of planted ware potatoes rose by two per cent to 16,300 hectares.

# Increase in area used to grow vegetables for human consumption

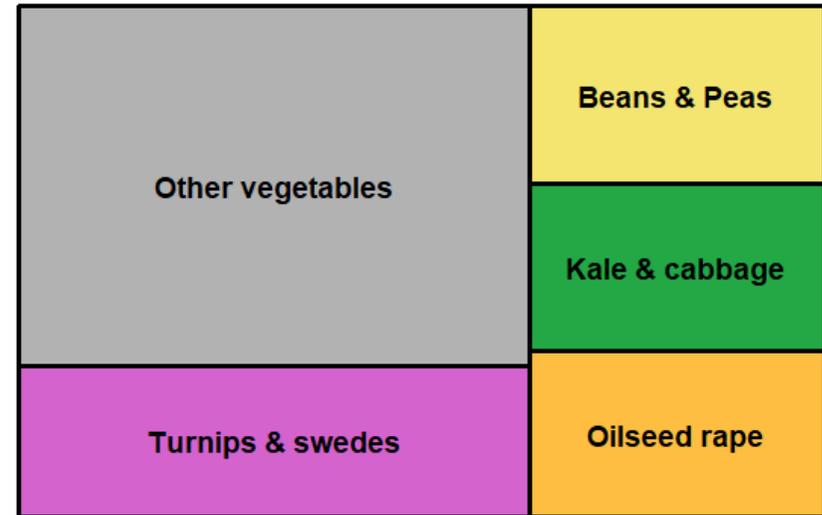
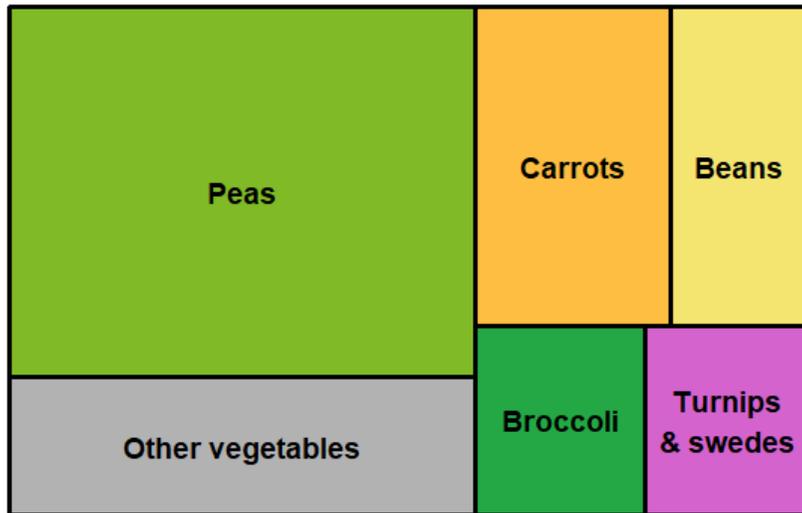


Area used to grow vegetables for human consumption

**21,000 hectares**

Area used to grow vegetables for stockfeed

**19,300 hectares**

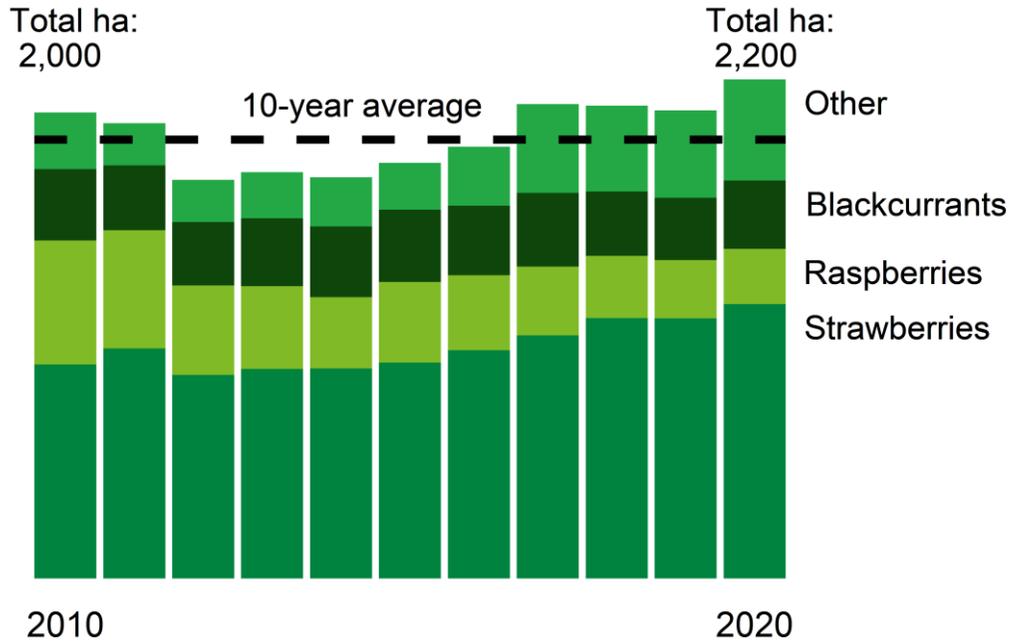


The area used to grow vegetables intended for human consumption (excluding potatoes) grew by 13 per cent over the past year. This increase in area applied to every type of vegetable, with the exception of carrots.

The area used to grow animal feed remained relatively stable. A large part of this area is used to grow 'other' vegetables, which includes a wide range of different crops. The peas and beans for stockfeed may also be used for drilling.



# Soft fruit growing areas well above ten-year average



Area of 2,200 soft fruit hectares

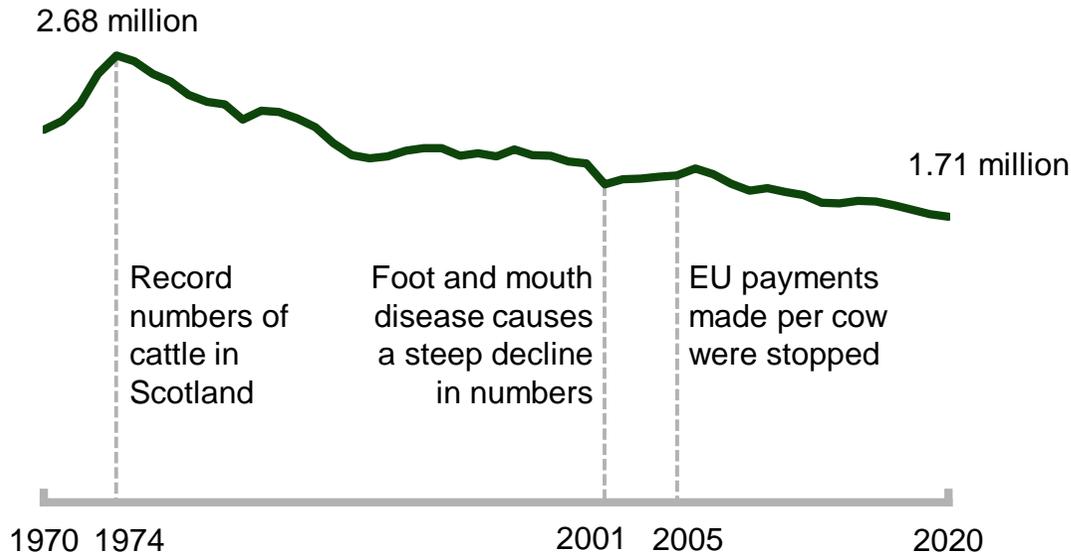
Most fruit is grown under cover in either glasshouses or walk-in plastic structures called 'Poly-tunnels'. This allows for a much longer growing season and almost 77 per cent was grown this way in 2020.

Over the past year, the total soft fruit growing areas increased by seven per cent. The estimated total area was 2,200 hectares. This is 14 per cent higher than the ten-year average. Strawberries are the most popular grown fruit, followed by blackcurrants and raspberries.

The area used to grow strawberries, blackcurrants and other soft fruits, such as blueberries and tomatoes, increased.

The area used to grow raspberries, which require the most skilled pickers, continues to fall.

# Steady decline of total cattle numbers



Total cattle numbers have steadily declined to a new 60 year low. In 2020, there were 1.71 million cattle in Scotland, a one per cent drop on 2019. Cattle numbers have been trending down since a peak in 1974 when there were 2.78 million cattle.

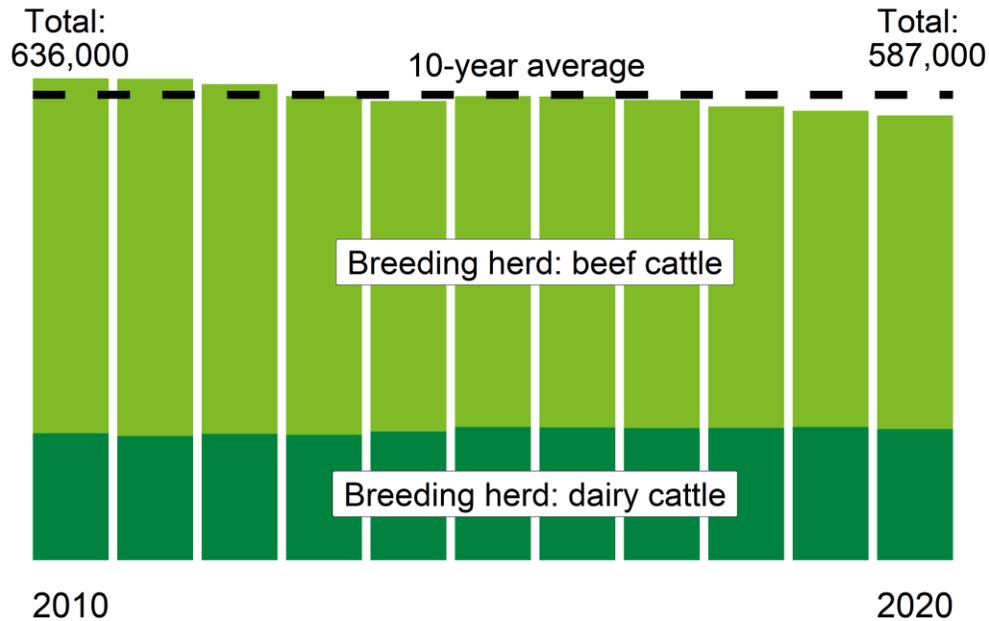


Number of cattle 1.71 million

Office of National Statistics environmental figures show methane emissions in the agriculture and related land use sector fell by just over 16 per cent between 1990 and 2018. This reduction is partly linked to a fall in livestock numbers.

In recent years increased costs of feed, vets and animal housing along with changes to the support system has led to a reduction in the profitability of cattle.

## Long term decline in beef cows as number of dairy cows remains stable



Over the past 10 years, there has been a 12 per cent decline in the total beef breeding herd. This year there were 413,900 beef cows, compared to 468,400 in June 2010.

The number of dairy cows have remained relatively stable since 2010. In June 2020, there were 173,000 dairy cows. This is three per cent higher than the 167,600 dairy cows in June 2010.



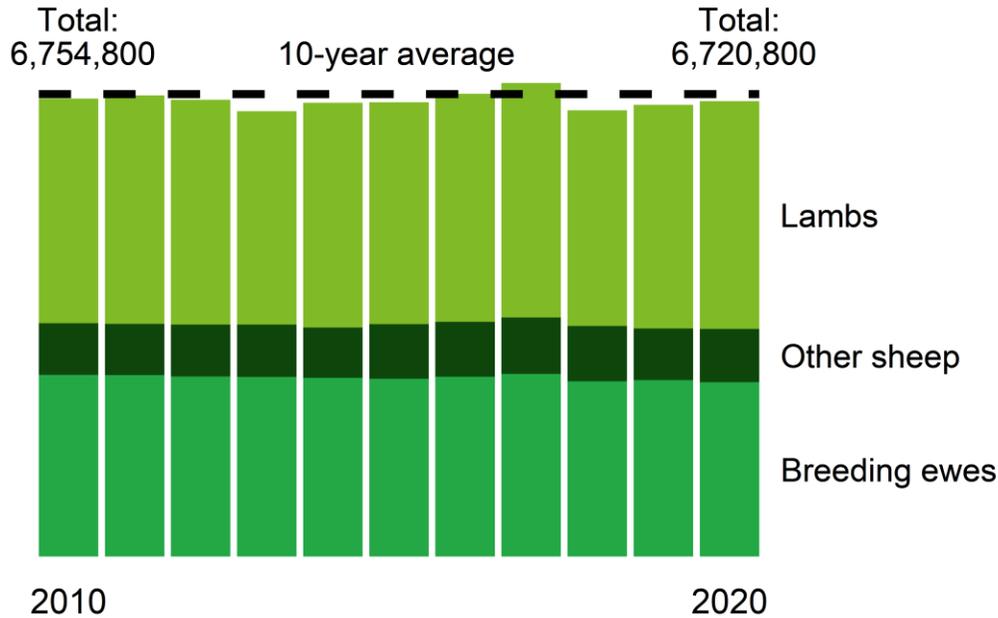
Number of beef cows 413,900

Number of dairy cows 173,000

It is estimated that beef cattle contribute nearly 50 per cent of the emissions from agriculture, with dairy cattle contributing a further 15 per cent.

Whilst the UK dairy industry was heavily impacted by the restrictions caused by COVID-19, there is some evidence to suggest that farmers in Scotland, who mainly service the retail sector, have not been as badly affected.

# Scottish sheep flock continues to recover



Number of sheep **6.72 million**

As the “Beast from the East” snow storm hit Scotland during the lambing season 2018, many new born lambs were unable to survive the harsh weather conditions.

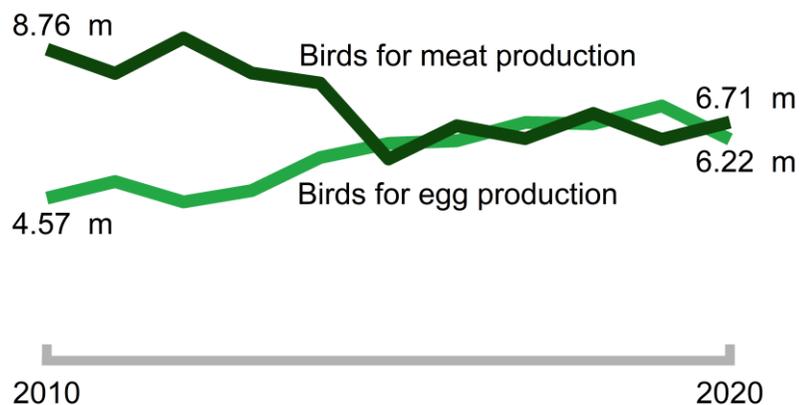
After the “Beast from the East” in 2018, the total number of sheep continued to recover, increasing by one per cent to 6.72 million sheep. This is slightly below the ten-year average.

The number of ewes and other sheep has remained relatively stable over the past ten years. The number of lambs has been more volatile.

A favourable lambing season saw lamb numbers continue to increase, by two per cent to 3.32 million lambs. However, current numbers are still two per cent lower than they were in 2017.



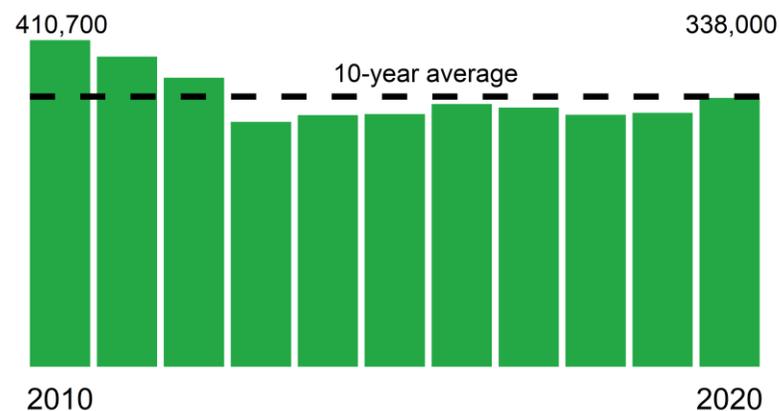
Number of poultry **14.4 million**



Poultry numbers decreased over the past year. There were an estimated 14.4 million poultry birds, a drop of four per cent. This decline in numbers is due to a 13 per cent drop in birds for egg production, to 6.2 million. The number of birds for meat production increased by eight per cent, to 6.7 million.



Number of pigs **338 thousand**

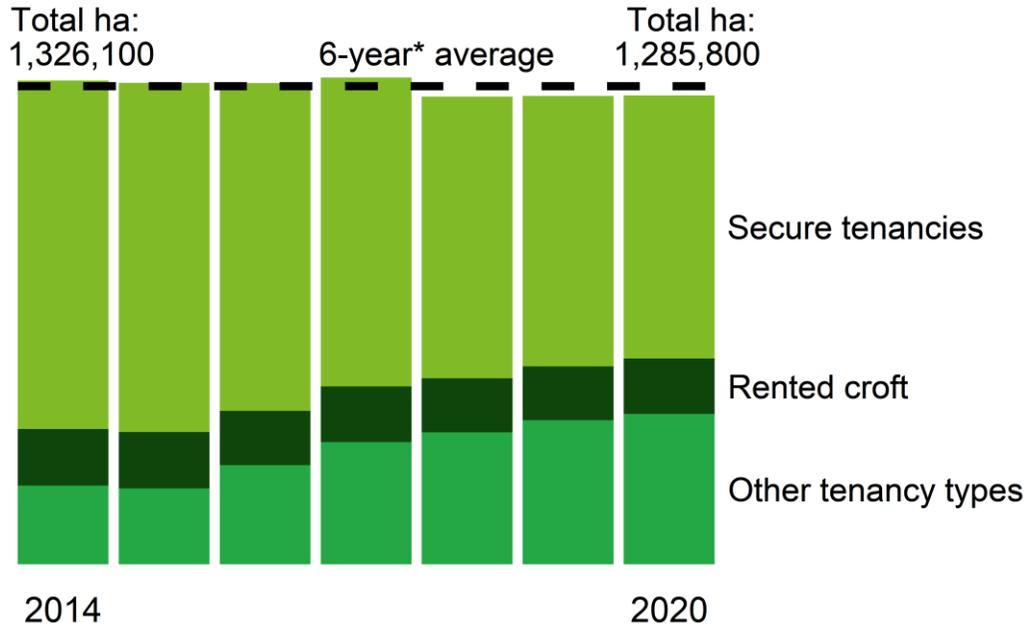


There were around 338 thousand pigs, a rise of six per cent. This number is only slightly below the ten-year average. The increase may be due to an increase in pig prices, partly due to world supply being impacted by swine flu.

**Other livestock:**

34,000 horses	5,100 beehives
14,100 farmed deer	2,100 camelids
6,900 goats	1,400 donkeys

# Area of rented land remains stable as shorter term tenancies increase



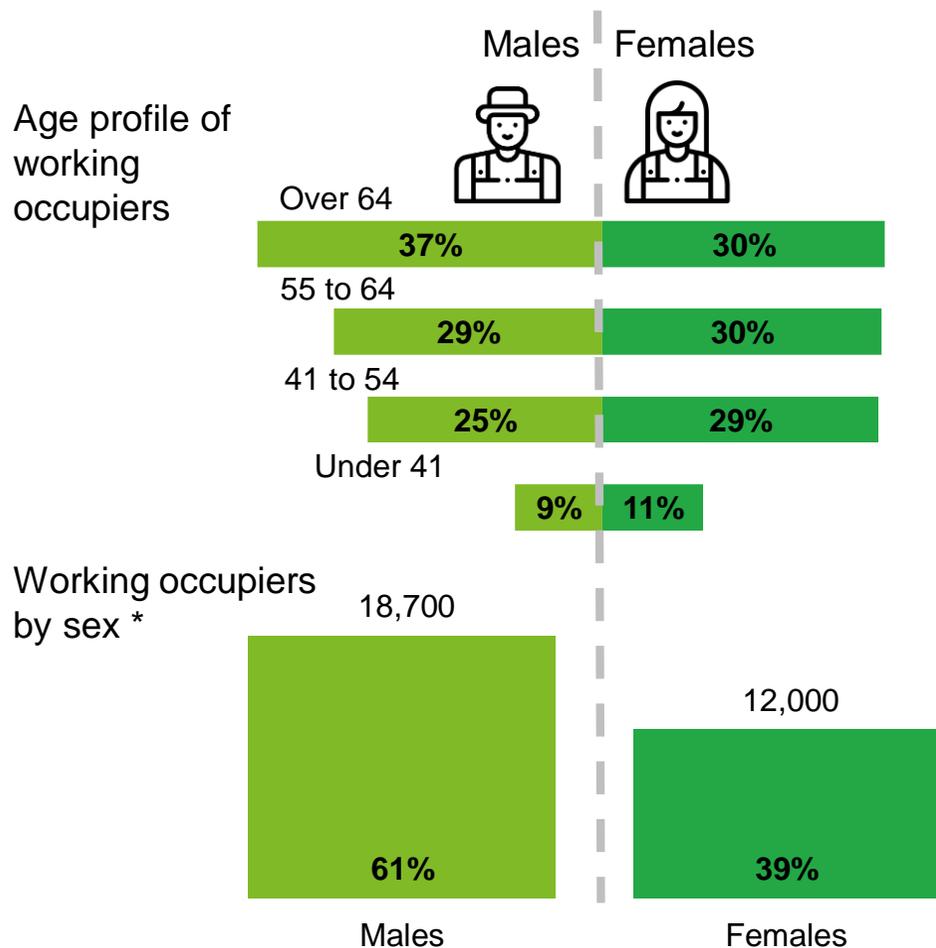
Area of 1.29 million rented land hectares

\* More accurate tenancy data is only available from 2014 onwards, which is why we present a six-year average.

The total area of tenanted land remained stable compared to 2019. The area of secure tenancies fell by three per cent, and the area of other tenancy types increased by four per cent. Newer, limited period tenancy arrangements have been increasing in recent years. These arrangements accounted for just over one third of all tenancy types in 2020.

The area of rented croft remained stable. Over the longer term, the amount of rented agricultural land has fallen steadily over the past ten years from 26 per cent in 2010 to 22 per cent in 2020.

# The majority of working occupiers and spouses are older than 55



\* Numbers include only occupiers and spouses that provided data.

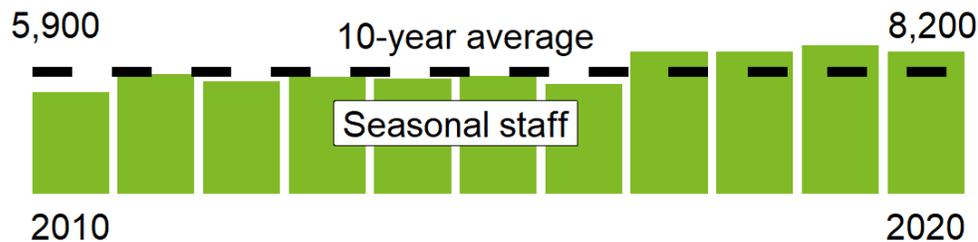
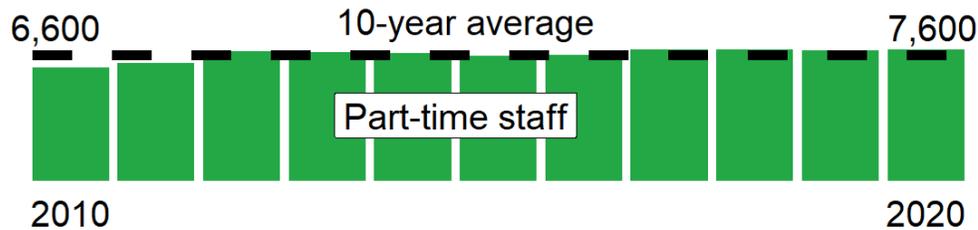
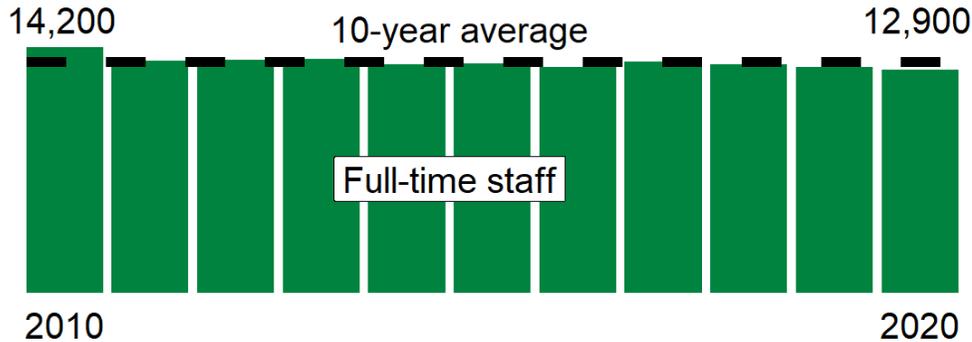
## Agricultural workforce 66,700

The total agricultural workforce is estimated to be around 66,700 workers. Although this estimate may not include some family members who may also provide labour.

The majority of the workforce are owner-occupiers, made up of people who own or rent the farm and work on it. Of all working occupiers (occupier and spouse), 61 per cent are male and 39 per cent are female.

Working occupiers are getting increasingly older. In June 2020, only ten per cent of the total working occupiers were under 41. Male occupiers are older than female occupiers. Where 37 per cent of male farm occupiers were older than 64, this was true for only 30 per cent of female farm occupiers.

# Small decline in full time and seasonal jobs



Agricultural employees **28,800**

In June 2020, there were 28,800 regular and seasonal employees working in agriculture. This is a decline of two per cent compared to June 2019.

This is due to a decline in regular full time staff and seasonal labour. The number of regular full time workers fell by one per cent, from 13,100 to 12,900. The number of seasonal labourers decreased by four per cent. The number of regular part time workers increased by one per cent. It is possible that some staff who were previously working full time are now working part time.

# June Agricultural Census 2020

## Data sources and more information

### Data source

This data is collected via an annual Agricultural Census run by the Rural and Environmental Science & Analytical Services Division of the Scottish Government. The census collects various data from agricultural holdings across Scotland.

A full quality assurance and methodology report can be found accompanying this report.

<https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-452-4>

For more information on the data in this publication contact Julia van Aart [agric.stats@gov.scot](mailto:agric.stats@gov.scot)

### Data tables

The data used to create the charts in this publication are available online in the accompanying spreadsheet.

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