

13 – AGRICULTURE

On the basis of the latest available data, there were about 243,141 operational agricultural holdings in Sicily in 2009, employing 126,374 units of work, 25,716 of which as dependent worker. Only 25.8% of these holdings in Sicily (62,735) invoiced over 10,000 euros, against an overall nationwide figure of 32.9%.¹

Although going through a confirmed period of recession, the value of agricultural production in Sicily in 2011 rose by 3.6% over the previous year, thus inverting a downward trend established over the previous years and confirming this sector to be rather burdensome on the Regional economy.

In economic terms the value of the crops amounted to over 4,000 million Euros, accounting for 8.3% of the national total. At the same time, value added in the sectors of agriculture, forestry and fishing was estimated (at current prices) at about 2,840 million Euros, which was substantially the same as that of the previous year (2,810 million). However, when compared to the figure for Italy as a whole, the market-share of this sector fell from 10.7% in 2010 to 10.2% last year.

With regard to agricultural produce, which registered overall growth of +2.6% in 2011, there was a slight (-3.7%) fall in the quantity of wood products, whilst an inversion of trend had grass and forage products registering an increase of +10.4%, following a period characterized by continual slumps. Detailed analysis shows that the durum wheat crop went from 8,054,000 quintals in 2010, to 7,982,000 in the following year, representing a -0.9% drop.

Potato (-6.6%), tomato (-2.3%) lemon (-6.5%) and grape (-1.1%) production were also down, whilst courgette production registered a rise (+53.7%) over the previous year, as did peppers (+21.3%) and almonds (+8.7%). Production of artichokes, mandarins and peaches remained at previous levels.

Overall wine production in 2011 was much lower than in the previous year, falling to a figure of a little over 4,000 million hectoliters (-17.4%); this was basically due to a considerable -36% fall in table-wines, which in a single year went from a figure of 2,364 to 1,513 hectolitres. DOC and DOCG wine production also registered a considerable decrease, with a combined figure of -12.4%, whereas IGT quantities remained substantially stable. The latter constitutes the largest share of wine produced in Sicily (58.9% against an average national figure of 33.5%). For DOC and DOCG wines the figure of 3.7% has to be compared to the national figure of 37%. In practice, Sicily produces a little over one eighth of all Italian table wine, about a sixth of the IGT production and only 1.1% of DOC and DOCG wines.

At the same time, live-stock production in 2011 registered +2.3% growth in beef production and +3.6% for poultry and analogous levels for pork products.

Up to July 2012, over 312,000 hectares of land destined for agricultural cultivation in Sicily was used for growing cereals, 164,000 for growing olives, 130,000 for vineyards and 91,000 hectares for citrus groves. Provisional data per Province shows a marked concentration of land used for cereal production in the Province of Palermo (28.3% of the total in Sicily) and in Enna (16%), whereas Messina, with a mere 1,730 hectares devotes only 0.5% of land to cereals. Mainly because of its specific altitude the latter Province allocates most of its agricultural land to olive-production (35,150 hectares), whereas it is no surprise that in Trapani over 64,000 hectares are used for vineyards, accounting for 49.5% of the total land used for this cultivation in Sicily.

Between 2007 and 2011 agricultural production, in spite of continual fluctuations over the period, registered a final balance between extremes that was practically zero. The first year registered growth, the following years a slump and further growth in the fourth year, whereas live-stock production rose by +6.2%. More specifically, beef production fell slightly, by -4.6%, when compared to the initial years in this period, whereas pork production increased by +4.3% as did poultry by +18.4%. At the same time, mild oscillations were recorded in the production of milk from cow and buffalo and milk from sheep and goats.

As regards organic agriculture, from data for 2011 provided by the OdG and the SINAB, there were over 7,460 organic farms operating in Sicily (representing 15.5% of the national total), which represented a notable fall of -10.1% when compared to the previous year. Analysis by type of farm shows a marked concentration in the production sector in both Sicily and at the national level, and a general absence of enterprises devoted to importing organic food products.

In 2010 the number of agritourism enterprises in the Region increased by 30, arriving at a total of 516, with sleeping accommodation for 9,329 (+5.9% over 2009). On the basis of data analyzed, with regard to specific facilities, farms which offer full-board seem to be the norm (326 agritourism enterprises) followed by those that provide half-board (101); these two provide 91.3% of beds available. Each enterprise in Sicily has an average of about 18 beds, as against 12.5 at the national level.

Glossary

Agricultural holding: economic/technical unit of land (also in non-contiguous plots), and also (possibly) a variety of equipment and installations, where agriculture, the production of wood and livestock-farming is carried out by the tenant (farmer, company, body).

Agriculturally utilised land (AUL): total area of land devoted to seed crops, family vegetable-gardens, permanent meadow and pasture, tree-growing and fruit-bearing chestnut groves. It constitutes the area allocated for proper agricultural cultivation and actually used for this purpose. It does not include the areas set aside for mushrooms in caves, cellars or appropriately-designated buildings.

Agritourism: adaptation and utilisation of rural buildings, in which agricultural entrepreneurs provide accommodation for tourists.

Dead-weight: for cattle and horses, this figure refers to the skinned carcass, including kidneys and their fat, but without the head, the vital organs of the thorax and abdomen, feet and tail, and with “loss through cooling” also detracted; for pigs, sheep and goats the dead-weight also includes the head and feet, with the vital organs and “loss through cooling” again detracted.

DOC and DOCG wines: wine obtained (from vines) from vineyards whose surface area is recorded in the Register of Vineyards instituted by the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture, for the production of wines of controlled denomination of origin (DOC) and guaranteed controlled denomination of origin (DOCG).

Organic farm: a farm using agricultural systems that encourage the production of food and fibre in a socially, economically and environmentally healthy manner. The productive capacity of these systems is based on the intrinsic fertility of the soil, allied to respect for nature, plants, animals and the countryside, and the thorough exploitation of all these separate factors.

Sowable land: area utilised for growing graminoid and herbaceous plants, subject to crop rotation, which envisages a maximum duration of five years' utilization.

Further reading

Publications

Italian Statistical Yearbook 2012- ISTAT
Agro-environmental indicators: methodologies, data needs and availability – ISTAT
Waste statistics in agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors – ISTAT
Italian Agricultural Yearbook - INEA
Foreign trade in agro-alimentary products - 2006- 2007-INEA
Italian Agro-alimentary Outlook - Annual report – ISMEA

Internet

www.inea.it

Italian Agriculture Counts 2012
Report on the state of Italian agriculture

www.istat.it

Value added for agriculture by Region - 1980-2010
Structure and production of agricultural holdings - 2007
Territorial indicator system – Area Agriculture
Short-term data – Annual data for cultivation
Short-term data - Annual data for live-stock quantities
Short-term data - Annual data on means of production
Short-term data – Annual and monthly data on milk and cheese production
Short-term data on forest surface areas and utilization
Short-term data – Annual data for hunting
Short-term data – Annual data for floriculture
Short-term data – Annual data for fishing
Agritourism enterprises in Italy
Italian Statistical Yearbook 2012 – Chapter 13: “Agriculture

<http://agri.istat.it/>

IT system regarding Agriculture and Animal Husbandry

www.politicheagricole.it

DOP and IGP products data-bank
DOC, DOCG, IGT wine data-bank
Traditional agro-alimentary products data-bank
Fishing and hydroponics data-bank
Agro-alimentary sector data-bank

www.sinab.it

National single system for Organic Agriculture

www.starnet.unioncamere.it

(thematic areas – agriculture – analysis and data)

Economic accounts – value added and gross fixed investments

Foreign trade and market shares. Map of Provincial competitiveness.

Stillbirths of enterprises registered at the Chamber of Commerce

www.corpoforestale.it

Statistics on forest fires

www.ense.it

Geographical distribution of officially-controlled areas for seed-crop production

www.ismea.it

Price survey – agro-alimentary product prices in over 300 markets

Business trends and situations – short-term notes, studies on consumption,
climate investigations and situational analysis

Economic-financial analysis

www.agricolturaitalianaonline.gov.it

On-line journal from the Ministry of Agricultural, Alimentary and Forestry
Policy

www.inran.it

Data-bank of alimentary composition

Database “Quality of varieties of wheat grown in Italy”

www.irepa.org

Economic observatory on productive structures for sea-fishing in Italy