

13 – AGRICULTURE

The agricultural sector in Sicily, because of its size and employment levels, represents an important part of the island's economy.

On the basis of the last available data, in 2007 there were about 237,000 agricultural holdings in Sicily, covering a total surface area of a little over 1,251,850 hectares and representing 14.1% of all businesses operating in Italy.

In 2008 agricultural production in Sicily generated a sum of over 4.1 thousand million Euros, 6.9% higher than the previous year's figure, and representing 8.5% of the national total.

At the same time, value added in the sectors of agriculture, forestry and fishing was estimated (at current prices) at a little more than 2,900 million Euros (10.2% of the national figure), which was slightly higher (+1.6%) than the previous year, but stable if the variations are considered in real terms. With regard to agriculture, there was a 5.4% increase in quantity in wood products, whereas graminoid and grass produce remained at the same level. The durum wheat harvest provided 9,146,000 quintals (representing a 8.7% increase). Orange production also saw an increase (+3.5%) as did table-grapes (+8.5%), whilst tomato production fell by 6.7% and eggs by about 42%. After the noticeable decline in 2007, overall wine production in 2008 exceeded 5 million hectolitres. Of these the DOC and DOCG wines together showed the sharpest increase (+50.3%), followed by table-wines (-31.1%). Once again, in spite of the improvements in quality in recent years, Regional wine production is still inclined towards supplying the semi-finished product to the wine-making industry in other Regions, which is to the detriment of its own more prized wines. In 2008 table wine accounted for 64.3% of the total against a national average of 37.2%, whereas the meagre 4.6% figure for DOC and DOCG wines pales in comparison with the 37.2% national figure. In practice, Sicily produces a little under a fifth of all Italian table wine, about a twelfth of the IGT production and only 1.6% of DOC and DOCG wines.

Live-stock production in 2008 more or less maintained the same levels as the previous year as regards both beef and pork production, whereas there was a more marked 9.5% increase with regard to poultry.

Data for individual provinces confirmed Catania and Messina as among the areas with the greatest vocation for agriculture and livestock-rearing in Italy. On the basis of estimates from the Istituto Tagliacarne, in 2006 the value added produced in the two Provinces in the sectors of agriculture, forestry and fishing amounted to more than 520 million Euros for the former, and 500 million for the latter, together accounting for over one third of agricultural and live-stock production in Sicily. Lower figures were recorded for Ragusa (425 million Euros), Enna (334) and Trapani (329), whereas Palermo (177) and Agrigento (161) came bottom of the list.

In the last five-year period examined there was an accumulated increase of about 4% in agricultural cultivation, whereas live-stock production fell by 10% also because of the continual health scares; beef production fell by 7%, and there was a 27% drop in production of milk from cow and buffalo and a 41.8% drop in sheep and goat-milk.

As for organic agriculture, from the data up to 2008 provided by the OdG (control organism) and the SINAB (National System of Information regarding Organic Agriculture) there were almost 7,000 organic farms operating in Sicily (representing 14.1% of the national total). This was a slight drop (-7.1%) 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 2008 the number of agri-tourism enterprises in the Region increased by 30, arriving at a total of 413, with sleeping places for 7,593 (+8.5% over 2007). On the basis of data analysed, with regard to specific facilities, places which offer full-board seem to be the norm (260 agri-tourism enterprises) along with those that provide half-board (87); these two provide 93.2% of beds available. Each enterprise in Sicily has an average of about 18 beds, as against 12 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)/Utilised agricultural areas (UAA): 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.

Agri-tourism: 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' utilisation.

Further reading

Publications

Italian Statistical Yearbook 2009- ISTAT –
Agro-environmental indicators: methodologies, data needs and availability – ISTAT
Waste statistics on agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors – ISTAT
Italian Agricultural Yearbook – 2006 –2007- INEA
Foreign trade in agri-alimentary products - 2006- 2007-INEA
Italian Agro-alimentary Outlook - Annual report – ISMEA

Internet

www.inea.it

Italian Agriculture Counts 2009
Report on the state of Italian agriculture

www.istat.it

Value added for agriculture by Region - 1980-2008
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 utilisation
Short-term data – Annual data for hunting
Short-term data – Annual data for floriculture
Short-term data – Annual data for fishing
Agri-tourist enterprises in Italy
Italian Statistical Yearbook 2009 – Chapter 13: “Agriculture”

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
Agri-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. A map of provincial competitiveness.
Stillbirths of companies registered with the Chamber of Commerce

www.corpoforestale.it

Statistics for forest-fires

www.ense.it

Geographical distribution of area officially controlled for seed production

www.ismea.it

Price survey – agri-alimentary product prices in over 300 markets
Business trends and situations – related 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