

According to the Agricultural Census data agricultural activity is concentrating more and more into large holdings

According to Statistics Estonia, on the basis of the first estimates of 2010 Agricultural Census the number of agricultural holdings has decreased almost three times as compared to the last, 2001 Agricultural Census. At the same time the agricultural area has increased 8%. It shows that agricultural activity is concentrating more and more into larger holdings.

On the basis of 2010 Agricultural Census data, there are 19,700 agricultural holdings in Estonia, which have at their disposal at least one hectare of agricultural area or which produce agricultural products mainly for sale. Regarding the Census list compiled on the basis of various administrative data and statistical information collected since 2001, altogether a third of the nearly 30,000 holdings announced that they have finished their agricultural activity or that their land use has decreased below one hectare.

The decrease in the number of agricultural holdings has occurred mostly on account of smaller holdings with agricultural area less than 10 hectares. The number of holdings with 10–100 hectares has decreased as well. At the same time the number of large holdings with more than 100 hectares of agricultural area has increased almost twice. The very large decrease in the number of holdings does not mean the disappearance of agricultural activity. There are nearly 938,800 hectares of utilised agricultural area in Estonia, which is 8% more than during the last Census. The increase can be partly explained by the inclusion of maintained permanent grassland from 2007.

The agricultural area has concentrated into the disposal of large holdings. On the basis of 2010 Census data almost three quarters of the agricultural area is already at the disposal of holdings with agricultural area more than 100 hectares. In animal husbandry the concentration is even larger — more than three quarters of the cattle are held in herds with more than 100 bovine animals.

2010 Agricultural Census results of other European Union (EU) Member States are not published yet and therefore these data cannot be used for international comparison. Still Estonian 2010 Census first estimates can be compared with the EU last largest agricultural survey from 2007. The average size of Estonian agricultural holding has increased within nine years from 16 to 48 hectares, which is four times more than EU average (13 ha in 2007). By the average size of agricultural holding Estonia is comparable with states like Germany, France and the United Kingdom. The average largest holdings are in Czech Republic and Denmark.

If in EU in 2007, holdings with more than 100 hectares had at their disposal 47% of the agricultural area, then in Estonia in 2010 the respective share accounted for 73%. The concentration of agricultural area into large holdings is bigger only in Slovakia, Czech Republic and Bulgaria. The concentration of cattle breeding into larger holdings in Estonia is also one of the EU largest.

The decrease in the number of holdings and concentration of agricultural activity into larger holdings characterise the whole EU but in Estonia this process is several times faster than in EU on average.

The Agricultural Census was conducted in Estonia from 1 September to 15 November. Final Census results will be published by Statistics Estonia on 15 December 2011. The results include an overview of the management of holdings, rental relations, crop production and livestock farming and their production methods, structure of labour force and other gainful activities. The classification by economic size and type of farming will also be published.

The Agricultural Census was conducted for the sixth time in Estonia. Previous Agricultural Censuses were organised in 1919, 1925, 1929, 1939, and after the restoration of independence in 2001. In the European Union countries, Agricultural Censuses are conducted in 2009 and 2010. In the European Union countries, Agricultural Censuses take place every ten years.

NEWS RELEASE

No. 165, 17.12.2010

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2010 Agricultural Census of Estonia was partly financed by the European Union.

Number of agricultural holdings and agricultural area, 2010 and 2001

	Total	0—<10 ha	10—<100 ha	>=100 ha
Number of holdings				
2010	19 700	10 700	7 300	1 700
2001	55 700	41 800	12 900	1 000
Agricultural area, ha				
2010	938 800	46 500	205 600	686 700
2001	871 200	148 500	297 400	425 300

For further information:

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