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publication for Scotland



# June Agricultural Census 2020

6 October 2020



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## Introduction

### **Main Findings**

The number of cattle in Scotland continues to decline. The long-term trend indicates that dairy cows remain relatively stable, whilst the number of beef cows continues to fall.

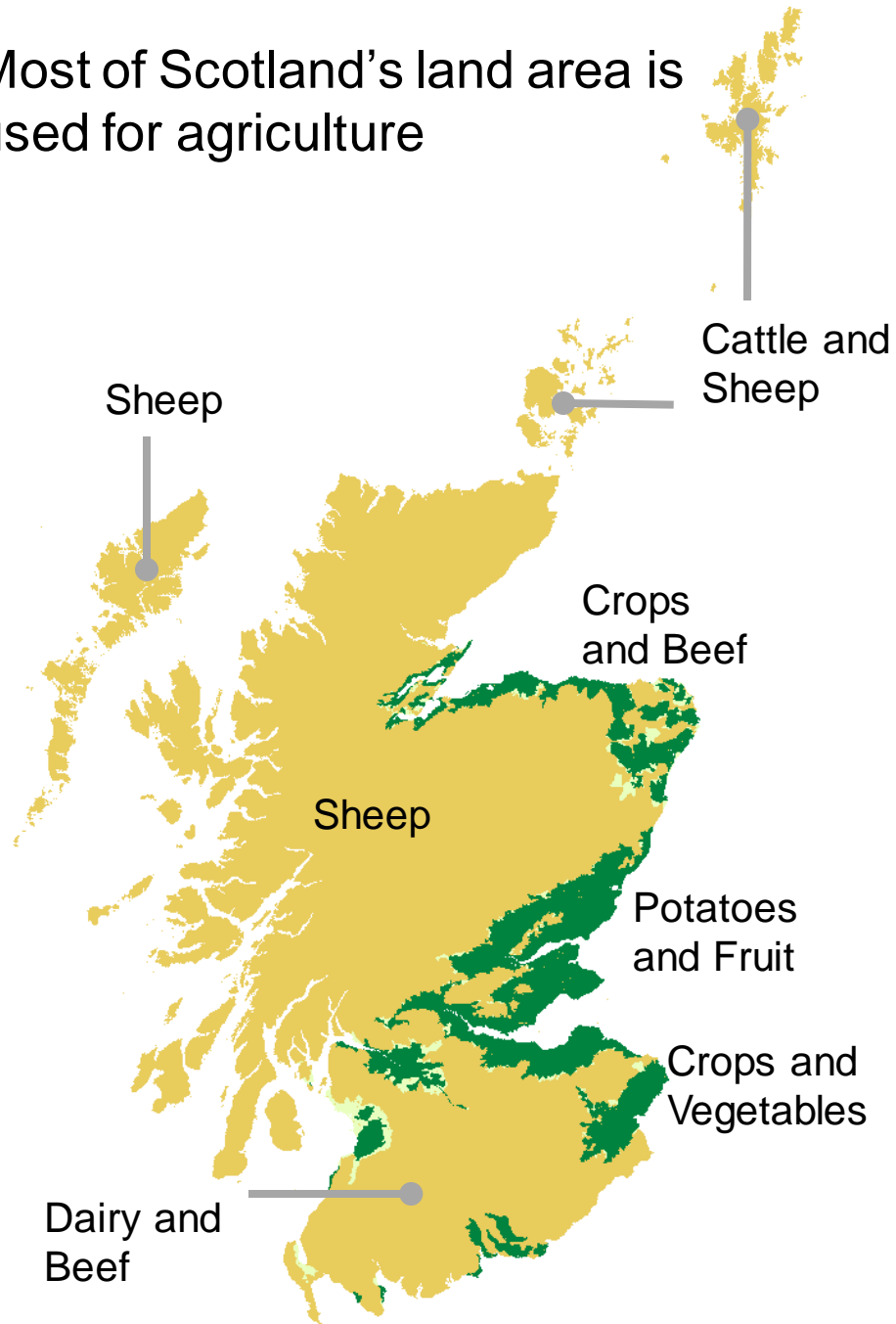
Lamb numbers continue to recover from the storm in 2018, and are two per cent higher than they were in the previous year.

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 extreme weather conditions in autumn and in 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 66,900 people.

Most of Scotland's land area is used for agriculture



Agricultural area 5.67 million hectares

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.

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

**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.

# 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 93,800 hectares.

The decrease in winter planted crops is linked to extremely wet 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

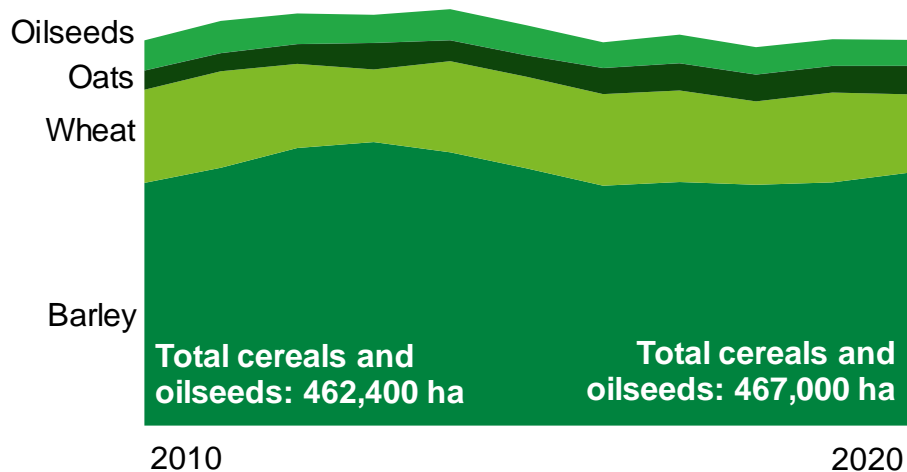


**467,000**  
**hectares**

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.

# Total area of cereals and oilseed rape remains stable despite extreme weather



Area of  
barley 302,500 ha

Area of  
wheat 93,800 ha

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

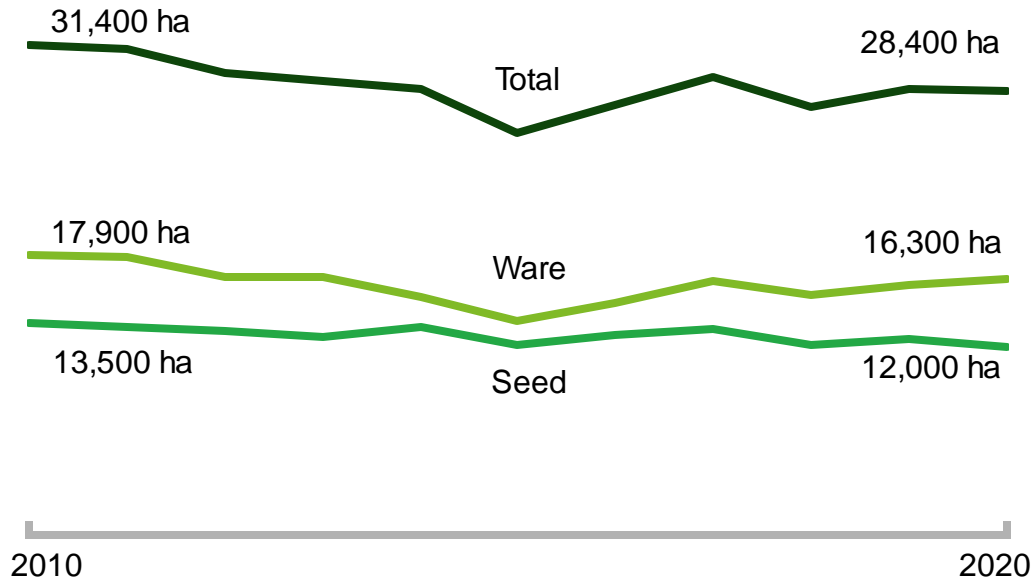
Despite the disruptions to winter planting, the total area of cereals and oilseed rape remained stable. Around 467,000 hectares were used to grow cereals and oilseeds. The total area planted was below the ten-year average. Barley makes up 65 per cent of the total hectares used to grow cereals and oilseeds, up from 62 per cent in June 2019.

Around 20 per cent of cereal area was used to grow wheat, down from 23 per cent in the previous year.

The area used to grow oats has increased by seven per cent since June 2019. The area used to grow oilseeds fell by three per cent. Other crops grown, such as rye and triticale, are still minority crops.



## Planted potato area remains steady



Area used to grow potatoes : 28,400 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 used to grow potatoes remained steady over the past year. The total area of planted potatoes was 28,400 hectares. This is two per cent lower than the ten-year average. Although the total planted potato area remained steady, there was a decrease in seed (planting) potatoes and an increase in ware (eating) potatoes.

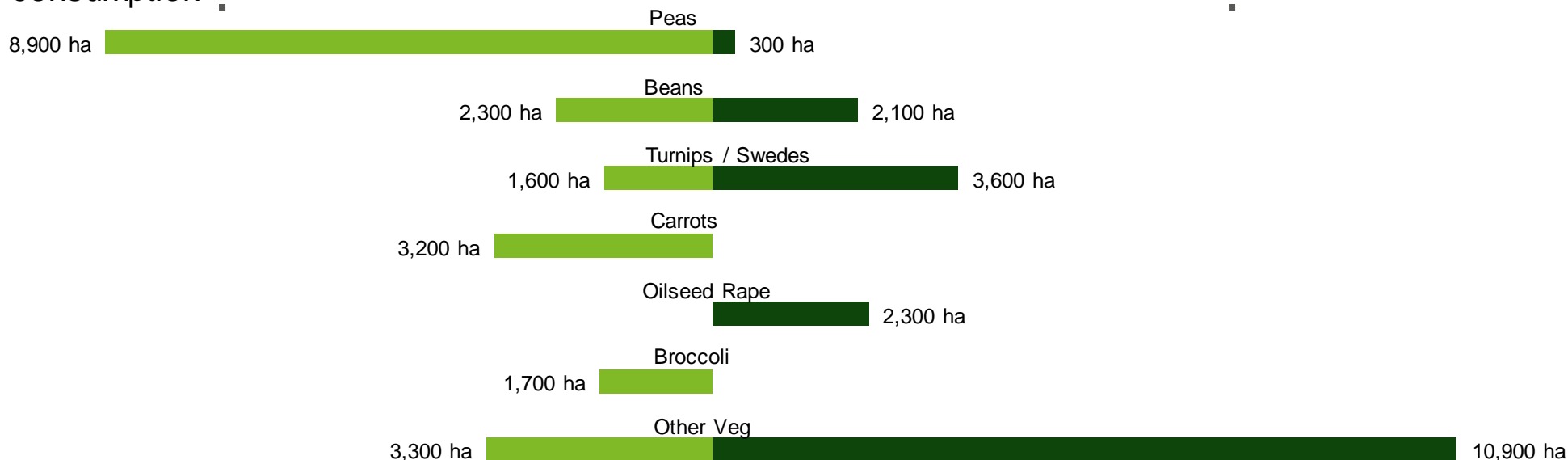
The area of planted seed potatoes fell by four per cent to 12,000 hectares, whilst the area of planted ware potatoes rose by two per cent to 16,300 hectares. The area of planted seed potatoes is six per cent below the ten-year average.

# More area used to grow vegetables for human consumption



Area used to grow vegetables for human consumption **21,100 hectares**

Area used to grow vegetables for stockfeed **19,300 hectares**

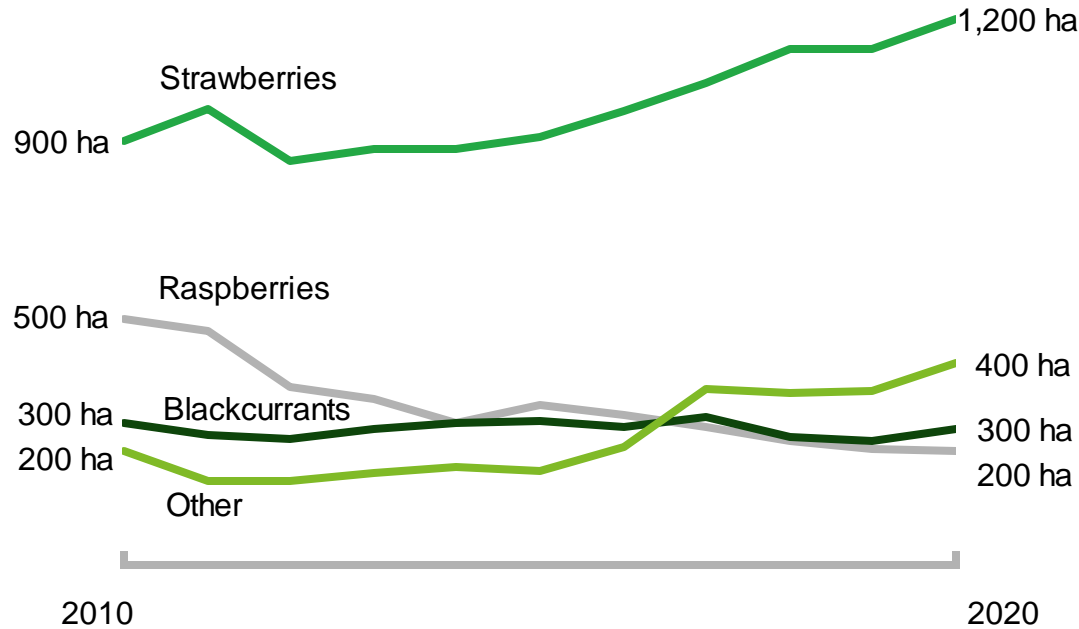


The area used to grow vegetables intended for human consumption (excluding potatoes) grew by 13 per cent over the past year. In June 2020 there were 21,100 hectares of vegetables. This increase in area applies to every type of vegetable, with the exception of carrots.

The area used to grow animal feed remained stable. The total area of vegetables for stockfeeding was 19,300 hectares. The peas and beans for stockfeed may also be used for drilling.



## Increase in soft fruit growing areas



Over the past year, the total soft fruit growing areas increased by seven percent. The estimated total area in June 2020 was 2,200 hectares. Strawberries are the most popular grown fruit. After a brief halt in growth in 2019, the area of strawberries continues to grow with a six per cent increase to 1,200 hectares.

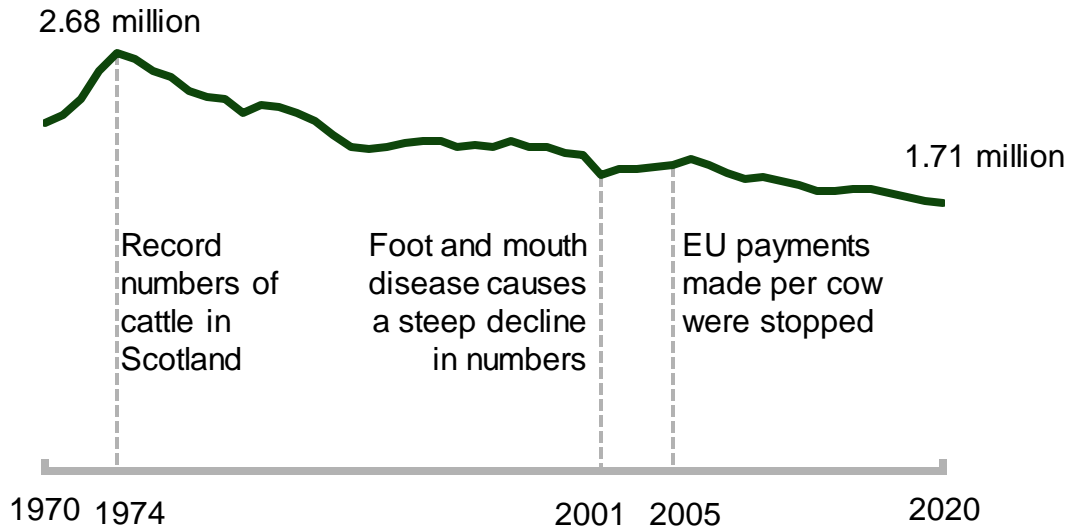
Area of  
soft fruit  
2,200  
hectares

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 75 per cent was grown this way in 2020.

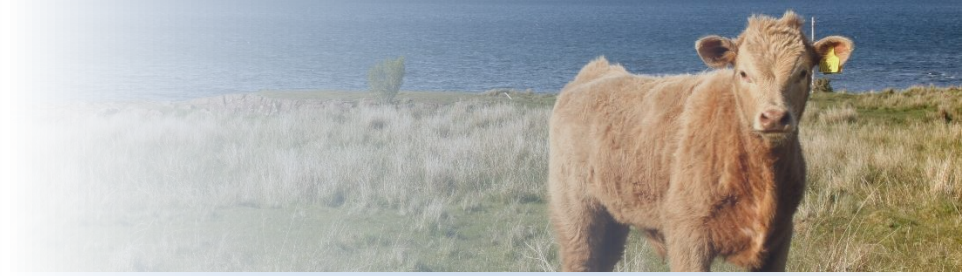
The area used to grow blackcurrants and other soft fruits, such as blueberries and tomatoes, also increased. The area used to grow raspberries continues to fall. Raspberries require the most skilled pickers and are heavily reliant on migrant labour.



## 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 in Scotland have been trending down since a peak in 1974 when there were 2.78 million cattle.

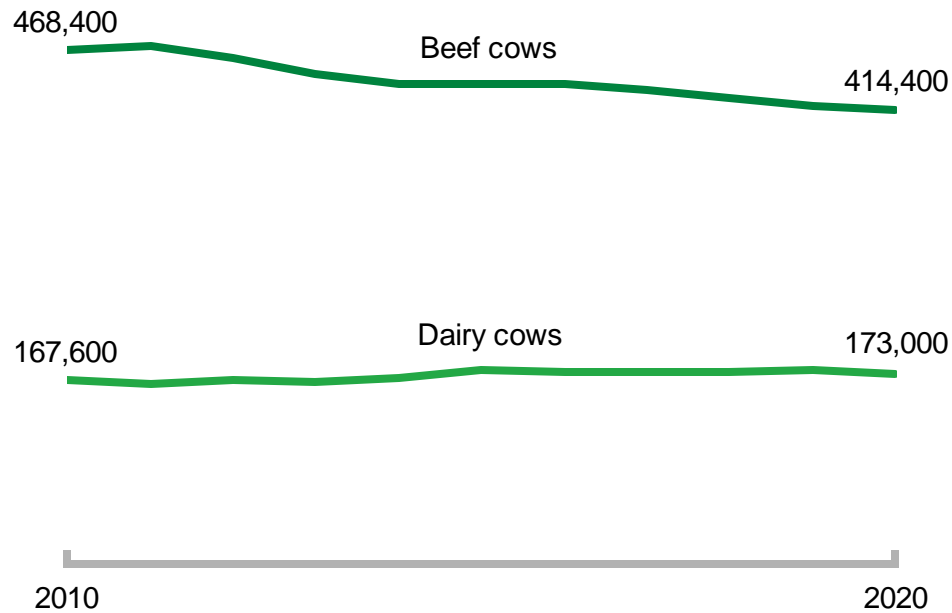


Number of cattle 1.71 million

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 the cost of feed, vets and animal housing have increased. Combined with the introduction of the Single Farm Payment in 2005, which stopped payments based on the number of cattle owned (coupled support), this led to a fall in the profitability of cattle.

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



The number of beef cows has fallen slightly in the past year. In June 2020 there were 414,400 beef cows, a drop of one per cent. Over the past 10 years, there has been a 12 percent decline in the total beef breeding herd.

There were 173,000 dairy cows, a drop of two per cent from 2019.



Number of  
beef cows 414,400

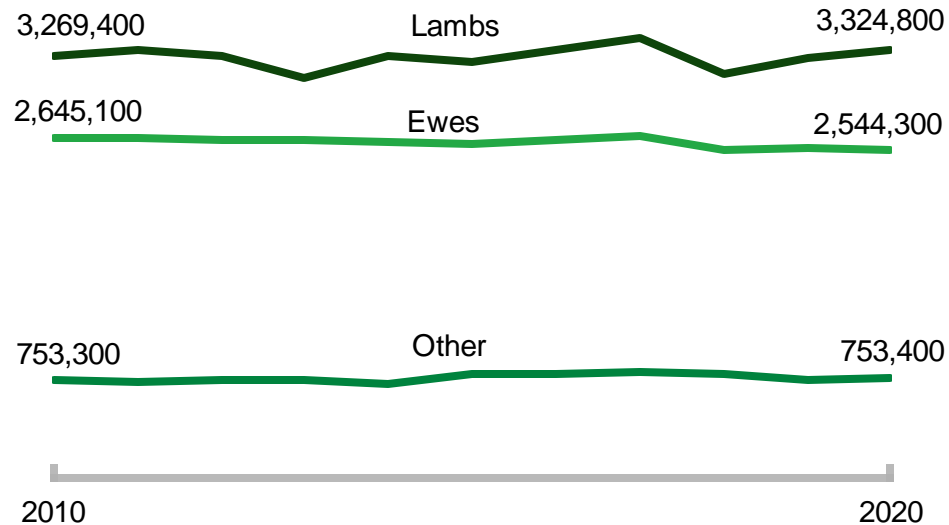
Number of  
dairy cows 173,000

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.

Over the past 10 years, the total number of dairy cows has remained relatively stable.

## Scottish sheep flock continues to recover



A favourable lambing season saw lamb numbers continued to recover in 2020, with an increase of two per cent to 3.32 million lambs. However, current numbers are still two per cent lower than the numbers from before the “Beast from the East” in 2018.



Number of sheep **6.73 million**

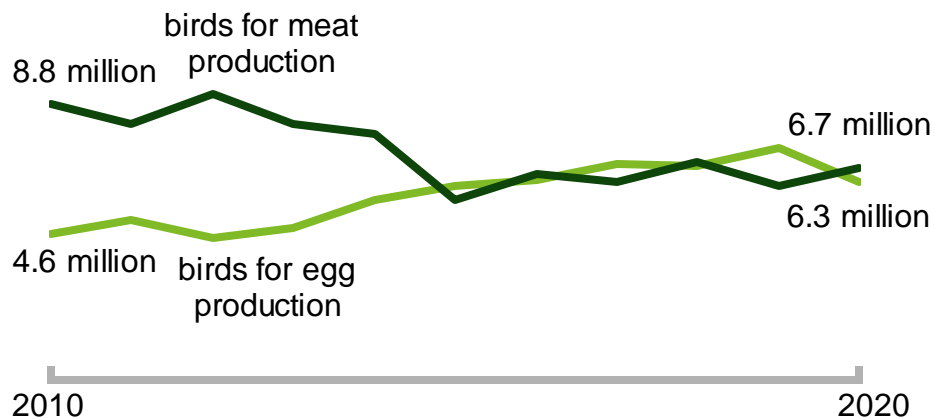
The favoured UK cuts of meat are leg and loin which means the value of imports is slightly more than exports.

The number of breeding ewes fell by one per cent to 2.54 million ewes in 2020, and the total number of sheep increased by one per cent to 6.73 million sheep.

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



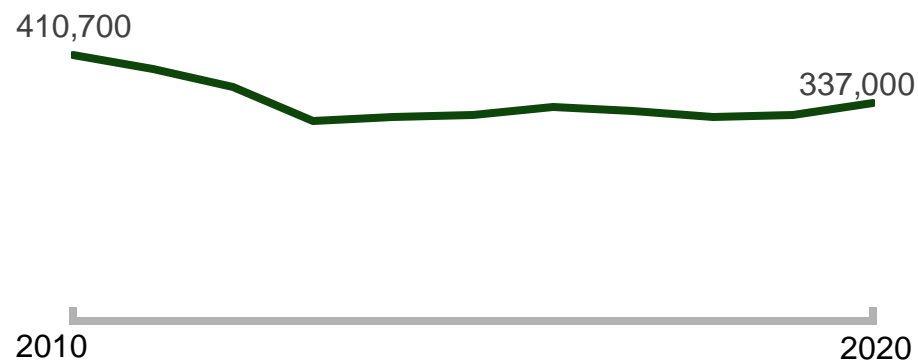
Number of poultry | 14.4 million



Poultry numbers decreased over the past year. In June 2020, there were an estimated 14.4 million poultry birds in Scotland, a drop of three per cent. This decline in numbers is due to a 15 per cent drop in birds for egg production, to 6.3 million. The number of birds for meat production increased by nine per cent, to 6.7 million.



Number of pigs | 337 thousand

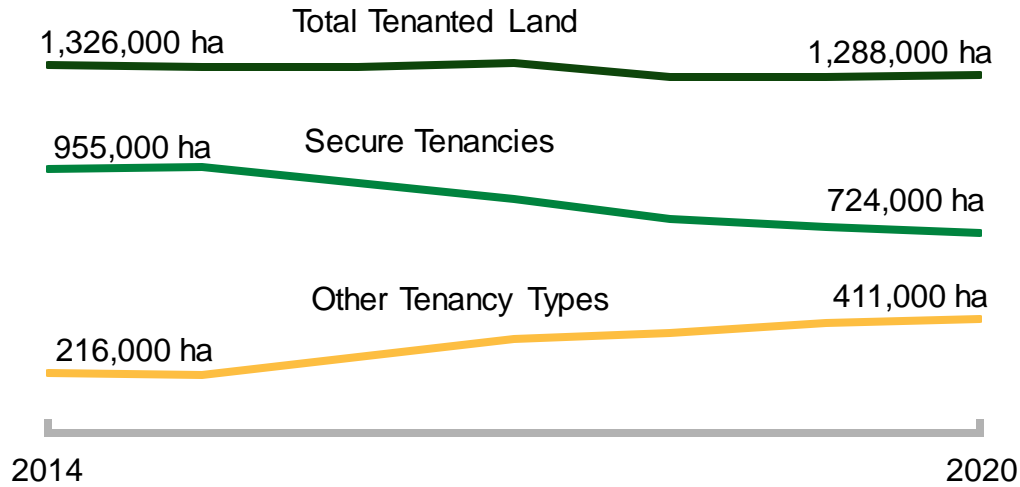


The number of pigs increased for the second year in a row. In June 2020, there were around 337 thousand pigs, a rise of six per cent. This may be due to an increase in pig prices, partly due to world supply being impacted by swine flu.

**Other livestock:**

34,000 horses 14,100 farmed deer  
 1,400 donkeys 4,900 beehives  
 6,900 goats 2,100 camelids

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



Area of 1.29 million rented land hectares

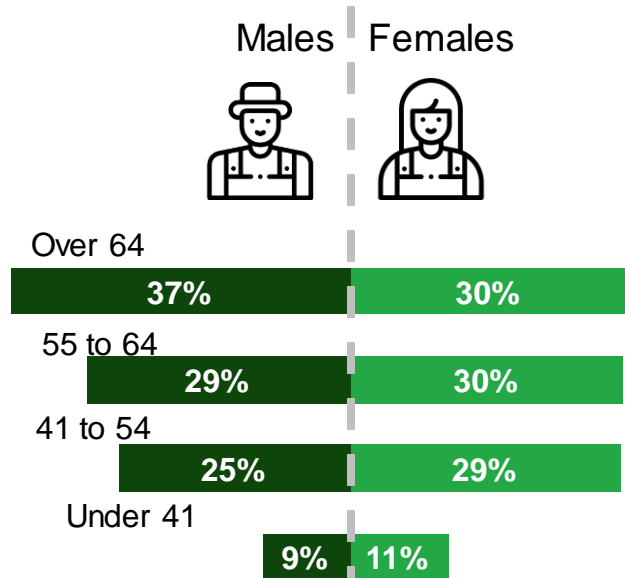
The total area of tenanted land remained stable compared to 2019. The area of secure tenancies fell by two per cent, and the area of other tenancy types increased by four per cent.

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.

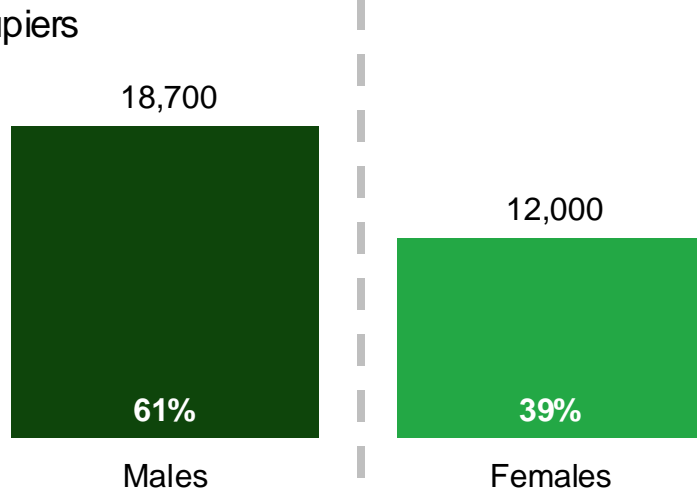
Over the longer term, the amount of rented agricultural land has fallen steadily over the past ten years from 26 per cent in 2010 to 22 per cent in 2020.

# The majority of working occupiers (occupier and spouse) are older than 55

Age profile of working occupiers



Working occupiers by sex



Agricultural workforce **66,800**

The total agricultural workforce is estimated to be around 66,800 workers. Although this estimate may not include some family members who also provide some 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 nine 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

Full-time staff	2020	12,800
	2019	13,100

Part-time staff	2020	7,700
	2019	7,500

Seasonal labour	2020	8,300
	2019	8,600



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 two per cent, from 13,100 to 12,800. The number of seasonal labourers decreased by four per cent. The number of regular part-time workers increased by two 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.

[www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-159-2](http://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-159-2)

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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