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Statistical Review of Northern Ireland Agriculture

2024

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
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An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe

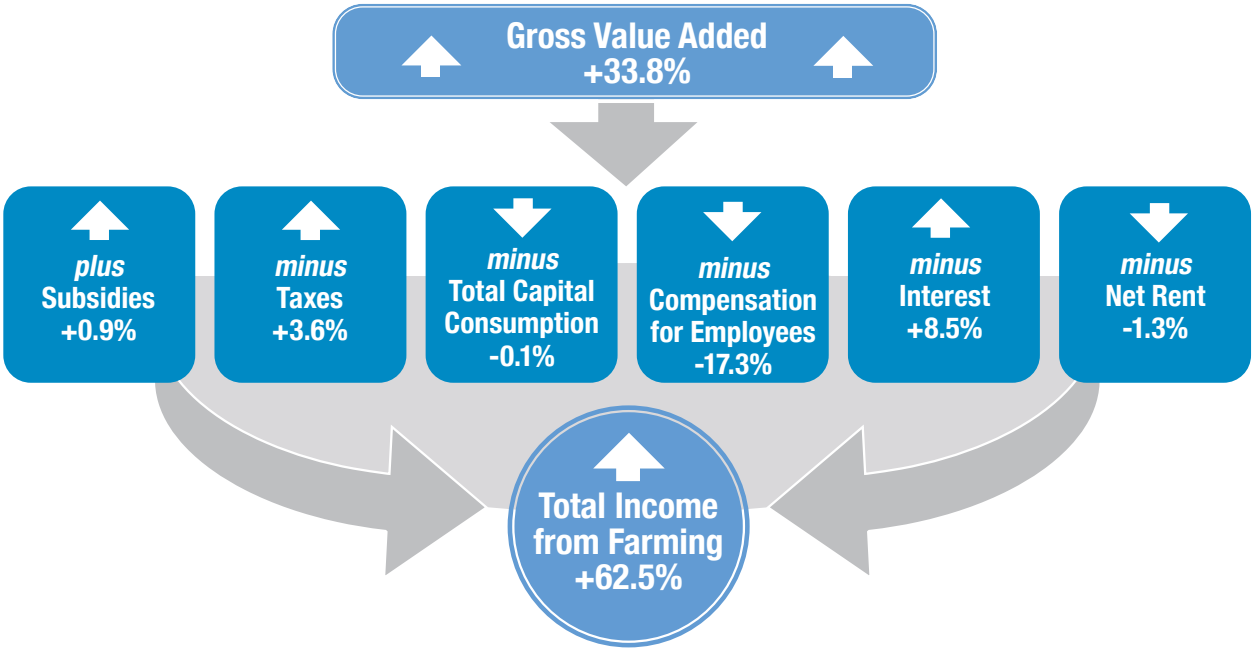
Depairtment o' Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers

An accredited Official Statistics Publication

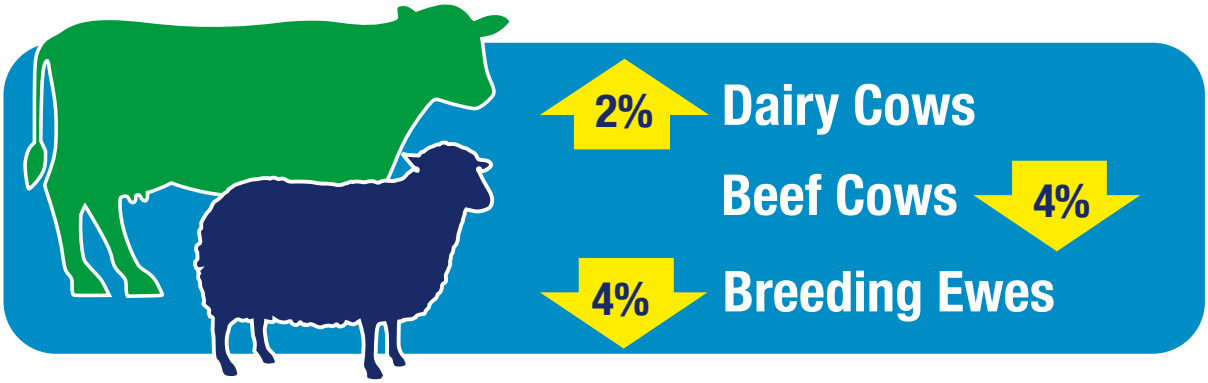
Statistical Review of Northern Ireland Agriculture 2024

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

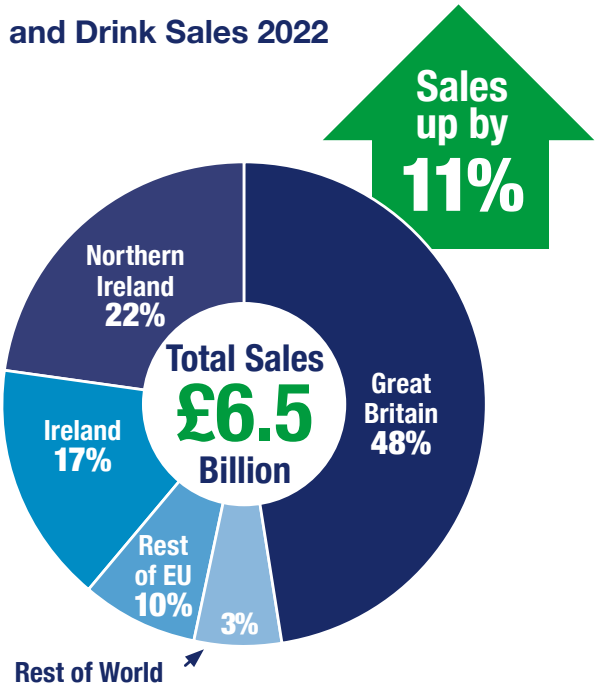
Agricultural Income changes 2023 & 2024



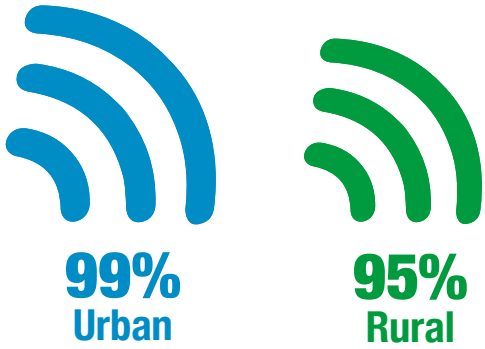
Cattle and Sheep Changes 2024



Northern Ireland Food and Drink Sales 2022



Coverage of Superfast Broadband 2024



Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2023

Key Facts 2024

Note: comparisons are with 2023 unless otherwise stated.

Aggregate income (Tables 2.1 - 2.3)

- The agricultural income of Northern Ireland farms increased in 2024.
- **Total income from farming (TIFF)** - which measures the return to farmers, partners and directors, their spouses and other family workers for their labour, management input and own capital invested - increased by 62.5 per cent (56.2 per cent in real terms) to £766 million, from £471 million in 2023.
- Following the increase in 2024, TIFF is now 71.7 per cent above the average of the last twenty years after accounting for inflation.
- The main factor behind the increase of TIFF in 2024 was higher product prices for most sectors and lower feed and fertiliser costs.
- Input costs remained elevated when compared to historic levels with gross input costs for the farm sector being 34 per cent higher in 2024 than 2020 levels. This was mainly driven by marked increases in the prices for feed, fertiliser, electricity and fuels during this time. Unit prices for these inputs have reduced to some extent during 2024 compared to 2023 but still remain high when compared to historic levels.

Output, input and value added (Tables 2.1 - 2.3)

- **Gross output** of Northern Ireland agriculture is estimated at £3.19 billion for 2024, a 7.5 per cent increase from 2023. There were also increases in the output for almost all sub-sectors. In particular milk output was up by £189.9 million to £1.1 billion due to a 17.0 per cent increase in milk prices.
- **Gross input** (or 'intermediate consumption') decreased by 2.6 per cent, to £2.09 billion. Feedstuff costs, which accounted for 57.0 per cent of the gross input figure, decreased by 4.4 per cent in 2024 to £1.18 billion. There was a 7.5 per cent increase in the volume of feedstuffs purchased and an 11.6 per cent decrease in the average price paid per tonne. Total machinery expenses decreased by 1.2 per cent to £199 million in 2024. This decrease was mainly due to a 7.8 per cent decrease in the cost of fuel & oils. Agricultural contracting costs remained unchanged at £118 million in 2024 whereas, total fertiliser and lime costs decreased by 9.7 per cent to £101 million in 2024.
- **Gross value added** increased in 2024 to £1.1 billion; an increase of 33.8 per cent, while **net value added** - gross value added less consumption of fixed capital (or 'depreciation') plus direct CAP subsidies increased by 39.6 per cent, to £994 million.

Productivity (Table 2.3)	• Changes in the volumes of outputs and inputs combined to produce a 1.2 per cent rise in **total factor productivity (TFP)** - the productivity of all resources in the industry. **Single factorial terms of trade**, which is a measure of farmers' economic welfare, increased by **23.4 per cent**.
Cash flow (Table 2.4)	• **Cash available to farm families from farming activity** was estimated to have increased by 93.7 per cent, to £850 million. In this estimate, 'non-cash' items such as stock changes as well as capital formation and consumption are removed and account is taken of the level of investment and change in borrowings, thereby more realistically portraying cash available from farming.
Farm level incomes (Tables 5.3 -5.4)	• **Farm Business Income (FBI)** is the headline measure of farm-level income used throughout the UK. Measured across all farm types, average Farm Business Income decreased from £50,450 in 2022/23 to £29,260 in 2023/24, a decrease of £21,190 per farm. It is expected to increase from £29,260 in 2023/24 to £60,622 in 2024/25, i.e. an increase of £31,361 or 107% per farm.
Subsidies (Table 2.10)	• The value of all **direct payments** to farmers increased by 0.9 per cent or £2.7 million, to £309.1 million in 2024.
	• The total value of the Basic and Young Farmer payments estimated to have accrued in 2024 was £285 million, a decrease of 5.5 per cent or £16.7 million compared with the equivalent payments in 2023. The Basic, and Young Farmer payments account for approximately 92 per cent of all direct payments.
Labour (Table 4.12)	• The **total agricultural labour force** in 2024 was 51,213 persons, a 2.8 per cent decrease from 2023.
Livestock numbers (Table 3.3)	• The number of **cattle** recorded in the June 2024 census remained stable at 1.67 million. In June 2024, there were 325,325 dairy cows (an increase of 1.9 per cent from 2023) and 226,000 beef cows (a decrease of 4.3 per cent compared to 2023). In June 2024, the **sheep** breeding flock was 4.4 per cent smaller than in 2023 at 930,447 ewes. Including lambs and other sheep the entire flock totalled approximately 1.97 million in 2024.
	• In June 2024, the total number of **pigs** was 692,091, an increase of 1.4 per cent compared to 2023. There was a 5.1 per cent decrease to 45,407 in sow numbers and a 1.9 per cent increase to 646,684 in the number of other pigs. **Broiler** numbers decreased by 14.0 per cent to 13.4 million birds, while the size of the **commercial laying flock** increased by 11.2 per cent to 6.4 million birds.

Crops and grass areas (Table 3.2)

- There was a 2.1 per cent decrease, to 46,795 hectares, in the total **agricultural cropped area** between June 2023 and 2024. The total area of **cereals** was 30,342 hectares in June 2024, which was a decrease of 4.6 per cent compared to 2023. In 2024, the total area of potatoes grown decreased by 5.0 per cent to 3,096 hectares, compared to 3,258 in 2023.

Farm Numbers (Table 4.2)

- There were 26,190 active **farm businesses** in Northern Ireland at June 2024.

Food and Drinks Sector (Tables 6.1 - 6.3)

- The performance indicators for the **food and drinks processing sector** indicate an increase in gross turnover between 2017 and 2022. Employment has also grown over the period. Exports account for 29.7 per cent of sales by the food and drinks processing sector.

Rural Population

- In 2023, 61 per cent of people lived in an urban area, with approximately 39 per cent living in a non-urban area (i.e. 'rural' or 'mixed'). Households in more remote rural areas continue to have lower average incomes than those closer to Belfast.

Animal Health & Welfare (Tables 8.1 - 8.3)

- There have been no cases of BSE since 2012. During 2024, 2,314 new herds in Northern Ireland were affected by bovine tuberculosis compared with 2,199 in 2023. The last confirmed brucellosis breakdown occurred in February 2012 and Northern Ireland achieved Official Brucellosis Freedom on 6 October 2015. Bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) is a highly contagious viral disease of cattle and in March 2016 compulsory testing was introduced. In 2024, the animal incidence rate for BVD remains at less than 1 per cent.
- The Veterinary Service (DAERA) carried out 559 on-farm welfare inspections in 2024. Of the inspections carried out as a result of complaints, risk assessment (related to cross-compliance) and targeted visits 85 per cent were fully compliant with legislation, while for random visits 100 per cent were fully compliant with legislation. In 2024, one farm animal keeper were disqualified by the courts as a result of serious welfare breaches.

Environment (Tables 9.1 - 9.8)

- In 2024, some 59,000 hectares of farmland were managed under the Environmental Farming Scheme in Northern Ireland.
- In 2023, agriculture was estimated to contribute 31 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland. Total emissions from agriculture increased by 8.0 per cent between 1990 and 2023.
- In 2024, approximately 29 per cent of river water bodies were classified as 'high' or 'good' ecological status.
- 502 hectares of new woodland was planted in Northern Ireland in 2024/25, compared to 433 hectares in 2023/24.

Key Facts Comparisons 2024

	NI	UK	ROI	EU27
GROSS VALUE ADDED (GVA)				
Agriculture as % of total GVA	2.0[P]	0.6	0.9	1.5
Food and drink processing as % of total GVA	2.2[2]	1.5[1]	-	-
EMPLOYMENT				
Agricultural employment ('000)	28	284	102	7,417[2]
As % of total civil employment	3.0	0.9	3.7	3.7[2]
Food and drink processing employment ('000)	13	319	58[2]	4,588[2]
As % of total civil employment	1.4	1.0	2.2[2]	2.3[2]
LAND USE				
Agricultural area ('000 ha)	1,040	16,760	4,488	161,495[5]
As % of total area	77	69	64	39[5]
LESS FAVOURED AREAS (LFA)				
LFA as % of agricultural area	69.7	50.4[4]	75.0[7]	50.7[7]
FARMS				
Number ('000)	26	209	133[1]	9,067[3]
Average agricultural area (ha)	39.7	80.5	34.7[1]	17.1[3]
ENTERPRISES Average enterprise size:				
Dairy cows	104	117	98[1]	-
Beef cows	17	27	14[1]	-
Sheep	196	-	165[1]	-
Pigs	1,807	476	1,191[1]	-
Laying hens	14,034	-	575[1]	-
Broilers	55,967	-	16,882[1]	-
Cereals (ha)	15.5	65.8	26.2[1]	-
Potatoes (ha)	9.3	15.0	8.2[6]	-

1. 2023, 2. 2022, 3. 2020, 4. 2019, 5. 2018, 6. 2016, 7. 2007, P = Provisional

Note 1. NI = Northern Ireland; UK = United Kingdom; ROI = Republic of Ireland; EU27 = Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

Note 2. Due to national accounting principles GVA figures do not include Single Farm Payment.

Note 3. In general, figures relate to the latest year for which statistics are available.

Note 4. The value given for LFA in the EU27 grouping excludes Croatia as it was not a member state in 2007.

Key Facts Comparisons 2024 (Continued)

Total Income from Farming, 2024

	NI	UK
Total income from farming	£766m	£7,688m
% change on previous year		
Current prices	+62.5	+26.4
Real terms	+56.2	+24.1

Gross Output from Farming, 2024

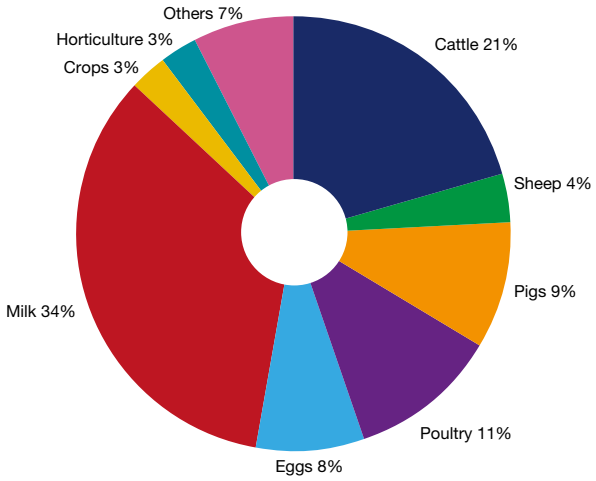
Enterprise	NI		UK		NI as % of UK
	£m	%	£m	%	%
Dairy	1,083	33.9	6,316	17.9	17.1
Cattle	658	20.6	4,148	11.7	15.9
Sheep & wool	123	3.9	1,764	5.0	7.0
Pigs	295	9.2	1,844	5.2	16.0
Poultry & eggs	620	19.4	4,706	13.3	13.2
Cereals & other crops	55	1.7	5,382	15.2	1.0
Potatoes	34	1.1	1,461	4.1	2.3
Horticulture	93	2.9	4,813	13.6	1.9
Others	233	7.3	4,945	14.0	4.7
Total	**3,193**	**100**	**35,381**	**100**	**9.0**

Total Expenditure of Farming, 2024

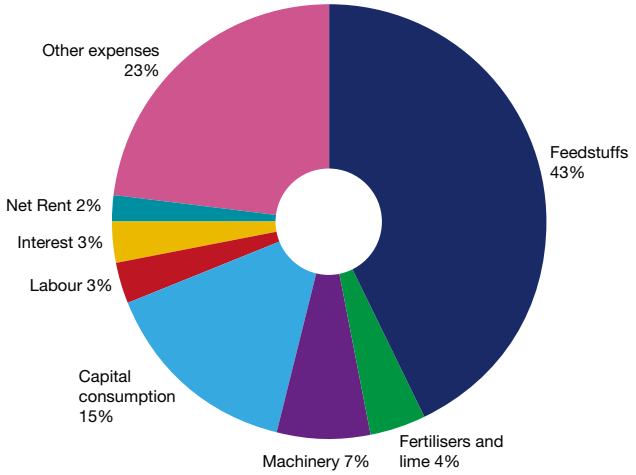
Expense	NI		UK		NI as % of UK
	£m	%	£m	%	%
Feedstuffs	1,183	43.2	7,133	23.2	16.6
Fertilisers and lime	101	3.7	1,725	5.6	5.9
Machinery	199	7.3	2,219	7.2	9.0
Capital consumption	411	15.0	5,303	17.3	7.7
Labour	86	3.2	3,044	9.9	2.8
Interest	82	3.0	804	2.6	10.2
Net rent	60	2.2	528	1.7	11.4
Other expenses	614	22.4	9,962	32.4	6.2
Total	**2,737**	**100**	**30,718**	**100**	**8.9**

Comparisons of NI and UK Agriculture

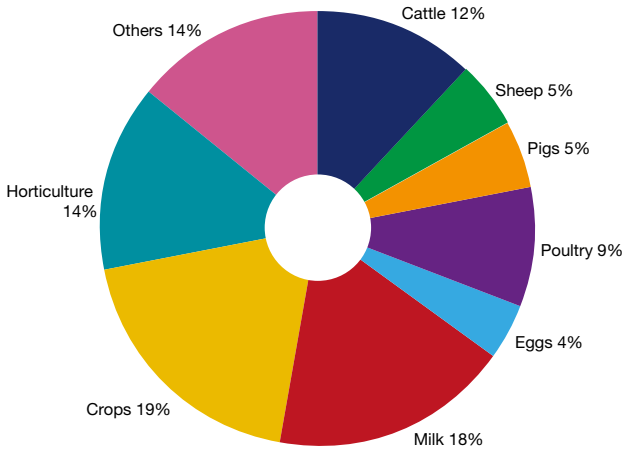
Gross output of NI agriculture, 2024



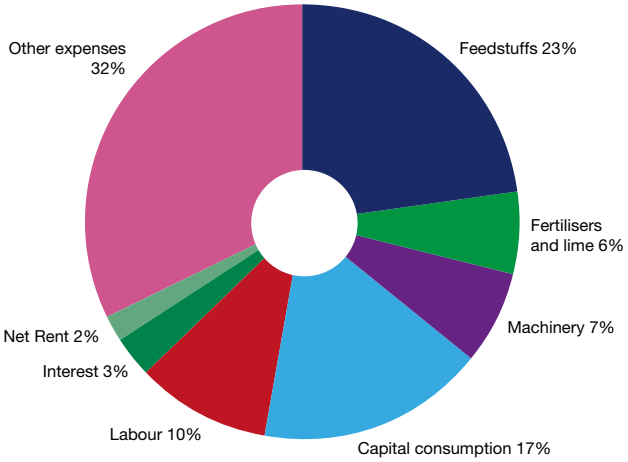
Total expenses of NI agriculture, 2024



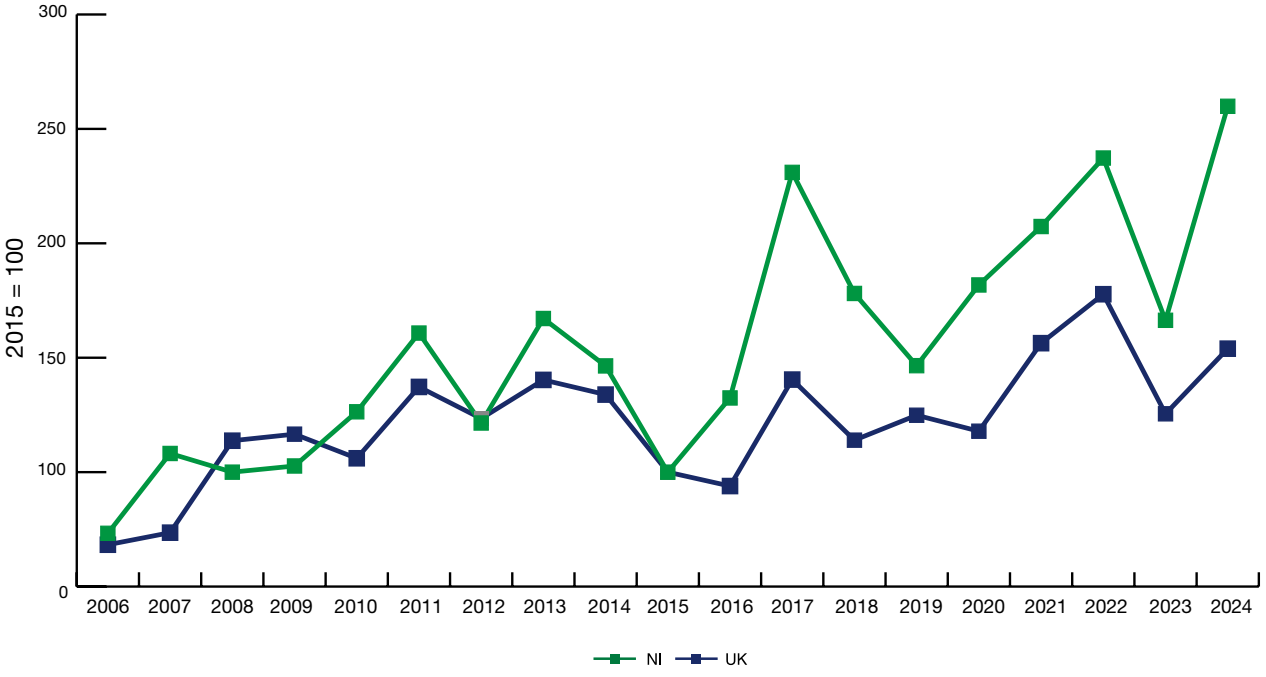
Gross output of UK agriculture, 2024



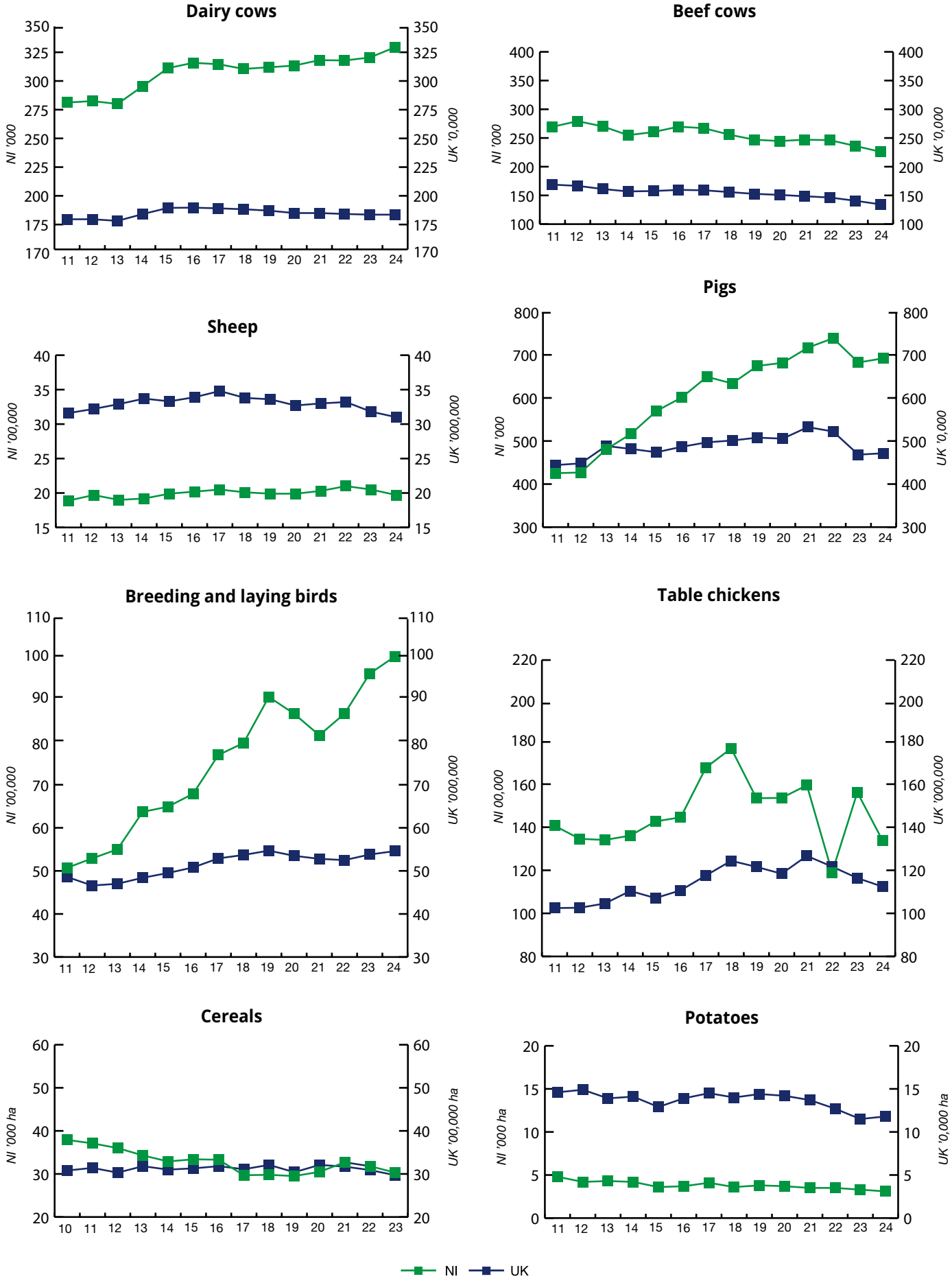
Total expenses of UK agriculture, 2024



NI and UK Total Income from Farming Indices in real terms (2015 = 100)



Trends in NI and UK Livestock Numbers and Crop Areas



Contents

1. Introduction

The *Statistical Review of Northern Ireland Agriculture* is a compendium of agri-food, environment and rural statistics that is published annually. It is an important reference document for both DAERA stakeholders and policy makers. The data contained in the Statistical Review are derived from farm surveys, as well as surveys of food processors and agricultural input supply firms, administrative data sources, and other environmental and rural data sources.

This is the 61st edition of the publication which is produced by Policy, Economics & Statistics Division, DAERA. Any queries or comments on its contents can be made to the Editor, Paul Keatley, whose contact details are given below.

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2. The Agricultural Economy

A. Aggregate Output, Input and Income

Summary

Key findings for 2024 compared to 2023 are as follows:

- **Northern Ireland Total income from farming (TIFF)** increased by 62.5 per cent (56.2 per cent in real terms) from £471 million in 2023 to £766 million in 2024.
- **Gross output** in 2024 was estimated at £3.19 billion which is 7.5 per cent higher than the 2023 value.
- **Gross input** (or intermediate consumption) decreased during 2024 to £2.09 billion; 2.6 per cent lower. This decrease can mainly be attributed to a 4.4 per cent reduction in feedstuffs cost, a 9.7 per cent reduction in fertilisers (including lime) costs, and a 7.8 per cent reduction in machinery fuel (including oils) costs.
- **Total factor productivity** increased by 1.2 per cent between 2023 and 2024. This was driven by an increase in the volume of all inputs, which was offset by an increase in the volume of all outputs.
- **Total direct payments** to farmers increased by 0.9 per cent or £2.7 million, to £309.1 million in 2024.

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Introduction

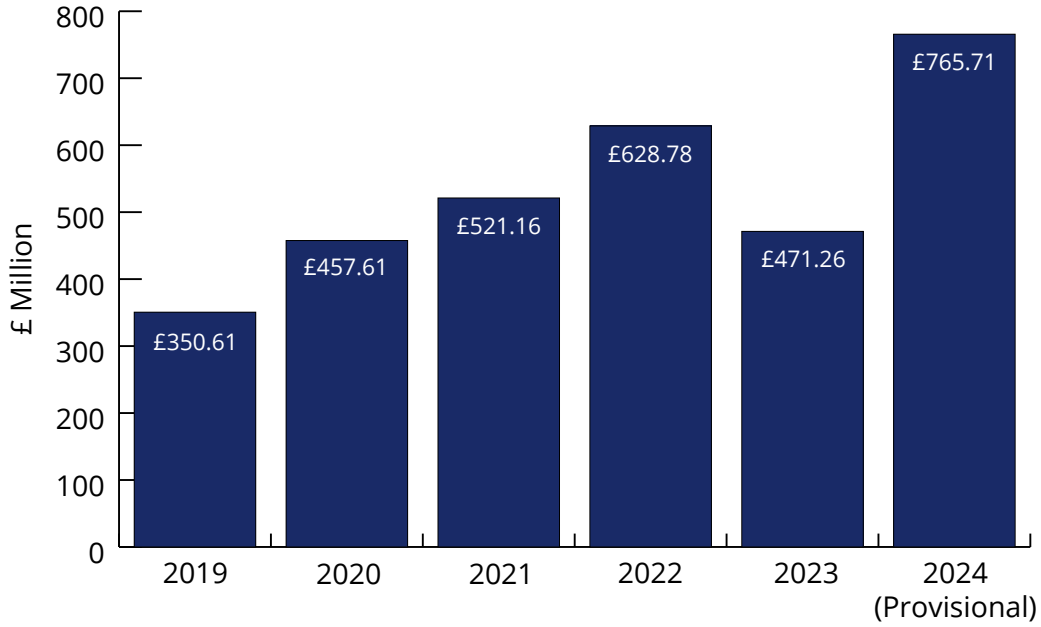
This sub-chapter presents the aggregate account for Northern Ireland agriculture and associated statistics including incomes, prices, productivity, subsidies, and labour. The headline measure of Total income from farming (TIFF) represents the return on own labour, management input and own capital invested for all those with an entrepreneurial involvement in farming (including all members of the family working on farm).

Total income from farming (TIFF) in recent years

Figure 2.1 shows the value of TIFF from 2019 to 2024. Since 2019, the average value of TIFF has been £533 million per year, with the lowest value of £351 million occurring in 2019, and the highest value of £766 million occurring in 2024.

TIFF increased in 2024, by 62.5 per cent to £766 million, an increase of 56.2 per cent after allowing for inflation. Following this increase in 2024, TIFF was 71.7 per cent above the average of the last twenty years after accounting for inflation. Over the same 20-year period, the number of persons drawing an income from farming also declined. From 2005 to 2024, the number of units of entrepreneurial labour decreased by 0.1 per cent with the result that, in real terms, **TIFF per unit of entrepreneurial labour** in 2024 was 65.7 per cent above the 20-year average.

Figure 2.1: Total Income from Farming for Northern Ireland at current prices, 2019 to 2024

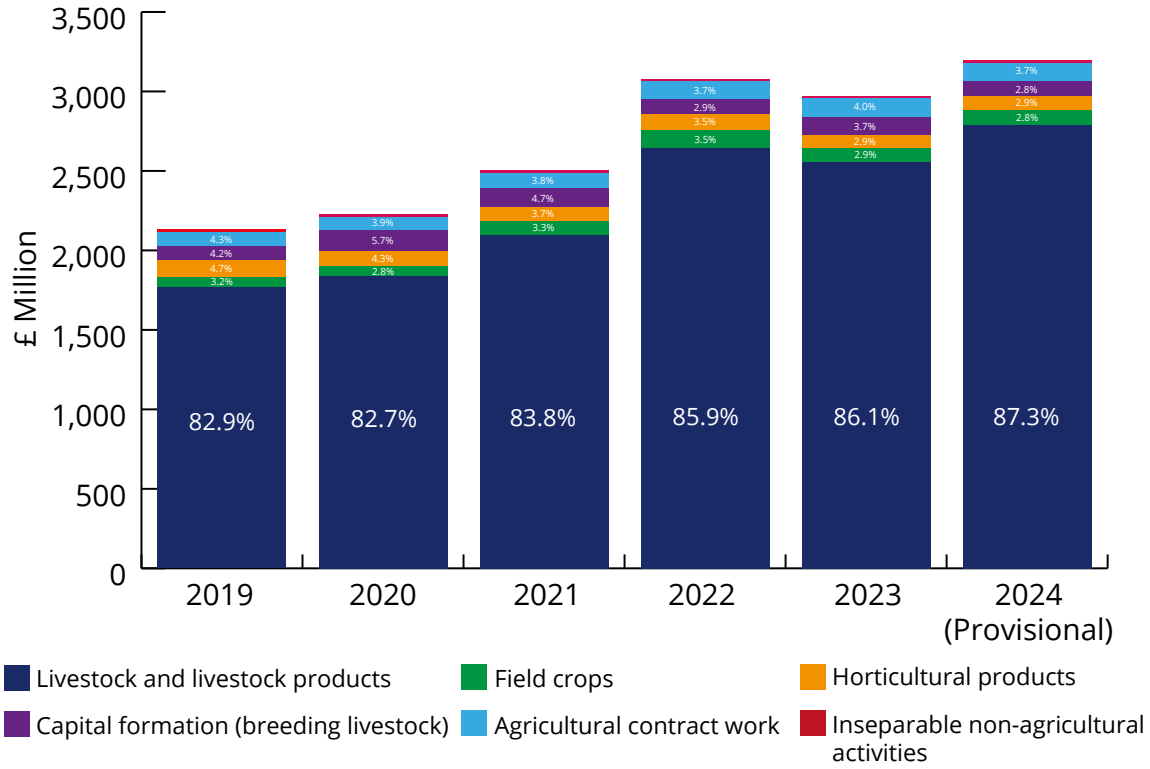


Refer to: Table 2.1 for the full Aggregate Agricultural Account dataset.

Output

The value of gross output in 2024, estimated at £3.19 billion, was 7.5 per cent higher compared with 2023. However, this masks some significant variations across the different commodities. Full details of commodity trends in all the individual outputs are given in Section 2B.

Figure 2.2: Breakdown of agricultural gross output for Northern Ireland, 2019-2024

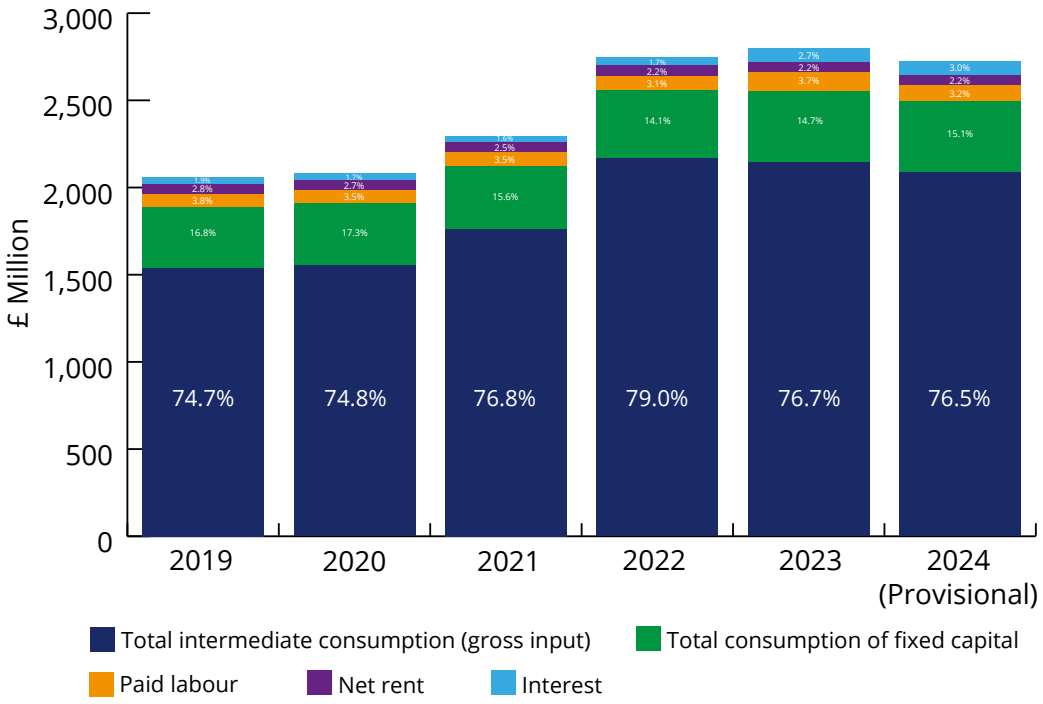


Refer to: Table 2.1 for the full Aggregate Agricultural Account dataset.

Inputs (or 'intermediate consumption) and other costs

The value of **gross input** also decreased during 2024, to £2.09 billion; 2.6 per cent lower. This decrease can mainly be attributed to a 4.4 per cent reduction in feedstuffs cost, a 9.7 per cent reduction in fertilisers (including lime) costs, and a 7.8 per cent reduction in machinery fuel (including oils) costs. Full details of trends in individual inputs are also given in Section 2B.

Figure 2.3: Agricultural gross input and other costs in Northern Ireland, 2019 - 2024



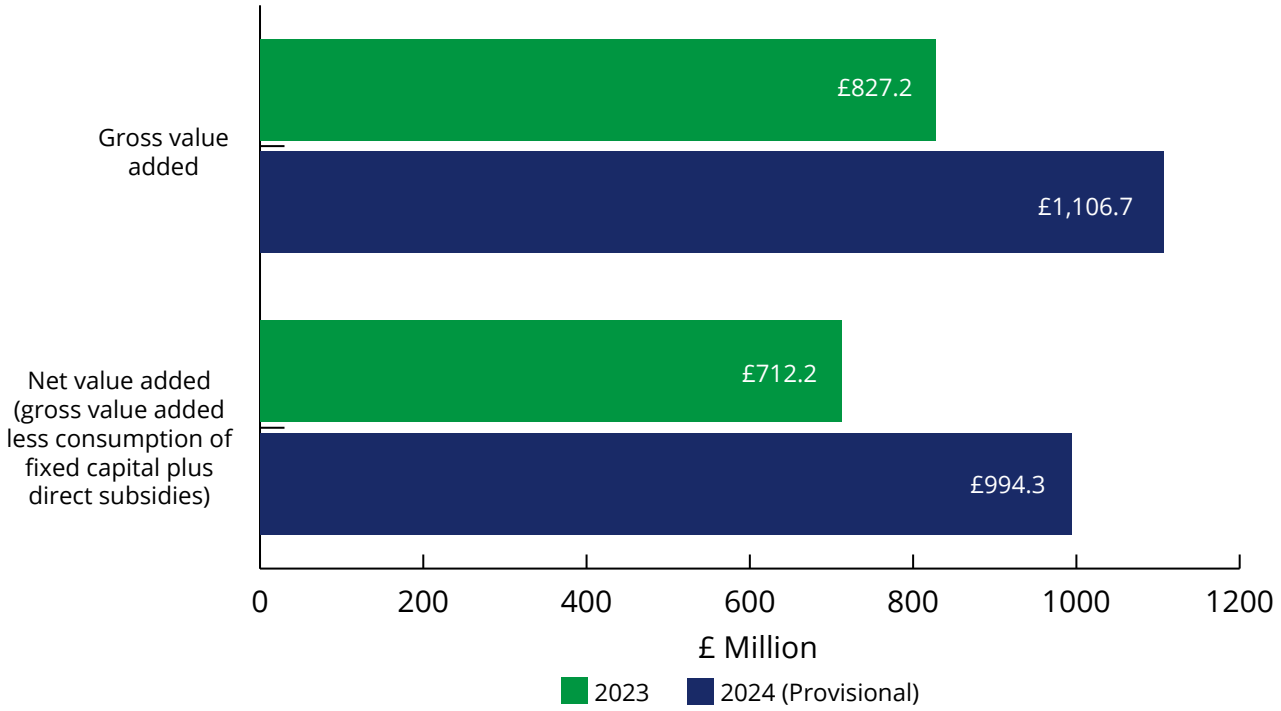
Refer to: Table 2.1 for the full Aggregate Agricultural Account dataset.

Gross and net value added

Gross value added - gross output less gross input - increased by 33.8 per cent to £1.11 billion in 2024 as a result of the increase in gross output and the decrease in gross input. **Net value added** (at factor cost), i.e. gross value added less consumption of fixed capital (or 'depreciation') plus direct subsidies - increased by 39.6 per cent, to £994 million.

Net value added is the sum of all 'incomes' arising in the industry, namely the earnings of paid labour, interest on borrowed capital, rent on conacre land (paid to non-farming persons) and the residual 'total income from farming'. The cost of paid labour (also termed 'compensation of employees') decreased by 17.3 per cent to £86 million in 2024 from £104 million in 2023. The total cost of borrowings in agriculture (interest payments plus financial intermediation services indirectly measured (FISIM), (see Table 2.26) increased by 4.9 per cent to £95.1 million, whereas conacre rent paid to non-farmers in 2024 decreased by 1.3 per cent to £60.2 million.

Figure 2.4: Gross and net value added from farming in Northern Ireland, 2023 - 2024



Refer to: Table 2.1 for the full Aggregate Agricultural Account dataset.

Income Indicators at current prices and real terms, 2019 - 2024

In 2024, total income from farming (TIFF) was 246.0 per cent higher and Net Value Added (NVA) was 164.6 per cent higher than their respective 2015 levels. After allowing for inflation, the increases in 2024 were 159.9 per cent for TIFF and 98.8 per cent for NVA when compared to 2015 levels.

Northern Ireland Agricultural income indicators at current prices and in real terms, 2019 - 2024

Indices: 2015 = 100

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Index at current prices						
Net value added	140.0	166.0	185.1	217.8	189.6	264.6
Total income from farming	158.4	206.8	235.5	284.1	212.9	346.0
Index in real terms[1]						
Net value added	129.5	146.0	163.0	181.9	148.1	198.8
Total income from farming	146.5	181.8	207.3	237.3	166.4	259.9

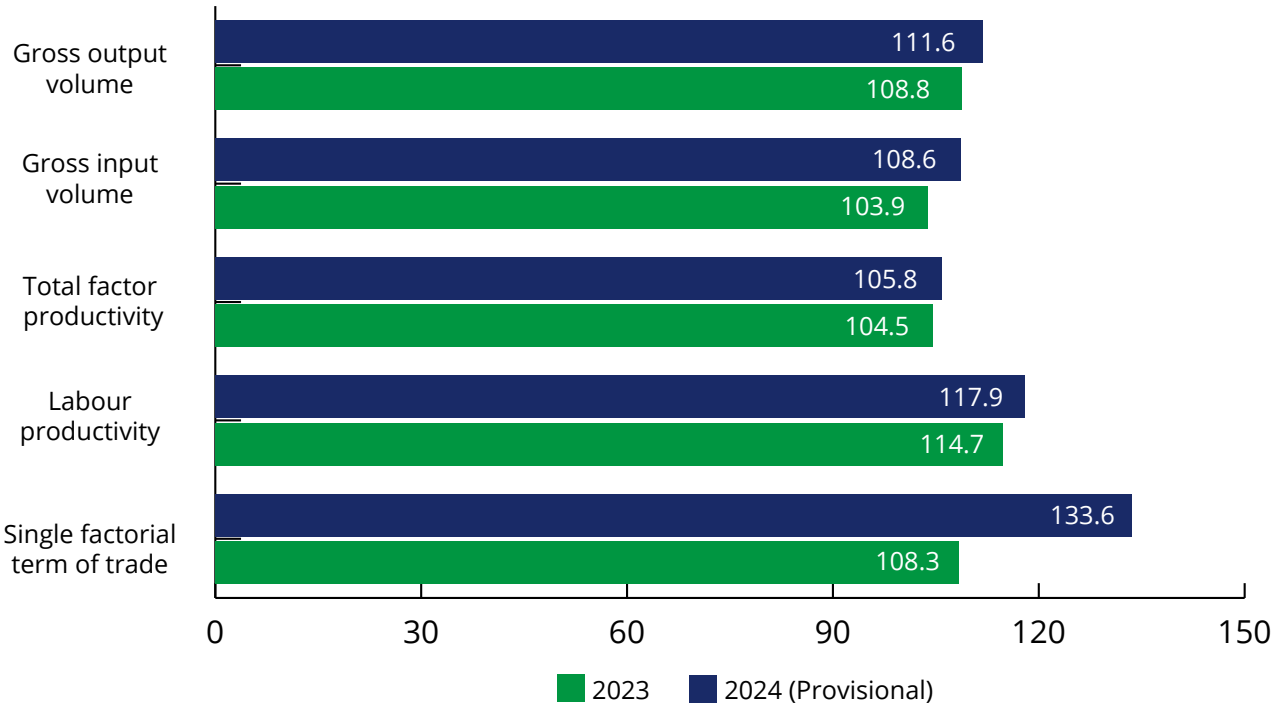
1. Deflated by GDP deflator to account for inflation.

Refer to: Table 2.2 for the summary income indicators dataset.

Productivity

Changes in the volumes of outputs and inputs combines to produce a 1.2 per cent increase in **total factor productivity (TFP)** - the productivity of all the resources in the industry. This was driven by an increase in the volume of all inputs, which was offset by an increase in the volume of all outputs. Labour productivity (Gross output per labour unit) increased by 2.8 per cent. Single factorial terms of trade, which is a measure of economic welfare that takes account of changes in both total factor productivity and prices, increased by 23.4 per cent.

Figure 2.5: Agricultural output, input and productivity indices in Northern Ireland, 2023-2024 (2015 = 100)



Refer to: Table 2.3 for the full productivity indices dataset.

Cash flow

Total income from farming (TIFF) measures the return (on own labour, management input and own capital invested) to farmers, their spouses and other family workers, i.e., all those with an entrepreneurial interest in farming. It is calculated according to internationally agreed practices, which require the inclusion of 'book' items such as stock changes, capital formation and consumption (depreciation). TIFF may not, therefore, realistically portray the cash available from farming. In the estimates shown in the table below, TIFF is adjusted to remove these non-cash items and to take account of the level of investment and change in borrowings (the derivation is given in the footnotes to Table 2.4). **Cash available to farm families from farming** was estimated to have increased by 93.7 per cent, to £850.2 million in 2024.

Headline figures on estimated cash flow for Northern Ireland agriculture, 2023-2024

£ million

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Total income from farming	471.3	765.7
Less:		
output stock change	+11.9	-41.2
gross fixed capital formation (breeding livestock)	110.7	89.8
capital investment	278.5	297.6
Plus:		
input stock change	-2.6	8.0
capital consumption	411.2	411.0
capital grants paid in year	11.9	8.8
change in borrowings	-51.8	2.9
Cash available to farm families from farming	**439.0**	**850.2**

Refer to: Table 2.4 for the full cash flow for agriculture dataset.

Aggregate gross margins estimates

The aggregate gross margin for the main agricultural sectors increased in 2024, by 23.2 per cent to £1,626 million. This was mainly driven by a gross margin rise of £217 million in the grazing livestock sector between 2023 and 2024.

Headline figures on aggregate gross margin for the main agricultural sectors in Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

2023							
	Adjusted ouputs	Estimated specific costs				Sector gross margins	
Sector		Feedstuffs	Fertilisers, seeds & sprays	Others	Total		
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	%
Total grazing livestock	1,687.2	608.1	103.3	41.3	752.8	934.4	70.8%
Total intensive livestock	907.4	629.1	-	20.4	649.5	257.9	19.5%
Total field crops	171.2	-	39.0	9.0	48.0	123.2	9.3%
Other items	14.1	7.8	1.5	0.1	9.4	4.7	0.4%
Total	**2,779.9**	**1,245.0**	**143.8**	**70.8**	**1,459.7**	**1,320.2**	**100.0%**

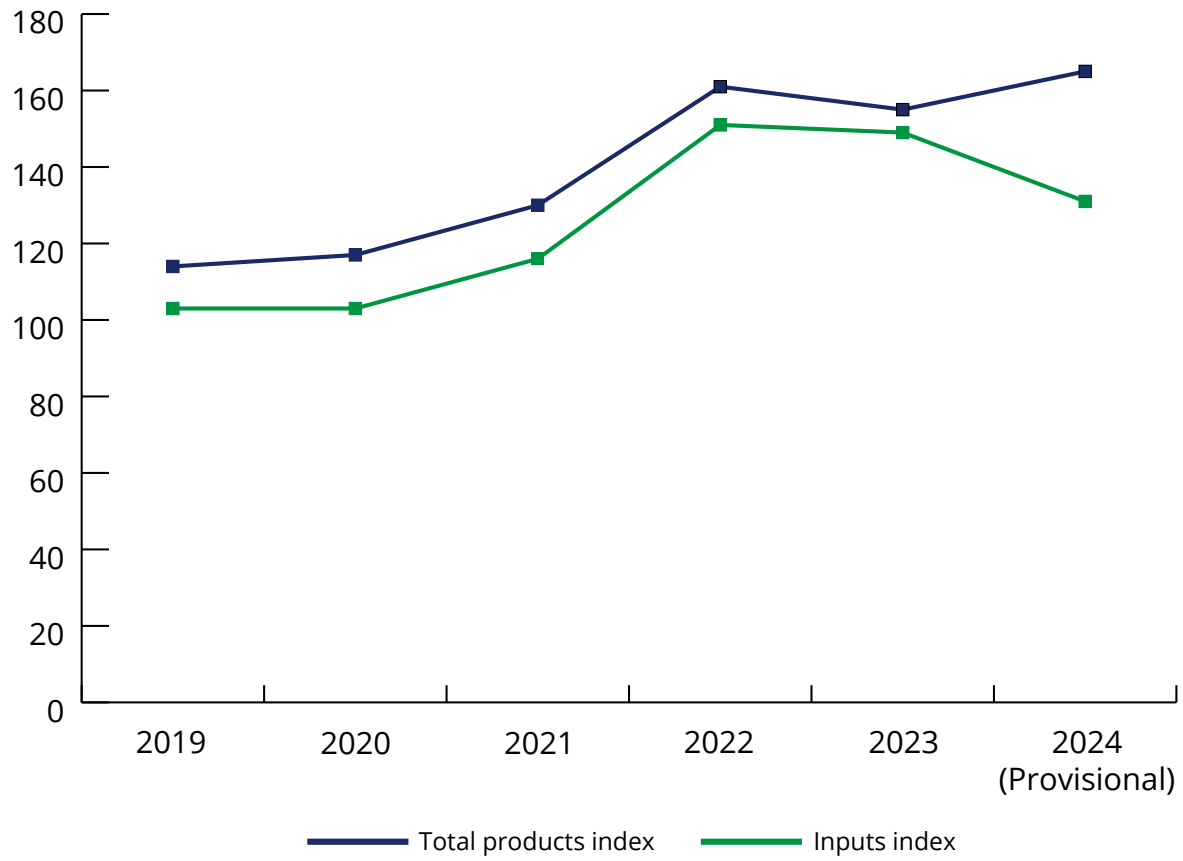
2024 (Provisional)							
	Adjusted ouputs	Estimated specific costs				Sector gross margins	
Sector		Feedstuffs	Fertilisers, seeds & sprays	Others	Total		
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	%
Total grazing livestock	1,903.7	614.5	92.5	45.0	752.1	1,151.6	70.8%
Total intensive livestock	915.6	560.9	-	20.3	581.2	334.5	20.6%
Total field crops	182.3	-	37.6	9.3	46.8	135.5	8.3%
Other items	14.2	8.0	1.2	0.1	9.4	4.8	0.3%
Total	**3,015.7**	**1,183.4**	**131.3**	**74.7**	**1,389.4**	**1,626.3**	**100.0%**

Refer to: Table 2.5 for the full dataset on aggregate gross margins estimates.

Producer prices

Compared with 2023, the annual average price indexes for 2024 were 6.6 per cent higher for agricultural outputs (total products index) and 12.6 per cent lower for agricultural inputs (inputs index). Whereas, when compared with 2015, the price indexes for outputs and inputs in 2024 were 65 per cent and 31 per cent above their respective 2015 levels.

Figure 2.6: Total products and inputs indices, Northern Ireland, 2019-2024 (2015 = 100)



Refer to: Table 2.6 for the dataset on quantities of the main products in output.

Refer to: Table 2.7 for the dataset on average producer prices of agricultural products.

Refer to: Table 2.8 for the full dataset on indices of producers prices of agricultural output.

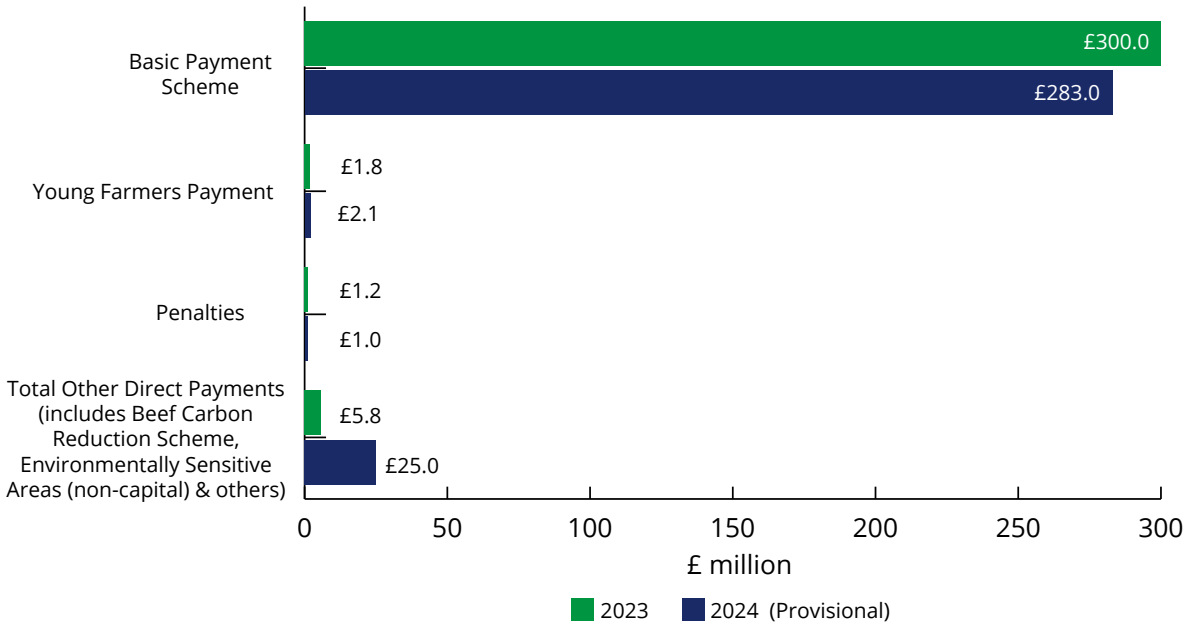
Refer to: Table 2.9 for the dataset on average market prices of breeding and store livestock.

Subsidies

Total direct payments to farmers increased by 0.9 per cent or £2.7 million, to £309.1 million in 2024.

The total value of the Basic and Young Farmer payments estimated to have accrued in 2024 was £285 million, a decrease of 5.5 per cent or £16.7 million compared with the equivalent payments in 2023. The Basic and Young Farmer payments account for approximately 92 per cent of all direct payments.

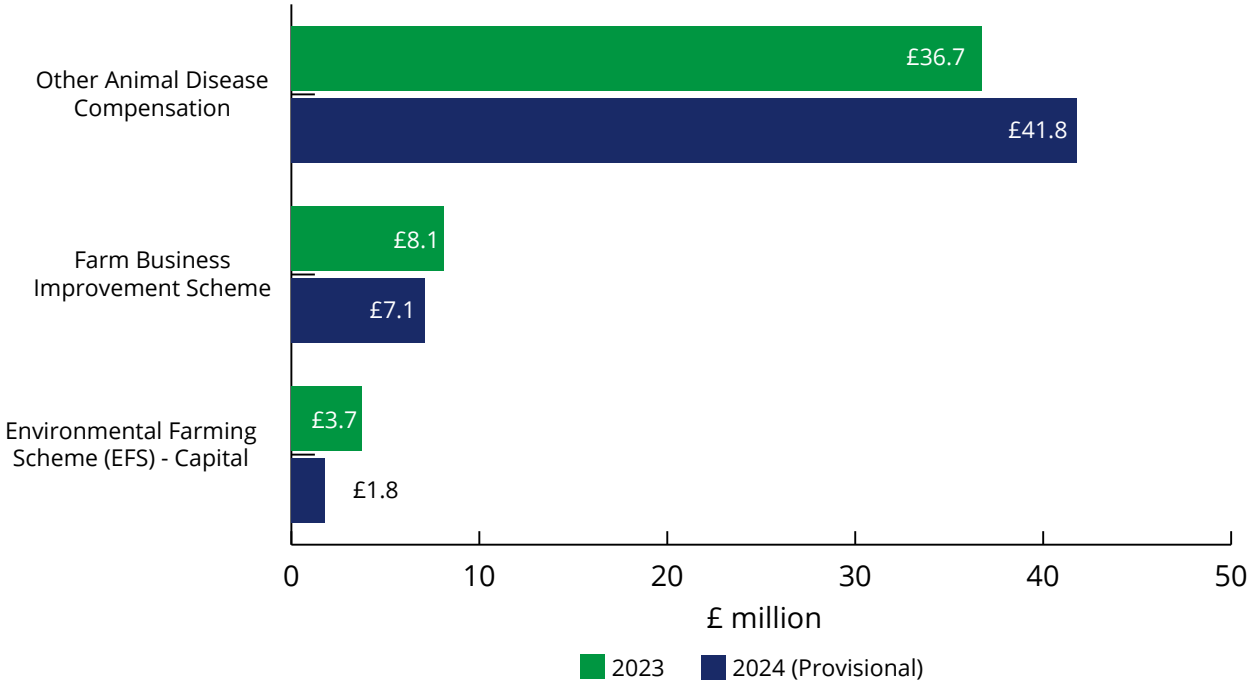
Figure 2.7: Direct payments included in the Northern Ireland Aggregate Agricultural Account, 2023-2024



Refer to: Table 2.10 for the full dataset on direct payments included in the Aggregate account.

Total capital grants to farmers decreased by 25.7 per cent or £3 million, to £8.8 million in 2024, due to decreases in grants from the Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS)- Capital and Farm Business Improvement Scheme. Whereas, **Animal Disease compensation payments** to farmers increased by 13.6 per cent or £5 million, to £41.8 million in 2024.

Figure 2.8: Capital grants and other direct payments in Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

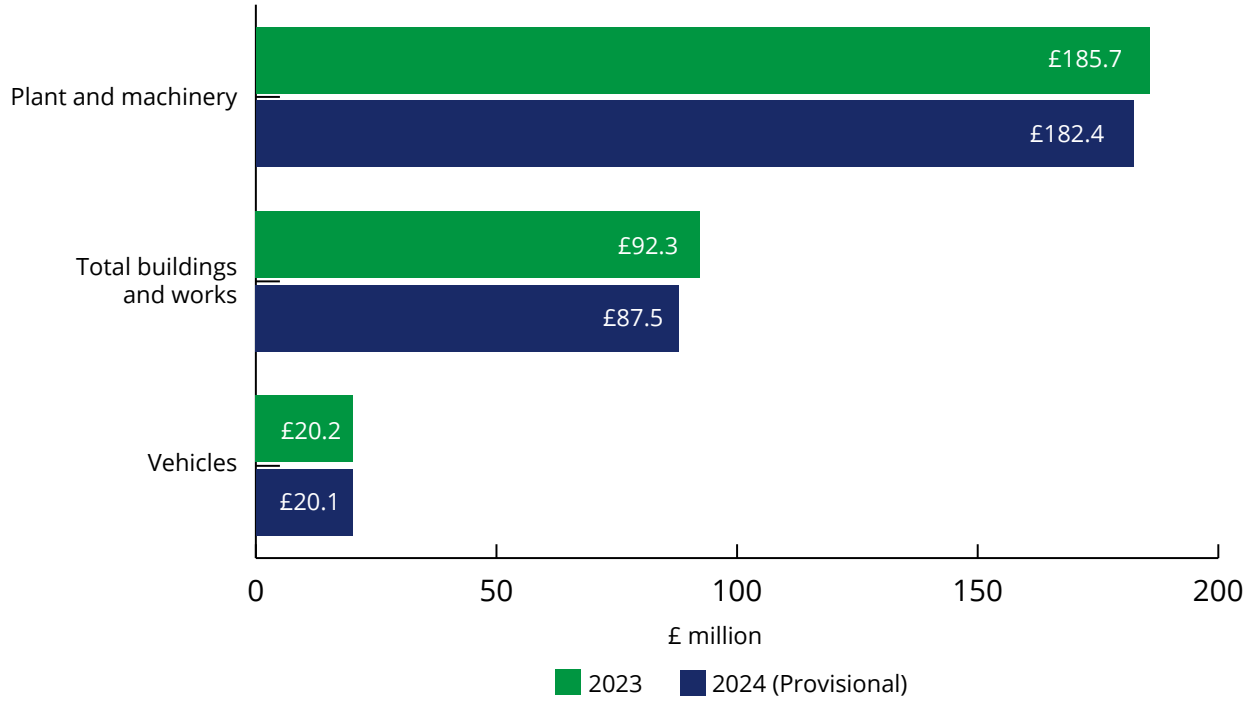


Refer to: Table 2.11 for the full dataset on capital grants and other payments not included in the Aggregate account.

Investment

Gross annual capital investment decreased by 2.6 per cent or £7.8 million to £290 million in 2024. Within this total there was a 1.6 per cent decrease in total investment in plant, machinery and vehicles, while investment in buildings and works was down by 4.8 per cent.

Figure 2.9: Gross annual capital investment in fixed assets and equipment in Northern Ireland, 2023-2024



Refer to: Table 2.12 for the full dataset on gross annual capital investment.

Milk Quality

Milk quality statistics show that butterfat content increased from 4.19 per cent in 2023 to 4.25 per cent in 2024 whereas protein content increased from 3.32 per cent in 2023 to 3.34 per cent in 2024.

Headline table on milk quality statistics in Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

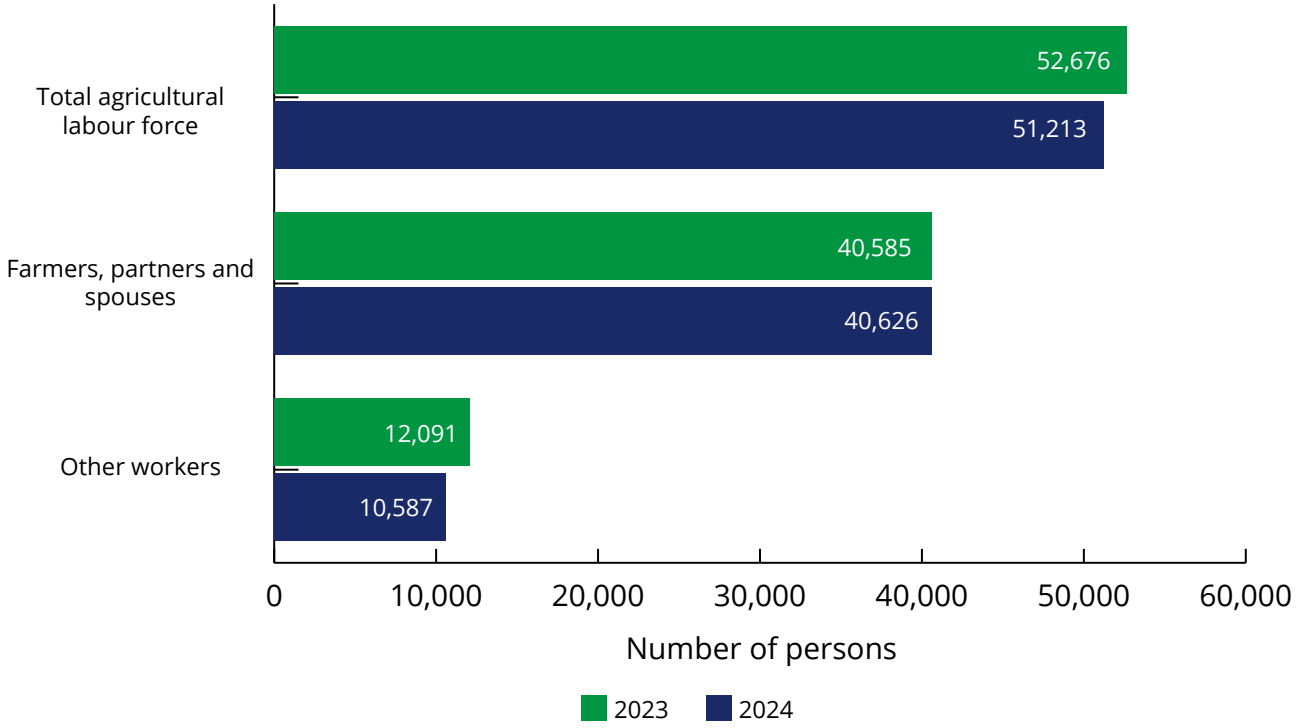
	Unit	2023	2024
Total bacterial Count	000' per ml	20	20
Somatic cell count	000' per ml	195	187
Butterfat content	%	4.19	4.25
Protein content	%	3.32	3.34
Lactose content	%	4.73	4.75

Refer to: Table 2.13 for the full dataset on milk quality statistics.

Agricultural labour force

The **agricultural labour force** in 2024 decreased by 2.8 per cent to 51,213 persons. Farmers, business partners, and spouses accounted for 79.3 per cent of the total agricultural labour force.

Figure 2.10: Number of persons working on farms in Northern Ireland, 2023-2024



Refer to: Table 2.14 for the full dataset on agricultural labour force.

Refer to: Table 2.15 for the dataset on agricultural manpower.

B. Commodities and Inputs

Key findings for 2024 compared to 2023 are as follows:

- The **value of output of cattle and calves** increased by 4.1 per cent to £658 million.
- The **value of output of milk** increased by 21.3 per cent to £1083 million. The average **gross milk price** (before deducting transport costs) was 41.27 pence per litre, a 16.9 per cent increase.
- Total **value of output of sheep and lambs** increased by 8.0 per cent to £123 million.
- The **value of output from the pig sector** decreased by 1.1 per cent to £295 million.
- The **value of output from the poultry sector** decreased by 6.9 per cent to £356 million.
- The **value of output for eggs** increased by 16.2 per cent to £264 million.
- The **value of potatoes output** rose by 9.5 per cent to just under £34 million.
- The **value of output for barley, wheat and oats** decreased by 1.1 per cent, 11.7 per cent and 16.6 per cent respectively to £24.1 million, £11.7 million, and £2.3 million (£38.2 million in total).
- The total **value of horticultural output** increased by 9.6 per cent to £93 million.
- The **total cost of purchased feedstuffs** decreased by 4.4 per cent to £1.18 billion. The average price of feedstuffs decreased by 11.6 per cent to £362 per tonne.
- The **total cost of fertiliser purchases** decreased by 11.3 per cent to £93 million.

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Introduction

This sub-chapter presents data on the values, prices and quantities of outputs and inputs components from the aggregate account for Northern Ireland Agriculture. Note that the values and prices presented are at current prices (not adjusted for inflation).

Cattle and calves

The number of clean cattle marketed during 2024 increased by 10.4 per cent to 374,415 head. The number of steers were 7.9 per cent higher at 169,617 head, heifers increased by 15.3 per cent to 162,067 head and the number of young bulls increased by 3.4 per cent to 42,534. Of the total number of clean cattle marketed, 197 head were exported. As a result, the proportion of steers in the slaughter mix decreased from 46.4 per cent in 2023 to 45.3 per cent in 2024, while the proportion of heifers increased from 41.5 per cent in 2023 to 43.3 per cent in 2024. Meanwhile, the proportion of young bulls slaughtered decreased from 12.1 per cent in 2023 to 11.4 per cent in 2024.

The average dressed carcase weights decreased by 0.3 per cent in 2024 to 339.2 kg. With the increase in cattle marketed the volume of clean beef produced increased by 10.1 per cent to 127,007 tonnes. The average producer price paid was 3.9 per cent higher at £4.78 per kilogram deadweight. The overall result of these changes was that the sales value of finished clean cattle increased by 14.4 per cent to £607 million.

Sales of culled cows and bulls increased by 2.3 per cent to 119,230 head in 2024. Average carcase weights for these animals was 0.3 per cent lower at 304 kg. The average price of culled cows and bulls decreased by 2.0 per cent to £3.17 per kilogram deadweight. Overall, total receipts from cull cattle sales, decreased 0.1 per cent to £115 million in 2024.

The number of calves presented for slaughter in 2024 increased by 2.5 per cent to 5,839 head. An estimated 182 calves were exported in 2024, which was an increase of 100.0 per cent compared with 2023 levels. The average calf price was 3.3 per cent higher at £886 per head and the revenue generated was £5.3 million.

The number of store cattle sold outside Northern Ireland increased by 21.5 per cent to 3,544 head in 2024. When combined with an 8.9 per cent increase in the average producer price paid to £1,016 per head, this generated revenues of £3.9 million; an increase of 32.3 per cent from 2023 levels. The main market outlet for these store cattle was Great Britain, which accounted for 77.5 per cent of these shipments.

Overall, the value of output of cattle and calves in 2024 (which deducts the value of imported cattle but includes breeding cattle and store cattle exports) increased by 4.1 per cent to £658 million.

Headline figures on output of cattle and calves, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Steers, heifers and young bulls		
Sales ('000 head)	339.2	374.4
Average producer price (p per kg dwt)	460.0	478.1
Average dressed carcase weight (kg)	340.1	339.2
Quantity of output ('000 tonnes)	115.4	127.0
Value of output (£m)	530.6	607.2
Cows and bulls		
Sales ('000 head)	116.5	119.2
Average producer price (p per kg dwt)	323.5	316.9
Average dressed carcase weight (kg)	305.2	304.2
Quantity of output ('000 tonnes)	35.6	36.3
Value of output (£m)	115.0	115.0

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Calves		
Sales ('000 head)	5.8	6.0
Average producer price (£ per head)	858	886
Value of output (£m)	5.0	5.3
Store cattle sold outside Northern Ireland		
Marketings ('000 head)	2.9	3.5
Average producer price (£ per head)	1,016	1,106
Value of output (£m)	3.0	3.9
Breeding cattle sold outside Northern Ireland		
Marketings ('000 head)	1.0	0.8
Average producer price (£ per head)	1,801	1,750
Value of output (£m)	1.8	1.5
Less Imported cattle		
Marketings ('000 head)	33.9	31.7
Average producer price (£ per head)	1,152	1,242
Value of output (£m)	39.1	39.4
Total Market Value (£m)	**616.3**	**693.5**
Stock change due to volume (£m)	15.8	-35.7
Total value of output (£m)	**632.1**	**657.8**

Refer to: Table 2.16 for the full dataset on output of cattle and calves.

Headline figures on sources of home-fed finished cattle marketed in Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

Per cent

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Cows and bulls	26	24
Steers and heifers originating from:		
- the dairy herd;		
- the beef herd;	39	40
- calves and stores imported from the Republic of Ireland or shipped from Great Britain	30	31
Total	**6**	**5**
Total number marketed ('000 head)	**100**	**100**

Refer to: Table 2.17 for the full dataset on sources of home-fed finished cattle.

Milk

The annual average dairy cow population in 2024 was 2.8 per cent higher than 2023 at 329,428 head. Average gross milk yield per cow increased from 7,967 litres in 2023 to 8,038 litres in 2024; a 0.9 per cent increase.

The higher dairy cow population and milk yields contributed to a 3.8 per cent increase in total milk output for 2024 in Northern Ireland; to 2.6 billion litres. The average gross milk price for 2023 (before deducting transport costs) was 41.27 pence per litre, a 16.9 per cent increase.

Overall, the value of output of milk increased by 21.3 per cent in 2024, to £1.08 billion.

Headline figures on output of milk, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Annual average number of dairy cows ('000 head)	320.4	329.4
Average gross yield per cow (to nearest 10 litres per annum)	7,967	8,038
Total output of milk for human consumption (million litres)	2,528	2,623
Average producer price (pence per litre)	35.31	41.27
Value of output (£m)	**892.6**	**1,082.5**

Refer to: Table 2.18 for the full dataset on output of milk.

Sheep and lambs

Marketings of clean sheep and lambs decreased by 8.7 per cent to 713,789 head in 2024, whereas, the average dressed carcase weight increased by 1.2 per cent in 2024 to 21.9 kg per head. As a result, the volume of clean sheep meat produced during 2024 decreased by 7.7 per cent to 15,611 tonnes. Clean sheep and lamb producer prices increased by 16.2 per cent to 639 pence per kg deadweight in 2024. The combined volume and price changes meant that the total market value of clean sheep and lambs increased by 7.3 per cent to £100 million.

Marketings of culled ewes and rams increased by 39.1 per cent to 212,565 head in 2024. There was a 20.4 per cent increase in the price received for these animals (£95 per head). These changes resulted in the value of market receipts for culled ewes and rams increasing to £20.2 million; an increase of 67.5 per cent.

Overall, the total value of output (which deducts the value of imported sheep but includes breeding sheep and store exports) from the sector increased by 8.0 per cent, to £123 million in 2024.

Headline figures on output of sheep, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Marketings ('000 head)		
Finished sheep and lambs	782.2	713.8
Culled ewes and rams	152.8	212.6
Average price (p per kg deadweight)		
Finished sheep and lambs	550.3	639.4
Culled ewes and rams	296.5	361.0
Average dressed carcase weight (kg)		
Finished sheep and lambs	21.6	21.9
Culled ewes and rams	26.7	26.4
Quantity of Output ('000 tonnes)		
Finished sheep and lambs	16.9	15.6
Culled ewes and rams	4.1	5.6
Market Value (£m)	**111.5**	**127.4**
Stock change due to volume (£m)	+2.0	-4.8
Value of output (£m)	**113.5**	**122.6**

Refer to: Table 2.19 for the full dataset on output of sheep.

Pigs

The number of clean pigs slaughtered in 2024 was 0.4 per cent higher at 1.50 million head. Average dressed carcase weights were 1.3 per cent higher at 96.3kg in 2024. When combined these changes resulted in a 1.7 per cent increase in the quantity of pigmeat produced to 144,223 tonnes. Pig producer prices decreased by 3.2 per cent to 208 pence per kg deadweight. As a result, the output from clean pig production was 1.5 per cent lower at £300 million.

Marketings of cull sows and boars were down by 14.1 per cent in 2024 at 13,463 head. The estimated market returns for these animals was £2.5 million in 2024. Overall, the value of output from the pig sector decreased by 1.1 per cent to £295 million (this figure includes deductions for the value of imported pigs and additions for the value of breeding and store pig exports).

Headline figures on output of pigs, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Marketings ('000 head)		
Finished clean pigs	1492.3	1497.7
Culled sows and boars	15.7	13.5
Average price (p per kg deadweight)		
Finished clean pigs	214.9	208.1
Culled sows and boars	137.0	132.0
Average dressed carcase weight (kg)		
Finished clean pigs	95.0	96.3
Quantity of output ('000 tonnes)		
Finished clean pigs	141.8	144.2
Culled sows and boars	2.2	1.9
Market value (£m)	**300.0**	**294.8**
Stock change due to volume (£m)	-1.7	+0.3
Value of output (£m)	**298.3**	**295.1**

Refer to: Table 2.20 for the full dataset on output of pigs.

Poultry

In 2024, the total volume of poultry meat production was 338,067 tonnes liveweight, an increase of 2.8 per cent from 2023 levels. Broiler production was 3.1 per cent higher at 317,838 tonnes liveweight. Broiler producer prices were lower than 2023 levels by 10.0 per cent at 104 pence per kg. Overall, as a result of these changes the market value of broilers in 2024 was 7.2 per cent lower at £331 million. Broilers accounted for 94 per cent of the total market value of the poultry sector.

Turkey production decreased in 2024, by 9.2 per cent, to 3,065 tonnes liveweight.

The value of output from the poultry sector in 2024 was £356 million; 6.9 per cent lower than 2023.

Headline figures on output of poultry, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Poultrymeat production ('000 tonnes liveweight)		
All poultrymeat (including broilers)	328.8	338.1
Broilers	308.3	317.8
Average producer price (p per kg liveweight)		
All poultrymeat (including broilers)	110.5	99.9
Broilers	115.8	104.2
Market value		
All poultry (£m)	381.3	352.0
of which broilers	356.8	331.3
Stock change due to volume (£m)	+0.7	+3.6
Value of Output (£m)	**381.9**	**355.6**

Refer to: Table 2.21 for the full dataset on output of poultry.

Eggs

Packing station throughput of graded eggs was estimated at 170 million dozen eggs in 2024. This was an increase of 5.7 per cent on 2023 levels. The proportion of throughput attributed to free range management systems in 2024 increased from 2023 at 83.9 per cent, whereas eggs originating from intensive systems accounted for 16.1 per cent of throughput.

The average producer price of eggs increased by 9.1 per cent, to 146 pence per dozen. Overall, the value of output for eggs increased by 16.2 per cent to £264 million (this figure includes eggs for processing, unrecorded sales for human consumption and duck eggs).

Headline figures on output of eggs, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Graded packing station throughput (million dozen)	161.1	170.4
Average producer price (p per dozen)	133.9	146.1
Value of output (£m)	**227.3**	**264.1**

Refer to: Table 2.22 for the full dataset on output of eggs.

Potatoes

The area of potatoes planted in 2024 decreased by 5.0 per cent to 3,096 hectares. The average yield decreased, by 5.9 per cent, to 41 tonnes per hectare. As a result of these changes the total quantity of potatoes harvested in 2024 is estimated to be 10.6 per cent lower at 127,199 tonnes.

Marketings of ware potatoes during 2024 were 9.1 per cent higher at 109,860 tonnes. In 2024, the volume of seed potato output (including home-saved seed) increased by 1.5 per cent to 8,213 tonnes. In total for 2024, the volume of potato output (including ware, seed and stockfeed potatoes) was 133,255 tonnes. This was an increase of 6.7 per cent.

The average price of ware potatoes was £320 per tonne in 2024, an increase of 18.8 per cent from 2023 levels. The average price of seed potatoes was higher than 2023 at £242 per tonne. Overall, the total value of potato output rose in 2024, by 9.5 per cent, to just under £34 million.

Headline figures on potatoes production, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Potatoes		
Area ('000 hectares)	3.3	3.1
Harvestable yield (tonnes per hectare)	43.7	41.1
Production ('000 tonnes)	142.2	127.2
of which:		
saleable potatoes	123.6	115.5
chats and waste	18.6	11.7

Refer to: Table 2.23 for the full dataset on cereals production.

Headline figures on output of potatoes, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Potatoes Quantity of output ('000 tonnes)		
Ware	100.7	109.9
Seed	8.1	8.2
Stockfeed	16.1	15.2
Total	**124.9**	**133.3**
Average producer price (£ per tonne)		
Ware	269.2	319.8
Seed	199.8	242.3
Market Value (£m)		
Ware	27.1	35.1
Seed	1.6	2.0
Stockfeed	0.4	0.3
Total	**29.1**	**37.4**
Stock change due to volume (£m)	+1.7	-3.7
Value of output (£m)	**30.8**	**33.7**

Refer to: Table 2.24 for the full dataset on output of potatoes.

Cereals

The area of spring barley sown in 2024 was 3.7 per cent higher than 2023 levels at 13,597 hectares, while recorded yields were up by 36.8 per cent. As a consequence, production of spring barley increased by 41.8 per cent to 81,012 tonnes. The area of winter barley sown, in 2024, was down by 18.0 per cent to 6,841 hectares, while yields were up by 0.2 per cent. These changes resulted in the production of winter barley decreasing by 17.8 per cent to 44,550 tonnes. Overall, total barley production was 12.8 per cent higher in 2024 at 125,562 tonnes, with the total area of barley grown down 4.7 per cent at 20,438 hectares and yields up 18.4 at 6.14 tonnes per hectare.

The total volume of barley sold or used on-farm in 2024 was 5.7 per cent lower at 120,410 tonnes. The average producer price of barley decreased, by 11.6 per cent, to £192 per tonne. These changes plus an increase in stocks resulted in the value of barley output decreasing by 1.1 per cent to £24.1 million.

The area of wheat grown in 2024 was 3.4 per cent lower at 8,029 hectares. This coupled with a 3.3 per cent increase in yields resulted in production being down by 0.2 per cent to 56,986 tonnes.

In 2024, the volume of wheat sold or used on-farm was 8.7 per cent lower at 56,075 tonnes, while the price per tonne of wheat decreased by 11.1 per cent to £205 per tonne. These changes plus an increase in stocks contributed to the value of wheat output decreasing by 11.7 per cent to £11.7 million.

The area of oats grown in 2024 was 6.9 per cent lower at 1,788 hectares with yields increasing by 7.1 per cent. This resulted in oats production decreasing by 0.3 per cent to 10,759 tonnes. The average producer price of oats was 17.1 per cent lower at £218 per tonne. The changes in price and production plus stock changes resulted in the value of oat output decreasing by 16.6 per cent to £2.3 million.

Headline figures on output of cereals, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Barley		
Area ('000 hectares)	21.5	20.4
Yield (tonnes per hectare)	5.2	6.1
Production ('000 tonnes)	111.3	125.6
Wheat		
Area ('000 hectares)	8.3	8.0
Yield (tonnes per hectare)	6.9	7.1
Production ('000 tonnes)	57.1	57.0
Oats		
Area ('000 hectares)	1.9	1.8
Yield (tonnes per hectare)	5.6	6.0
Production ('000 tonnes)	10.8	10.8

Refer to: Table 2.23 for the full dataset on cereals production.

Headline figures on output of barley and wheat, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Barley		
Quantity of output ('000 tonnes)	127.7	120.4
Average producer price (£ per tonne)	217.5	192.3
Market Value (£m)	**27.8**	**23.2**
Stock change due to volume (£m)	-3.4	1.0
Value of output (£m)	**24.4**	**24.1**
Wheat		
Quantity of output ('000 tonnes)	61.4	56.1
Average producer price (£ per tonne)	230.6	205.0
Market Value (£m)	**14.2**	**11.5**
Stock change due to volume (£m)	-0.9	0.2
Value of output (£m)	**13.2**	**11.7**

Refer to: Table 2.24 for the full dataset on output of cereals.

Horticulture

The total value of horticultural output in 2024 increased by 9.6 per cent to £93.4 million. Returns from the sale of fruit (mainly apples) increased by 0.5 per cent to £11.5 million. Apple production decreased by 15.8 per cent to 40,258 tonnes while prices increased by 9.0 per cent. Overall, the market value of apples decreased by 8.3 per cent to £8.5 million. The value of output from mushrooms decreased by 2.4 per cent to £40 million as a result of an 8.7 per cent decrease in production and a price increase of 7.0 per cent. Receipts from the sale of vegetables decreased by 12.2 per cent to £17.1 million. The output value of ornamental and hardy nursery stock increased by 83.4 per cent to £25.1 million.

Headline figures on output of apples and mushrooms, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Apple		
Quantity of output ('000 tonnes)	47.8	40.3
Average producer price (£ per tonne)	195	212
Market value (£m)	**9.3**	**8.5**
Stock change due to volume (£m)	0.0	-1.0
Value of Output (£m)	**9.3**	**7.5**

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Mushrooms		
Quantity of output ('000 tonnes)	20.8	19.0
Average producer price (£ per tonne)	1,949	2,084
Value of output (£m)	**40.6**	**39.6**

Refer to: Table 2.25 for the full dataset on output of apples and mushrooms.

Feedstuffs

The total volume of all compound feedstuffs purchased during 2024 was 7.1 per cent higher than the 2023 levels at 2.74 million tonnes. Within this total, the purchased volumes of all cattle (and calf) compounds increased by 9.4 per cent with dairy compounds purchased increasing by 6.2 per cent and beef cattle compounds decreasing by 2.0 per cent. The volume of sheep compounds purchased were 4.4 per cent higher. Total purchases of pig compounds rose in 2024 by 11.8 per cent while poultry compounds increased by 4.5 per cent.

Inputs of straights (including home-fed cereals) rose by 9.4 per cent in 2024 to 435,690 tonnes. In total, the volume of all feed purchased was 7.5 per cent higher in 2024 at 3.2 million tonnes. The average price of feedstuffs (compounds and home-fed cereals) decreased, by 11.6 per cent, to £362 per tonne in 2024. Overall, the cost of purchased feedstuffs in 2024 decreased by 5.0 per cent, to £1.18 billion.

Headline figures on quantity and cost of feedstuffs, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Feedstuffs		
Total quantity purchased ('000 tonnes concentrate equivalent)	3,020	3,246
of which : Non-concentrates ('000 tonnes)	62	70
Compounds ('000 tonnes)	2,559	2,740
Straights & cereals fed on-farm ('000 tonnes)	398	436
Average cost (£ per tonne concentrate equivalent)	410	362
Value of feed consumed (£m)	**1,238**	**1,183**

Refer to: Table 2.26 for the full dataset on quantity and cost of feedstuffs.

Fertilisers and lime

The quantity of fertilisers purchased in 2024 increased by 20.7 per cent to 266,439 tonnes while the average price decreased by 26.5 per cent to £351 per tonne. In volume terms, 49.6 per cent of total fertiliser sales were straights, while 50.4 per cent were compounds.

As a result of these movements in both quantity purchased and price paid, the total value of fertiliser purchases decreased, by 11.3 per cent, to £93.4 million.

Total expenditure on lime increased by 16.2 per cent when compared to 2023 levels to £7.5 million. The quantity purchased increased by 23.4 per cent to 155,160 tonnes while the price paid decreased by 5.8 per cent.

Headline figures on quantity and cost of fertilisers and lime, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Fertilisers		
Quantity purchased ('000 tonnes product)	221	266
Average cost (£ per tonne)	477	351
Value of purchases (£m)	**105.3**	**93.4**
Lime		
Quantity purchased ('000 tonnes)	126	155
Average cost (£ per tonne)	51.52	48.53
Value of purchases (£m)	**6.5**	**7.5**

Refer to: Table 2.26 for the full dataset on quantity and cost of fertilisers and lime.

Marketing expenses

In 2024 total marketing expenses were 4.1 per cent higher than 2023 levels at £41.1 million. Cattle marketing expenses were £25.3 million, while sheep expenses were £4.0 million. Marketing expenses for milk were £6.3 million, while those for pigs were £5.5 million.

Headline figures on marketing expenses, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

£ million

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Marketing expenses		
Cattle	23.7	25.3
Sheep	4.1	4.0
Pigs	5.4	5.5
Milk	6.3	6.3
Total	**39.5**	**41.1**

Refer to: Table 2.26 for the full dataset on marketing expenses.

Machinery expenses

Machinery expenses in 2024 decreased, by 1.2 per cent, to £198.8 million. This decrease was driven by a 7.8 per cent decrease in fuel and oil costs, reflecting global price commodity movements.

Headline figures on machinery expenses, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Total machinery expenses (excl. depreciation)	201.2	198.8

Refer to: Table 2.1 for the full dataset on machinery expenses.

Interest

Total farm borrowings in 2024 increased by 0.3 per cent. The average cost of borrowing is estimated to have increased from 8.68 per cent in 2023 to 9.11 per cent in 2024. As a result, the total interest bill (including FISIM) increased by 4.9 per cent in 2024 to £95.1 million.

Financial intermediaries (mainly banks) charge explicit commissions and fees for their services to customers, as well as implicit ones by paying and charging different rates of interest to borrowers and lenders. The revenue from the margin on lending and borrowing by financial intermediaries is described as financial intermediation services indirectly measured (FISIM). The inclusion of FISIM in the account is in line with recommended EU national accounting conventions. It is a reallocation to gross output of part of the interest paid by farmers. While the inclusion of FISIM will increase intermediate consumption and decrease gross value added, it will decrease, by the same amount, the figure shown for interest paid and consequently this change in methodology has no impact on total income from farming.

Headline figures on bank interest, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Interest		
Bank base lending rate (%)	4.7	5.1
Total interest charges (£m)	**90.7**	**95.1**

Refer to: Table 2.26 for the full dataset on interest charges.

Labour

In 2024, the volume of paid labour input (excluding labour used on capital projects) was 17.1 per cent lower, at 7.26 million hours. The cost of paid labour was 17.3 per cent lower than 2023 at £86.2 million.

Headline figures on quantity and cost of labour, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024

	2023	2024 (Provisional)
Labour		
Volume of paid labour (million hours)	8.76	7.26
Value of paid labour (£m)	**104.3**	**86.2**

Refer to: Table 2.26 for the full dataset on labour.

3. Crop Areas and Livestock Numbers

Summary

Key findings for 2024 compared to 2023 are as follows:

- **Farms:** In June 2024 there were 26,190 farms in Northern Ireland with approximately 1.04 million hectares of land farmed, similar to 2023 (26,131 farms and 1.04 million hectares).
- **Cattle:** Total cattle numbers have remained stable at around 1.67 million. The number of dairy cows increased by 1.9 per cent to 325,325, while the number of beef cows decreased by 4.3 per cent to 226,000.
- **Sheep:** There was a decrease of 4.4 per cent in breeding ewes compared to 2023, with numbers falling to 930,447. Overall, the total number of sheep recorded was approximately 1.97 million, which was a 3.8 per cent fall from June 2023.
- **Poultry:** Total poultry numbers on farms at June 2024 decreased by 7.3 per cent from 2023 levels with 23.7 million birds recorded. Total number of laying birds saw an increase of 4.2 per cent whilst broiler numbers decreased by 14.0 per cent and other poultry decreased by 17.0 per cent compared to June 2023.
- **Pigs:** Total pig numbers recorded in June 2024 increased by 1.4 per cent to 692,091 compared to June 2023.
- **Crop areas:** The total area of crops grown in Northern Ireland in 2024 was approximately 46,795 hectares, a decrease of 2.1 per cent from 2023.
- **Cereals:** The total area of cereals (30,342 hectares) grown in 2024 decreased by 4.6 per cent from 2023. Wheat crops decreased by 3.4 per cent to 8,029 hectares, Winter Barley decreased by 18.0 per cent and Spring Barley increased by 3.7 per cent, while Oats decreased by 7.0 per cent from 2023, at 1,788 hectares.

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Introduction

The data in this chapter are sourced from the Agricultural Census which is conducted in June each year. The statistics are compiled from a survey of farm businesses augmented by administrative data (*Northern Ireland Farm Information System NIFAIS, cattle tracing system)*. The statistics provide robust estimates of crop areas, numbers of livestock and of farmers and workers on active farm businesses on the survey date of 1st June 2024. The population of farms to which these statistics refer includes all active farm businesses having one or more hectare of farmed land, whether owned, leased or taken in conacre, and those with under one hectare having any cattle, sheep, or pigs, or with significant poultry or horticultural activity.

Land use

Approximately 77.5 per cent of the total Northern Ireland land area of 1.35 million hectares is used for agriculture, including common rough grazing. Around 8.8 per cent of the total land area is used for forestry (Table 3.1). The greater part (52.2 per cent)

of the total forested area (119,000 hectares) is managed by the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (see F*orest Service Annual Report, 2023/2024*[1]).

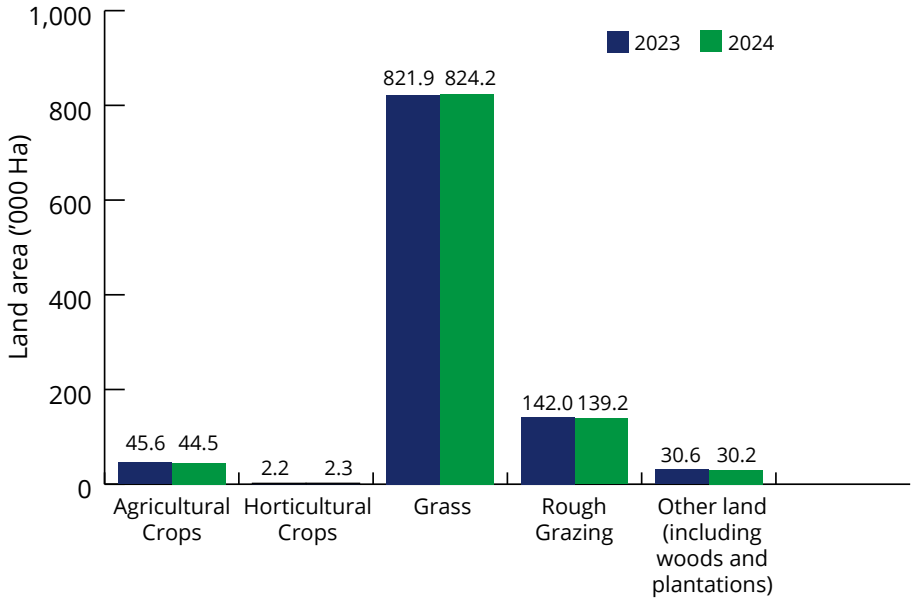
Headline figures for land use in Northern Ireland, 2024 (thousand hectares)

	Crops	Grass and rough grazing	Woodland	Other land	Total land area
Farms	47	963	19	11	1,040
Common grazing	-	39	-	-	39
NI Forest Service	-	-	62	13	75
Other areas	-	-	38	162	199
All land	**47**	**1,002**	**119**	**185**	**1,353**

Refer to: Table 3.1 Land use in Northern Ireland, 2024.

Most farmland in Northern Ireland is under grass (79.2 per cent). Arable or horticultural crops occupy 46,795 hectares and make up just 4.5 per cent of the total area farmed. Barley (20,438 hectares) is the main crop grown followed by wheat with 8,029 hectares. The total area of cereals grown (30,342 hectares) was 4.6 per cent less in 2024 than in 2023. In 2024, the area of potatoes grown was 5.0 per cent less than 2023 levels at 3,096 hectares. In 2023, the cropped area also included 2,258 hectares of horticultural crops, mainly apple orchards (1,241 hectares) and vegetables (840 hectares).

Figure 3.1: Land use, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024 (thousand hectares)



Refer to: Table 3.2 Land use in Northern Ireland, 2023.

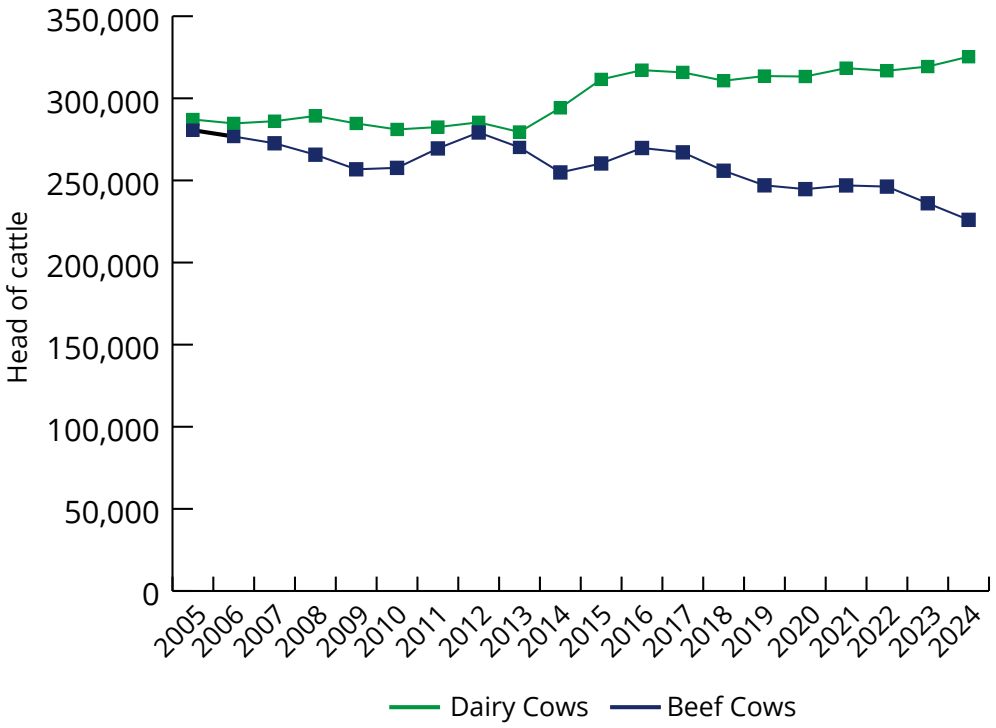
Grazing livestock

All but 7.8 per cent of Northern Ireland farms keep cattle or sheep. In 2024, cattle were present on 20,232 farms (77.3 per cent), sheep on 10,026 farms (38.3 per cent) and cattle and/or sheep on 24,135 farms (92 per cent).

1 Available on the DAERA website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/forest-service-annual-reports

Cattle: The total number of cattle on farms at the time of the June 2024 Agricultural Census remained stable compared with 2023 at approximately 1.67 million. The number of beef cows decreased by 4.3 per cent to 226,000 and the number of dairy cows increased by 1.9 per cent to 325,325. The total cattle population peaked in 1998 at 1.77 million before gradually falling to just under 1.60 million in 2009. Since then, the total number has remained relatively stable.

Figure 3.2: Number of beef and dairy cows, Northern Ireland 2005-2024



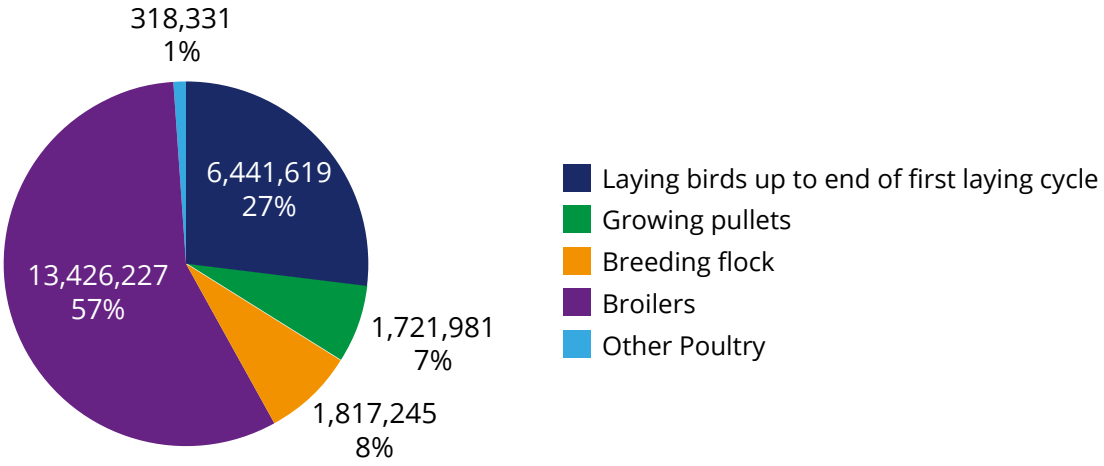
Refer to: Table 3.3 Livestock numbers in Northern Ireland, June 2019-2024.

Intensive livestock

In Northern Ireland, pigs and/or poultry (for commercial purposes) are present on 5.1 per cent of farms.

Poultry: Total poultry numbers decreased by 7.3 per cent from 2023 with 23.7 million birds recorded in 2024. The total number of laying flock (9.98 million) saw an increase of 4.2 per cent whilst broiler numbers (13.4 million) decreased by 14.0 per cent and other poultry decreased by 17.0 per cent compared to June 2023.

Figure 3.3: Number of Poultry, Northern Ireland 2024

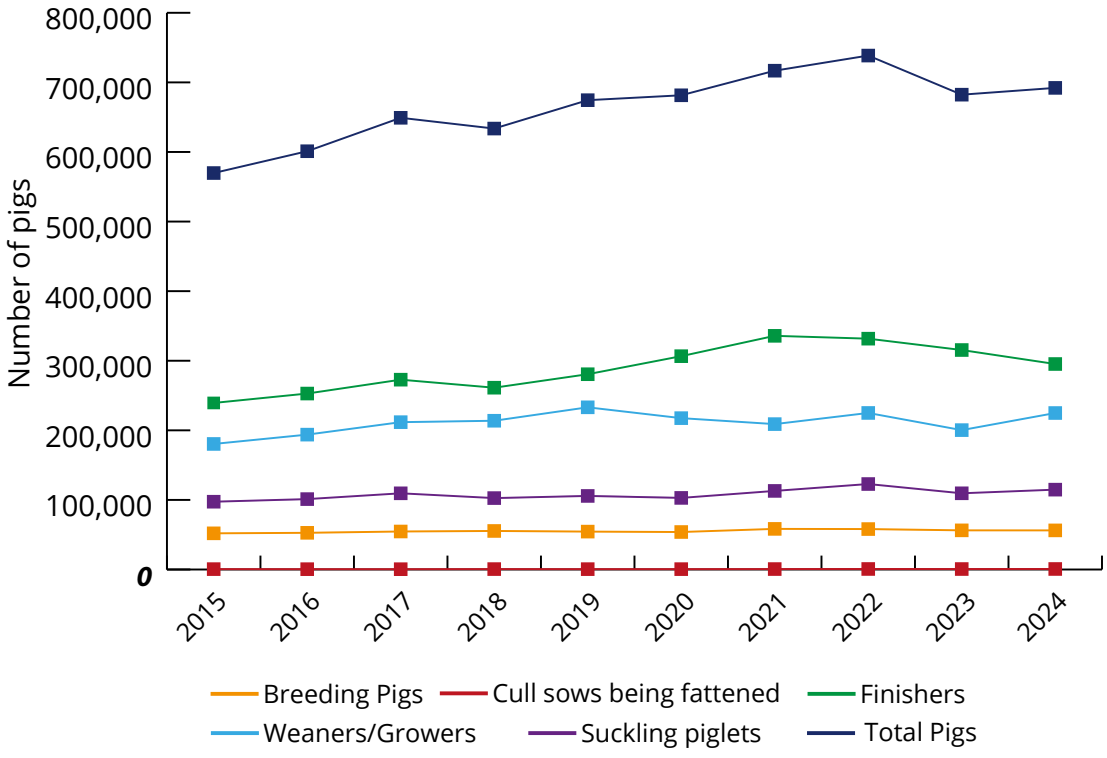


Refer to: Table 3.3 Livestock numbers in Northern Ireland, June 2019-2024.

Pigs: There has been a slight increase in total pig numbers recorded on the farm census in June 2024 of 1.4 per cent to 692,091 from 682,339 in 2023.

In comparison to 2023, the total breeding herd (including breeding sows, gilts in pig, maiden gilts, and boars) remained unchanged at 56,220 (56,274 in 2023). The number of weaners and growers increased by 12.2 per cent to 224,884 and suckling piglets increased by 4.8 per cent to 114,762. The number of female breeding pigs (breeding sows and gilts in pig) decreased by 5.1 per cent to 45,407 in 2024.

Figure 3.4: Type of Pigs, Northern Ireland 2015 - 2024



Refer to: Table 3.3 Livestock numbers in Northern Ireland, June 2019-2024.

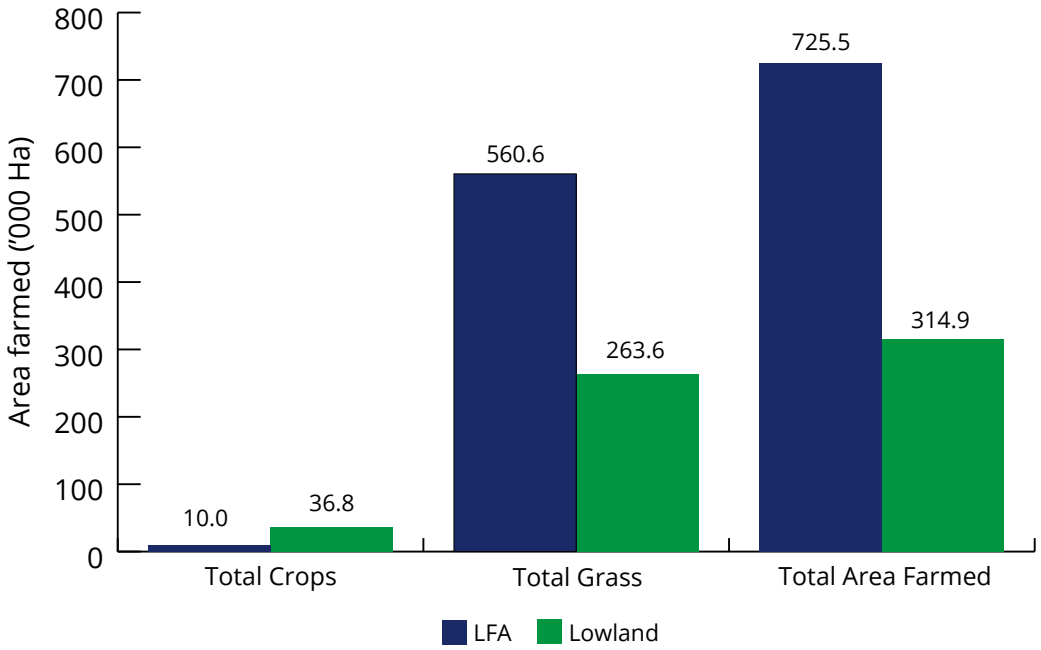
Most pigs are concentrated in relatively few farms, with units of more than 200 sows on 1st June accounting for 17.6 per cent of herds but 79 per cent of total breeding sows.

Less Favoured Areas

The term Less Favoured Areas (LFA) is used to describe those parts of the country which, because of their relatively poor agricultural conditions, were designated as such under EU legislation. Further details are given in the Appendix.

Farms classed as **LFA farms** occupy 69.7 per cent of farmed land in Northern Ireland and livestock farming predominates. Crops occupy 11.7 per cent of land on lowland farms compared with only 1.4 per cent in the case of LFA farms.

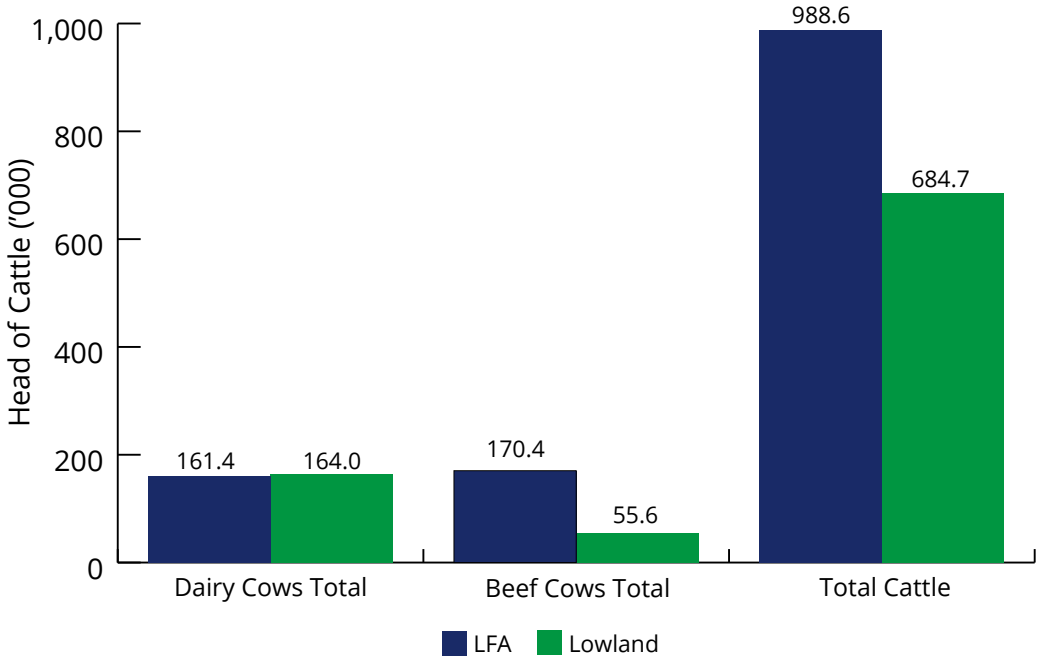
Figure 3.5: Land use by Less Favoured Area (LFA) category of farm, Northern Ireland, June 2024 (thousand hectares)



Refer to: Table 3.4 Areas of crops, grass, rough grazing and other land by Less Favoured Area, June 2024.

There are also significant differences in the patterns of livestock farming. There were more beef cows (170,423) than dairy cows (161,347) on **LFA farms**, while in contrast, dairy cows (163,978) predominate on **lowland farms** compared to beef cows (55,577) in 2024.

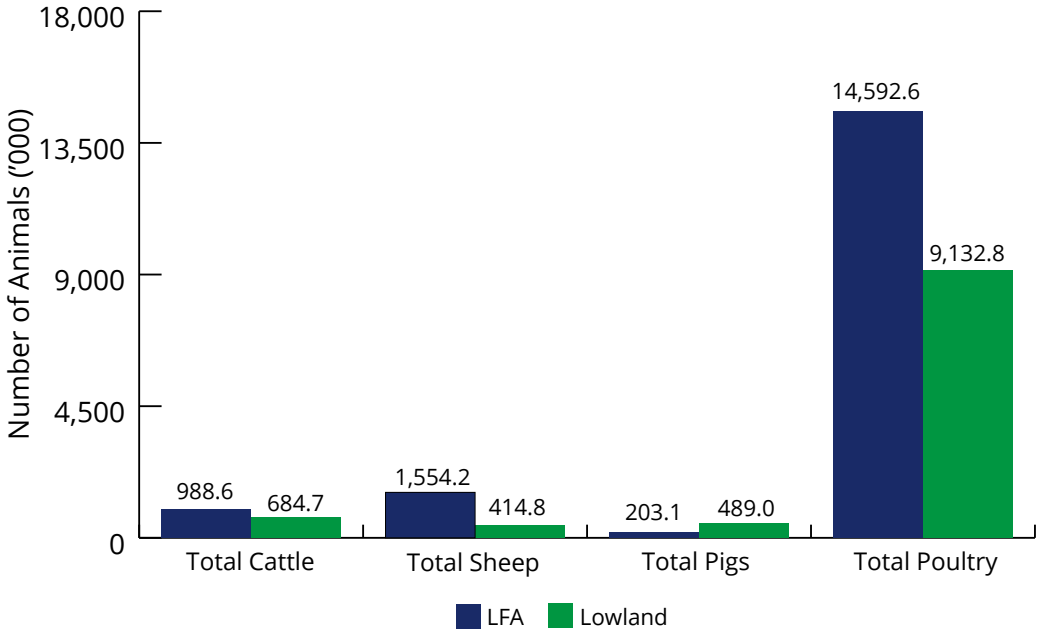
Figure 3.6: Beef cows, dairy cows and total cattle by Less Favoured Area (LFA) category of farm (thousand head), Northern Ireland, June 2024



Refer to: Table 3.5 Livestock numbers by Less Favoured Area (LFA) category of farm, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

LFA farms account for 29.3 per cent and 61.5 per cent of the Northern Ireland's pigs and poultry, respectively (Table 3.5).

Figure 3.7: Livestock by Less Favoured Area (LFA) category of farm (thousand head), Northern Ireland, June 2024



Refer to: Table 3.5 Livestock numbers by Less Favoured Area (LFA) category of farm, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

4. Farm Structure

Summary

- **Farm Structure:** In Northern Ireland almost four-fifths of farms (79.3 per cent) are very small (20,779 in 2024). Over three quarters of farms in Northern Ireland (77.3 per cent) have some cattle, 38.3 per cent have some sheep, 3.7 per cent have some poultry and 1.5 per cent have some pigs.
- **Farmers and workers:** In June 2024 the were a total of 51,213 farm workers, of which 79.3 per cent were farmers, directors, partners or spouses.

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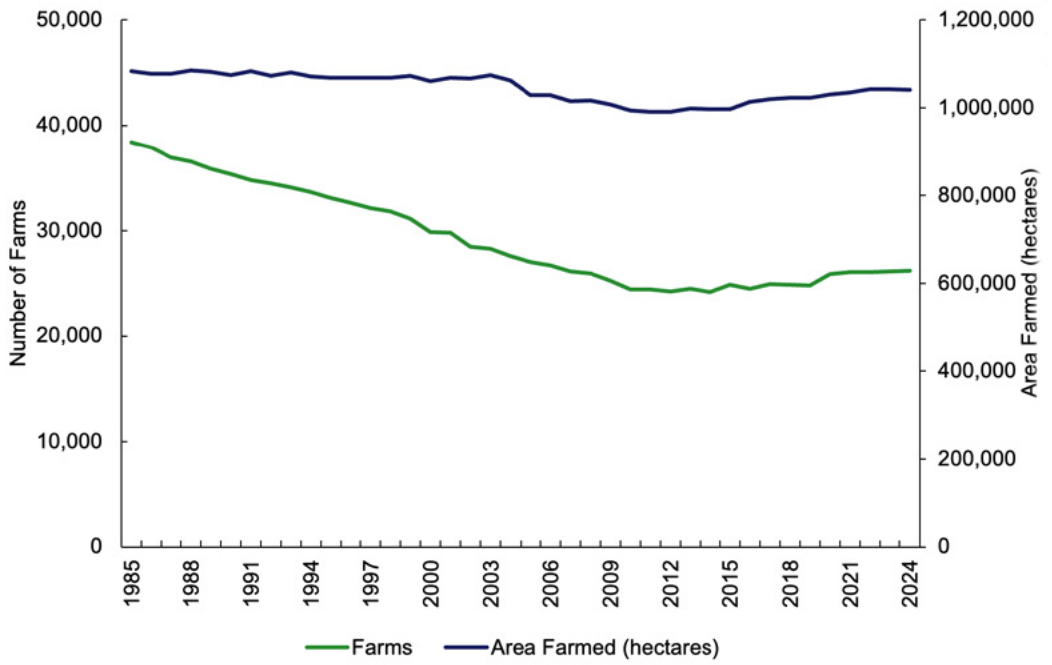
Farms

In June 2024 there were 26,190 farms in Northern Ireland with 1,040,392 hectares of land farmed.

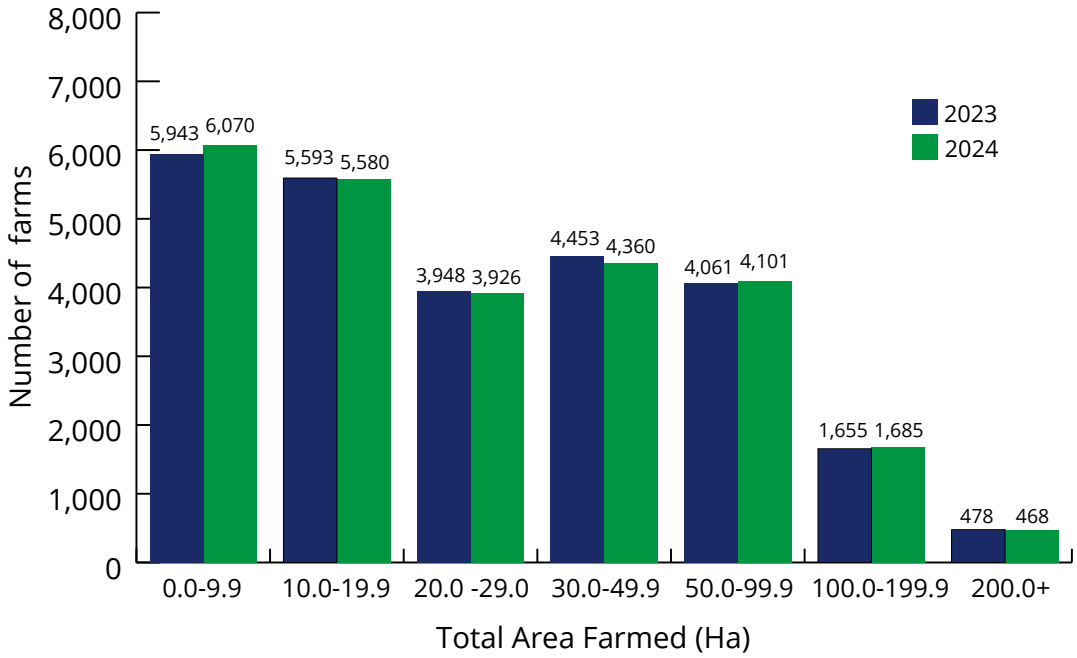
Figure 4.1: Number of farms and area farmed, Northern Ireland, 1985-2024



Refer to: Table 3.2 Areas of crops, grass, rough grazing and other land, June 2019 - 2024.
Refer to: Table 4.1 Number and area of farms by area farmed, Northern Ireland, June 2024.
Refer to: Table 4.2 Number of farms, average area and distribution of area by area farmed, Northern Ireland, 2019-2024.

Over one quarter (26.4 per cent) of farms have less than 10 hectares of crops and grass, while 1,562 farms (6.0 per cent) have 100 hectares or more. The latter occupy 28.0 per cent of the total area of crops and grass.

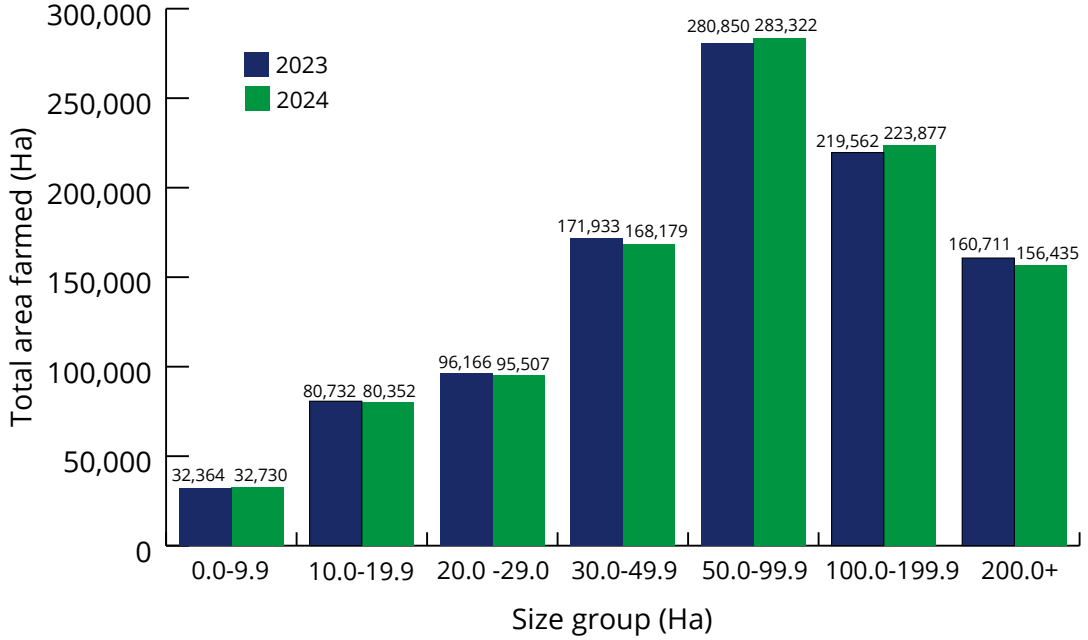
Figure 4.2: Number of farms by size group of total area farmed (Hectares), Northern Ireland, 2023-2024



Refer to: Table 4.1 Number and area of farms by area farmed, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

The size group occupying the largest area of land is the 50 to 99.9 hectares category.

Figure 4.3: Total area farmed (Hectares) by size group, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024



Refer to: Table 4.1 Number and area of farms by area farmed, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

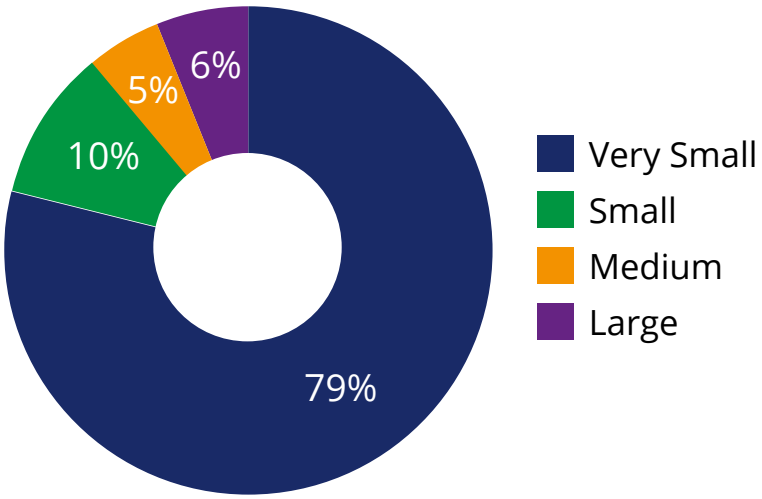
Business size

Almost four fifths of farm businesses in Northern Ireland (79.3 per cent), are classified as **very small**. In 2024, there were 20,779 farms in this category. These farms are unlikely to provide full time employment or an adequate income solely from farming activities.[2] They contribute 19.6 per cent of the industry's total standard output (SO) but account for 49.5 per cent of the farmed area. The main activities of these farms are cattle and sheep rearing. In 2024, 61.1 per cent of beef cows[3] and 52.8 per cent of total sheep were found on very small farms (Table 4.14). Just under 35,000 persons are engaged in the work of these farms (Table 4.12).

In 2024 there were 2,504 **small** farms, 9.6 per cent of all farms in Northern Ireland. These farms make important contributions to all sectors, for example accounting for 22.2 per cent of poultry and 24.4 per cent of total sheep activities; they cover 18.1 per cent of the agricultural area and involve 13.9 per cent of the full-time agricultural labour force.

The 1,221 **medium** and 1,686 **large** farms (together representing 11.1 per cent of all farms) contribute just under 65.6 per cent of the total SO from approximately one third (32.4 per cent) of the land area. These farms dominate the dairy, pigs and poultry sectors with 87.1, 95.5 and 70.4 per cent shares of the livestock numbers, respectively.

Figure 4.4: Farm Size, Northern Ireland, June 2024

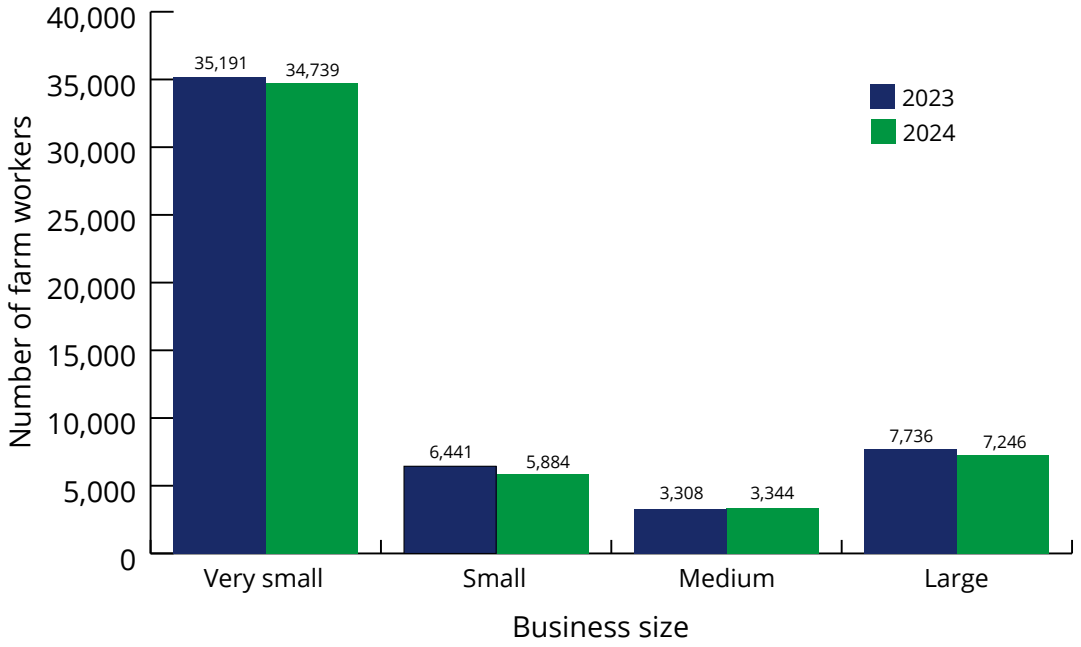


Refer to: Table 4.4 Number of farms by business size, Northern Ireland, 2019 - 2024.

Farmers and workers: The total number of farm workers decreased by 2.8 per cent to 51,213 in 2024 from 52,676 in 2023. Figure 4.5 shows the breakdown of these total farm workers by farm business size. Figure 4.6 shows that the breakdown of these total farm workers between farmers, directors, partners or spouses (79.3 per cent in 2024) and all other farm workers (20.7 per cent in 2024) has remained relatively stable since 2005.

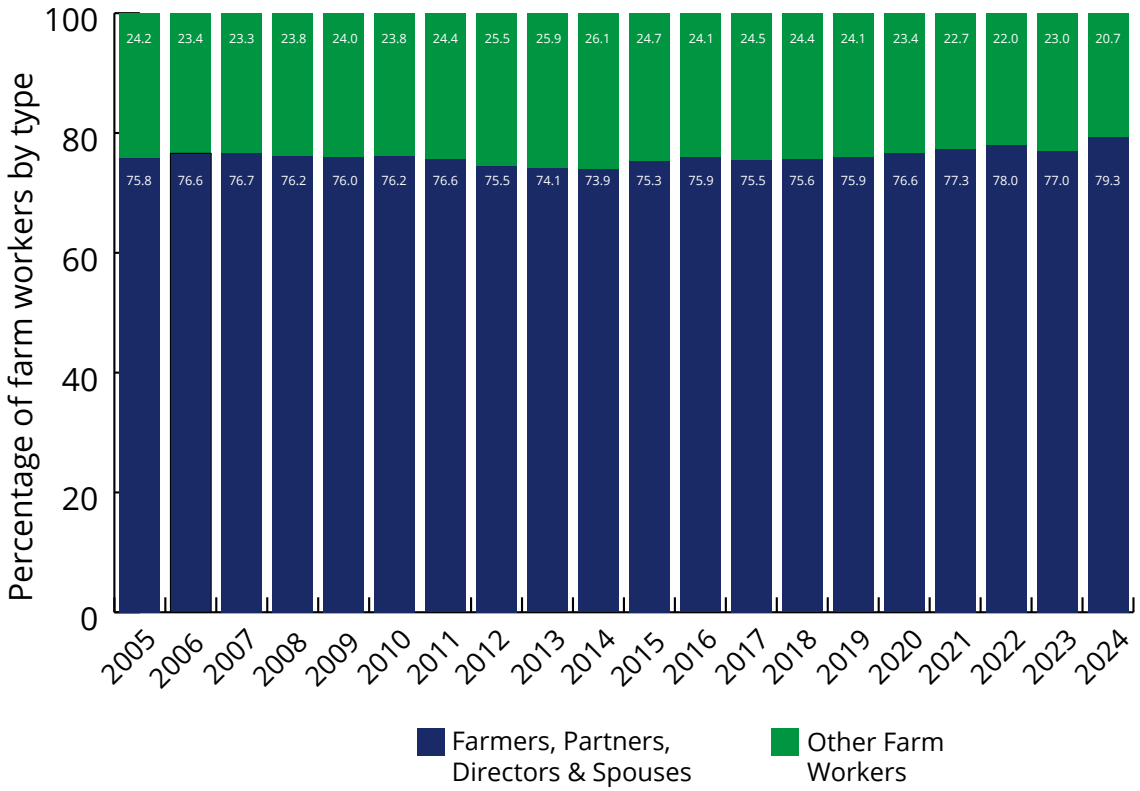
2 For further information on the persons living and working on farms of different sizes, see "Farmers and Farm Families in Northern Ireland", DAERA 2002.
3 Figures for cattle are derived from the cattle tracing system (APHIS, NIFAIS).

Figure 4.5: Distribution of the farm labour force by business size, Northern Ireland, 2023-2024



Refer to: Table 4.12 Distribution of the farm labour force by business size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

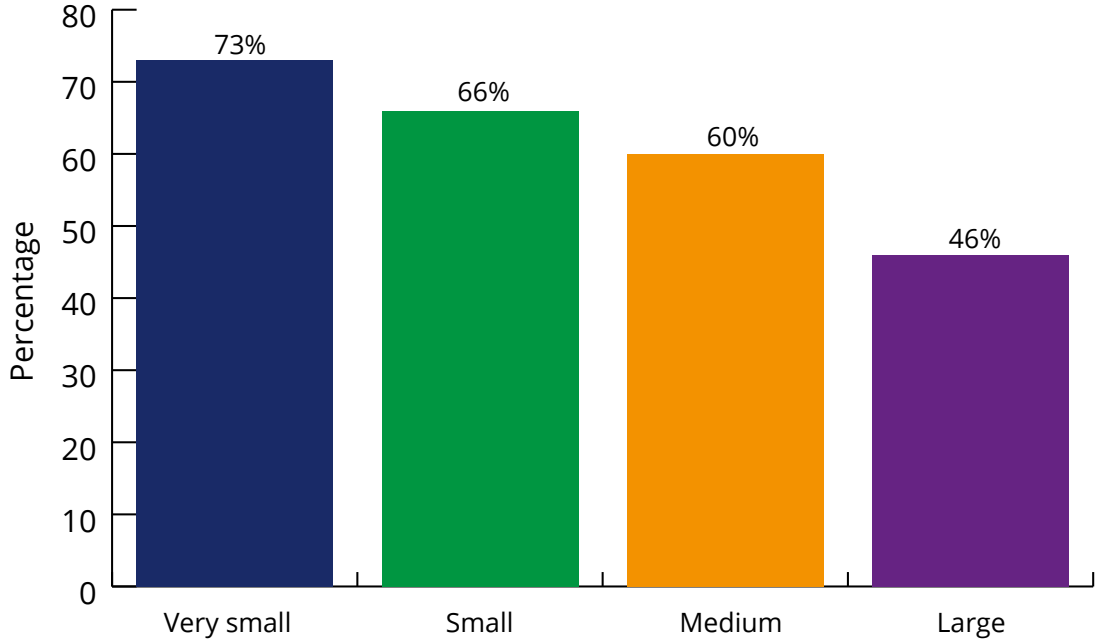
Figure 4.6: Percentage of farm workers by type, Northern Ireland, 2004-2024



Refer to: Table 4.12 Distribution of the farm labour force by business size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

Less Favoured Areas: Almost three quarters (72.5 per cent) of **very small** and 66.4 per cent of **small** farms are mainly in Less Favourable Areas whereas, for **medium** and **large** farms, the proportions are 60.4 and 46.4 per cent, respectively.

Figure 4.7: Percentage of farms in LFA by farm size, Northern Ireland, June 2024

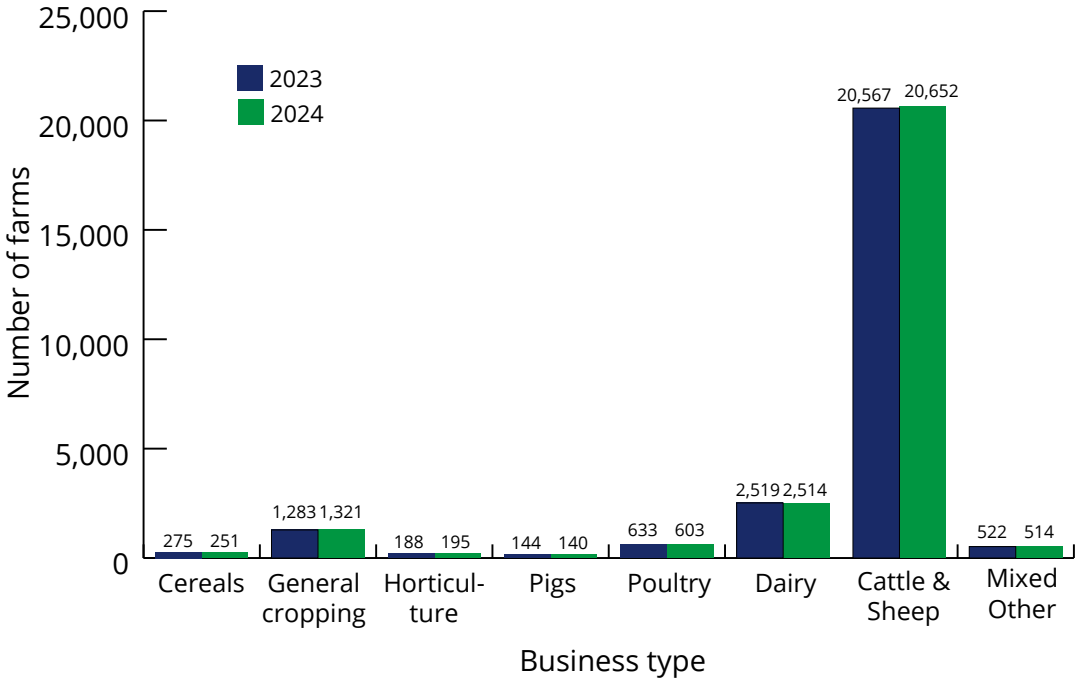


Refer to: Table 4.5 Distribution of the farm labour force by business size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

Farm type

Almost 89 percent of Northern Ireland farms derive two-thirds or more of their total standard output (SO) from grazing livestock, including 9.6 per cent classified as **dairy** farms and 78.9 per cent as **cattle and sheep**, which is the predominant activity. Relatively few farms depend predominantly on cropping with 251 (1.0 per cent) classified as **cereal** farms, 1,321 (5.0 per cent) as **general cropping** and 195 (0.7 per cent) as horticulture. Specialist **pigs and poultry** farms together (743) account for 2.8 per cent, while **mixed and other** farms (514) make up 2.0 per cent of the total. This remains relatively consistent with the results since 2020.

Figure 4.8: Number of farms by business type, Northern Ireland June, 2023 - 2024

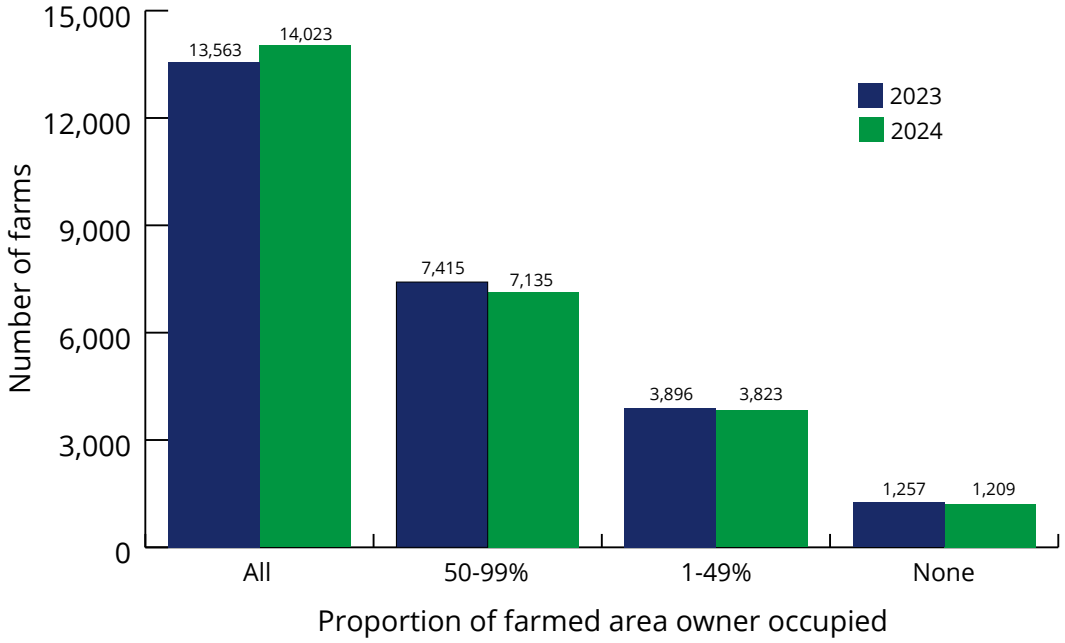


Refer to: Table 4.7 Number of farms by business type, Northern Ireland June 2019 - 2024.

Farm tenure

Almost all farms in Northern Ireland have owned land (over 95.4 per cent) and less than half include at least some rented land (almost 46.5 percent). Within the total farms, only 4.6 per cent were entirely rented or leased, 41.8 per cent had a mixture of owned and rented land and the remaining proportion (under 53.5 per cent) were entirely owner-occupied.

Figure 4.9: Number of farms by proportion of area owner occupied, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024



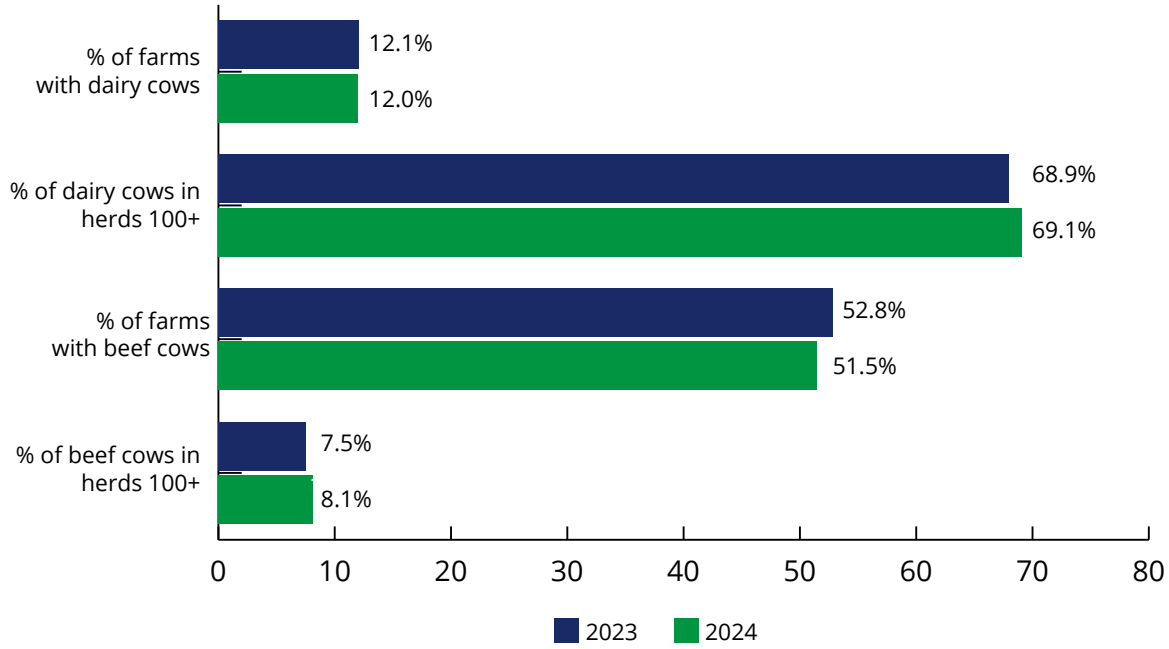
Refer to: Table 4.9 Number of farms by business size and proportion of area owner occupied, Northern Ireland June 2024.

Much of the rented land is taken under the conacre system of short-term lettings which is a particular feature of land tenure throughout Ireland. By renting conacre land, farmers may expand their businesses to grow more crops or keep more livestock than would be possible on the owned area. Landowners who are unable or unwilling to farm all or part of their land may let it in conacre, i.e. on a seasonal basis, (nominally for 11 months or 364 days) without entering into a long-term commitment.

Enterprises

In 2024, 3,133 farms (12.0 per cent) had dairy cows, 13,475 (just over 51.5 per cent) had beef cows (Table 4.15). Herds of 100 or more cows account for 69.1 per cent of dairy cows, compared with 8.1 per cent of beef cows.

Figure 4.10: Percentage of farms with dairy and beef cows and percentage of dairy and beef cows in herds of over 100, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024

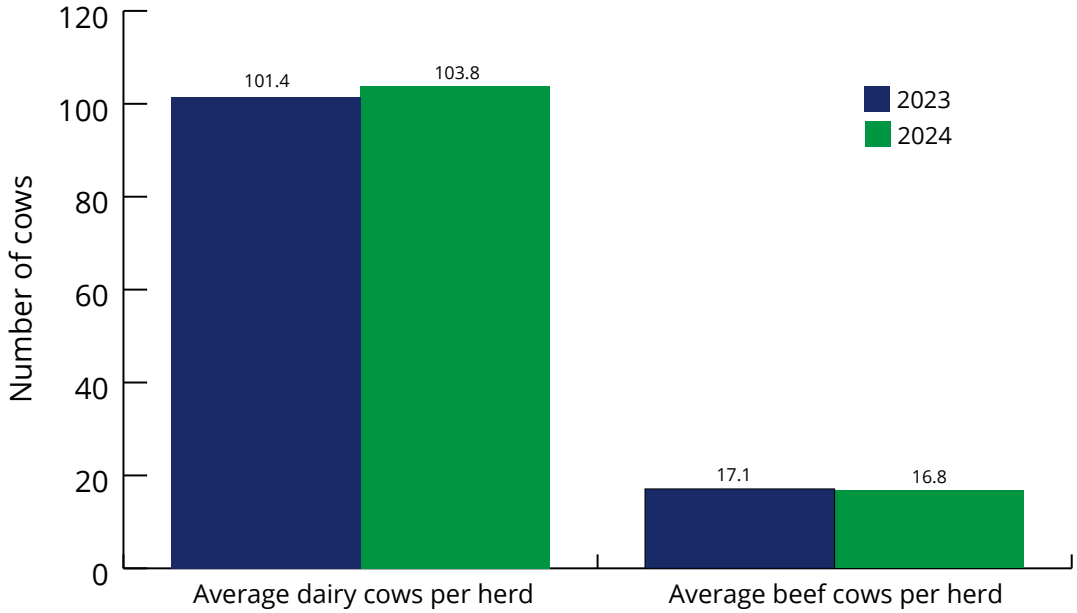


Refer to: Table 4.14 Distribution of numbers of livestock, hectares of crops, full-time labour and output by business size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

Refer to: Table 4.15 Distribution of (a) dairy cows and (b) beef cows by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

The average number of dairy cows per herd, 103.8, was slightly more than in 2023 (101.4). It compares with an average herd size for beef breeding herds of 16.8 cows in 2024.

Figure 4.11: Average number of cows of dairy cow and beef cow herds, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024

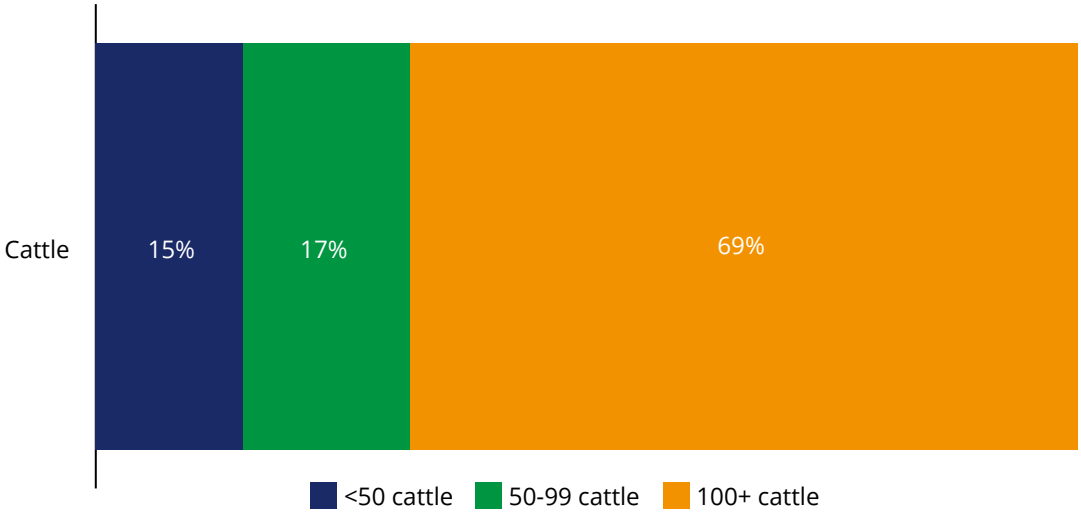


Refer to: Table 4.15 Distribution of (a) dairy cows and (b) beef cows by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

Refer to: Table 4.16 Distribution of total cattle by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

Over two-thirds (68.5 per cent) of all cattle are in herds of 100 or more.

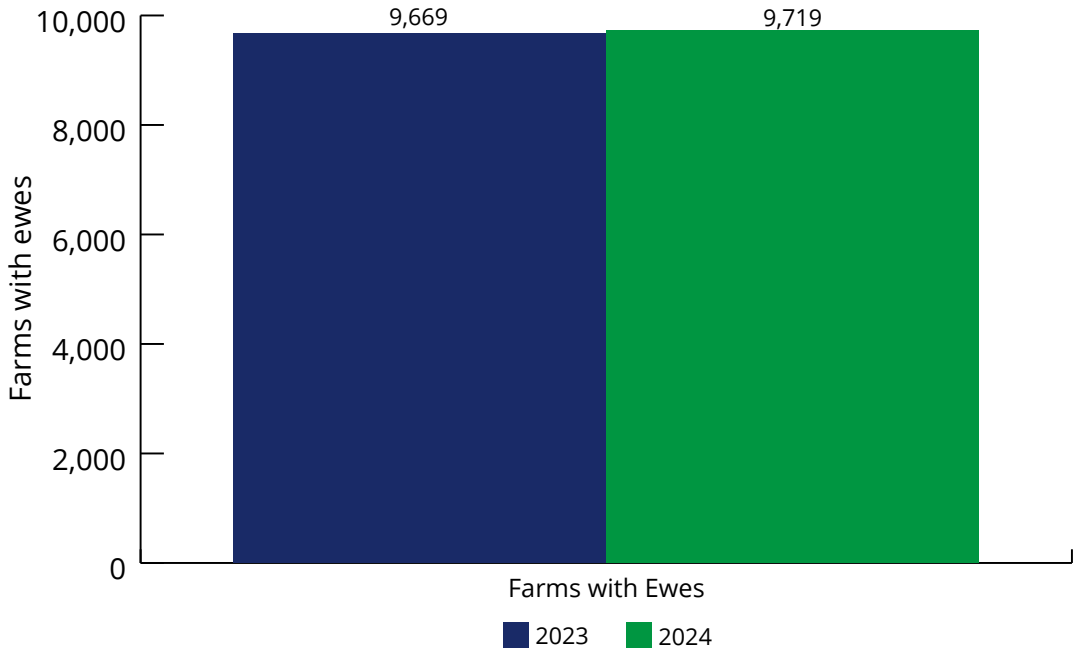
Figure 4.12: Distribution of total cattle by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2024



Refer to: Table 4.16 Distribution of total cattle by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

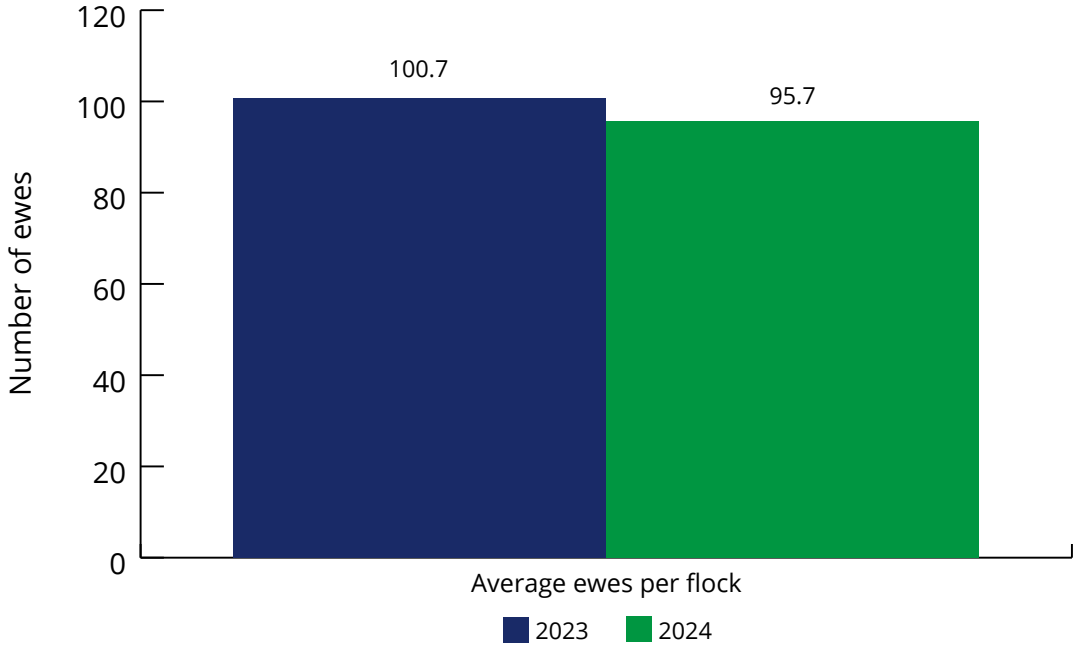
In 2024, 9,719 farms had breeding sheep, with an average of 95.7 ewes per flock.

Figure 4.13: Number of farms with ewes, Northern Ireland June 2023 and 2024



Refer to: Table 4.17 Distribution of (a) ewes and (b) total sheep by flock size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

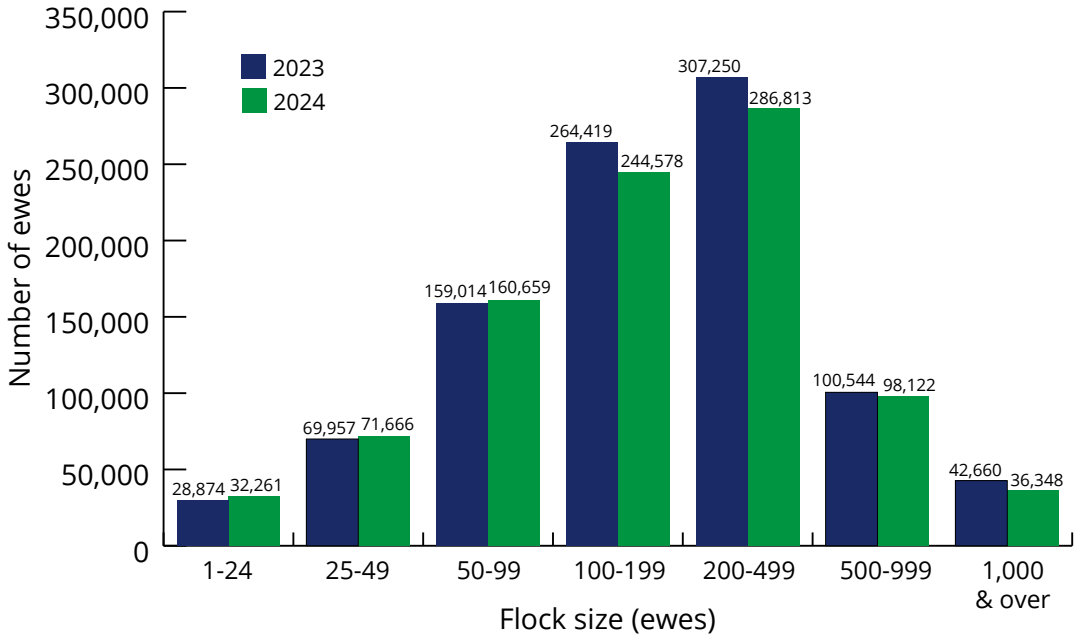
Figure 4.14: Average number of ewes per flock, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024



Refer to: Table 4.17 Distribution of (a) ewes and (b) total sheep by flock size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

There were relatively few large flocks in Northern Ireland, with only 26 farms having a flock size of 1,000 ewes or more.

Figure 4.15: Number of ewes by flock size, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024

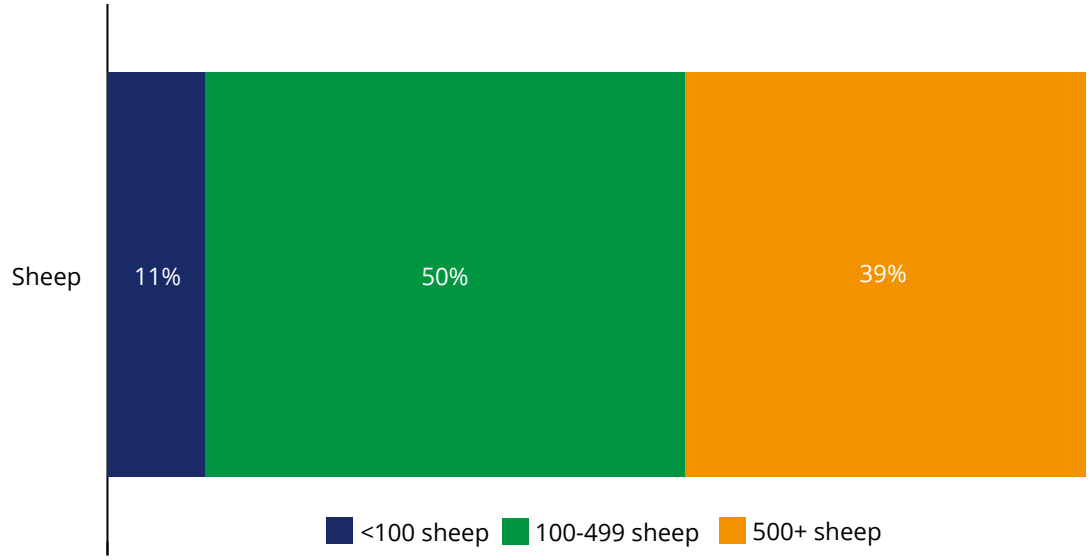


Refer to: Table 4.17 Distribution of (a) ewes and (b) total sheep by flock size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

In June 2024, the total number of sheep decreased by 3.8 per cent to approximately 1.97 million compared to 2023. There was a 4.4 per cent decrease in the number of breeding ewes compared with 2023, with numbers falling to 930,447.

Farms with more than 500 sheep on 1st June 2024 account for 39.1 per cent of the total sheep population.

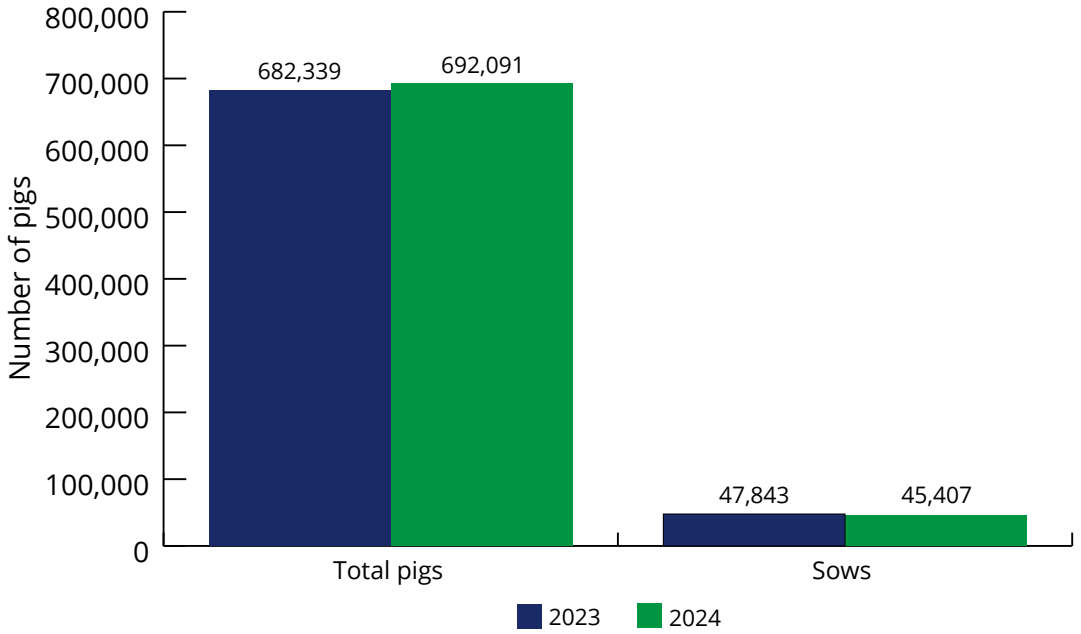
Figure 4.16: Distribution of sheep on farm by flock size, Northern Ireland, 2024



Refer to: Table 4.17 Distribution of (a) ewes and (b) total sheep by flock size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

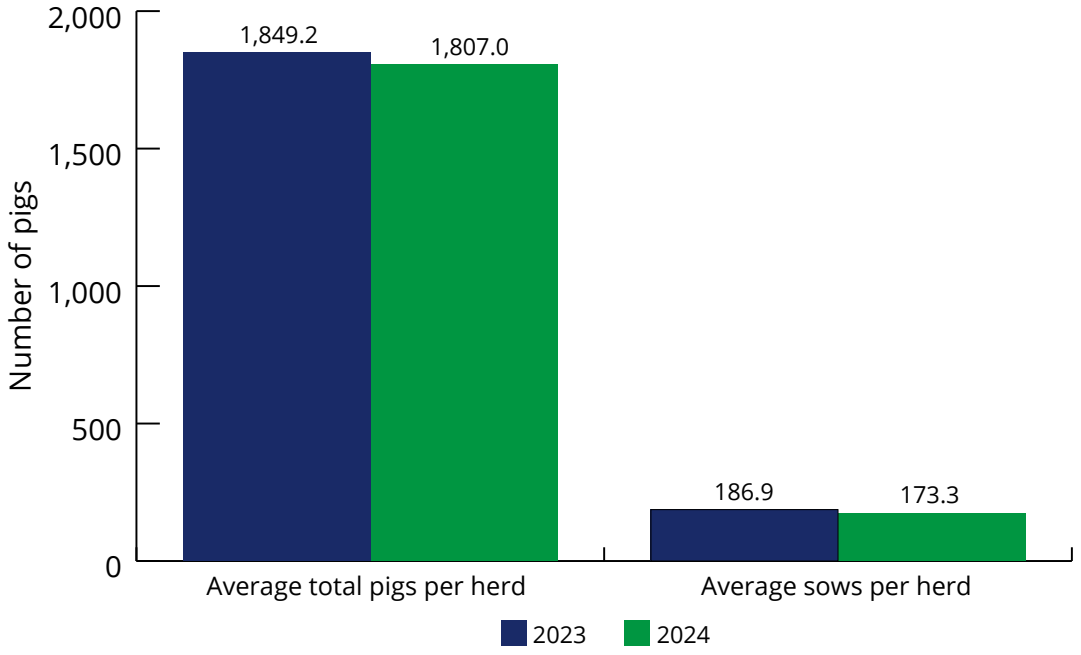
In 2024 there were 383 commercial pig herds operational in June. The majority of the pig herds (262 in 2024) had sows, averaging 173.3 sows per herd.

Figure 4.17: Number of pigs and breeding sows, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024



Refer to: Table 4.18 Distribution of breeding sows by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2024 & Table 4.19 Distribution of (a) Finishers/Weaners and (b) total pigs by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

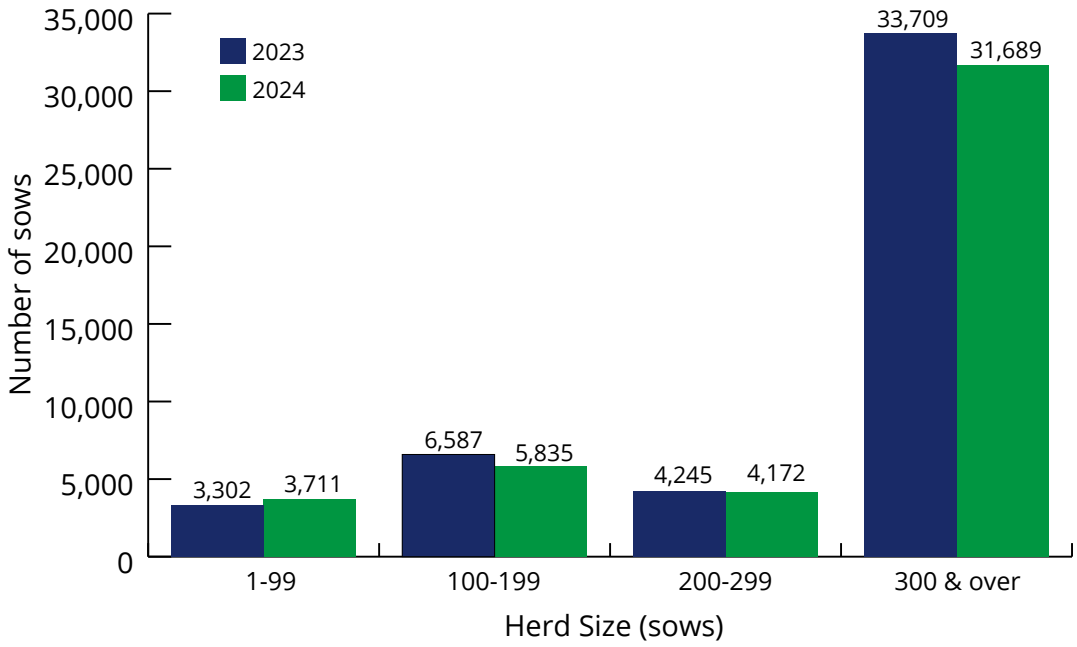
Figure 4.18: Average number of total pigs and breeding sows per farm, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024



Refer to: Table 4.18 Distribution of breeding sows by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2024 & Table 4.19 Distribution of (a) Finishers/Weaners and (b) total pigs by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

Farms with 100 or more sows account for 91.8 per cent of all sows - although these farms make up just 32.8 per cent of all farms with sows.

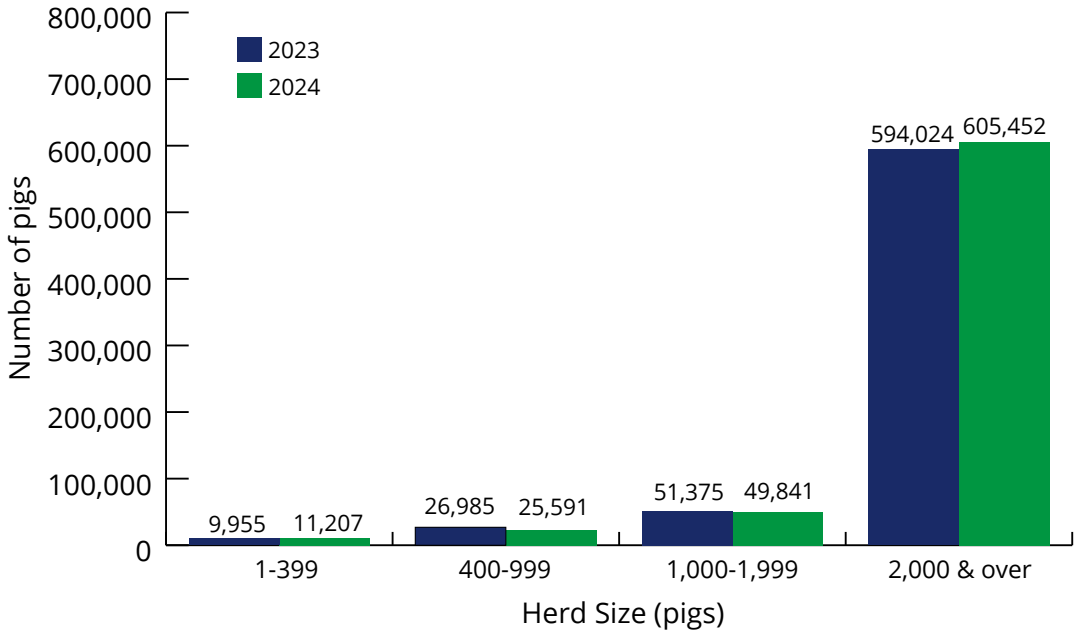
Figure 4.19: Number of sows by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024



Refer to: Table 4.18 Distribution of breeding sows by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

Similarly, of total pigs, the largest units (>1000pigs) accounting for 24.3 per cent of total herds hold 94.7 per cent of total pigs.

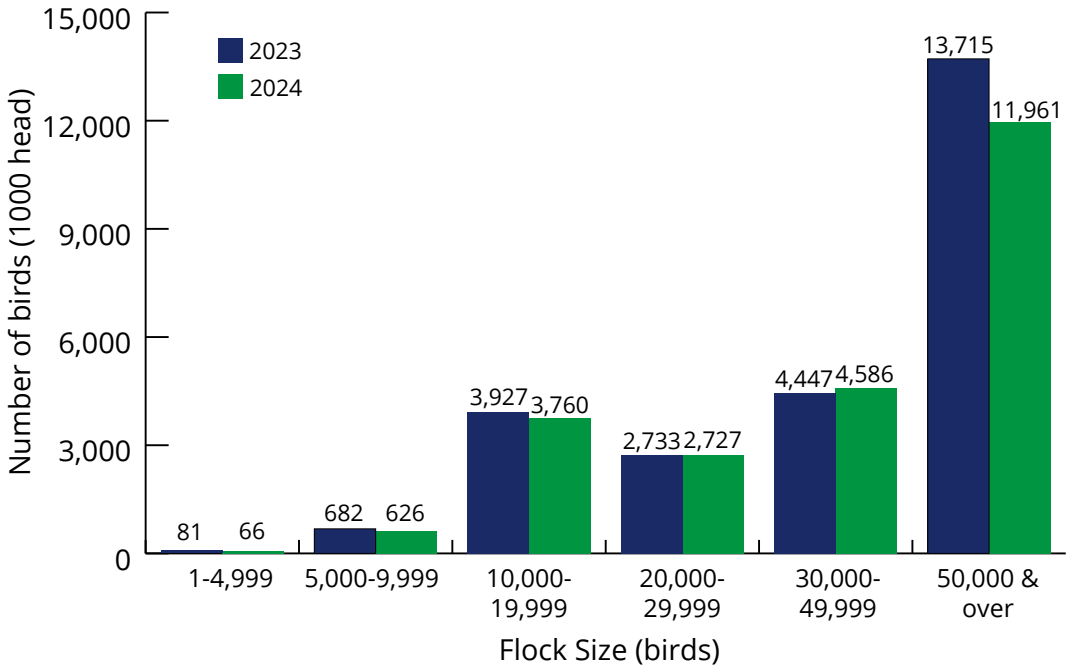
Figure 4.20: Number of pigs by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024



Refer to: Table 4.19 Distribution of (a) Finishers/Weaners and (b) total pigs by herd size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

Of the 957 businesses with poultry, 72.4 per cent had flocks over 5,000 birds, accounting for 99.7 per cent of total poultry. Of these, 26.9 per cent of businesses (257) farmed over 30,000 birds, accounting for 69.7 per cent of birds.

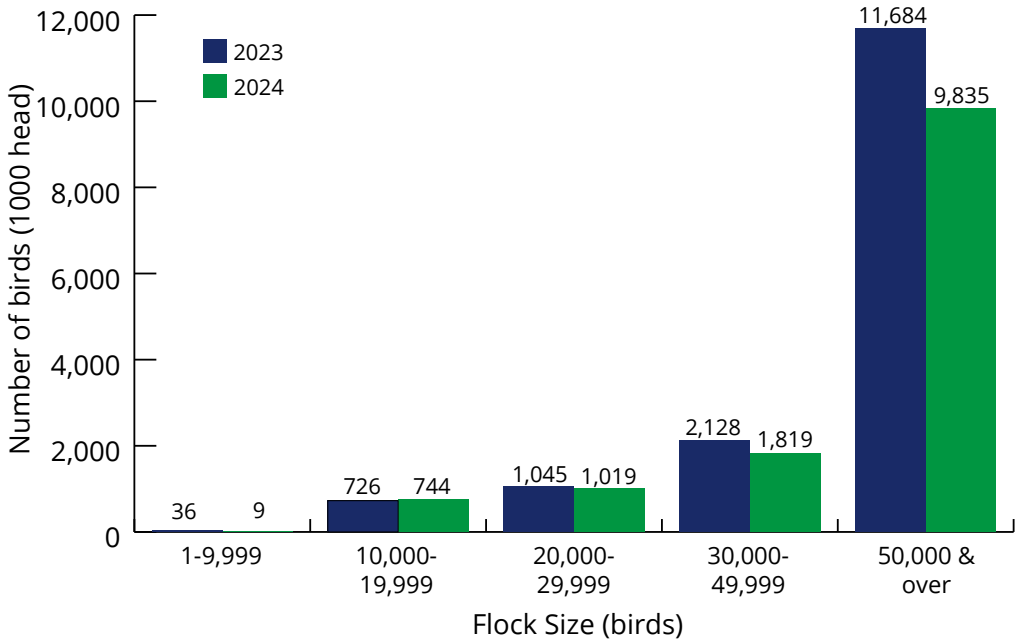
Figure 4.21: Number of poultry by flock size, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024 (1000 head)



Refer to: Table 4.21 Distribution of total poultry by flock size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

On broiler units, the average flock size is a great deal larger, with almost 79.2 per cent of farms having 20,000 birds or more on the farm, with 94.4 per cent of broilers found on these farms.

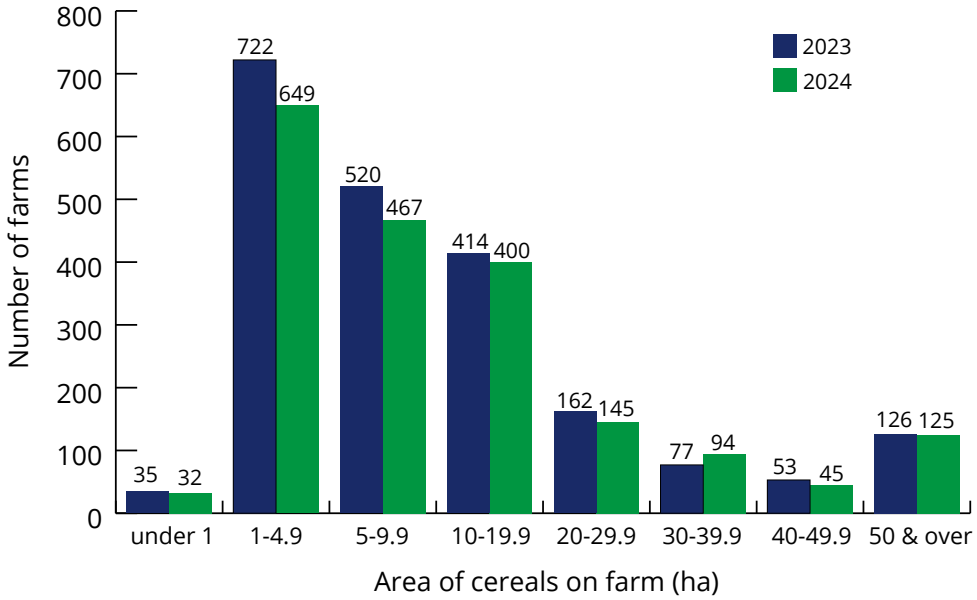
Figure 4.22: Number of broilers by flock size, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024 (1000 head)



Refer to: Table 4.20 Distribution of (a) laying hens and (b) broilers by flock size, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

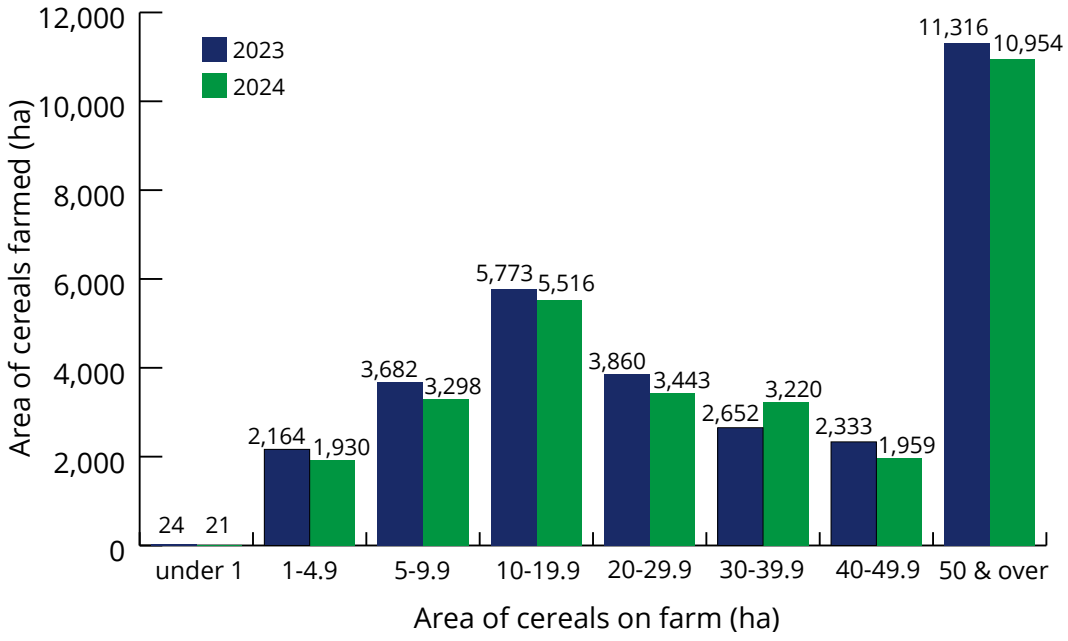
In 2024, cereals were grown on 1,957 farms, 7.5 per cent of all farms in Northern Ireland. The average area of a cereal enterprise was 15.5 hectares. Over a third (34.8 per cent - 681) of the farms with cereals had less than 5 hectares, while 125 farms grew 50 hectares or more and accounted for 36.1 per cent of the total cereal area grown.

Figure 4.23: Number of farms with cereals by area of crop, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024 (ha)



Refer to: Table 4.23 Distribution of total cereals by area of crop, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

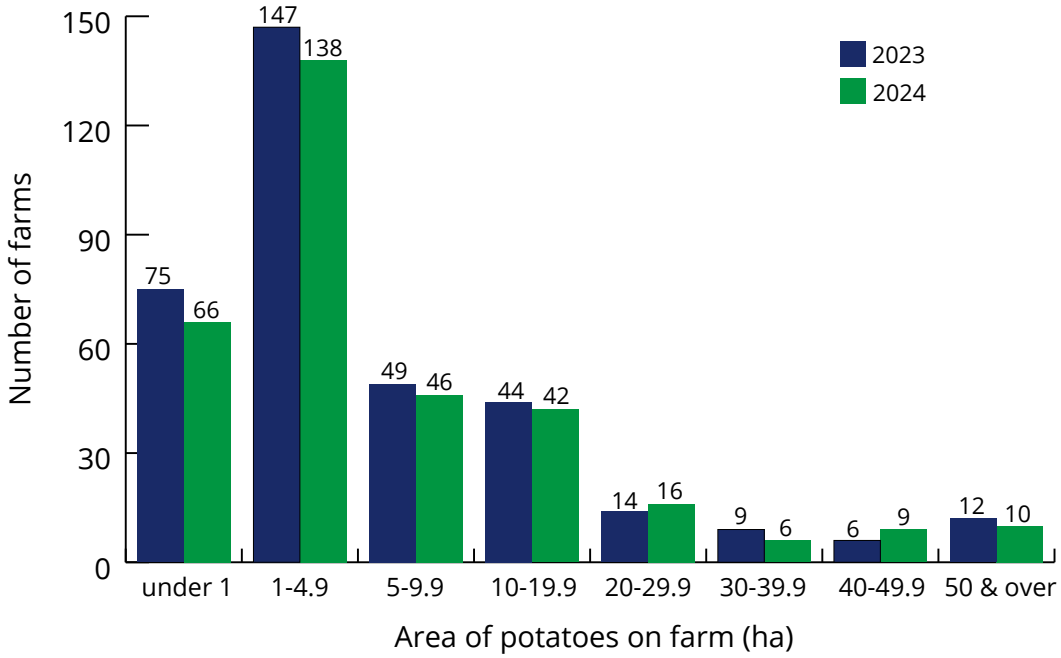
Figure 4.24: Area of cereals grown by area of crop, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024 (ha)



Refer to: Table 4.23 Distribution of total cereals by area of crop, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

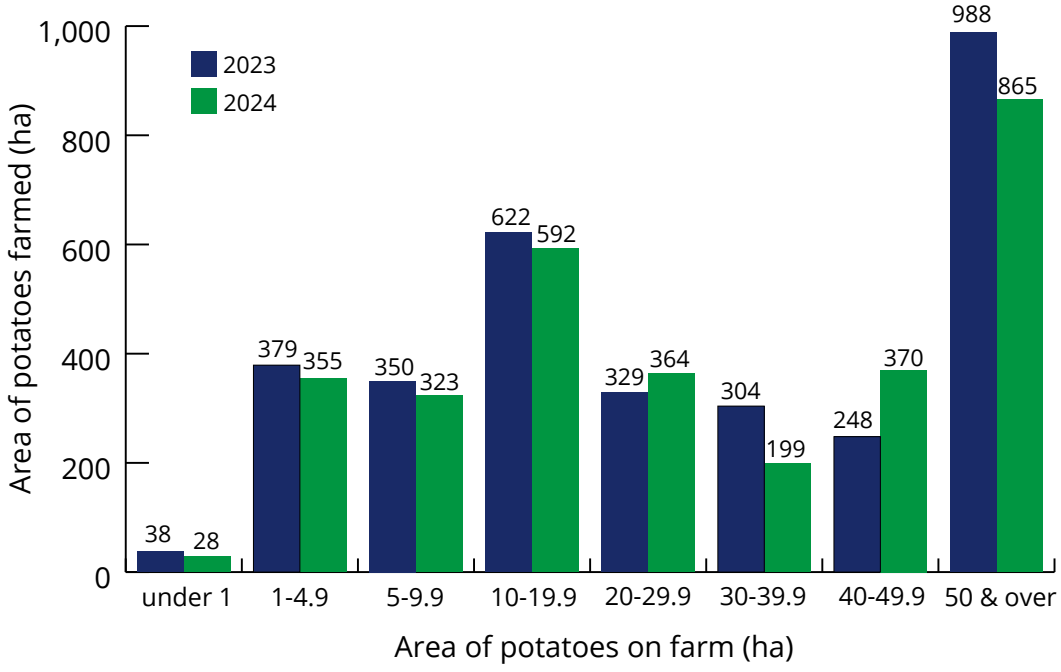
Some 333 farms, 1.3 per cent of total farms, grew potatoes in 2024. Of this number, 83 grew 10 hectares or more, with these farms accounting for 77.2 per cent of the total area of potatoes grown.

Figure 4.25: Number of farms with potatoes by area of crop, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024 (ha)



Refer to: Table 4.24 Distribution of potatoes by area of crop, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

Figure 4.26: Area of potatoes grown by area of crop, Northern Ireland, June 2023 and 2024 (ha)



Refer to: Table 4.24 Distribution of potatoes by area of crop, Northern Ireland, June 2024.

5. Incomes at Farm Level

Summary

- The average **Farm Business Income (FBI)** across all farm types decreased from £50,450 in 2022/23 to £29,260 in 2023/24.
- **FBI** measured across all farm types is expected to increase from an average £29,260 in 2023/24 to £60,622 in 2024/25, i.e. an increase of £31,361 or 107% per farm.
- In 2023/24, the proportion of farms with a negative Farm Business Income was 17 per cent. This proportion was lower for Cattle and Sheep (LFA) farms at 15 per cent and higher for Dairy farms at 22 per cent.

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Introduction

This section contains information, collected in the Farm Business Survey (FBS), on average incomes for the main types and sizes of full time farm businesses in Northern Ireland. A detailed analysis of FBS results is published in 'Farm Incomes in Northern Ireland 2023/24'.

Farm Business Income (FBI) represents the return to all unpaid labour (farmer, spouses and others with an entrepreneurial interest in the farm business) and to their capital invested in the farm business which includes land and buildings. FBI was introduced in January 2008 as the headline measure of farm level incomes in the UK.

Net Farm Income (NFI) represents the return to the farmer and spouse for their manual and managerial labour and tenant-type capital invested in the farm business. Within its calculation, notional deductions are made for unpaid labour (excluding farmers and spouse) and owned land and buildings. Furthermore, no account is taken of any interest paid or earned.

FBI differs from NFI in that it represents the return to all unpaid labour, not just the farmer and spouse and it treats the tenure of farms as it is: tenants as tenants, owner occupiers as owner occupiers and those with both types of tenure as mixed.

Cash Income (CI) measures the difference between total farm receipts and total farm cash costs. This measure excludes notional items such as depreciation charges and livestock/crop valuation changes. It also takes no account of net expenditure on capital investment. Trends in Cash Income since 2018/19 are presented in Table 5.1.

Income changes in 2023/24

At the individual farm type level, the results show that Farm Business Income decreased between 2022/23 and 2023/24 on Cereal, Dairy, Cattle and Sheep (Lowland) and Mixed farms. In contrast, Cattle and Sheep (LFA) and Pig farm types showed an increase in average Farm Business Income.

Measured across all farm types, average Farm Business Income decreased from £50,450 in 2022/23 to £29,260 in 2023/24, a decrease of £21,190 per farm. Also measured across all farm types, average Net Farm Income decreased from £43,587 in 2022/23 to £22,148 in 2023/24 (a decrease of £21,439 per farm) and average Cash Income decreased from £69,195 in 2022/23 to £54,115 in 2023/24 (a decrease of £15,080 per farm).

Headline figures on incomes by farm type, Northern Ireland, 2022/23 and 2023/24

£'000 per farm

Business type	CI		FBI		NFI	
	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24
Cereals	163.5	80.9	75.9	6.2	85.3	11.6
Pigs	84.1	201.8	49.9	162.0	62.0	166.7
Dairy	149.6	81.7	118.4	43.6	109.3	35.5
Cattle and Sheep (LFA)	28.9	35.8	17.8	18.8	11.4	11.7
Cattle and Sheep (Lowland)	37.4	42.6	25.8	25.5	19.1	17.5
Mixed	98.9	79.1	56.3	30.6	53.0	30.2
All types	**69.2**	**54.1**	**50.5**	**29.3**	**43.6**	**22.1**

Refer to: Table 5.1 for the full dataset on the indices of average cash income in real terms by farm type.

Refer to: Table 5.3 for the full dataset cash income by business size and farm type dataset.

Refer to: Table 5.4 for the full dataset farm income by business size and farm type dataset.

Refer to: Table 5.5 for the full dataset net farm income by business size and farm type dataset.

Distribution of farms by income level

In 2023/24, the proportion of farms with a negative Farm Business Income was 17 per cent. This proportion was lower for Cattle and Sheep (LFA) farms at 15 per cent and higher for Dairy farms at 22 per cent.

Fifty-one per cent of farms had an income less than £20,000 whereas 22 per cent had a Farm Business Income of more than £50,000. There was also variation between Dairy and Cattle and Sheep (LFA) farm types in the individual income categories. For example, 37 per cent of Dairy farms were in the highest income category (>£50K) whereas for Cattle and Sheep (LFA) farms the proportion was 13 per cent.

Measured across all farm types, 29 per cent and 5 per cent of farms failed to make a positive Net Farm Income and Cash Income, respectively. The proportions were lower

for Cattle and Sheep (LFA) farms at 27 per cent (Net Farm Income) and 3 per cent (Cash Income) respectively. Whereas 31 per cent of Dairy farms had a negative Net Farm Income, and 7 per cent had a negative Cash Income.

Headline figures on the distribution of farms by income level, Northern Ireland 2023/24

per cent

	Dairy			Cattle and sheep (LFA)			All types		
Income (£'s)	**CI**	**NFI**	**FBI**	**CI**	**NFI**	**FBI**	**CI**	**NFI**	**FBI**
Less than 0	7	31	22	3	27	15	5	29	17
1 - 4,999	2	2	2	8	5	11	4	7	7
5,000 - 9,999	1	5	2	8	10	9	6	7	6
10,000 - 14,999	5	5	3	5	16	13	6	11	11
15,000 - 19,999	3	3	6	7	10	10	9	7	9
20,000 - 29,999	3	10	13	25	16	22	13	12	17
30,000 - 49,999	17	13	15	20	8	7	20	11	10
> 50,000	62	31	37	24	7	13	37	17	22
Total	**..**	**100**	**..**	**..**	**100**	**..**	**..**	**100**	**..**
Number of farms in sample		76			71			191	

Refer to: Table 5.2 for the dataset on the distribution of CI, NFI, and FBI by farm type dataset.

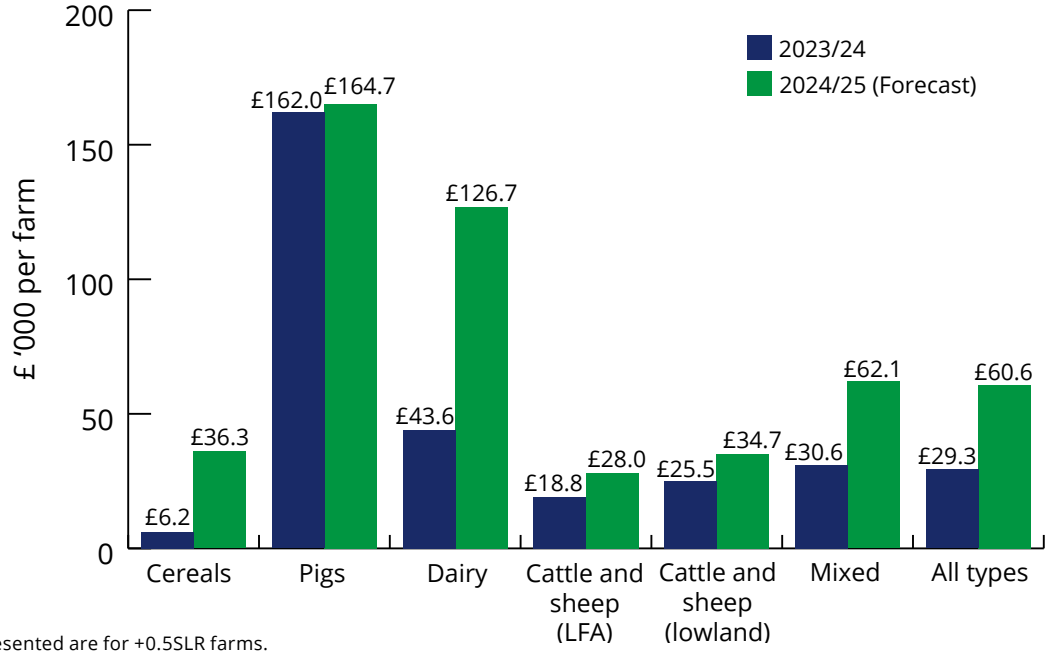
Provisional estimates of incomes for 2024/25

Provisional estimates of incomes for farm businesses larger than 0.5 Standard Labour Requirements for the year ending mid-February 2025 show average Farm Business Income measured across all farm types increasing from £29,260 in 2023/24 to £60,622 in 2024/25, i.e. an increase of £31,361 or 107% per farm.

Farm Business Income is expected to increase (by varying amounts) for each individual farm types between 2023/24 and 2024/25. In each case the upturn in their incomes is attributable to lower feed and fertiliser prices combined with more favourable prices for milk, beef, and lamb in the 2024/25 year. Additionally, there was better overall cereal yields experienced during the 2024/25 year.

Average Cash Income measured across all farm types is estimated to increase from £54,115 in 2023/24 to £86,086 in 2024/25, which is an increase of £31,971 per farm. Whereas average Net Farm Income measured across all farm types is estimated to increase from £22,148 in 2023/24 to £53,240 in 2024/25.

Figure 5.1: Average Farm Business Income by farm type (£ per farm), Northern Ireland, 2023/24 and 2024/25[1]



1 Figures presented are for +0.5SLR farms.

Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth of Farms

The average total assets per farm measured across all farm types were £1,572,531 in 2023/24. Whereas average external liabilities per farm measured across all farm types were £44,412 in 2023/24, which is 3% higher compared to the previous year. When measured across all farm types the average external liabilities (i.e. mainly bank borrowings) per farm in 2023/24 were equivalent to 3% of total farm assets. Given these values for assets and liabilities the average net worth per farm measured across all farm types was £1,528,119 in 2023/24. When measured across all farm types, net worth expressed as a percentage of total assets was 97% in 2023/24.

Headline figures on assets, liabilities, and net worth of farms,Northern Ireland, 2022/23 and 2023/2024

£'000 per farm

	Dairy		Cattle and sheep (LFA)		All types	
	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24
Total fixed assets	1617.1	1695.9	1220.8	1241.8	1411.6	1465.2
Total current assets	128.8	126.0	79.7	77.5	108.4	107.4
Total assets	**1745.9**	**1821.9**	**1300.5**	**1319.3**	**1520.0**	**1572.5**
Total long/medium term loans	50.0	49.8	7.6	6.2	26.0	27.0
Total short term loans	33.6	35.6	9.0	8.3	17.0	17.4
Total external liabilities	**83.6**	**85.4**	**16.7**	**14.5**	**43.0**	**44.4**
Net worth	**1662.3**	**1736.4**	**1283.8**	**1304.8**	**1477.0**	**1528.1**

Refer to: Table 5.6 for the dataset on the average tenant's capital by farm type.
Refer to: Table 5.7 for the full dataset on the average closing valuations by farm type.

6.1. Northern Ireland Food and Drink Processing Sector

Summary

- In 2022, the NI Food and Drinks Processing Sector employed 25,508 full time equivalents, had a turnover of £6.5 billion, added £1.1 billion to the Northern Ireland economy and purchased £5.1 billion worth of goods and services for production.
- The sector also contributed 35.5 per cent to total manufacturing sales, 30.1 per cent to total manufacturing employment, 19.3 per cent to manufacturing GVA and accounted for just over 2 per cent of total NI GVA.

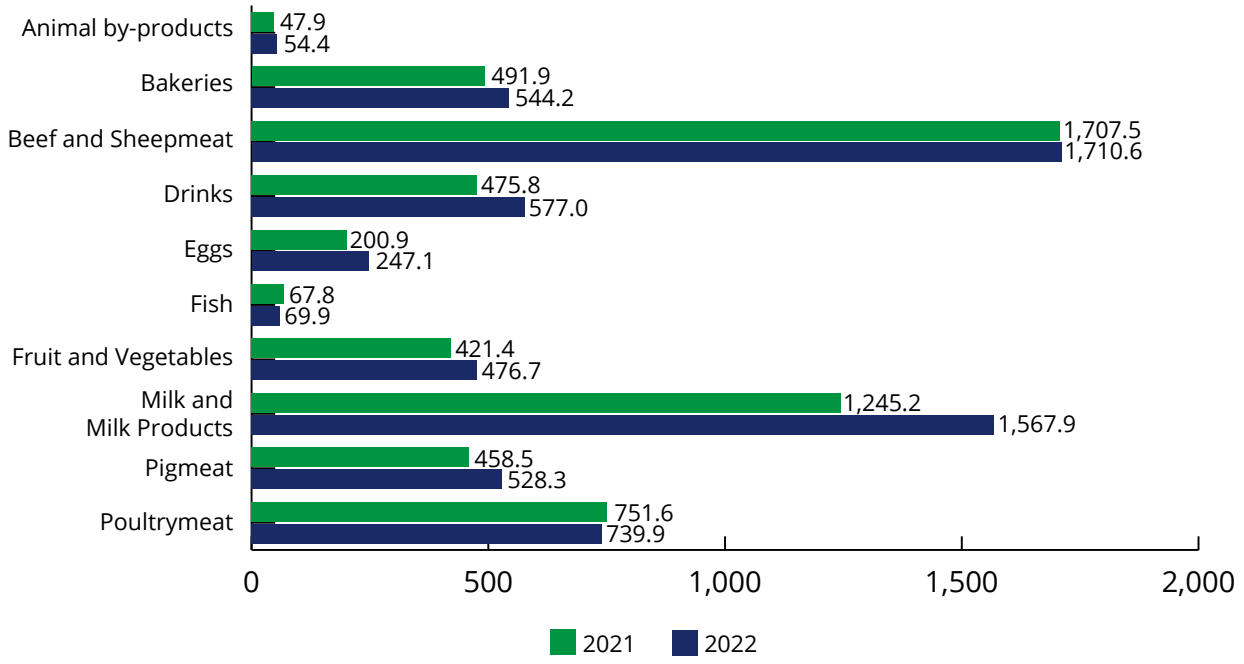
The publication Northern Ireland Food and Drinks Processing report is an annual publication providing estimates for key sector size variables and benchmarking variables.

For more in depth information, please read Northern Ireland Food and Drinks Processing Report 2022.

Gross Turnover

Gross turnover in the Northern Ireland food and drinks processing sector is estimated to have increased from £5,869 million to £6,516 million between 2021 and 2022; an increase of 11 per cent. Nine subsectors experienced increases in turnover over the period.

Figure 6.1: Northern Ireland food and drinks processing subsector turnover, 2021-2022 (£ million)

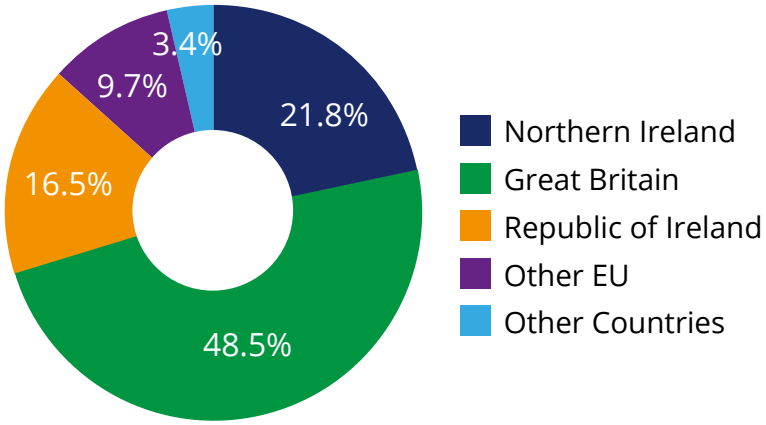


Refer to: Table 6.1 Gross turnover of the Northern Ireland food and drinks processing sector 2017-2022.

Destination of Sales

Great Britain was the main destination of sales for the NI food and drinks processing sector in 2022 at 48.5 per cent of total sales. Northern Ireland is the second largest market at 21.8 per cent. Export sales represent 29.7 per cent of total sales.

Figure 6.2: Destination of Northern Ireland food and drinks processing sector sales, 2022

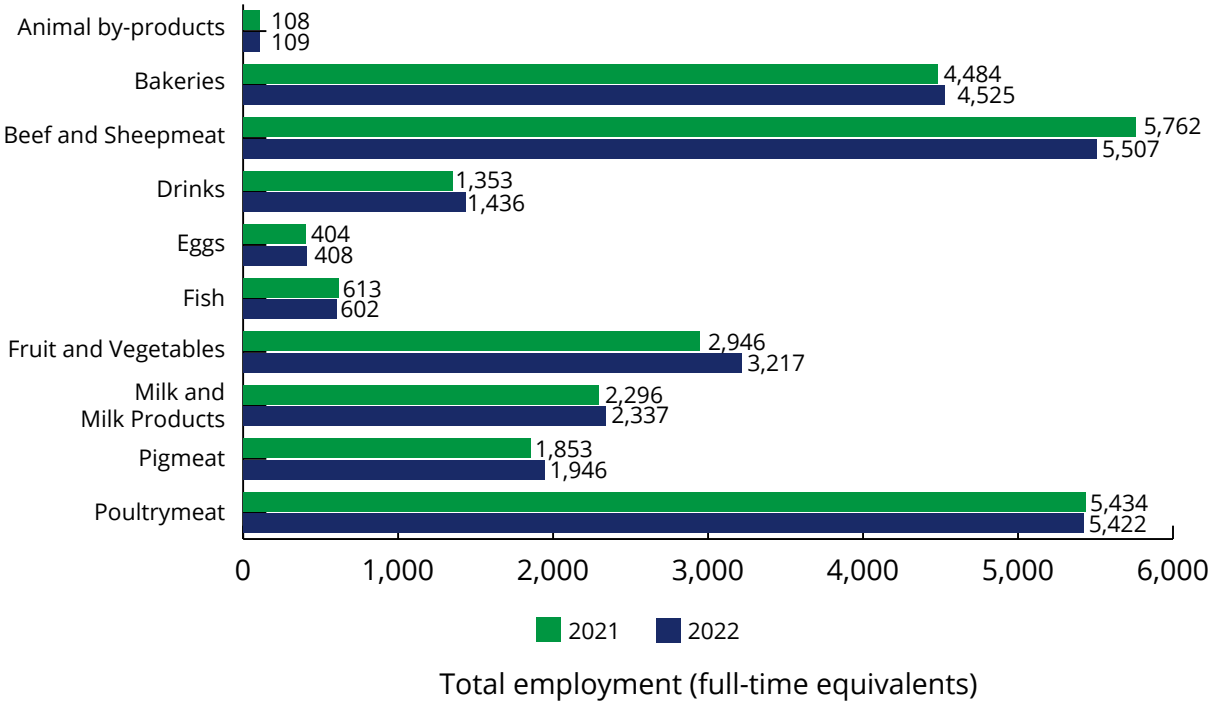


Refer to: Table 6.2 Destinations and values of NI food and drinks processing subsector sales, 2022.

Employment

Employment in the sector is estimated to have to have increased from 25,251 full time equivalents in 2021 to 25,508 in 2022; an increase of 1 per cent. Seven subsectors experienced increases in employment over the period..

Figure 6.3: Northern Ireland food and drinks processing subsector employment, 2021-2022

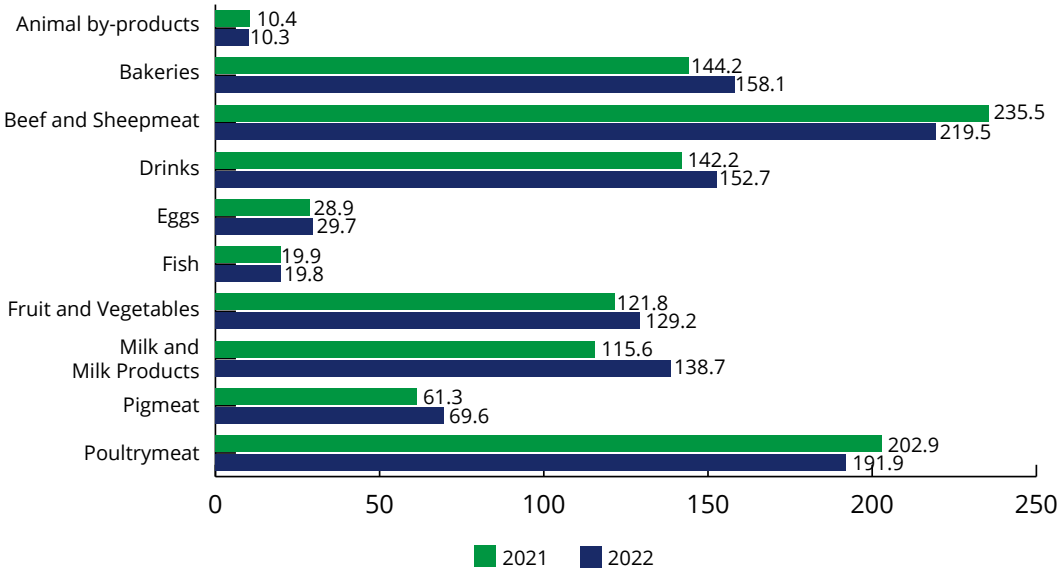


Refer to: Table 6.3 Estimated employment in the NI food and drinks processing sector 2017-2022.

Value Added

Value added by the Northern Ireland food and drinks processing sector to the economy is estimated to have increased from £1,083 million in 2021 to £1,120 million in 2022; an increase of 3.4 per cent. Six of the subsectors experienced an increase in value added over the period.

Figure 6.4: Northern Ireland food and drinks processing subsector value added, 2021-2022 (£ million)

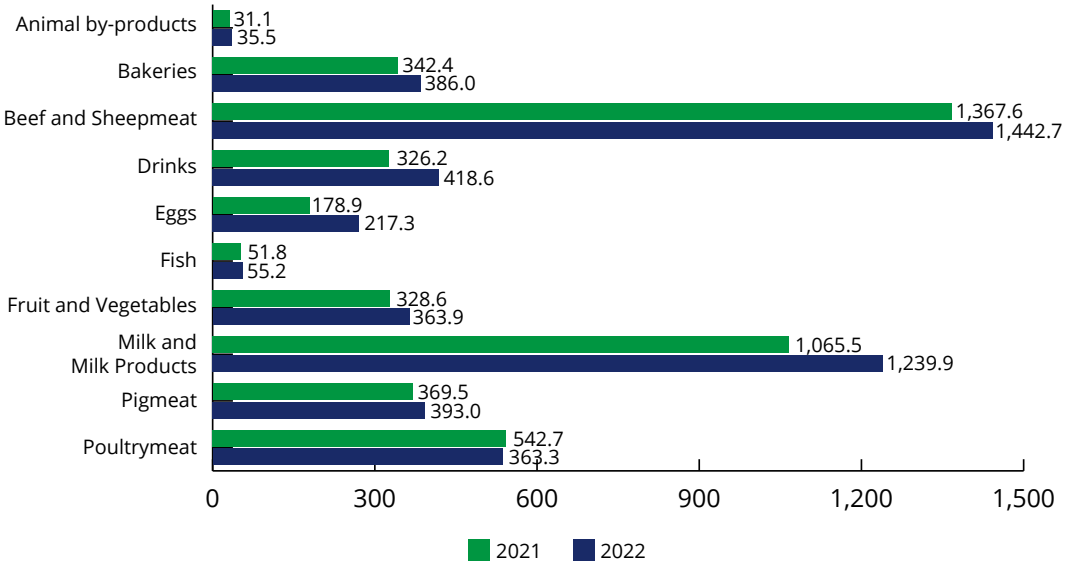


Refer to: Table 6.4 Value Added by the Northern Ireland food and drinks processing sector 2017-2022.

Purchases

Total purchases by the Northern Ireland food and drinks processing sector are estimated to have increased from £4,604 million in 2021 to £5,142 million in 2022; an increase of 11.7 per cent. Nine subsectors experienced increases in purchase costs over the period.

Figure 6.5: Northern Ireland food and drinks processing subsector purchases, 2021-2022 (£ million)

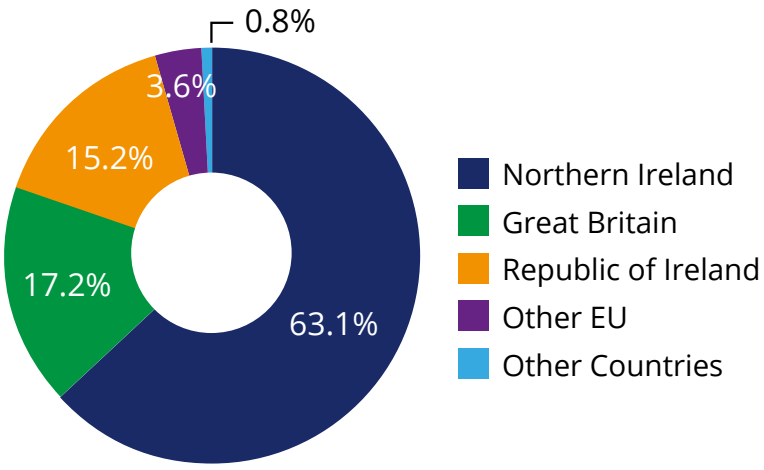


Refer to: Table 6.5 Total Purchases of the Northern Ireland food and drinks processing sector 2017-2022.

Purchases by Origin

Northern Ireland remains the largest market for purchases for the sector in 2022 at 63.1 per cent. Great Britain remains the second largest market for purchases at 17.2 per cent but imports now exceed purchases from Great Britain at 19.6 per cent.

Figure 6.6: Origin of Northern Ireland food and drinks processing sector purchases, 2022



Refer to: Table 6.6 Origins and Values of NI Food and drinks processing sector purchases, 2022.

6.2. Other Agri-Food Trade and Employment Data

This section provides other Northern Ireland agri-food trade and employment data not covered elsewhere.

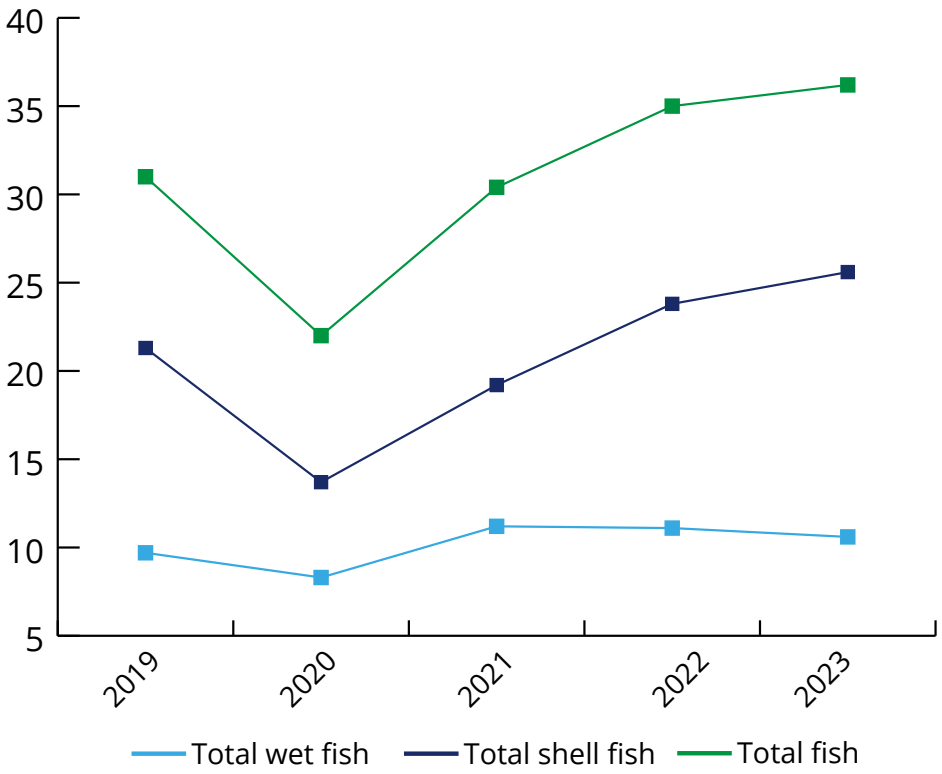
Summary

- In 2023, the value of fish landings in Northern Ireland were estimated to be £36.2 million and the sector employed 2,059 people.
- In 2024, external sales of live animals were valued at £102.5 million and external purchases of live animals into Northern Ireland were valued at £180.5 million. Export sales of non-edible goods stood at £330.6 million.

Fish Landings

The value of fish landings into Northern Ireland is estimated to have increased to £36.2 million in 2023 from £35.0 million in 2022; an increase of 3.4 per cent. This was driven by a 7.2 per cent increase in the value of shellfish landings from £23.8 million to £25.6 million.

Figure 6.7: Estimated value of recorded landings of fish into Northern Ireland, 2019-2023 (£ million)

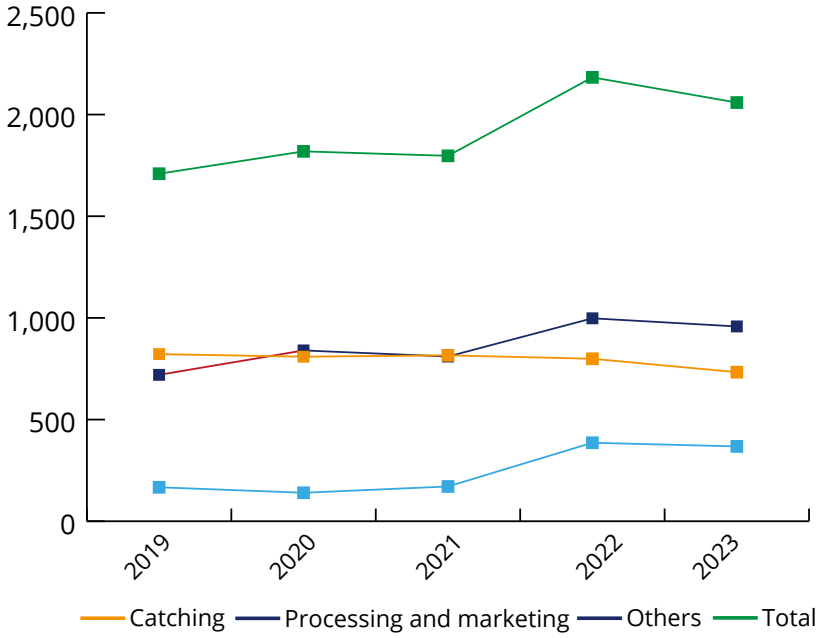


Refer to: Table 6.7 Liveweight and estimated value of recorded landings of fish into NI 2019-2023.

Employment in Northern Ireland Fishing Industry

The total number of people employed in the fishing industry has decreased to 2,059 in 2023 from 2,183 in 2022; a decrease of 5.7 per cent.

Figure 6.8: Employment in Northern Ireland fishing industry (head) 2019-2023

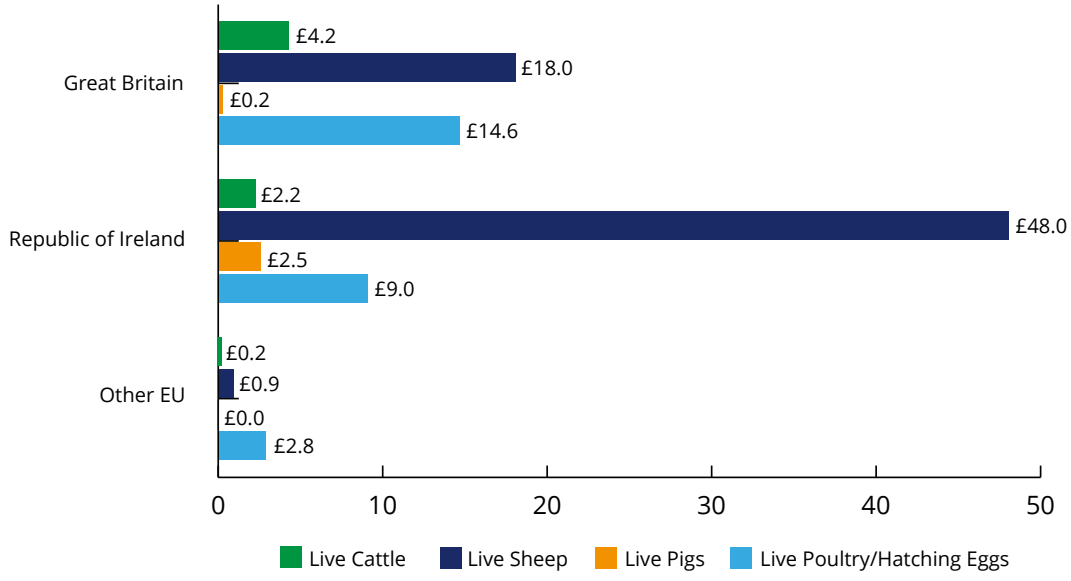


Refer to: Table 6.8 Employment in Northern Ireland fishing industry 2019-2024.

Live Animal Sales

Republic of Ireland was the main destination for NI external live animal sales in 2024 for two out of the four subsectors and accounted for 60 per cent of the total value of external sales.

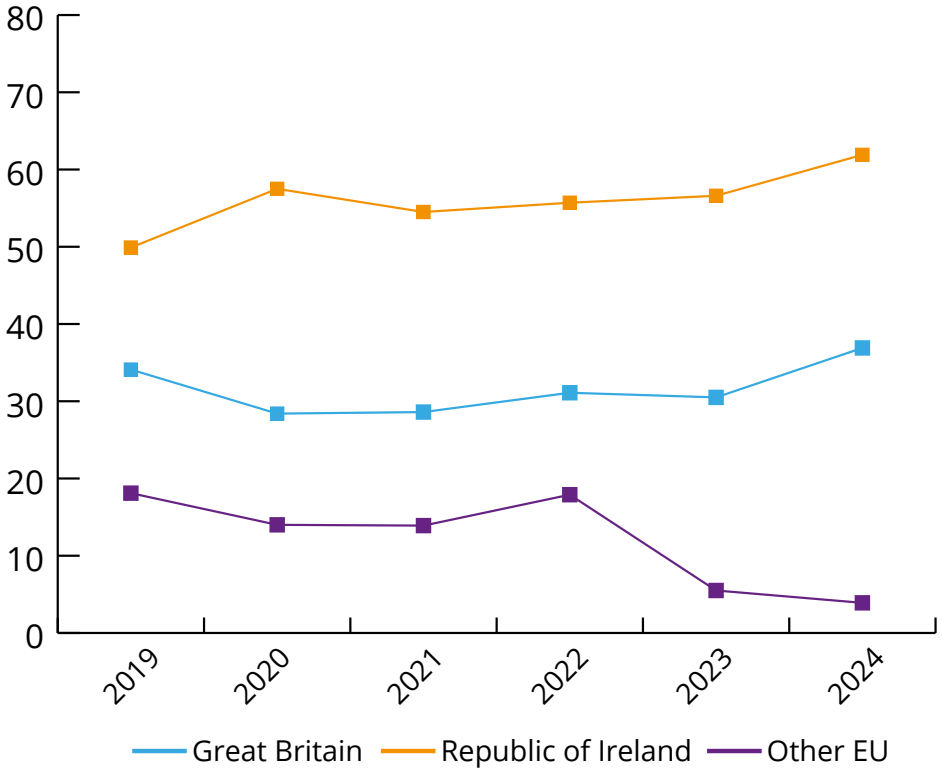
Figure 6.9: External sales of live animals from Northern Ireland by destination, 2024 (Provisional), (£ million)



Refer to: Table 6.9 External sales of live animals from Northern Ireland by destination, 2024 (Provisional).

The total value of live animal sales to Republic of Ireland and Great Britain increased by £6.1 million and £6.4 million respectively between 2023 and 2024. Sales to Other EU decreased by £1.6 million over the same period. Overall, external sales of live animals increased by 12 per cent from £91.6 million in 2023 to £102.5 million in 2024.

Figure 6.10: External sales of live animals from Northern Ireland by destination 2019-2024, £ (million)

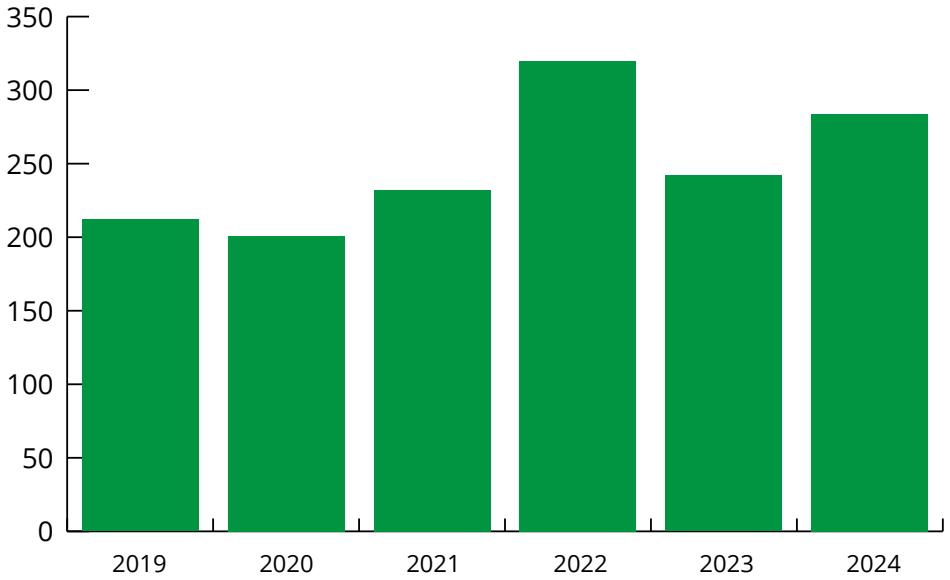


Refer to: Table 6.10 External sales of live animals from Northern Ireland by destination 2019-2024.

Raw Milk Sales

The value of raw milk sales to the Republic of Ireland have remained above £200 million per annum since 2019. In 2023, raw milk sales were £242m, increased by 17% to £284m in 2024.

Figure 6.11: Value of raw milk sales to Republic of Ireland, 2019-2024 (£ million)

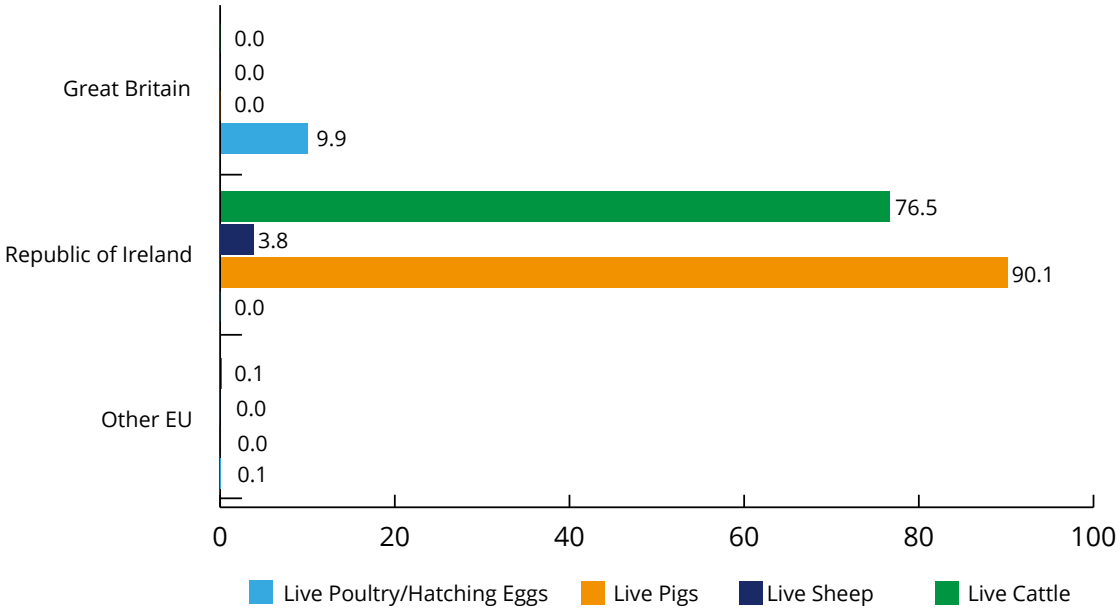


Refer to: Table 6.11 Value of raw milk sales to Republic of Ireland 2019-2024.

Live Animal Purchases

Republic of Ireland was the largest external market for NI live animal purchases for three out of the four subsectors in 2024 and accounted for 94 per cent of the total value of external purchases.

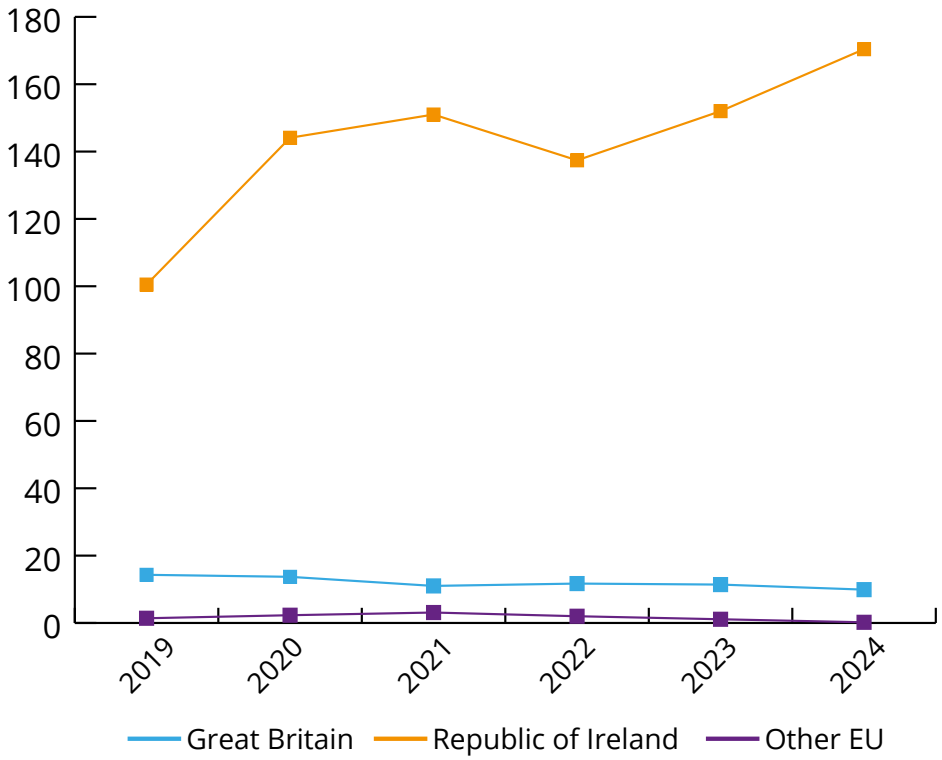
Figure 6.12: External purchases of live animals to Northern Ireland by origin 2024 (Provisional) (£ million)



Refer to: Table 6.12 External purchases of live animals to Northern Ireland by origin, 2024 (Provisional).

Between 2023 and 2024 total live animal imports from the Republic of Ireland increased by £19.0 million. Purchases from Great Britain and Other EU decreased by £1.5 million and £0.9 million respectively. Overall, total external purchases of live animals increased by 10 per cent from £163.9 million in 2023 to £180.5 million in 2024.

Figure 6.13: External purchases of live animals to Northern Ireland by origin 2019-2024, (£ million)

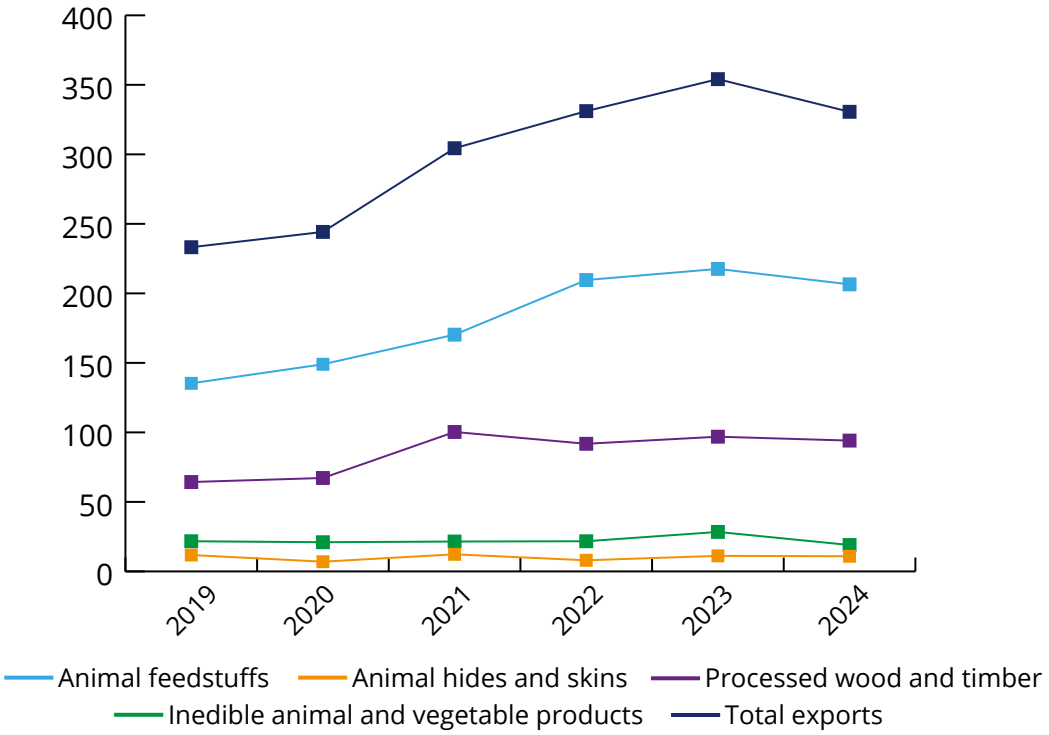


Refer to: Table 6.13 External sales of live animals from Northern Ireland by destination 2019-2024.

Non-Edible Exports

In 2024, the total value of non-edible product export sales decreased by £24.8 million; a decrease of 7 per cent from 2023. All four subsectors experienced an decrease in exports over the period.

Figure 6.14: Value of non-edible product exports from Northern Ireland 2019-2024 (£ million)



Refer to: Table 6.14 Value of non-edible product exports from Northern Ireland 2019-2024.

7. Rural Population

Summary

- **Rural Population:** At the time of the 2021 NI Census, approximately 61 per cent of people lived in an urban area, with approximately 39 per cent living in a non-urban area (i.e. 'rural' or 'mixed').
- **Income:** Rural households more distant from Belfast continued to have lower average incomes than those closer to Belfast.
- **Businesses:** Agriculture remained the leading industry by far in rural areas in 2024, accounting for approximately 39 per cent of the VAT registered businesses in rural locations.
- **Education:** In 2023/24, school leavers from rural areas were more likely to have achieved more qualifications than their urban counterparts, as well as being more likely to enter higher education (43 per cent, compared with 38 per cent for urban school leavers).
- **Housing:** In 2023/24, owner occupancy rates continued to be substantially higher in rural areas.
- **Transport and Connectivity:** In 2024, access to superfast broadband in rural areas increased to 95% of residential premises.
- **Health:** In 2024 average life expectancy in rural areas continued to outstrip that in urban areas. Average waiting times for ambulances passed the 30-minute mark in rural areas.

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Rural Population

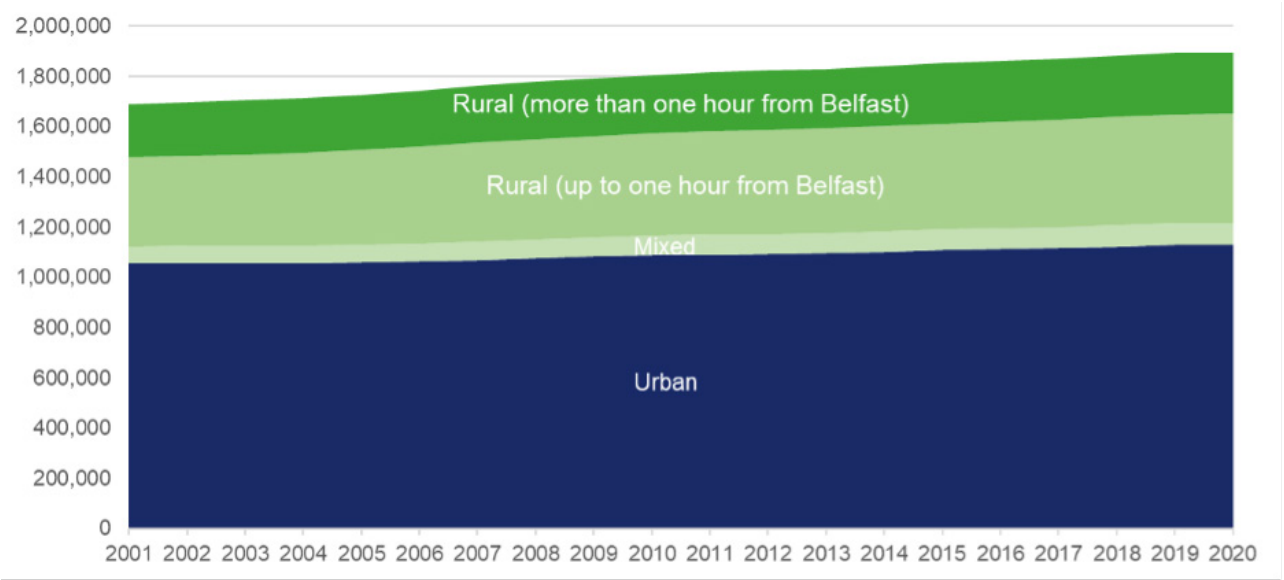
Due to methodological changes in the 2021 Census, only headline population figures for urban and rural are currently available. Direct comparison of the 2021 figures with the previous mid-year estimates has not been made. The 2021 Census uses 'urban' and 'non-urban' classifications, with the latter encompassing both the previous 'rural' and 'mixed' designations. Population estimates using the previous methodology from 2001-2020 have been provided for context.

	Population	Proportion of NI Population
2023		
Urban	1,176,514*	61%
Non-Urban	743,881*	39%
NI	**1,920,395***	**100%**
2022		
Urban	1,168,632*	61%
Non-Urban	741,946*	39%
NI	**1,910,578***	**100%**

	Population	Proportion of NI Population
2021		
Urban	1,165,483	61%
Non-Urban	739,108	39%
NI	**1,904,591**	**100%**

*Source: NISRA Mid-year Population Estimates

Figure 7.1: Population trends in Northern Ireland, 2001-2020



Refer to: Table 7.1 Population Trends in Northern Ireland, 2001-2020.

In 2020, based on mid-year population estimates at small area level, 60 per cent of people in Northern Ireland lived in urban areas, 5 per cent in mixed urban/rural areas and 36 per cent in rural areas. Of those living in rural areas, 60 per cent lived within 20 minutes' drive time of a medium or larger settlement and 63 per cent lived within an hour's drive time from Belfast. Rural and mixed urban/rural areas have experienced a much greater population growth since 2001 than towns and cities, with the biggest increases being in mixed areas, and in rural areas less than an hour's distance from Belfast.

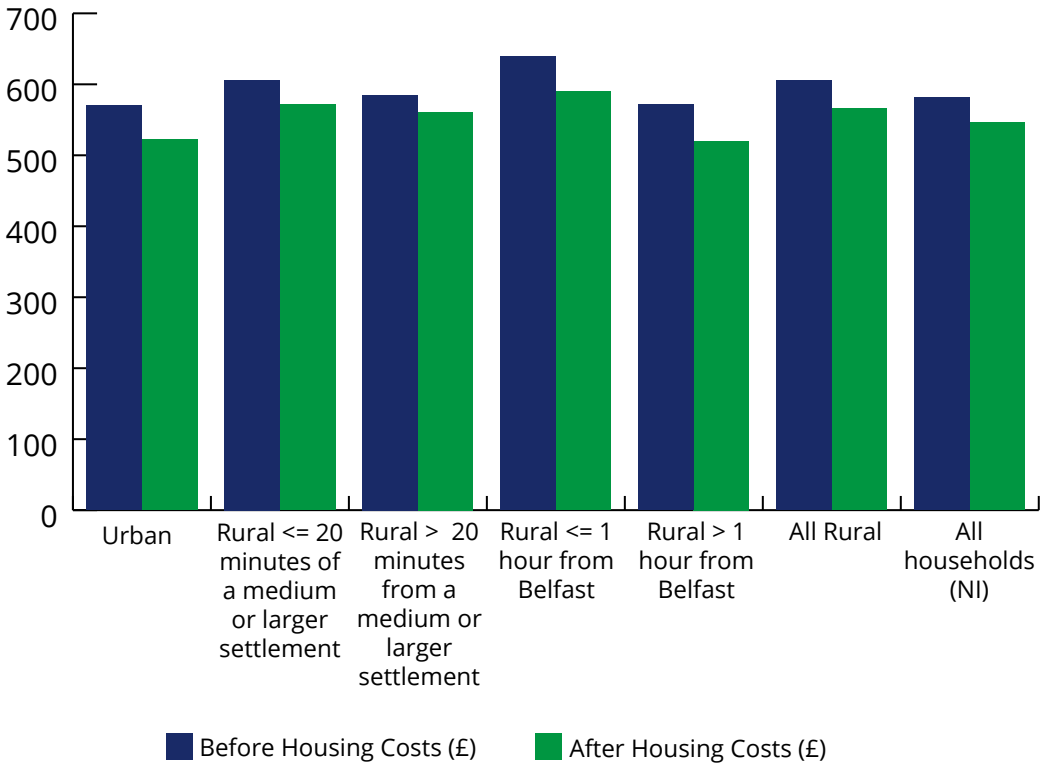
2020	Proportion of NI Population*	% Growth 2001-20
Urban	60%	6%
Mixed	5%	32%
All Rural	36%	19%

**Percentages may not sum due to rounding*

Income

The gap in average household incomes between urban and rural households is narrowing. However, there is a difference in incomes between rural dwellers living close to, and those living more distant from Belfast. Rural households located more than an hour's drive from Belfast have lower incomes than those closer to Belfast (Figure 7.2). In addition, poverty levels in households in rural areas which are more than an hour's journey from Belfast are higher than those in rural areas closer to the city.

Figure 7.2: Median equivalised net disposable weekly household income (£) in Northern Ireland, 2022/23

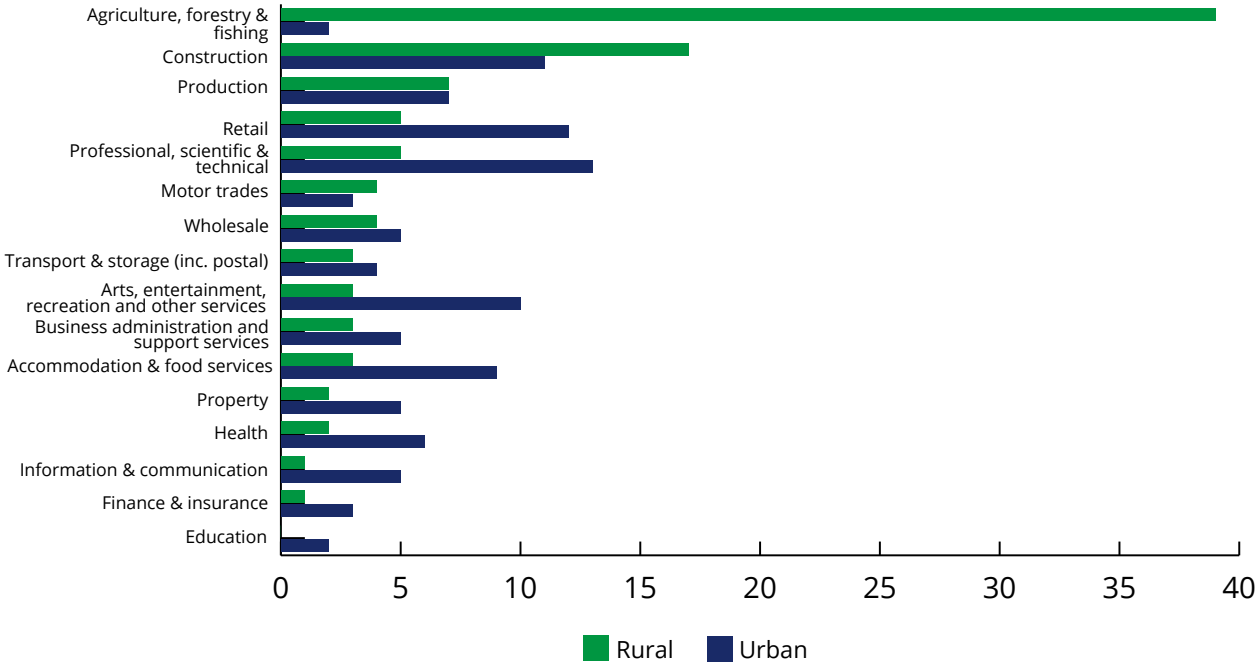


Refer to: Table 7.1 and 7.2.

Businesses

In 2024, there were 80,045 businesses registered for VAT and/or PAYE schemes in Northern Ireland. In 2019, businesses were legally obliged to register for VAT once their turnover exceeded £85,000. Agriculture is by far the leading industry in rural areas, particularly in those which are more than an hour's distance from Belfast. The majority of small businesses without employees are also located in rural areas, reflecting the dominance of agriculture in the rural economy (see Tables 7.3 and 7.4).

Figure 7.3: Proportion of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses operating in Northern Ireland by broad industry group, 2024



Refer to: Table 7.3 and 7.4.

Education

The adult population of rural and urban areas have on average similar levels of formal educational attainment (see Table 7.5). However, rural school leavers are more likely to achieve GCSE or A-level qualifications and to enter higher education than their urban peers (Figures 7.4 and 7.5).

Figure 7.4: Performance of school leavers in Northern Ireland, 2022/23

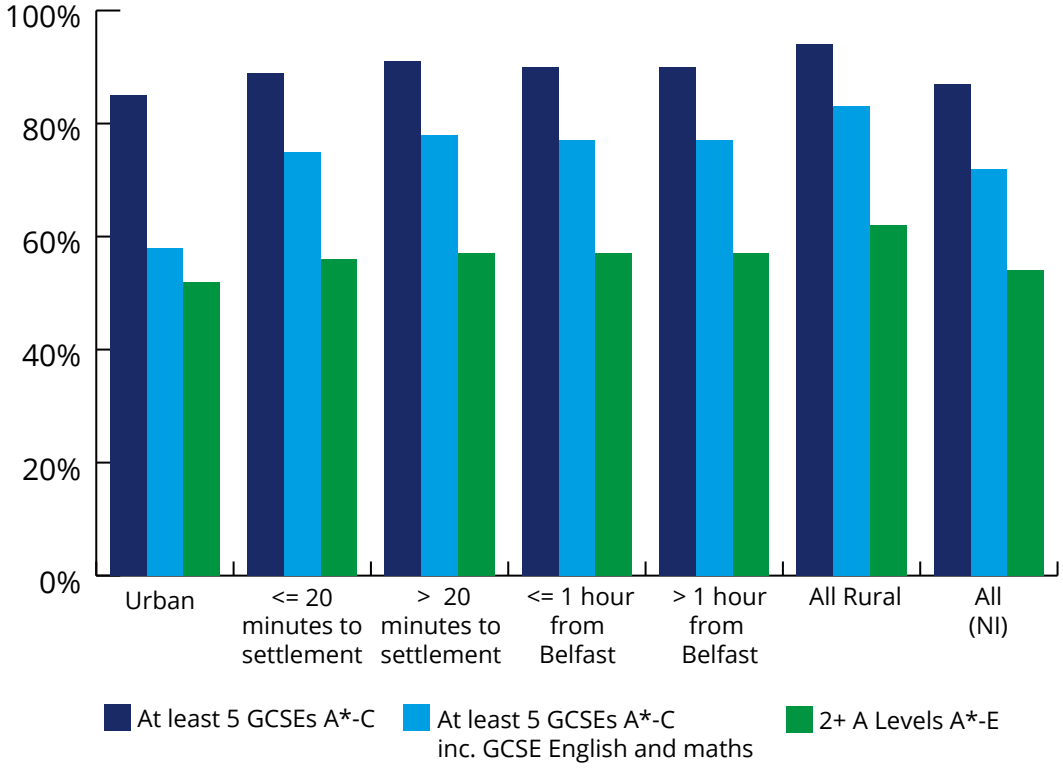
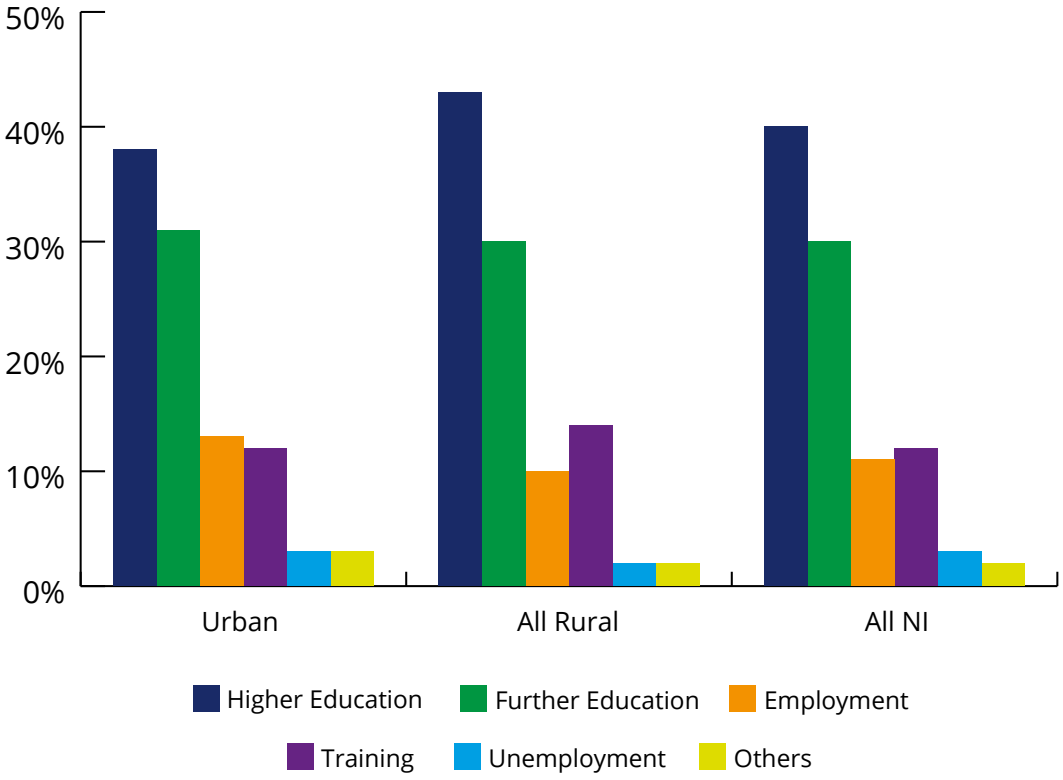


Figure 7.5: Destinations of school leavers in Northern Ireland, 2022/23

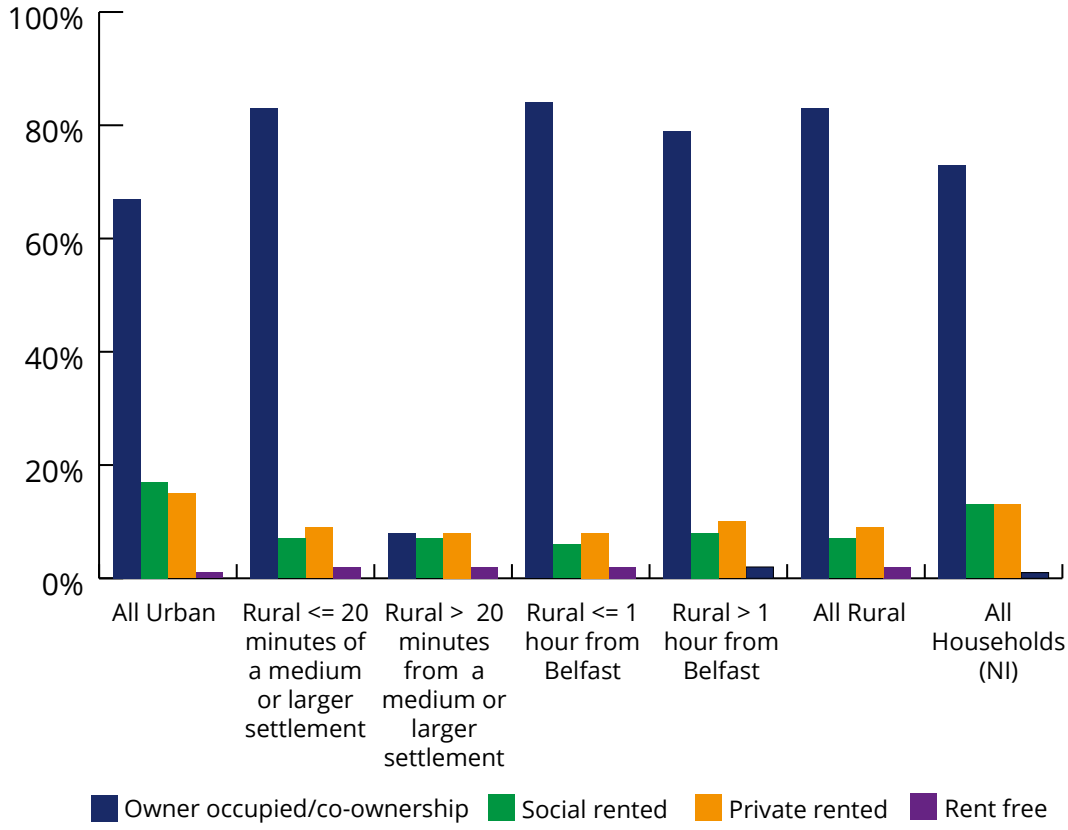


Refer to: Table 7.5 - 7.7.

Housing

Rural areas show a much higher level of home ownership and a much lower level of social renting than urban areas, although the latter may in part reflect availability. House prices are in general higher in rural areas but have been rising slightly more quickly in urban areas. The average household size is also higher in rural than in urban areas (see Tables 7.8 – 7.11).

Figure 7.6: Housing Tenure in Northern Ireland, 2023/24

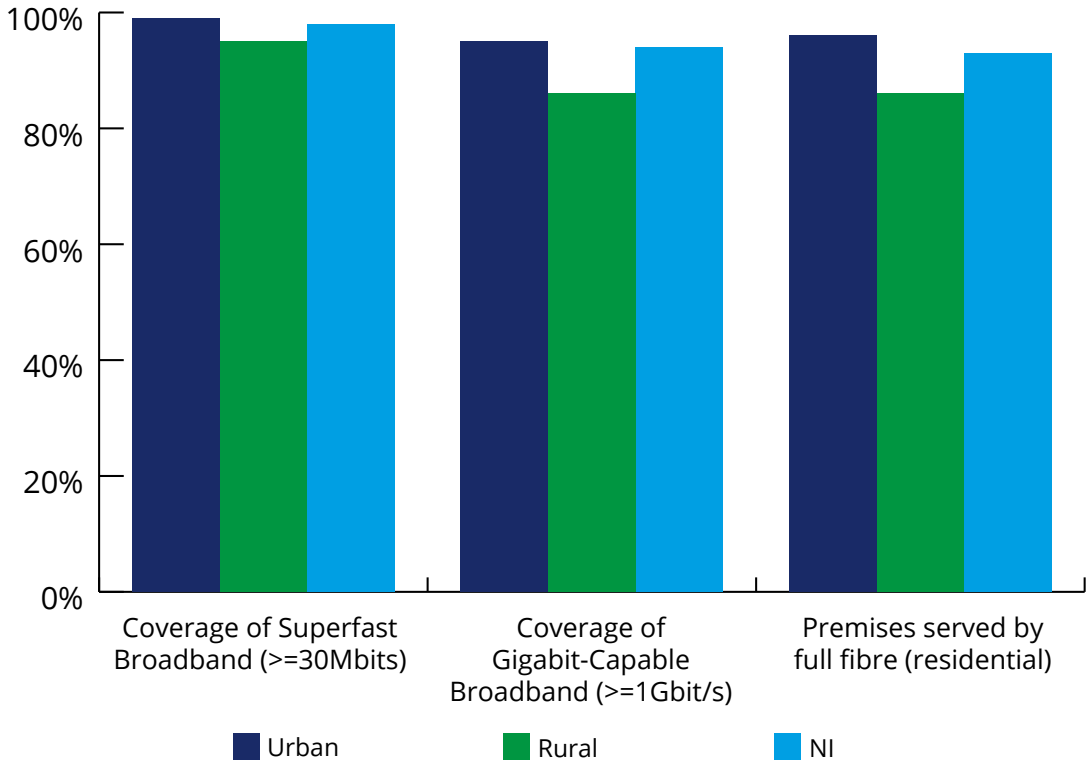


Refer to: Table 7.8 - 7.11.

Transport and Connectivity

Rural dwellers have a heavy reliance on private transport, in comparison to those in urban areas who enjoy much better access to bus and rail services (see Tables 7.11 and 7.12). Broadband speed and availability have both improved significantly in recent years due to the rollout of Project Stratum, with superfast speeds now available to 95% of rural residential premises (see Table 7.13).

Figure 7.7: Broadband speeds and availability in Northern Ireland, 2024

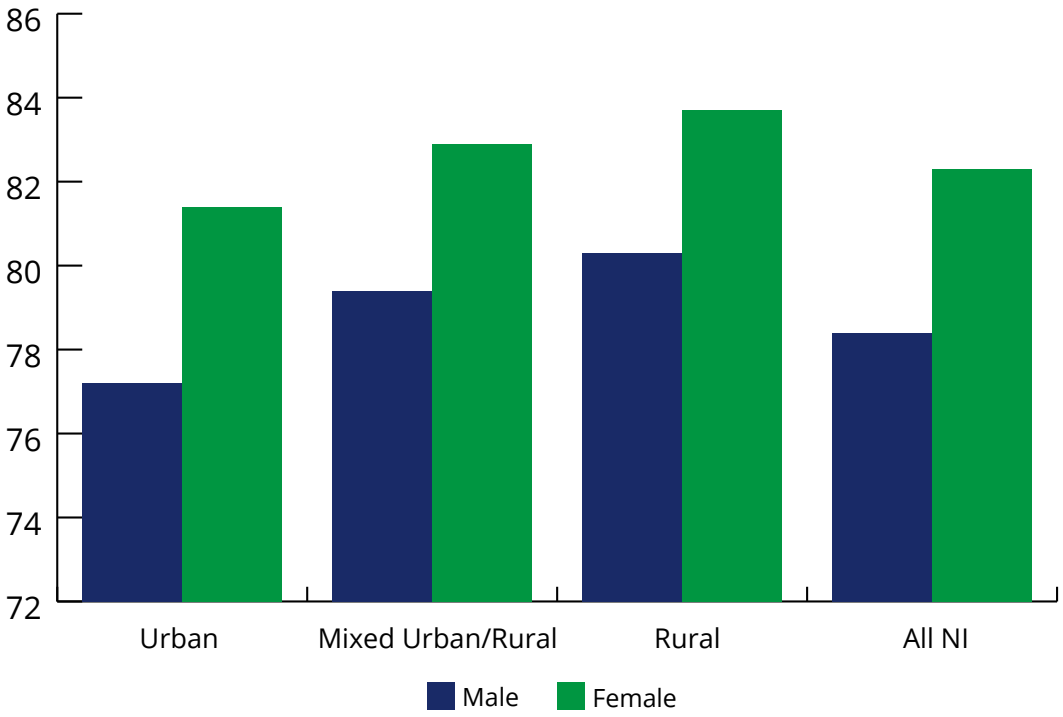


Refer to: Table 7.12 - 7.13.

Health

Average life expectancy is higher and mortality rates are lower in rural than in urban areas (see Tables 7.14 and 7.15). Median fire response times have increased overall but are much longer in rural than in urban areas (see Tables 7.16 and 7.17).

Figure 7.8: Average life expectancy (years) at birth in Northern Ireland, 2021-23



Refer to: Table 7.14 - 7.17.

Methodological notes

With the exception of Table 7.13, the definition of rural used throughout this section is that provided in the Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) 2015). This classification recommends a default urban-rural boundary at a population threshold of 5,000.

Much of the information included in these tables is aggregated from postcode level data. However, some data is available only at small area and not at postcode level. Small areas which comprise both urban and rural postcodes have been classified by NISRA as 'mixed' rural/urban areas. Therefore, where information is available only at small area level, tables in this section show data for 'mixed' as well as urban and rural areas.

The NISRA 2015 classification also includes a consideration of service provision, achieved by calculating estimated travel times to the location of a major service provider, operationalised as the town centre of a medium or larger settlement (at least 10,000 usual residents). Areas are further classified by their distance to Belfast. Where data is available, tables in this section provide information for rural areas within or outside a 20 minute drive-time of a medium or larger settlement, and within or outside an hour's distance from Belfast. A full description of the NISRA 2015 settlement classification is available at: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/review-statistical-classification-and-delineation-settlements

Information in Table 7.13 is based on the Locale definitions of rural and urban used by Ofcom. Locale is a third-party data source which uses a combination of Government conurbation definitions, population density, urban sprawl boundaries, Ordinance Survey roadmaps and visual inspection to classify areas. Details of the Locale definitions are available at: https://www.bluewavegeographics.com/images/LOCALE_Classification.pdf

In the 2021 NI Census of Population, the previous Output Area and Super Output Area geographies have been replaced with Data Zones and Super Data Zones. Urban status is derived by assigning Data Zones as either urban or non-urban. Data Zones with 90% or more of their usual resident population inside the boundary of an urban settlement (i.e. those settlements with population 5,000+ usual residents) are classed as urban. All remaining Data Zones are classed as non-urban.

Further information is available at https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census/2021-census

8. Animal Health and Welfare

Summary

DAERA is responsible for programmes of animal disease management and eradication, animal welfare surveillance and education of livestock keepers in standards of animal welfare. This chapter provides a compendium of the results from DAERA's disease and animal welfare checks that underpin these programmes..

- During 2024, 10 per cent of the herds tested recorded a positive incident of Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) and 3 per cent of herds tested recorded a positive incident of Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD).
- Random on-farm animal welfare checks found 100 per cent of farms to be compliant while risk assessed targeted checks found 85 per cent to be compliant.

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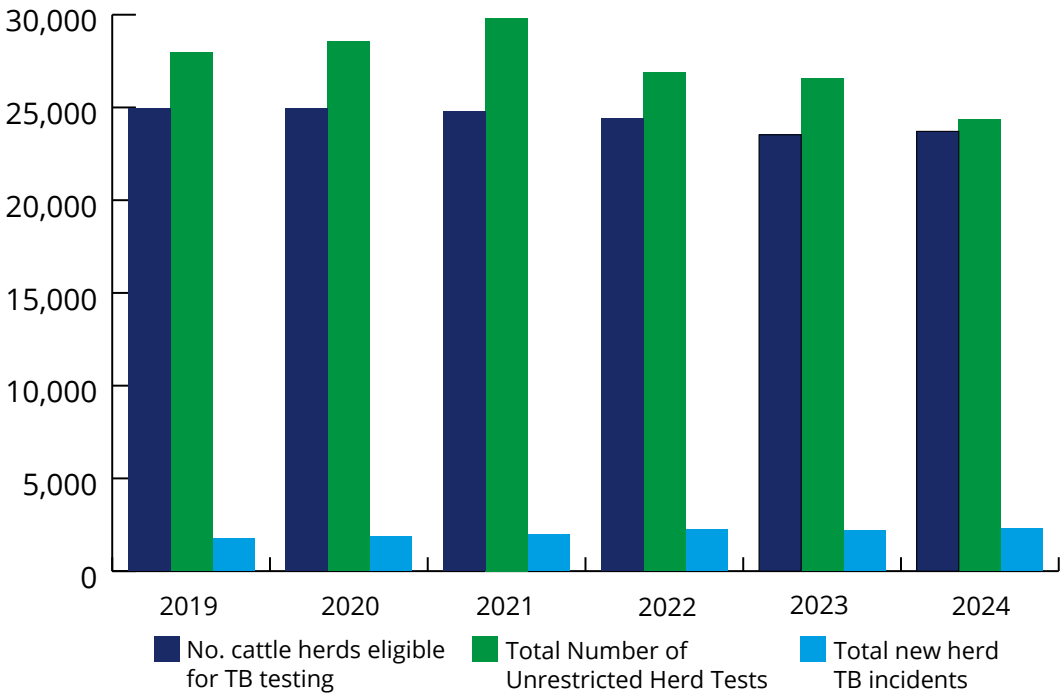
Disease

Focus has switched to bovine tuberculosis (TB) and bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) since Northern Ireland achieved "negligible risk status" for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in 2017 and official bovine brucellosis (BR) freedom in 2015.

During 2024, there were 2,314 new herd breakdowns in Northern Ireland due to bovine TB. This is both the highest number of herd incidents and the highest proportion of herd incidents since 2019.

Figure 8.1: Northern Ireland Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) Statistics, 2019-2024



Refer to: Table 8.1 Northern Ireland Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) Statistics.

BVD is a highly contagious viral disease of cattle that can be spread directly or indirectly by infected animals.

Compulsory testing began on 1st March 2016 as part of an industry led programme for eradication. In 2024, the animal incidence remains at less than 1 per cent.

Northern Ireland Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) Eradication Programme Headline Statistics 2022-2024

	2022	2023	2024
Number of Herds with BVD Animal Statuses Set	16,129	15,700	15,325
Number of Herds with Positive BVD Animal Statuses (Prevalence)	723 (4.48%)	569 (3.84%)	465 (3.03%)
Number of Animals with BVD Status Set	557,416	539,664	517,649
Number of Animals with Positive BVD Status (Prevalence)	1,472 (0.26%)	1,172 (0.22%)	1,134 (0.22%)
Number of Animals with Inconclusive BVD Status (Prevalence)	4 (<0.01%)	4 (<0.01%)	3 (<0.01%)

1. Compulsory testing was introduced from 1st March 2016. Before then, participation was on a voluntary basis.

Refer to: Table 8.2 Northern Ireland Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) Eradication Programme Statistics.

Animal Welfare

Veterinary Service Animal Health Group (VSAHG) carried out 559 on-farm welfare inspections in 2024.

Of the 559 welfare inspections carried out on farms by VSAHG during 2024, 91 per cent were complaint, follow-up, targeted, or cross compliance inspections (where herds are identified as being “at risk”) whereas the remaining 9 per cent were random cross compliance checks.

Outcomes of on-farm animal welfare inspections completed on Northern Ireland farms in 2024

Type of inspections	Compliance with animal welfare legislation	Number of Inspections	Category of Non-compliance	Number per category	Percentage of total %
Cross-compliance programme of random inspections	No	0	A B C	0 0 0	0.00 0.00 0.00
	Yes	52		52	100.00
	Total	**52**		**52**	**100%**
Cross compliance Risk Assessment based, other Targeted and Complaint related inspections	No	78	A B C	44 13 21	8.68 2.56 4.14
	Yes	429		429	84.62
	Total	**507**		**507**	**100%**
All inspections	No	78	A B C	44 13 21	7.87 2.33 3.76
	Yes	481		481	86.05
	Total	**559**		**559**	**100%**

1. Reference EC decision 2006/778. Categories of non-compliance are defined as follows:
   - Category A: non-compliance related to housing or animal treatment with no immediate action for administrative or criminal penalties, though corrective action is required within 3 months.
   - Category B: non-compliance associated with staff training, record keeping or frequency of inspection of animals with no immediate action for administrative or criminal penalties, though notice should give an appropriate amount of time to make the necessary improvements i.e. more than 3 months.
   - Category C: a serious welfare problem requiring immediate action with respect to application of administrative or criminal penalties.

Refer to: Table 8.3 Outcomes of on-farm animal welfare inspections completed on Northern Ireland farms in 2023.

Of the 52 random cross compliance inspections in 2024, 100 per cent achieved an overall assessment of compliance with legislation (compared with 98 per cent in 2022 and 100 per cent in 2023).

Of the complaint follow-up, targeted visits and risk cross compliance inspections, in total 85 per cent achieved compliance with legislation (compared with 87 per cent in 2022 and 81 per cent in 2023). 15 per cent of these 507 inspections indicated levels of non-compliance needing corrective action. This category of inspections carries a higher risk of non-compliance compared to those that are randomly selected from

all Northern Ireland keepers as they are identified through known triggers. The vast majority of Northern Ireland herd keepers comply with the legislation.

Taking all welfare inspections into account there were 4 per cent assessed as showing a serious welfare problem requiring immediate action with respect to application of administrative or criminal penalties.

All welfare inspections where a breach is recorded are referred for consideration of basic farm payment scheme penalties.

In 2024, one farm animal keeper was disqualified by the courts as a result of serious welfare breaches.

All complaints and allegations of poor welfare on specific farms are treated as a matter of urgency. DAERA also co-operate closely with other organisations such as PSNI, local District Councils etc.

9. Environment

Summary

- **Greenhouse gas emissions** were estimated to be 18.2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent ($MtCO_2e$) for 2023, a decrease of 7.1 per cent compared with 2022 and 31.5 per cent compared with 1990.
- **Water Quality -** In 2024, approximately 29 per cent of river water bodies were classified as 'high' or 'good' ecological status. At 61 of the 65 groundwater monitoring stations (94 per cent) nitrate concentrations were consistently below 25 mg NO_3/l in 2023. Water pollution incidents rose by 8 per cent to 887 substantiated incidents in 2024.
- **Agri-Environmental Schemes** - By the end of 2024, there were five active tranches of the Environmental Farming Scheme with over 3,480 agreements covering 59,000 hectares of land.
- **Organic Farming** - The area of land farmed organically in Northern Ireland has fallen to 7 thousand hectares which is the lowest level reported since 2004.
- **Forestry** - 502 hectares of new woodland was planted in Northern Ireland in 2024/25, compared to 433 hectares in 2023/24.

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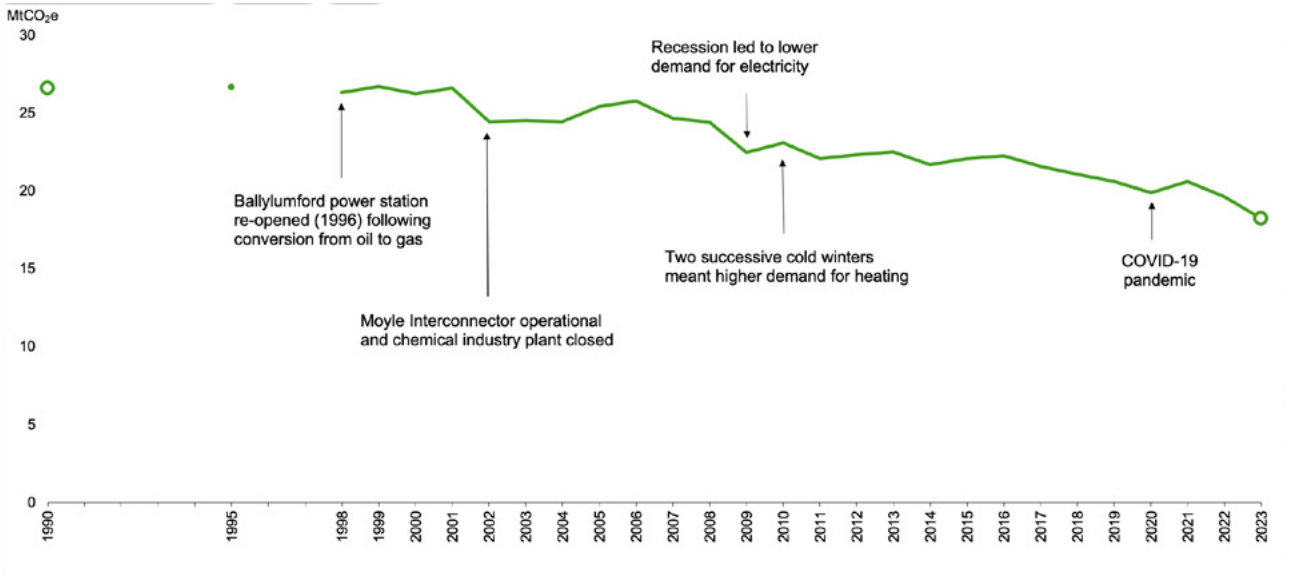
The Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report is an annual compendium publication providing estimates for key environmental statistics produced by DAERA. The following information includes statistics from the Environmental Statistics Report along with other DAERA and external publications.

Greenhouse gas emissions

Greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. The presence of these gases in the atmosphere affects the temperature of the earth. There are concerns that increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are contributing to climate changes with potentially harmful consequences for the environment and human health. Agriculture is a major contributor to emissions of methane and nitrous oxide.

In 2023, Northern Ireland's net greenhouse gas emissions were estimated to be 18.2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent ($MtCO_2e$), a decrease of 7.1 per cent compared with 2022. This net figure is a result of an estimated 20.1 $MtCO_2e$ total emissions, offset by 1.9 $MtCO_2e$ of emissions removed through sequestration. The longer-term trend showed a decrease of 31.5 per cent compared to the base year. The base year is 1990 for carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, and 1995 for the fluorinated gases.

Figure 9.1a: Total greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland, 1990, 1995, 1998-2023, $MtCO_2e$



Refer to: Table 9.1: Total greenhouse gas emissions 1990-2023.

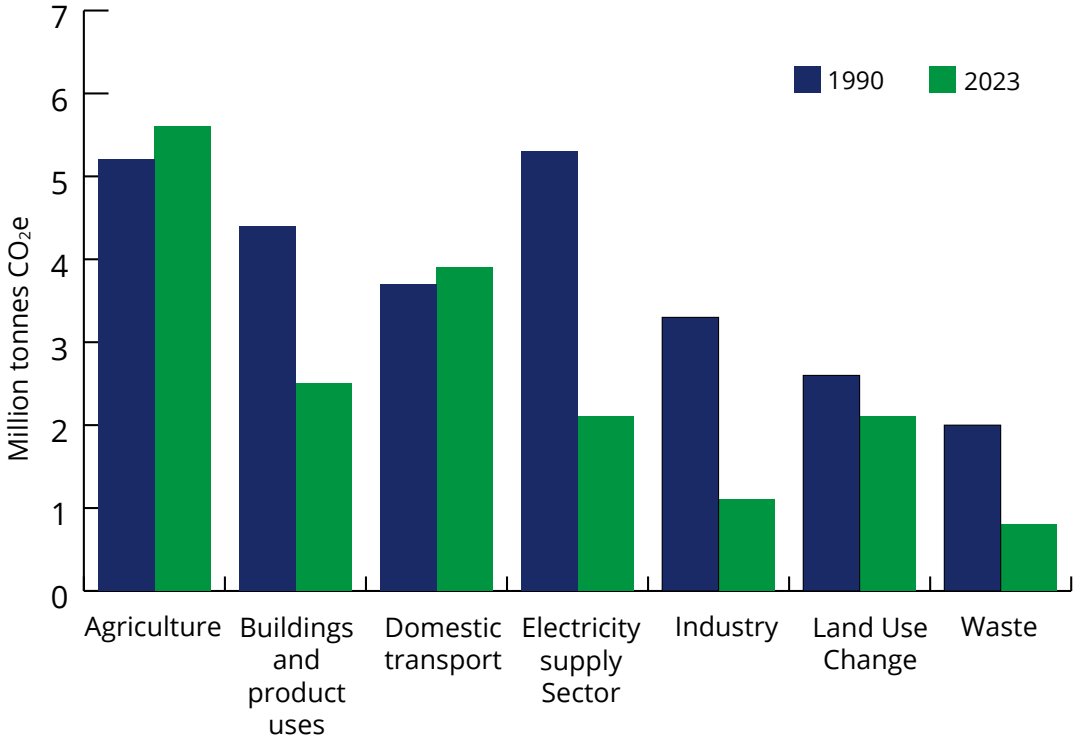
The largest sectors in terms of emissions in 2023 were Agriculture (30.8 per cent), Domestic transport (21.5 per cent), Buildings and product uses (13.8 per cent) and Land use change (11.8 per cent). The remaining emissions were produced by Electricity supply (11.7 per cent), Industry (6.2 per cent) and Waste (4.2 per cent), with less than 0.0 per cent of emissions from Fuel supply.

The largest decreases in terms of tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent were in Electricity supply (0.9 $MtCO_2e$), Buildings and product uses (0.4 $MtCO_2e$) and Agriculture (0.1 $MtCO_2e$) sectors with the reasons for these cited below:

- Electricity supply emissions fell due to fuel-switching away from oil and coal-fired power-stations and an increase in generation from renewable sources.
- Buildings and product uses fell with reduced emissions from fuel combustion in residential buildings.
- Agriculture fell due a decrease in the purchase of manufactured fertilisers and a decline in beef cattle numbers.

Further details on Greenhouse Gas Emissions can be found in the following publication: Northern Ireland greenhouse gas inventory.

Figure 9.1b: Total greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland by sector, 1990 & 2023



Source: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: 1990 - 2023.

Refer to: Table 9.1: Total greenhouse gas emissions 1990-2023.

Water Quality

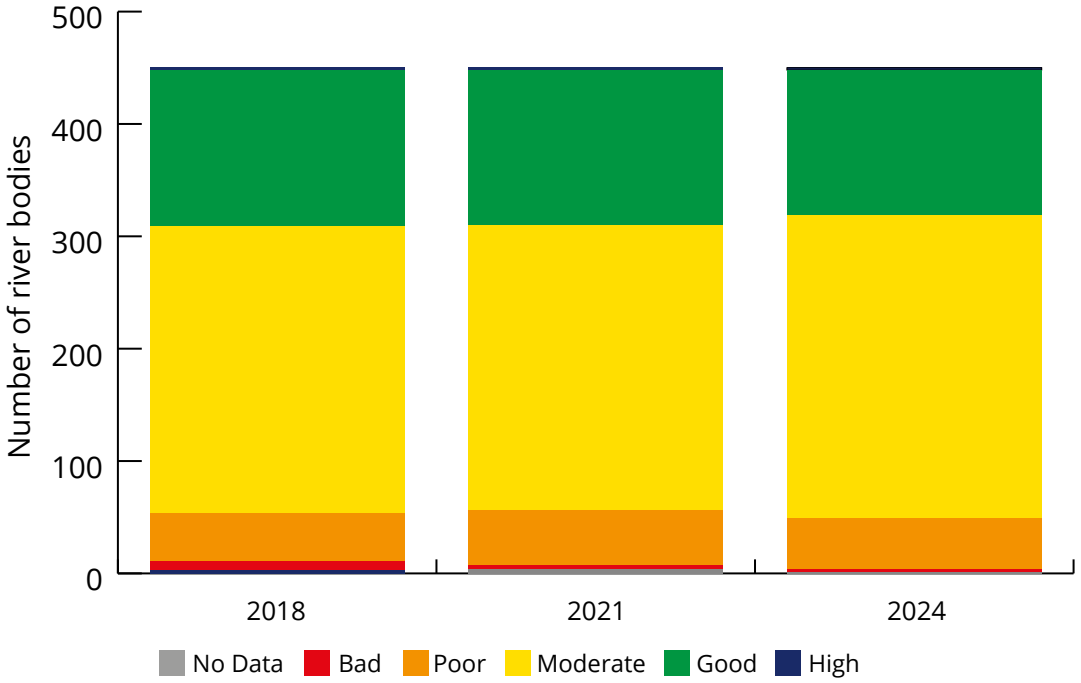
There are 571 water bodies in Northern Ireland, 496 of these are surface water bodies: including 450 rivers, 21 lakes, and 25 transitional & coastal water bodies (Marine). The remaining 75 are groundwater bodies. For surface waters, ecology and chemistry status of water bodies are assessed using Water Framework Directive (WFD) specifications. Ecology and chemistry status combine to an overall surface water status.

In 2018, new priority substances were introduced to the monitoring programme. For the first time the presence of ubiquitous, persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic (uPBT) substances, so-called 'forever' chemicals, have been assessed as part of chemical status. Due to their bioaccumulative and persistent nature, uPBT substances have been detected at all monitored stations and resulted in failures of all those stations. These failures were extrapolated to all water bodies so no river water bodies achieved good chemical status in 2021 as explained in the Northern Ireland Water Framework Directive (WFD) Statistics Report 2021. The WFD report presents ecological and chemical status, as well as overall surface water status to provide more detailed information.

By analysing the ecological status only, it can reflect the key pressures acting upon our water environment such as excess nutrients and organic pollution resulting from

agricultural and urban (sewage) land use. The ecology status of river water bodies can be assigned to one of five classes from 'high' through to 'bad'. In 2024, approximately 29 per cent of river water bodies were classified as 'high' or 'good' ecological status. This compares with approximately 31 per cent classified as 'high' or 'good' in 2021 and 31 per cent in 2018.

Figure 9.2: Northern Ireland river ecological status 2018, 2021 & 2024

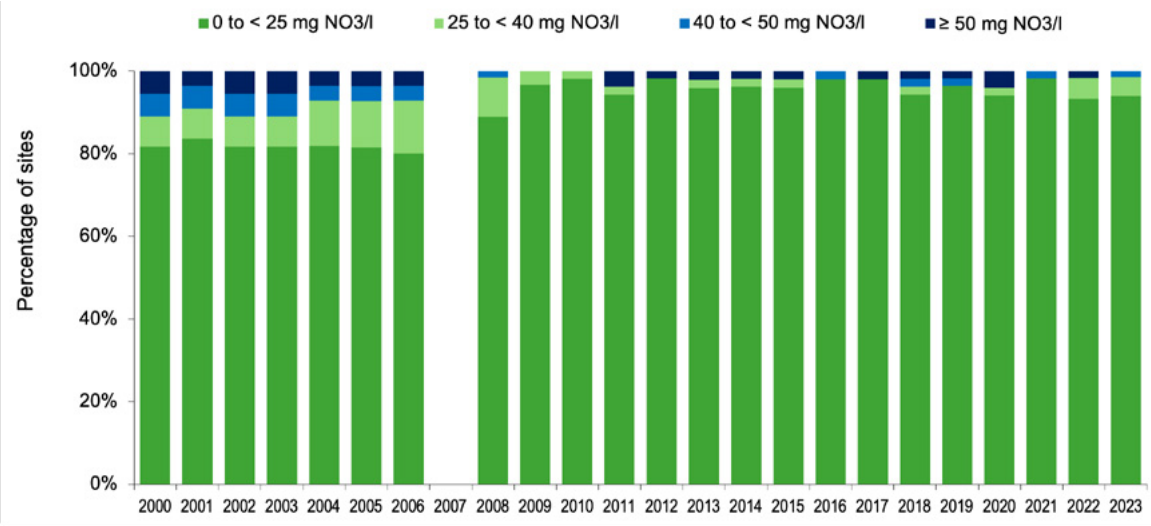


Source: Northern Ireland Water Framework Directive Statistics Report 2021.

Refer to: Table 9.2: Northern Ireland river ecological status.

Regional monitoring of nitrate concentrations in Groundwater across Northern Ireland began in 2000. The Water (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 ensures that the Water Framework Directive (as transposed) maintains the Groundwater Daughter Directive groundwater quality standard at 50 mg NO_3/l. In the period 2000 to 2006, approximately 91 per cent of sites had an annual mean concentration of less than 40 mg NO_3/l and approximately 82 per cent were less than 25 mg NO_3/l. Regional monitoring re-commenced in 2008, after a major review of the network was undertaken. The figures both pre and post review are broadly comparable. In 2023, nitrate concentrations were monitored at 65 groundwater sites across Northern Ireland giving an average concentration of 5.14 mg NO_3/l. At 61 of the 65 groundwater monitoring stations (94 per cent) nitrate concentrations were consistently below 25 mg NO_3/l.

Figure 9.3: Annual mean nitrate concentrations (in groundwater) in Northern Ireland, 2000-2023



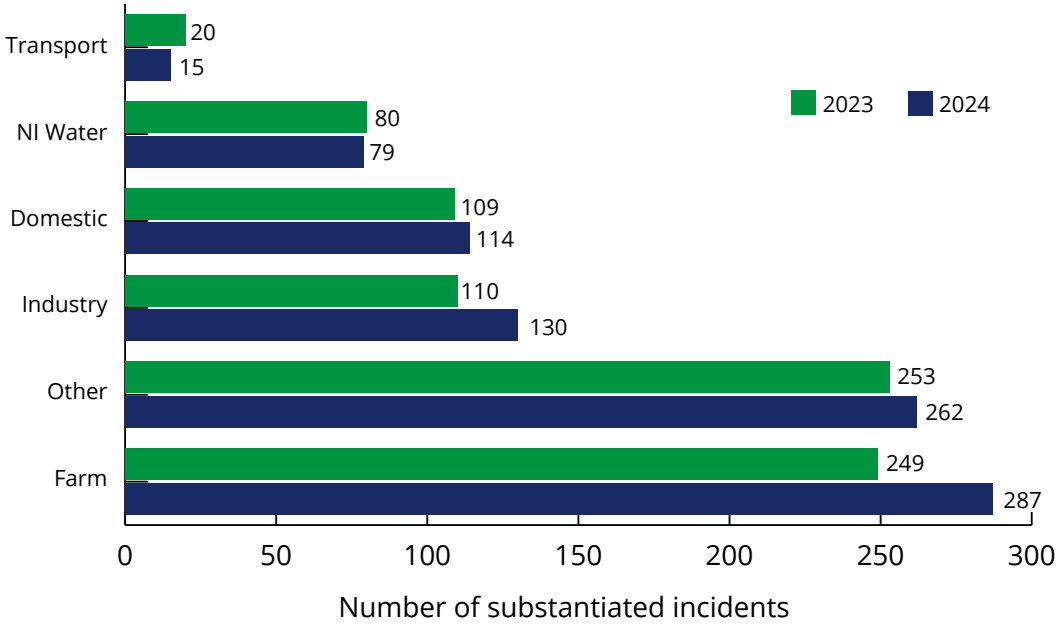
Source: NIEA

*Note: no figures for 2007 as a major review of the network was undertaken during that period.

Refer to: Table 9.3: Annual mean nitrate concentrations (in groundwater) in Northern Ireland, 2000-2023.

Figure 9.4 provides information on the source of substantiated water pollution incidents. Water pollution incidents rose by 8 per cent to 887 substantiated incidents in 2024. In 2024, Farm (32 per cent), accounted for the largest proportion of substantiated incidents investigated by NIEA, followed by Other (30 per cent), Industry (15 per cent), Domestic (13 per cent), Northern Ireland Water Ltd (9 per cent) and Transport (2 per cent).

Figure 9.4: Source of substantiated water pollution incidents in Northern Ireland, 2023 and 2024



Source: NIEA

Refer to: Table 9.4 Source of substantiated water pollution incidents in Northern Ireland, 2018-2024.

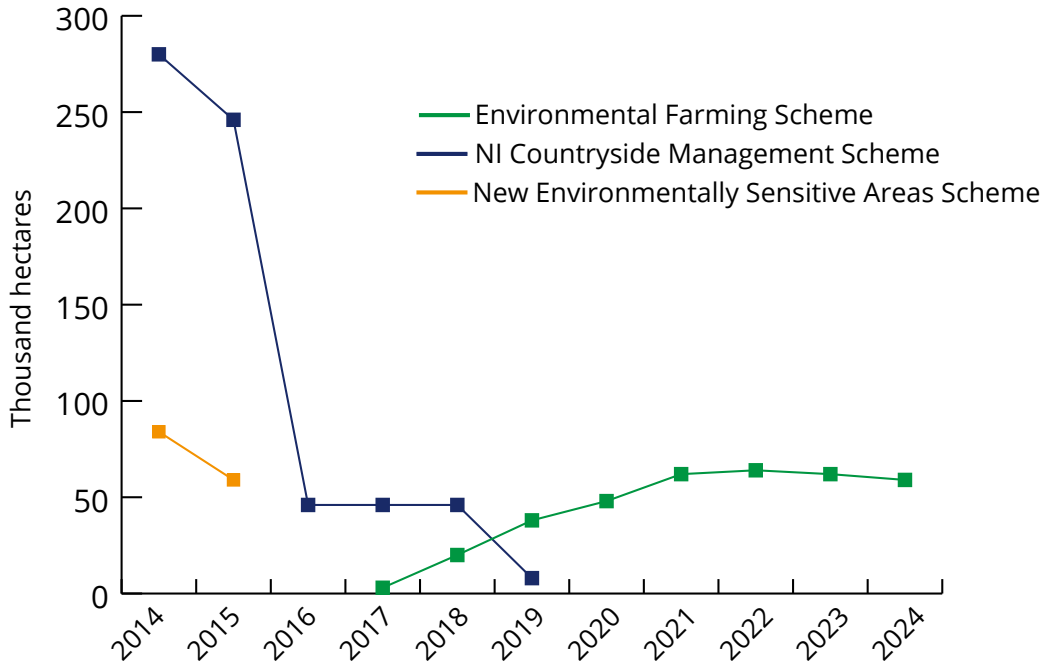
Water pollution from farms can be diffuse, such as from fertiliser and pesticides spread on the land and point source such as runoff from livestock buildings. The main areas of concern are nitrate pollution in surface and groundwater, phosphorus levels in surface water and contamination by pesticides. Incidents relating to confirmed occurrences of potentially toxic blue green algae are included within the "Other" category. Potentially Toxic Blue Green Algal blooms result from longer term diffuse inputs to our waterways. As these inputs largely derive from diffuse wastewater and agricultural sources, no single discharger can be identified as the source. Overall, there was a decrease in the number of confirmed incidents related to potentially toxic blue green algae in 2024 compared to 2023.

Agri-environmental Schemes

Agri-environmental schemes are managed in Northern Ireland under the Rural Development Programme (RDP). The area of agricultural land managed through these schemes decreased by 85 per cent to 46,000 hectares (approximately 5 per cent of NI farmland) between 2015 and 2016. This was due to the expiration in 2016 of those remaining 10 year agreements from older agri-environment schemes such as the Countryside Management Scheme (CMS) and the Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme (ESAS). Within the Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme (NICMS), a significant proportion of the total number of agreements also came to the end of their seven year term in late 2015. All NICMS agreements ended on 31st December 2019.

The trends for uptake of agri-environment schemes and the area under agreement have been determined by a number of factors including length of scheme agreement, farmer participation, available funding and resources to manage and deliver schemes.

Figure 9.5: Area of Farmland in Northern Ireland under Agri-Environmental Schemes, 2014 - 2024



Source: Countryside Management Unit DAERA

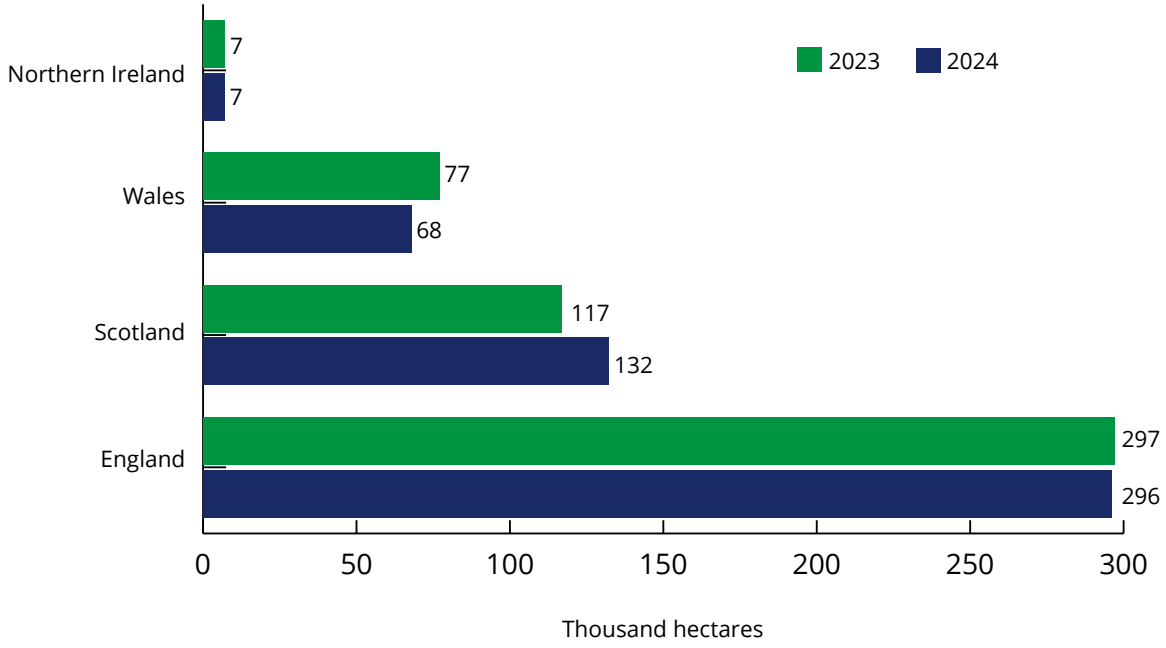
Refer to: Table 9.5: Area of farmland in Agri-Environment schemes 2014-2024.

In 2017 DAERA launched its new agri-environment scheme - the Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS). This is a voluntary scheme under the NI Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is part financed by the EU. It offers participants a 5-year agreement to deliver a range of environmental measures. By the end of 2024 there were five active tranches of the Environmental Farming Scheme with over 3,480 agreements covering 59,000 hectares of land.

Organic farming

Organic farming involves holistic production management systems for crops and livestock, based on ecological principles that impose strict limitations on farm inputs, especially purchased inputs, in order to minimise damage to the environment and wildlife. Northern Ireland has the lowest proportions of farmland under organic management in the UK.

Figure 9.6: United Kingdom organic and organic in-conversion agricultural land area, 2023 - 2024



Source: Organic farming statistics 2024.

Refer to: Table 9.6: Organic and organic in-conversion agricultural land area 2018-2024.

The area of land farmed organically in Northern Ireland has fallen to 7 thousand hectares which is the lowest level reported since 2004. The total organic and organic in conversion agricultural land area in the UK overall was 503 thousand hectares in 2024, 5 thousand hectares more than in 2023.

Forestry

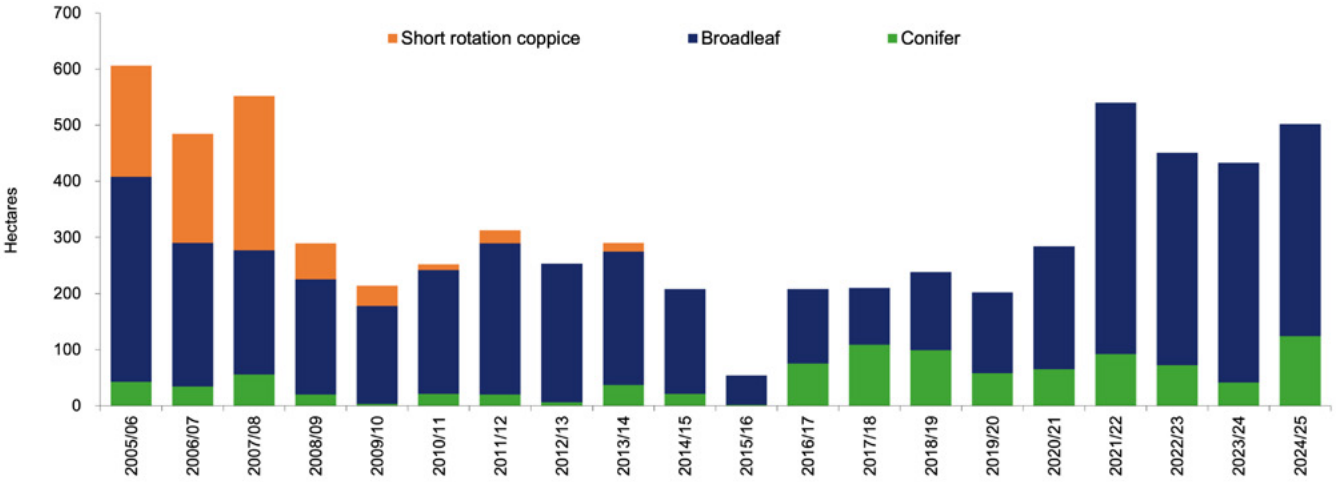
In Northern Ireland the state-owned forest area has changed little since 2000. In 2012 the Northern Ireland Woodland Base-map incorporated new woodland data from the DAERA Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) project. This has contributed a significant additional area of woodland that had not previously been captured by any of the original datasets. Remote sensing was used to identify significant areas of non-

woodland and the removal of these also resulted in an improved estimate. The area of privately owned forest area is estimated to be 56 thousand hectares as of 31 March 2024. See table 9.7a in the accompanying statistical review tables file for time-series information on forestry area. Privately-owned forest area data for the years prior to 2011/12 are now thought to be under-estimates.

The area of woodland in the UK has increased over the past century. Approximately 5 per cent of the UK was covered by woodland in 1924; in 2024, 13.5 per cent of the UK was wooded.

Grant support to encourage afforestation and sustainable management of privately owned woodlands is provided by forestry measures in the Rural Development Programme. When combined with NI Forest Service planting, 502 hectares of new woodland was planted in 2024/25, compared to 433 hectares in 2023/24.

Figure 9.7: Area of new forest and woodland plantings by private landowners supported by grant aid and NI Forest Service plantings, 2005/06 - 2024/25

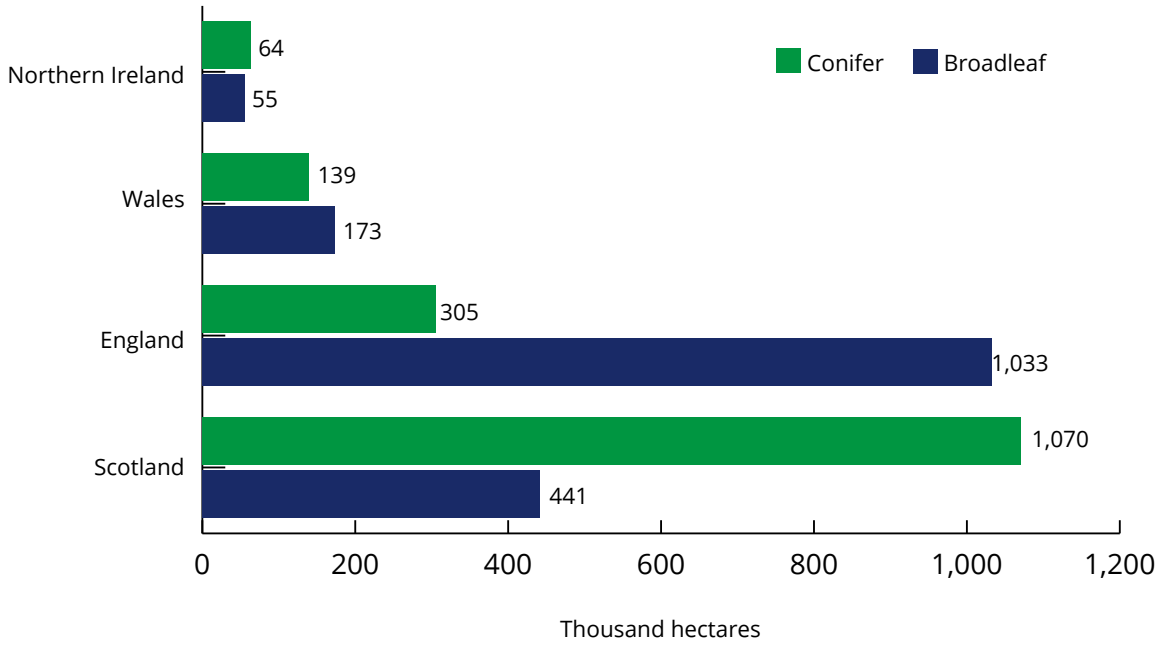


Source: Northern Ireland Forest Service.

Refer to: Area of new forest and woodland plantings by private landowners supported by grant aid and NI Forest Service planting, 2000/01 - 2024/25.

Northern Ireland has approximately nine per cent of total land area in forestry compared to a UK average of 13.5 per cent. The chart below shows the area of conifer and broadleaf woodland throughout the UK regions. Scotland has the largest area of conifers while England has the largest area of broadleaves.

Figure 9.8: Area of woodland throughout the United Kingdom by forest type, 2024



Source: Forestry Statistics and Forestry Facts & Figures.

Refer to: Table 9.8: Area of woodland throughout the UK by forest type, 2024.

Notes for Readers Section

Statistical And Methodological Notes

Aggregate Agricultural Account (AAA)

The AAA, from which agriculture's output, input, value added and income are obtained, is conducted according to the rules and conventions of the United Nations *System of National Accounts 1993*, the subsequent *European System of Accounts 1995 and Regulation* (EC) No. 138/2004 (which incorporates the revised European Union's *Manual on the Economic Accounts for Agriculture 1997, introduced throughout the UK in 1998)*.

The main features of the AAA are as follows:

(i) The AAA is conducted on a 'sector' basis. This means that agricultural activity includes 'inseparable non-agricultural secondary activities', such as pony trekking, which are carried out on-farm and for which the inputs cannot be separated from farming inputs.

(ii) The AAA is calculated on an accruals basis, i.e. 'as due' rather than 'as paid'. This means that subsidies such as the Single Farm Payment are counted in the year in which they are due rather than in the year when they are paid. The detailed allocation of subsidies is documented in footnotes to Table 2.1.

(iii) Rent paid on 'conacre' (short-term lettings) to non-farming persons is included as an expense.

(iv) Capital formation in, and depreciation of, breeding livestock is included.

(v) Direct inter-farm sales and on-farm use of finished products such as cereals are included as both outputs and inputs thereby, in most cases, leaving gross and net product and total income from farming unchanged.

Income indicators

The main indicator of the return to all of the factors of production, i.e. land, labour, capital and 'enterprise', is **net value added** (strictly, net value added at factor cost). This is defined as gross output less expenditure on material and service inputs purchased from outside the sector, less consumption of fixed capital (or depreciation) plus subsidies not paid on products. Hence:

Gross output - gross input (also known as 'intermediate consumption')

= gross value added

Gross value added - consumption of fixed capital + subsidies not paid on products (such as the Single Farm Payment)

= net value added (at factor cost)

The income of all farm families in NI is given by **total income from farming (TIFF)**. This includes returns to farmers, their spouses and family workers for their labour and 'enterprise' and on their own capital invested; it therefore represents the income of all those with an entrepreneurial involvement in farming. It is the preferred income measure, conforming to national and international accounting practice and forming the basis of a Eurostat (the EU Statistical Office) indicator used for income comparisons across the EU. The derivation of TIFF is:

Net value added (at factor cost)

less paid labour (also known as 'compensation of employees'
interest
net rent

= Total income from farming (TIFF)

Cash flow series is shown in Table 2.4. Cash flow omits the effects of stock changes, but takes into account receipts of capital grants, expenditure on capital investment and changes in borrowings. It is a useful indicator of cash available to farm families from farming, but should not be considered as an alternative measure of income.

Sensitivity of estimates Since agricultural income measures are 'residuals' between two large aggregates, they are sensitive to quite small changes in either aggregate. For example, total income from farming in 2022 would change by around +9 per cent if there were one per cent changes (in opposite directions) in gross output and gross input. The degree of sensitivity rises as the level of income falls.

Provisional estimates 'Provisional' figures for 2024 presented in this Review are estimates based on data available during the period from December 2023 to January 2025, in most cases covering only the first 9-11 months of the year (2024). Forecasts are used to cover the months where no data is available. Provisional figures are therefore subject to revision when complete information becomes available. Revised figures will be published in next year's *Review*.

Revisions to Income series The 2023 figures have been revised as more complete information has become available. Net value added in 2023 is now estimated at £712.2 million (previously £ 580.4 million) while total income from farming for 2023 is now estimated at £471.3 million (previously £340.7 million). A 30-year plus consistent series of the AAA is available on the DAERA website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk.

Census Statistics on employment on farms (Tables 2.14 and 2.15), crop areas and livestock numbers (Section 3) and farm structure, (Section 4) are derived from the June Agricultural and Horticultural Census. This is an annual statistical survey which is based on a large sample survey. From 2020 a revised methodology was used to create the census sample using Departmental Administration data.

All farms were contacted and invited to participate in the survey. In response to COVID-19, the data collection for the 2020 Farm Census moved entirely online for the first time.

For farms that failed to submit an online response, estimates were completed for crop areas, livestock and labour figures. For the most part, these estimates were based on data collated from other administrative systems within the Department, or from the latest return from each farm, or in some cases farms with substantive numbers or areas of pigs, poultry or mushrooms were telephoned for information. The statistics are thus compiled from a survey of farm businesses augmented by administrative data. This has enabled detailed farm census statistics to be produced.

Further information on methodology and quality of the farm census data is available at: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/agricultural-census-northern-irelandmethodology-and-quality-report

Census Coverage

The statistical definition of a farm, which was changed in 1997, is based on separate business status as applied under the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS), having previously been based on land ownership. The census now covers all active farm businesses having one hectare or more of farmed land, whether owned, leased or taken in conacre, and those with under one hectare having any cattle, sheep or pigs or with significant poultry or horticultural activity.

In the Northern Ireland Agricultural Census, the statistical definition of a farm is the same as that applied under the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS), i.e. it is based on the concept of separate businesses. Until 1997, the definition was based on land ownership. The current definition is in keeping with that adopted for European Union surveys on the structure of agricultural holdings, according to which a farm is *'a single unit, both technically and economically, which has a single management and which produces agricultural products'* but it differs from that used elsewhere in the UK where a higher minimum size threshold is applied.

The Agricultural Census in Northern Ireland covers all active farm businesses having one hectare or more of farmed land, whether owned, leased or taken in conacre, and those with under one hectare having any cattle, sheep or pigs or with significant poultry or horticultural activity.

Over the past 50 years, the following criteria have been used to determine the coverage of the agricultural census in Northern Ireland:

Years	Census methods and coverage
Until 1954	Census information was collected by police enumerators who identified and visited all farms, including any under one acre (0.4 hectares), and recorded in special books information given to them orally by the farmer.
1954-1972	A postal census was introduced in 1954. This used the list of farmers which had been identified in the 1953 census, but included only those of **one acre or more**. From this time onwards a distinction was made between **'main'** holdings which were included in the census and **'minor'** holdings which were surveyed on a sample basis using simplified questions. Estimates were made for their total crop areas and livestock numbers but these holdings were not included in the count of farms.
1973-1980	In 1973, in conformity with a similar change in the rest of the United Kingdom, an alteration was made in the scope of the census in Northern Ireland. From then until 1980, the main census covered all holdings which had **at least 10 acres (4 hectares)** of land with the addition of any below that size which had any full-time agricultural workers or whose stock and cropping amounted to an annual estimated labour requirement of more than 40 man-days. This definition of a 'main' holding removed some 7,700 holdings from the old register but, at the same time, brought back a number of 'minor' holdings of less than one acre. The net reduction in the number of 'main' holdings arising from these adjustments was some 5,500.
1981-1996	A further change was made between 1980 and 1981 when, with the introduction of a new system of farm classification, and with changes to the minimum threshold in other parts of the UK, the threshold for inclusion in the 'main' census in Northern Ireland was raised. This new threshold restricted the census to holdings which had (a) a total land area (owned or taken on long-term lease) of 6 hectares or more or (b) any full-time workers other than the farmer or (c) a farm business size of 1,000 ECUs of Standard Gross Margin. This change resulted in the exclusion of a further 6,690 'minor' holdings from the main census between 1980 and 1981.
1997	The basis of the agricultural census was changed in 1997 from a 'census register' to a central register of all of the Department's 'clients'. The change was made possible as a result of the introduction of IACS and of work undertaken to streamline administrative functions. This resulted in a common means of identification across all schemes, with each farmer who was/is in contact with the Department being allocated a unique Client Reference Number and each "Client" being linked to a Business Identifier. The population surveyed in 1997 consisted of one 'Client' in each business for which a census return with crops and/or livestock was obtained in the preceding year or which had received a subsidy in respect of crops or livestock during the preceding 15 months. Also included were those with a milk

	quota and those known by the Department to be engaged in the production of pigs, poultry, potatoes or horticultural crops. The distinction between 'main' and 'minor' holdings was discontinued.
1998-1999	A further 166 pig farms with no owned land were added to the population in 1998 and sampling was introduced. Census forms were issued only to half of the **'very small'** farms.
2000	A full census was conducted. Mushroom production was targeted and around 100 mushroom businesses which had not previously been surveyed were identified and added to the list of businesses covered.
2001-2006	A sample survey was carried out on the same basis as that conducted in 1999.
2007-2009	A sample survey was carried out. The number of cattle questions on the survey form were reduced as data was sourced primarily from APHIS (Animal and Public Health Information System) to determine cattle numbers. No poultry questions were asked, with data on poultry being sourced from the Northern Ireland Bird Register Update.
2010	A full census of all farm businesses in Northern Ireland was carried out.
2011-2012	Sample survey completed similar to years 2007 -2009.
2013	Sample survey completed similar to 2011-2012. Pig questions removed from paper form. Data on pigs sourced from NI Annual Inventory of Pigs.
2020 on	A full census of all farm businesses in Northern Ireland was completed. The farm census population was sourced using available departmental administrative data and estimation processes were updated and improved. Survey was completed entirely online for the first time. Questionnaire was streamlined and shortened to reduce burden on farmers and encourage online completion.

Farm business size

Farm business size is determined by calculating each farm's total Standard Labour Requirement (SLR). Standards or norms have been calculated for all major enterprises. The total SLR for each farm is calculated by multiplying its crop areas and livestock numbers by the appropriate SLR coefficients and then summing the result for all enterprises on the farm. A standard labour unit is equivalent to 1,900 hours of work per year.

Prior to 2004, the farm business size had been determined by calculating each farm's Standard Gross Margin (SGM). However, it was felt that using SLR's was a more appropriate and accurate method to size farm businesses in the UK.

To show year-to-year changes in business size, the enterprise SLR coefficients are held constant for a number of years. The current series (introduced in 2004) is based on the average labour requirements during the period 1999-2001. For a list of these values, see table below.

Standard Labour Requirements

The following factors have been used to classify farms in N.I

Enterprise	Item	Unit	Standard Labour Requirement (hours)
Crops	Cereals	ha	30
	Oilseeds	ha	22.5
	Potatoes	ha	135
	Outdoor vegetables	ha	150
	Set-aside	ha	1.5
Fruit and	Fruit	ha	450
Ornamentals	Ornamentals	ha	1,500
Indoor Crops	Glasshouse vegetables	ha	5,000
	Other glasshouse	ha	25,000
	Mushrooms	house	1,050
Forage	Forage crops	ha	9
	Grass	ha	6
	Rough grazing	ha	2.25
Cattle	Dairy cows	head	39
	Beef cows	head	12
	Other cattle	head	9
Sheep	Ewes and rams: Lowland	head	5.2
	Ewes and rams: LFA	head	4.2
	Other sheep: Lowland	head	3.3
	Other sheep: LFA	head	2.6

Enterprise	Item	Unit	Standard Labour Requirement (hours)
Pigs	Sows and gilts Piglets Other pigs	head head head	16 1.0 1.3
Poultry	Laying hens Pullets Broilers Turkeys, Ducks etc.	head head head head	0.17 0.12 0.04 0.045
Other Livestock	Horses Goats Deer	head head head	150 20 15

In UK agricultural statistics, business size is described in terms of five SLR size bands. These are:

Size	Standard Labour Requirement
Very small	Less than 1
Small	1-<2
Medium	2-<3
Large	3-<5
Very large	5 or more

* 1 standard labour unit = 1900 hours.

Since there are few farms in the very **large size** range in Northern Ireland, these are included in the large category.

Farm business type[4]

The system of classifying farms according to the type of farming found on a holding is set out in Commission Regulation (EC) 1242/2008 and explained in greater detail in the EU Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN) Typology Handbook RI/CC 1500 rev.3.

Depending on the amount of detail required, farms can be classified into 1 of 62 types. Individual farms are allocated to a type category on the basis of the aggregate value of farm outputs. As it is not feasible to estimate the value of outputs on a farm-by-farm basis, Standard Outputs (SOs) are calculated as reference values for a variety of farm products. The SO of a specific product (crop or livestock) is the average monetary value (per ha or head) of agricultural output based on regional farm-gate prices over a 5 year period. The SO excludes direct payments and no costs are deducted. Once the numbers of livestock and hectares of crop for an individual farm have been multiplied by

4 The EU typology has been updated from 2010 Standard Output coefficients to 2013 coefficients during 2020.

the relevant SOs, it is allocated to a type category depending on where most of the total SO comes from. To ensure a stable framework for comparison and analysis SO values, once calculated, are held constant for a number of years. The SO values in use at the moment cover the five year period centred on 2013.

For UK statistical purposes, the 62 farm types (not all of which are found in Northern Ireland) are grouped into 10 'robust' categories which have particular relevance to UK conditions. These are:

Type	Definition
Cereals	Farms on which cereals and combinable crops account for more than two-thirds of the total SO.
General cropping	Farms which do not qualify as cereals farms but have more than two-thirds of the total SO in arable, including field scale vegetable, crops or in a mixture of arable and horticultural crops where arable crops account for more than one-third of the total SO and no other grouping accounts for more than one-third. In addition, farms with a substantial area of grassland but few livestock are also included within this farm type.
Horticulture	Farms with more than two-thirds of the total SO in horticultural crops (including specialist mushroom growers).
Specialist pigs	Farms of which pigs account for more than two-thirds of total SO.
Specialist poultry	Farms on which poultry account for more than two-thirds of total SO.
Dairy	Farms on which dairy cows account for more than two-thirds of the total SO.
Grazing livestock (LFA)	Farms wholly or mainly in the Less Favoured Areas which do not qualify as Dairy farms but have more than two-thirds of their total SO in grazing livestock (cattle and sheep).
Grazing livestock (Lowland)	Farms wholly or mainly outside the Less Favoured Area which do not qualify as Dairy farms but have more than two-thirds their total SO in grazing livestock (cattle and sheep).
Mixed	Farms that have no dominant enterprise and do not fit into the above categories.
Other types	Farms that specialise in enterprises which do not fit the definitions of mainstream agricultural activities. For the most part this category is made up of specialist horse farms plus other farms that are unclassified.

Less Favoured Areas

The term **Less Favoured Areas (LFA)** is used to describe those parts of the country which, because of the relatively poor agricultural conditions which prevail there, have been so designated under EU legislation. This recognition allows those who farm in such areas to apply for special support, such as LFA Compensatory Allowance (LFACA) and for additional benefits under various capital grant and forestry schemes.

The LFA consists of a Severely Disadvantaged Area (SDA), which is the original LFA as designated in 1975 (487,000 hectares), and the Disadvantaged Area (DA) which was designated following reviews in 1984 (335,000 hectares) and 1990 (3,700 hectares). (The areas designated include some non-agricultural land).

Farm Business Survey (FBS)

The Farm Business Survey (FBS) is a continuous annual survey that monitors the physical and financial performance of farm businesses in Northern Ireland. The survey is carried out by Policy, Economics & Statistics Division of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. Similar surveys are carried out in England by DEFRA, in Scotland by Scottish Government, and in Wales by WAG.

In the most recent accounting year, 2023/24, the FBS obtained farm accounts information from 260 businesses. This accounting information enables outputs, inputs and incomes to be analysed by farming type and business size. Trends in farm incomes from the FBS are produced by comparing results from identical samples of farms participating in the survey in successive years. Indices showing trends in cash incomes are derived by linking the results of identical samples from successive pairs of years (Table 5.1).

Differences between FBS and AAA

The coverage and methodology of the FBS differ in several important respects from the Aggregate Agricultural Account (AAA) presented in Section 2. For example, the FBS does not cover **Very Small** farms or **horticultural** businesses, whereas, the AAA covers the whole agricultural sector. The FBS account years end between October and May, with an average account ending date of mid-February, while the AAA relates to calendar years. Farm Business Income includes changes in both the volume and price of crops and livestock, whereas the AAA includes volume changes only. For these reasons no direct comparison between the FBS and AAA income series can be made.

General Notes to Tables

Symbols:

- means nil, or an insignificant quantity.

... means not available, or not collected.

Rounding:

Most figures have been rounded individually and the totals shown may therefore differ slightly from the sum of the constituent items.

Metric units:

Metric units are used throughout this publication. Conversion factors from metric to imperial units, correct to 4 significant figures, are given below:

1 hectare (ha)	= 2.471 acres
1 kilogram (kg)	= 2.205 pounds
1 tonne (t)	= 0.9842 tons
1 litre (l)	= 0.2200 gallons

Abbreviations:

dcw	- dressed carcase weight
dwt	- deadweight
lwt	- liveweight

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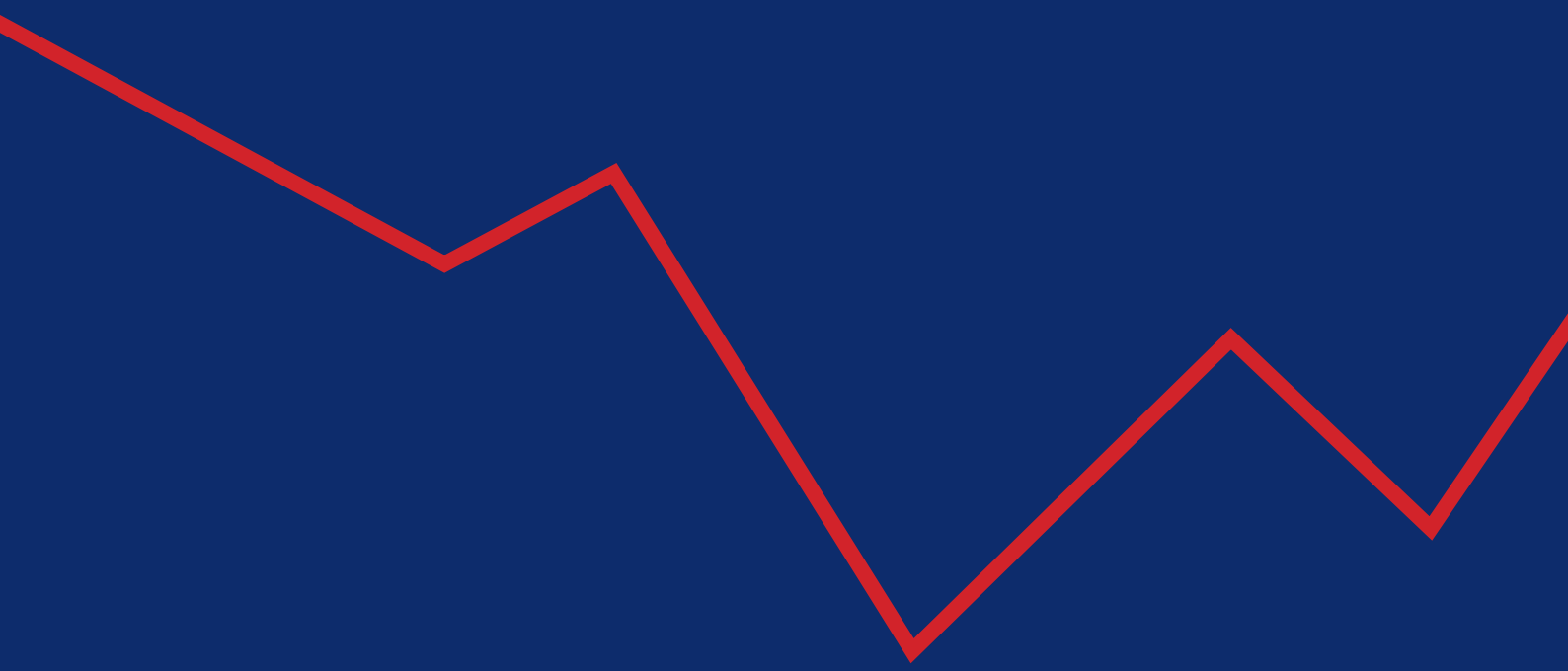

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