

Agricultural statistics: production potential of plantations of fruit trees (repeal. Directive 76/625 /EEC)

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The Commission presents a report on the experience acquired from the statistical survey on plantations of certain species of fruit trees, carried out by the Member States in 2007 in application of Directive 2001/109 /EC. The last survey was in 2002.

On a species basis, the **most important findings** can be summarised as follows:

80% of the EU-27 orchard area occupied by the species surveyed was concentrated in Spain, Italy, Poland, Greece and France. Apple trees are the most common fruit trees cultivated in EU-27, covering around one third of the surveyed area. Citrus trees (orange, lemon and small citrus fruit) together cover another third of the EU-27 area.

The **enlargements to EU-27 produced a substantial increase in the area under table apples** and a smaller increase in the other areas surveyed. The area under apple trees increased more than 2.4 times, mainly due to the addition of the Polish and Romanian apple orchards. Pear and peach tree areas increased by 17% and 13% respectively. The 27% increase of the apricot area was more significant. For citrus fruits, the increase in area due to the last two enlargements is not significant (around 1%).

In EU-27, the **main growers of apple trees** are Poland, Romania, Italy and France. The total EU-15 area of apple tree orchards decreased by 11% between the two surveys. The area in Italy showed a slight increase, while the area in France decreased by 16%.

The largest **areas of pear tree orchards** in EU-27 are found in Italy, Spain, Portugal and Belgium. The total EU-15 area under pear trees decreased by almost 13% during the period 2002-2007.

In EU-27, the largest **areas under peach trees** are in Spain, Italy, Greece and France. Spain and Italy together account for two thirds of the total EU-27 area. Spain is the only EU-15 Member State where the peach tree orchard area increased; as a result, the total EU-15 area under peach trees declined by around 6%.

The largest **area of apricot tree orchards** is found in Spain, followed by Italy, France and Hungary. Spain and Italy have more than half of the total EU-27 area under apricot tree orchards. The total area in Italy stayed almost constant, and decreased in all other Member States, with the exception of the significant increase (by 26%) experienced by Austria.

Spain has around 55% of the EU-27 area of **orange tree orchards**. The area of 73,786 ha in Italy represents one quarter of the entire EU-27 area. The other Member States where orange orchards are surveyed are Greece, Portugal, Cyprus and France, which together account for only 20% of the orange tree orchards in EU-27. The total EU-15 orange tree orchard area increased by 10% between 2002 and 2007, due to the increases in Spain and Portugal. The other Member States experienced small decreases in the orange orchard areas.

The 39,859 ha of **lemon tree orchards** in Spain represent more than 60% of the EU-27 area. The second largest area of lemon tree orchards belongs to Italy, which accounts for around one quarter of the EU-27

area. The third largest area is in Greece (8%). The areas in Cyprus, Portugal and France make up only a very small share of the EU-27 area (around 1% or less in each Member State). As only the area in Portugal increased, while all the other areas decreased, the overall impact in EU-15 was a decrease in the total area under lemon trees.

Spain has 116,225 ha under **small citrus fruit trees**, which accounts for three quarters of the EU-27 area of small citrus fruit tree orchard. The next largest grower is Italy which represents around 15% of the total EU-27 area. The area increased in Spain and Greece, and decreased in Italy by approximately the same amount. As a result, the small citrus fruit orchard area remained more or less constant overall.

Between 1997 and 2002 the **EU-15 orchard area declined by approximately 187,700 ha (15% in relative terms)**. This decline was particularly noticeable in the case of apple and peach trees (both in absolute values and in relation to the total area under these species). There was an increase, on the other hand, in small-fruited citrus trees (resulting mainly from a significant increase in Spain). With the exception of Finland, areas under fruit trees decreased in all Member States. This downward trend also continued between 2002 and 2007. The total surveyed orchard area in EU-15 declined by 37,621 ha (4% in relative terms) between 2002 and 2007. The area under orange trees increased by 10%, and the area under small citrus fruit stayed approximately constant.

The **rest of the fruit tree areas experienced declines** of between 5% and 13%. On a Member State (EU 15) basis, the most important findings can be summarised as follows: In some Member States, the total surveyed area increased. The total surveyed orchard area increased in Denmark (by 6%), Austria (by 4%) and Spain (by 3%). In Denmark, all the areas surveyed (apple and pear trees) increased. In Austria, the peach tree orchard area decreased by one quarter, while all the other areas surveyed saw an increase. There was also a sizeable increase in the apricot orchard area (26%). In Spain, there was a significant increase in the area under orange trees (21%), and a less important increase in the areas under peach trees and small citrus fruit trees. The other surveyed areas declines, and the decline was especially significant in the area under apple trees (a decrease of one third).

Some other **Member States experienced a decrease in the total surveyed area**, as well as a decline for all of the species of fruit tree surveyed. The total area declined quite significantly in France, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (by between 15 and 20%), while in Luxembourg the plantations of fruit trees producing for the market disappeared almost entirely. In Germany and Ireland, there was only a very small decrease (of less than 1%) in the total surveyed area.

In the remaining Member States, the total orchard area occupied by the surveyed species decreased, although there was an increase for some of the species surveyed. In Greece, for example, the area under small citrus fruit trees increased by one third, whereas all the other areas decreased. In Italy the total area decreased by 8%. It experienced a slight increase in the apple and apricot orchard areas, and declines in the other types of orchard areas. The fall was quite large in the areas under small citrus fruit trees (22%), pear trees (17%) and peach trees (13%). Portugal experienced a large increase in the area under lemon trees, while all other areas decreased, some of them substantially (peach and apricot). In Belgium and Netherlands, the total area decreased by around 4%, due to the combined effect of the decrease in the apple tree orchard area and the increase in the pear tree orchard area.

The Commission considers that there have been **improvements since 2002** particularly in relation to the common use of the concept of net areas. **The 2007 survey can be considered satisfactory in overall terms**. With regard to future surveys, consideration should be given to updating the list of varieties and codes, and to harmonising the thresholds. The identification of synergies with other statistical operations and/or use of administrative sources should be explored.

Summarising the considerations presented in the national reports from the Member States, the Commission can conclude that the Member States experienced no major difficulties in carrying out the

survey. This survey provides a reliable estimate of the EU orchard for the seven species under consideration. In addition, it can be said that most of the Member States consider the survey to be very useful, in that it provides not only information on a very important agricultural sector, but also information that is very useful for other statistical purposes, such as agricultural accounts.