

RUMINANT LIVESTOCK FARMING AND EMPLOYMENT



« How do livestock farming practices and systems create jobs? »

1

Despite the full range of advantages of jobs in ruminant livestock farming - such as meaningful work, contact with nature and animals, useful to society - the profession suffers from a lack of attractiveness. This issue needs to be addressed urgently to avoid a decline in production levels, especially regarding the growing global population needs.

2

Ruminant livestock farming offers numerous salaried employment opportunities.

Whether directly on farms, through subcontracting or via shared employment, it is a sector that hires.

3

Livestock farming also attracts people outside traditional agricultural backgrounds who seek to come back to the land, reconnect with the act of producing, or work with animals.

4

Beyond farm jobs, livestock activity also generates indirect employment, both up- and downstream of the farms.

5

These direct and indirect jobs are often located in areas where a significant part of employment depends on agriculture and the agri-food industry - making them all the more important.

6

Through the jobs generated, livestock farming provides multiple services to society.

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WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

- **Direct jobs:** people involved in livestock activities on farms,
- **Indirect jobs:** positions around farming (inputs, processing, sales) and in agricultural training and development,
- **Induced jobs:** still difficult to assess, those generated by the household spending of people employed in direct or indirect positions (Lang et al., 2015). These ones are not included in this sheet.

IN 2020, RUMINANT LIVESTOCK FARMING GENERATES 256,000 FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTE) IN DIRECT FARM JOBS ACROSS 144,000 FARMS (CNE, 2023).

INCLUDING INDIRECT JOBS, THIS IS EQUIVALENT TO NEARLY 500,000 FTE IN TOTAL (Lang et al., 2015).

However livestock sectors face a major demographic crisis: 50% of current farmers in 2018 will have retired by 2027. There are not enough new entrants to replace them, recruitment of salaried workers is difficult, and few women choose careers in livestock farming – all symptoms of declining attractiveness of the livestock sector (CNE, 2023).

HIGHLY DEPENDENT ON UNWAGED LABOUR, LIVESTOCK FARMING IS THEREFORE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE WHEN IT COMES TO WORKFORCE RENEWAL. Compared to other fields of activity, its labor force is less flexible and predominantly composed of family members.

BREAKDOWN AND EVOLUTION OF LABOUR FOR EACH RUMINANT LIVESTOCK TYPE (farms with significant part of livestock i.e. where cattle, sheep and goat herds reach at least 8 feed UGB or having minimum 5 dairy or beef cows, or 50 meat ewes or 25 dairy ewes or 10 goats). (Agreste – 2010 & 2020 agricultural census, analysis by Institut de l'Elevage)

Major activity	Farms with significant livestock part			Full-Time Equivalents (FTE) in these farms (excluded contracted services)			% of waged labour (family excepted)	
	Number in 2010	Number in 2020	Variation between 2010 & 2020 (%)	Number in 2010	Number in 2020	Variation between 2010 & 2020 (%)	Number in 2010	Number in 2020
Dairy cattle	75 629	50 588	- 33,1	153 700	112 600	- 26,7	10,8	14,7
Beef cattle	87 292	70 629	- 19,1	123 700	103 300	- 16,5	11,5	11,6
Meat sheep	11 852	9 790	- 17,4	15 700	13 900	- 11,6	10,0	14,1
Dairy sheep	4 879	4 232	- 13,3	9 300	8 800	- 5,4	6,8	12,0
Goats	6 894	6 021	- 12,7	13 800	13 200	- 3,9	14,8	21,0
Others (large variety of animals even horses)	3 763	2 728	- 27,5	4 600	3 900	- 15,5	23,2	24,6
Altogether	190 309	143 988	- 24,3	320 800	255 700	- 20,3	11,2	13,8



1 The attractiveness of livestock farming jobs

A profession with many benefits - but facing image and recruitment challenges

Jobs on livestock farms benefit from numerous assets. They offer work that makes sense (useful to society); close contact with animals and nature; independence and autonomy; a seasonal pace tied to natural cycles. However, these jobs suffer from several image and accessibility issues: low-income levels; physically demanding conditions; a general lack of awareness and understanding of the profession; long and expensive startup processes; hard working conditions.

Besides, livestock farming is underrepresented in general education, resulting in a mismatch between young people's perceptions and expectations and the realities of the profession (Idele, 2023). Furthermore, gender disparity is also a concern: only 5.6% of daughters of farmers become farmers themselves, and women remain underrepresented. Attracting more young women is a priority for the field of activity (Depeyrot et al., 2023).

Lack of attractiveness varying according to sectors

Replacement rates are much lower in cattle farming (45% for dairy), compared to goat (106%) and sheep (94% meat, 91% dairy) sectors (CNE, 2023). Goat and sheep activities are more appealing to newcomers outside farming families (smaller animals, lower investment requirements). However, hard working conditions mean shorter careers in these sectors and some newcomers have non-standard projects with limited viability (smaller herds, less productive farms).

The National Confederation for ruminant livestock (CNE) wrote a white paper on attractiveness proposing 27 measures, including: expanding the trial right program on a national scale; improving startup economic projections; enhancing support and guidance for aspiring farmers (CNE, 2023).

Worrying impact on future production

The decline in agricultural labor available for ruminant livestock farming generates a serious risk to milk and meat production by 2030, which could undermine overall food security due to growing demand (CNE, 2023).

KEY FIGURES

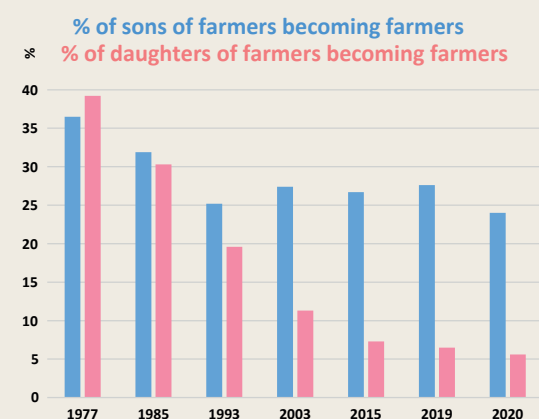
Livestock farming represents **37%** of French farms, **43%** of farm managers, **50%** of family FTE (Depeyrot et al., 2023).

Between 2010 and 2020, the number of ruminant farms fell by **24,3%**, compared to only **9%** for farms without herbivores whereas FTE in livestock farming (excluding purchase of labour) dropped by **20%** (Depeyrot et al., 2023).

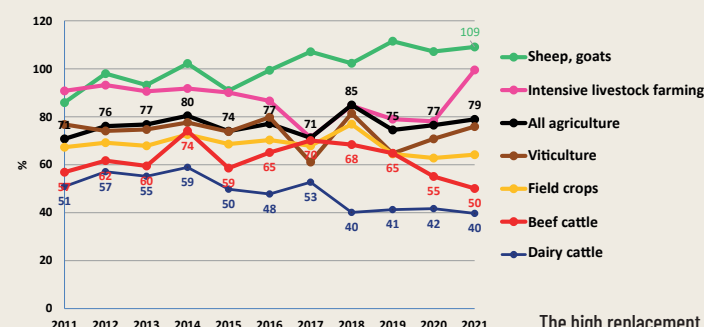
Less than 1 woman for 5 men under age 40 in dairy cattle installations
VS

Full gender parity in goat cheese production (Depeyrot et al., 2023).

PROPORTIONS OF SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF FARMERS BECOMING FARMERS THEMSELVES (Idele, 2023).



REPLACEMENT RATE OF DEPARTURES PER AGRICULTURAL SECTOR - TRENDS FROM 2011 TO 2021 (Idele, 2023 d'après données MSA).



The high replacement rate in sheep and goats productions is partly due to a huge turnover



LEARN
MORE...

...about the assets of livestock
farmer profession,

CHECK OUT THE SHEET ➡
«Ruminant farming and Livestock farming»

RUMINANT LIVESTOCK FARMING AND EMPLOYMENT

2

Wage labour

Salaried job opportunities exist, but recruitment remains challenging

Due to a labor shortage, ruminant livestock farms are increasingly seeking permanent and seasonal employees. Over the past decade, this field of activity has seen a rise in permanent salaried jobs, as well as more frequent use of occasional waged work.

However, livestock farming still relies primarily on family labor, which has declined by 22.6% (in FTE) over 10 years (Agreste - agricultural census 2010 & 2020, processed by Idele). Recruitment remains difficult for farmers due to limited financial capacity to offer competitive wages, low attractiveness of salaried livestock work, difficulty to find skilled candidates, lack of managerial skills among some farmers, competition from other employment sectors (Idele, 2023).

Subcontracting and shared salaried employment on the rise

To meet labor needs on livestock farms, farmers increasingly turn to subcontracting and shared employment (employers' groups, replacement services, agricultural cooperatives (Idele, 2023).

Opportunities for young people too

While farming face aging farm managers, it attracts notably young salaried workers (43% of livestock farm employees are under 30) (Depeyrot et al., 2023). However, the number of young people entering the field remains too low. There's a real need to: raise awareness of livestock jobs, attract them and promote all these jobs through agricultural training pathways.

Wage labour as a stepping stone towards becoming a farmer

Salaried employees and apprentices represent a key pool of future farm managers. Of those in salaried or apprentice positions in 2010, 6.9% of employees and 15% of apprentices later set up their own livestock farms (Depeyrot et al., 2023). The fact of being an apprentice leads more likely to farm ownership than salaried work.



KEY FIGURES

Between 2010 and 2020, waged employment (FTE) remained relatively stable: **+ 3,6%** according to MSA data and **- 1,9%** to agricultural census.

Wage labor makes up **14%** of FTE on farms with ruminants, against **47%** on farms without animals. Farms without livestock contract out **74%** of their work with companies specialized in agricultural work (ETA), cooperatives (CUMA), etc. (Perrot, 2023).

3

Farmers coming from outside the family circle

An appealing sector for newcomers to agriculture

Due to the labor shortage, ruminant farming offers opportunities for people outside traditional farming family circle - those seeking a return to rural life, a reconnection with production, daily contact with animals. While installations by newcomers - outside family circle - have increased since 2010, growth has been slower in livestock activities than in farms without livestock (Depeyrot et al., 2023).

Newcomers in livestock farming often face difficulty finding internships, earning a retiring farmer's trust, profiting by technical information, obtaining funding. These barriers may lead to shorter careers due to installation failures.

To overcome difficulties, the CNE white paper proposes stronger support, guidance, and training to project leaders, as well as measures to encourage farm transfers and make installation easier (CNE, 2023).

However, even if farming access to newcomers outside family circle appears to be essential to farm succession, their projects are often small-scale, alternative production and sales models. Current production levels should be maintained otherwise (Idele, 2023).



KEY FIGURES

Since 2010, **28%** of livestock farms installations outside family circle against **37%** in farms without livestock; over **50%** in goat cheese production (Depeyrot et al., 2023; CNE, 2023).

4

Indirect employment

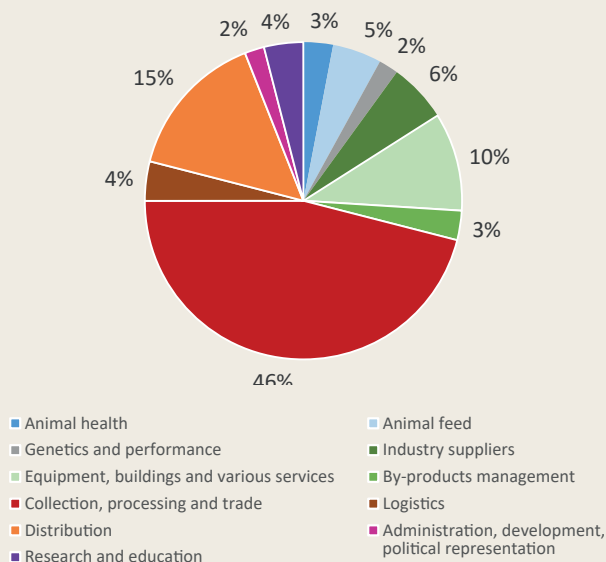
A vast range of jobs surrounding ruminant livestock farming

Indirect jobs include activities such as animal feed, milk and meat collection, products and sales, but are also related to animal health, genetics, efficiency controls, farm equipment, buildings and housing, research, training, etc. According to the GIS Avenir Elevages, these represent 244,000 FTE, more or less depending on livestock production (Lang et al., 2015). However small productions experience methodology discrepancies when counting employment rate, maybe under reality. Indeed, collection of milk and dairy processing require huge labour on specialized sites, often small size and isolated (in mountains and/or for raw milk cheese). For example, a national report assesses that sheep dairy sector represents over 20,000 direct and indirect jobs (National Assembly, 2021), very higher than the GIS estimates by 10,100 FTE. This discrepancy highlights the complexity of quantifying employment linked to livestock. Ongoing studies aim at updating these figures. Maintaining employment in French farms is even more an issue that indirect employment linked to livestock farming is at stake.

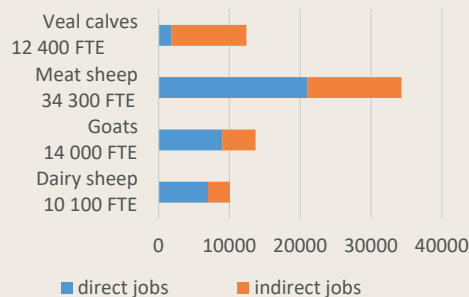
KEY FIGURES

Employment depending on French livestock farming = **3,2%** of overall employment (Lang et al., 2015).

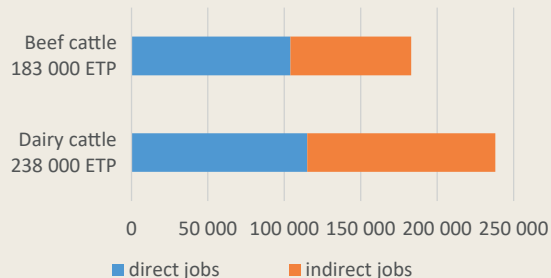
SHARE OF TOTAL INDIRECT JOBS (ALL LIVESTOCK SECTORS COMBINED) (Lang et al., 2015).



DIRECT AND INDIRECT JOBS GENERATED BY SMALL LIVESTOCK PRODUCTIONS (Lang et al., 2015).



DIRECT AND INDIRECT JOBS GENERATED BY THE DAIRY AND BEEF CATTLE SECTORS (Lang et al., 2015).



5 The importance of livestock-related jobs in territories

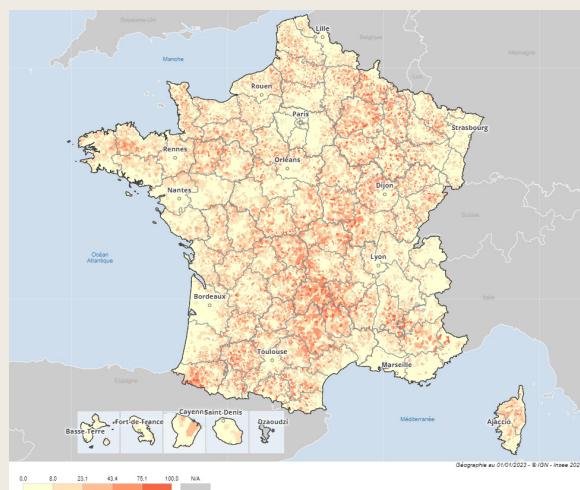
Local employment in rural areas relies heavily on livestock

The 500,000 FTE generated by direct and indirect ruminant livestock employment are concentrated in rural areas, even hard areas, including: mountain regions, disadvantaged or isolated territories. In these zones, agriculture and agri-food jobs often form the core of local economies, as there are fewer alternatives than in coastal, urban, or tourist areas, which gives ruminant livestock farming strategic importance.

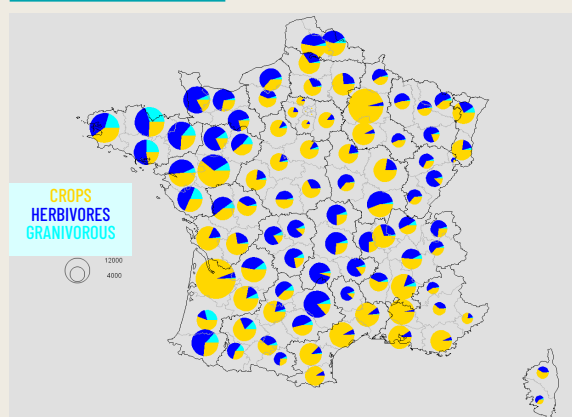
Where local employment depends on farming, livestock is the key driver. Maintaining livestock activities is therefore essential to sustaining economic life in these regions.



SHARE OF FARMERS IN THE NUMBER OF JOBS AT THE WORKPLACE (%), 2020 (Insee, 2023)



DISTRIBUTION OF AWU (ANNUAL WORK UNITS) ON FARMS BY TYPE OF ACTIVITY (Agreste, Agricultural Census 2010 – processed by the French Livestock Institute, IFIP, ITAVI)



6 Societal services provided by livestock-related jobs

Numerous services are provided through direct and indirect employment

Maintaining these jobs is crucial because they contribute to:

- the supply of healthy food, high nutritional valued proteins to feed the population;
- rural attractiveness shaping landscapes, enhancing less arable land, and creating regional identity (with local breeds, cheese, and products);
- territorial vitality, breeding jobs in services, trade, administration, and tourism—especially through landscape maintenance and regional food products;
- environmental protection, maintaining biodiversity, helping offset greenhouse gas emissions, preserving water and soil quality, and producing renewable energy;
- cultural heritage & quality of life, safeguarding gastronomic heritage, maintaining traditional landscapes, and sustaining specific skills and traditional know-how for example.



ACTIONS AND TOOLS
IMPLEMENTED BY THE SECTORS

devenir
éleveur·euse

LA COMMUNAUTÉ
AU SERVICE
DES ÉLEVEUSES
ET DES ÉLEVEURS

CNE

LIVRE BLANC

LE RENOUVELLEMENT DES ACTIFS
EN ÉLEVAGE BOVIN, OVIN ET CAPRIN



Déclit
travail



Confédération
Nationale de l'Élevage
CNE

The network of livestock farmers as witnesses

These farmers promote the value of livestock farming in France. Created by CNE during the mad cow crisis, the program trains 30–40 farmers (cattle first, and then goats, sheep) in analyzing misunderstanding, concerns and fears of citizens and consumers; as well as in communicating clearly and educationally. Participants take part in media training sessions with microphones and cameras, and the group learns collectively from each other's experiences.

“L'Aventure du Vivant” platform

A nationwide communication campaign to promote agricultural training and its career opportunities (Idele, 2023). It aims at informing and helping young people to find schools, courses, and careers suited to their interests (www.laventureduvivant.fr).

“Devenir Éleveur·euse” platform

This platform centralizes key resources for those wishing to become livestock farmers. Indeed, there is a great deal of specialized entities helping candidates, each with its own specific and limits (field of activity, sector, region, type of system etc.) which are reasons to find it difficult to have access to dispersed information essential to build a farm project. Developed by Idele and initiated by CNE, this platform provides numerous articles, testimonials, and technical advice, and appears to give tools for building a professional project (www.devenir-eleveur.com).

“OK Éleveur” platform

A shared knowledge web base for livestock farmers and their decision-making process. Designed for farmers, advisors, and teachers, it offers reliable, verified resources by production and topic, practical tools to support daily decision-making (www.okeleveur.com).

The 2023 white paper

It proposes concrete actions to renew the agricultural workforce (CNE, 2023), divided in 3 parts, corresponding to:

- Stronger support, advice and training,
- Easier farm transmission and installation as far as legal, tax, regulatory and economic levers are concerned,
- Rebuilding connections between livestock farming and society.

“Déclit Travail” Tool

A practical tool to help farmers deal with labour issues. It provides instant access to practical tips and tools, self-assessment to guide farmers through questions related to working conditions, human resources management, work organization (www.declittravail.fr).

Farmpédia online encyclopedia

A teaching resource for middle and high school teachers, explaining how livestock farming works today, its major challenges and stakes. A work group was also created to raise awareness of livestock farming and knowledge about it in general education (www.ressources-elevage.fr/farmpedia).

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