



EUROPEAN

Panorama

OF THE AGRICULTURAL, RURAL AND FORESTRY

CONTRACTORS



Edition 2018



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Summary



Phil Hogan

"A crucially important service for European farming and forestry"

Land-based contractors provide a crucially important service for European farming and forestry. I want to recognise that service, and commend you for the commitment you show to continuously improving technology, and making European agriculture and forestry more competitive and sustainable. Your contribution to the vitality of the rural economy should also not be forgotten.

The agri-food sector is rightly celebrated as a jewel in Europe's crown, but it is perhaps forgotten how strongly our farmers rely on the services provided by contractors. The reality is that most farmers do not have the resources to invest in the latest technology themselves, so when it comes to cutting silage, spreading slurry, harvesting grain or logging trees, they leave it to the experts. These businesses – your businesses – are intrinsically linked with agri-food and forestry, and are providing high-skilled jobs in rural areas. The technological services you provide are vital for making our farms and forests more productive, more efficient, and more sustainable. As Europe is moving towards a more modern and more climate-friendly CAP, technological solutions will be more important than ever. The potential of precision agriculture and data-driven solutions is only beginning to be fully understood.

In November 2017, the Commission published a Communication on the Future of EU Food and Farming. This document calls for a policy which is more modern and delivers greater benefits for EU citizens, particularly when it comes to environment and climate performance. We need to do more to meet the EU's ambitious climate and environment agenda too. To achieve these objectives, investment in equipment offering both efficient and sustainable ways of farming and management of forests will be necessary. The importance of the service land-based contractors provide is highlighted by the cost of this technology, which is prohibitive for many farmers and can often only be financially justified via agricultural contractors servicing a broad farmer base.

CEETAR members are the people who can address challenges like this one, which has huge implications for agricultural sustainability, and the overall ambitious targets set out by the EU under the Cop21 agreement and the SDGs.

Let me therefore welcome this second edition of the European Panorama of the agricultural, rural and forestry contractors. It shows the vitality and the overall presence of land-based contractors everywhere in Europe and their importance in the design in the future CAP, as they understand better than anyone the importance of technology and upskilling, and the challenges to rolling this out across Europe.

Phil HOGAN
European Commissioner

Commission for Forestry



Klaus Pentzlin

"Contractors are the best kept secret of farming and forestry"

For several years now, CEETAR's development as a representative organisation and an intermediary recognised by the European institutions is accelerating.

Indeed, having made the choice to invest on the long term in high-quality technical and political work, CEETAR, with the support of the expertise of its member organisations, has managed to have the decision makers getting a grip on land-based contractors concerns while always aiming at bringing added value to the European debates. The themes are diverse and concern technical files (technical specifications of machines, the fight against illegal work...) as well as political issues (reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, European forestry strategy...).

The gradual establishment of an ad-hoc cooperation with other European stakeholders and the participation in collective campaigns has also given a new scope to the activities of the organization, making it possible to positively influence certain issues (e.g. to stimulate the development of biomass in renewable energies).

More than ever, the national organizations of agricultural, rural and forestry contractors can rely on a more efficient European organization. This effectiveness is reflected in particular by the affiliation of new organizations every year. By 2018, 23 national organizations from 19 European countries will be actively involved in the work of the European umbrella organisation. In 2015, the first panorama shed new light on entrepreneurs and the activities they perform.

Almost 3 years have passed since, and with the prospect of a new reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, it was useful to update, complete and deepen the information published.

This is the purpose of this 2018 edition, whose role is to provide food for thought to both national and European decision makers. By serving farmers, landowners and the rural world, land-based contractors contribute in reality to the satisfaction of the society's numerous needs: food products, provision of wood as a raw material for constructions, energy, papermaking, rural development and maintenance of natural areas.

We wish you a pleasant and informative reading of this document.

Klaus PENTZLIN
President

The word of the President



Agricultural contractors are soil experts, helping farmers to better understand and to improve the value of the output from their land, the first asset of their holding. Credits Soyl France

Key players of agriculture and forestry

In the absence of official statistics, as there are no indicators in the European Farm Structure Survey, the number of agricultural, rural and forestry contractors is based on estimates. Based on membership figures for CEETAR member organisations, it would be reasonable to estimate that **150,000 agricultural, rural and/or forestry contractors** operate within the territory of the European Union.

Due to the fact that the sector is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises, we can also estimate that **600,000 people are directly employed** in the sector (including managing directors and self-employed workers) at a Community level.

Agricultural services: a wide spectrum of activities

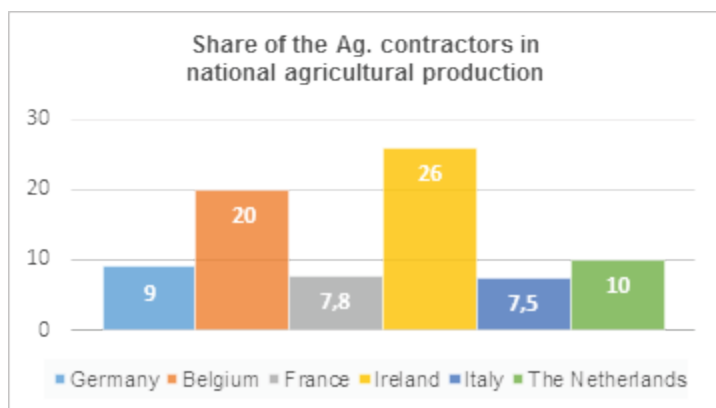
The services provided for the agricultural sector cover **a wide variety of professions and operations**. They include all types of agricultural works, such as soil cultivation, fertilisation, harvesting, transport, livestock and farm management services.

This is in addition to a wide range of maintenance and management services for rural areas, focusing on networks (communication and infrastructures), the environment and public spaces. A study carried out by CEETAR and the Lublin University indicates that the value of services provided by agricultural contractors in

the agricultural sector alone represents about 10% of the value of the agricultural production of the Member States, reaching in some cases 20 %.

However, it is safe to say that 60 % of regular work in the sector is completed by contractors and, for some harvesting activities, this can figure can rise to over 90 %!

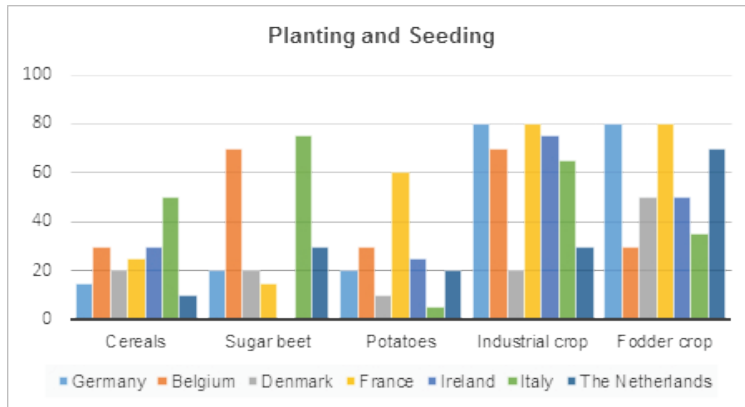
A more detailed analysis of the activities of these companies shows that, beyond harvesting (and incidentally the transport of crops) which is the first work that farmers have outsourced to



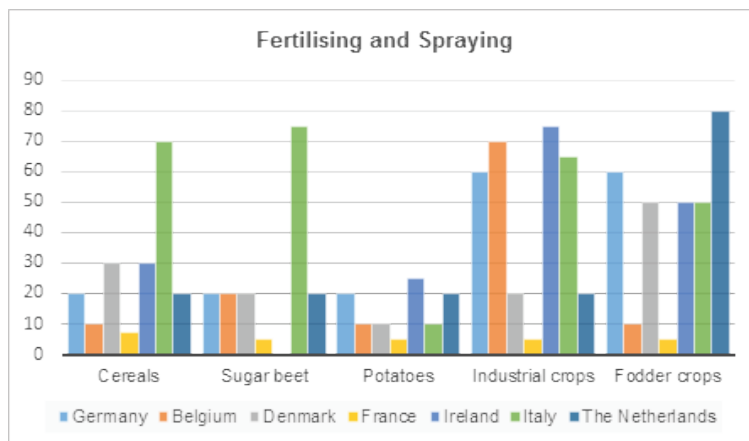
Source: CEETAR and University of Life Sciences of Lublin

agricultural contractors, they are present in all phases of the plant cycle. Naturally, their market share varies from one country to another depending on the density of domestic production. However, the increasing technical sophistication required in agriculture, environmental and food safety constraints, as well as international competition are encouraging farmers to turn to equipped and skilled professionals. The charts below illustrate this reality with a representative sample of European countries.

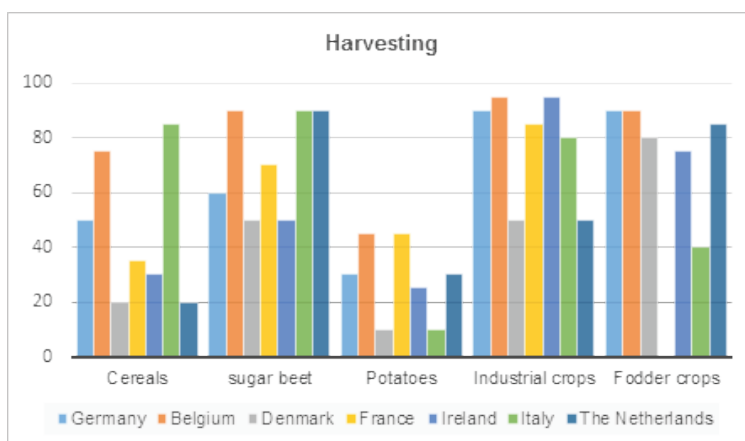
- In France, over 65 % of farms specialising in cultivable arable crops and over 75 % of livestock farms make use of contractors, which harvest sugar beet across an area covering over 250,000 ha;
- In Germany, agricultural contractors harvest and make silage from approximately 90 % of maize. For grain maize alone, this is equivalent to 1.35 millions hectares and 54 million tons;
- In Ireland, over 80 % of 25 million tons of grass silage is harvested by agricultural contractors every year;
- In Italy, contractors provide soil preparation services on over one million hectares, as well as services for harvest cultivable arable crops and vegetables on close to 2.5 million hectares.



Source: CEETAR and University of Life Sciences of Lublin



Source: CEETAR and University of Life Sciences of Lublin



Source: CEETAR and University of Life Sciences of Lublin

Food production

Rural services: key for the territorial development

Entrepreneurs are also vital to the rural communities, the local authorities and infrastructure management bodies, so that they can meet the requirements of road safety, quality and efficiency of networks, waterways and ensure the proper execution of public services.

The unpredictable weather of the last few years has shown on several occasions that, in severe winter weather conditions, the traffic grinds to a complete halt, if you cannot rely on outside snow clearing or gritting services. Many contractors have specialised in path and waterway maintenance, ensuring that the traffic networks are continuously available under maximum safety conditions.

In addition, these contractors take care of all kinds of green spaces throughout the year. Whether they maintain sports fields, mow grass verges or cut trees along our roads or apply mulch to vast areas of non-cultivable land, these businesses have the required expertise when it comes to the necessary planning, experience and techniques.

Finally, territorial development in rural areas continues to undergo major changes as such land use, population and development in many aspects. Through their local roots, their skills and their equipment, rural contractors can concretely support the development of rural areas, which are permanently evolving.

Because of this, they reinforce economic development and support employment by guaranteeing better supply and equal access of services to the population, improving the quality of life, contributing to job and equal opportunities for rural inhabitants, and more broadly, helping to preserve specific or sensitive natural areas.

This explains the wide spectrum of activities of the rural contractors. In the Netherlands only, each year, rural contractors:

- mow more than 10,000 kilometers verges along roads;
- maintain more than 140,000 kilometers of ditches and waterways;

- operate for 70 percent of all earthmoving work in the Netherlands;
- ensure that 10,000 hectares of sports fields are ready to be used. In many cases, land-based contractors represent the largest employers' group in rural areas.

Networks' maintenance	Territorial development	Environmental works	Leisure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mowing of roadsides • maintenance of hedges • roadsweeping • snow removal • maintenance of ditches • maintenance-pruning various paths, near power line and railways... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparation of road beds • earthmoving (work infra and top set back as original) • earthmoving (work infra to prepare building) • building and demolition of buildings • creation of non-collective sanitation system • installing fences... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greenkeeping (even creating the green areas) & landscaping • land development in agricultural and forest surroundings • maintenance of waterways • creation of drainage-irrigation systems • drain and spread on land water waste • weed control • biomass from green activities... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cleaning of beaches • waterweed cutting • preparing leisure, festivals' areas • creating and maintaining golf courses and sport amenities • creating and grooming ski slopes...

Forestry services: the contractor is indispensable

Forests play an important part in Europe and cover almost 182 million hectares across the 28 EU countries, which is equivalent to approx. 43% of their total area (Eurostat, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Statistics, 2016 edition). Wooded areas actually cover a slightly larger area than agricultural land (41%), which included over half the national territory of seven member states in 2015. Just over three quarters of the national territory of Finland and Sweden consist of forests, closely followed by Slovenia (63%). 54-56% of the national territory of four other countries (Estonia, Latvia, Spain and Portugal) consists of forests.

Forestry contractors are mostly micro, small or medium size companies and many of them family owned companies. They are now about 50,000 in numbers and 100,000 active people, present at all stages of the development of forests. At the service of their customers, they provide silviculture, wood harvesting and energy wood

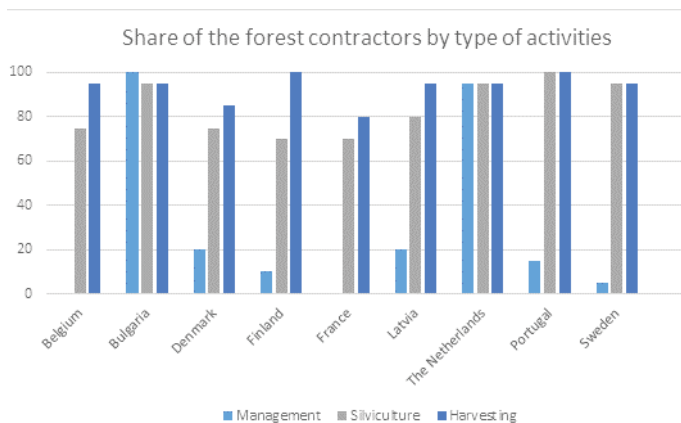


Vast majority of forestry contractors are micro or SMEs with specialised activities

delivery services to farmers, cooperatives and private forest owners, wood-based industry, bioenergy industry, local authorities and public institutions. Forestry contractors ensure the provision of quality timber production, a simplified management of the plots, the qualitative stand improvement and growth of the most beautiful trees. Some entrepreneurs are diversifying their activities to forest management, supply of wood energy, selling firewood, logistics and transportation.

Forestry works are exercised by entrepreneurs in strict compliance with safety rules of the employees and protection of the environment. Forestry contractors implement on the ground the principles of sustainable management of forests. At the same time, forest certifications (PEFC or other schemes) grow continually in the sector.

There are three major categories of works performed in the forest: silvicultural operations, harvesting/forwarding operations and wood chip production.



The purpose of silvicultural operations is to prepare the ground, to eliminate herbaceous or shrubby competition, to reforest (seedlings or plants), prevention and to fight forest fires, to restore forest hydrologic systems, to create green areas, to landscape and to improve the quality of individual trees. The operator himself uses either hand tools (brush cutter, pruner, planting cane...) or mechanized tools (tractor, plough, spreader, sprayer...).

Harvesting operations aim to cut down trees, delimit branches and cut fallen trees into logs according to technical specifications then forward them to a landing area (storage mostly along forest road side). The harvesting is done either manually (chainsaw) or mechanically by special forestry machinery (harvester). There are several ways to skid fallen trees: the forwarder (self-propelled equipment with a crane and a trailer), the skidder (self-propelled equipment with a winch or a clamp), the aerial cable (used in mountains or in high ecological interest areas) or, rarely, horse (used in strong ecological interest areas).

Forest wood chips are mainly made of nonindustrial quality roundwood and wood branches. In the forest these are handled by typical forest machines. On forest roadside storage or on a wood terminal energy wood is either chipped or crushed by a special machinery.

The total harvest in the EU-28 forests was 522.3 million cubic meters in 2010. Between 80 % and 99 % of the harvesting operations of these cuts are carried out by forest entrepreneurs: without them, furniture, stationery and some of the construction cannot

exist. In addition, tens of millions of cubic meters of forest chips are produced for bioenergy production.

Performance and innovation

Within this highly competitive context, already applying the concept of agriculture 4.0, i.e. a connected and sustainable agriculture in Europe, agricultural, rural and forestry contractors are continuously embracing the challenge of adopting new technology. This means that, regardless of their activities, they are highly capital intensive. As they provide services that cannot be completed without the use of cutting-edge equipment, these contractors need an efficient fleet of machinery based on the latest innovations, which can ensure that work is completed to the highest standard. According to an internal study, **the sector invests almost 6 billion Euros per year**. It comes as no surprise that it is often the contractors who enable new technologies to be rapidly introduced in the fields: thanks to them, precision agriculture, Farming 4.0 and sustainable intensive farming are concepts, which have already been put into practice or are currently being introduced.

Similarly, these contractors, due to this innovative dimension, are characterised by their use of a **qualified workforce and skilled professionals**. In fact, trained and qualified employees who are able to learn new skills are needed if we are to fully embrace technological advances. In several member states, recognised professional training programmes are already in place or are currently being introduced.

It goes without saying that the combination of these two factors makes it necessary for contractors to guarantee the quality of their services. For this reason, **certification**, though not compulsory in some cases (such as the use of phytosanitary products), is common practice in most of the sector. This is because, despite the constraints and work involved with certification, the sector is aware of its added value. It guarantees that customers receive the level of service that they deserve, by promoting professional standards for contractors. At the same time, it encourages high standards in terms of health and safety, while also reinforcing compliance with environmental regulations.

An asset for the agricultural and forestry sectors

Agricultural, rural and forestry contractors have all that it takes to provide and complete tailor-made services as rapidly as possible for farmers, forest owners and their other customers. Fine-tuned techniques, qualified staff and professional planning of even the most complex work processes **make it possible to achieve results efficiently, while keeping costs under control**.

As a sector, agriculture is particularly subject to increasingly high demands in terms of farm management and marketing. Agricultural, rural and forestry contractors provide cutting-edge techniques at attractive prices. At the same time, they are able to work flexibly, based on contracts, and their customers are provided with the services that they need and when they need them. Moreover, farmers do not have to invest in their own machinery and can avoid certain financial risks, which is even more important for young farmers. They can therefore devote more financial resources to expanding their businesses and spend their precious time managing the latter. **This makes farms more competitive**.

If a contractor cannot make maximum use of the workforce and available technology or the acquisition of new machines would cause costs to rocket, it is often wise, from the work and farm management point of view, to call upon outside specialists, as

this approach can improve the quality of work in many cases. This is all the more true as, by introducing the latest innovations to the agricultural and forestry sector, contractors can also provide unique expertise.

Contractors also carry out important work for public authorities (municipalities), so that they can meet safety requirements on the roads, and maintain paths, roads and waterways. The unpredictable weather of the last few years has shown on several occasions that, in severe winter weather conditions, the traffic grinds to a complete halt, if you cannot rely on outside snow clearing or gritting services. Many contractors have specialised in path and waterway maintenance. In addition, these contractors take care of all kinds of green spaces throughout the year. Whether they maintain sports fields, mow grass verges or cut the trees along our roads or apply mulch to vast areas of non-cultivable land, these businesses have the **required expertise when it comes to the necessary planning, experience and techniques.**

Land-based contractors are engaged in the development of the area where they operate. They play different roles in rural areas, supporting agriculture, providing "green services", offering highly qualified workplaces, owning their share to the prosperity of the economy and the community. They have actively contributed to the achievement of rural development priorities, as attractiveness and sustainability of rural areas is their daily concerns. They believe that the title of the Cork Declaration 2.0 « a better life in rural areas » is the appropriate slogan: investing to help the young generation stay, live and work is urgent.

The highly varied situation concerning European forestry contractors. With their wide range of professional skills and profiles, the latter clearly play a vital role in the use and exploitation of European forests. They are a source of work and investment in efficient machinery, which means that forestry contractors also play an essential part in the European rural economy and timber industry. Nor we forget the wood energy sector, which is currently booming in Europe. Using contractors also guarantees greater added value in the final product. Round timber is already cut and measured at the start of the process. When the tree is felled, stripped and cut into logs, information on log types and the volume of trees is recorded on the on-board IT system on the harvesters. This up-to-date information on quality and volume can be used to manage logistics and plan processes at the sawmills. This helps to improve the value of the product and limit stock levels.

Current challenges of the contractors

Despite being little known or even unknown to the general public and those who make the decisions, for a long time, agricultural, rural and forestry contractors have been vital partners for the agricultural and forestry sectors. This lack of profile seriously hampers recognition of the contribution made by agricultural, rural and forestry contractors and leads to the **unfair competition** that prevails in many European countries. This unfair competition results in a grey area, in which services are provided outside any kind of legal framework by non-contractors, coupled with unequal treatment for equivalent players in terms of access to public funding linked to the CAP.

The **difficulties experienced when driving agricultural and forestry machinery on public roads** are a major problem for contractors who frequently have to travel. The population increasingly complains about the presence of enormous machines and the dangers that they present for local traffic. During the work season, it is important that society is made aware of the use of these machines. Improved skills, driver attitudes and working on commu-

nication may alleviate this feeling of being annoyed. In addition, the member states have strict regulations on the speed and size of machines, combined with maximum axle loads, which do not make it easy to drive the vehicles available on the market.

The problem of driving machines is accentuated by the urban sprawl, which is encroaching on rural areas. This peri-urbanisation leads to the fragmentation of land used for agriculture, which forces contractors to make more journeys with their machines in areas where the population is increasing, so that the presence of these machines becomes a source of conflict for the latter.

Like all other economic sectors, digital and information technology is shifting the agricultural and forestry sectors into a new era where data will play a crucial role for the benefit of all agricultural and forestry businesses. The **data** provided by the machines and their devices, the aggregated data, processed and analyzed, make it possible to achieve substantial improvements in many aspects of the production processes and create a new vision for agriculture and forestry. Land-based contractors have already identified the main challenges. On the legal side, the framework is unclear and there is an urgent need to **clarify the rules of ownership of the data** collected by the contractors during the operations performed for their clients (e.g. farmers, timber buyers). On economic side, land-based contractors should use this flow of information to continue to develop new applications and services and to improve their business model for the benefit of their customers. On the technical side, land-based contractors, as users of different equipment and brands, are confronted with conflicting technologies, systems and interfaces. Therefore, a standardized approach for the production of data at European level would be welcomed.

Access to funding remains a major concern for all SMEs. This is especially true for agricultural and rural contractors as capital investments are vital for their work. Since the beginning of the crisis, contractors have noticed more stringent requirements in terms of bank guarantees and other expectations. In some countries, the credit crunch was so powerful that the banks stopped providing liquidity facilities and drastically limited loans for a while. Even if things seem to be improving, interest rates can still vary as much as by threefold between the member states.

Yet, although the number of jobs in traditional agriculture is constantly falling, it can be seen that contractors providing technical services in rural areas now represent a new and continuously developing sector, which is creating qualified jobs and training opportunities. In order to keep up with these developments, **the sector must ensure that the profession remains attractive** to qualified employees, as expectations are constantly rising for operators and this calls for talented professionals who can be difficult to find.

Finally, other issues, such as public procurement's rules, energy taxation, provision of transnational services, generational change and even profitability are also a major source of concern for contractors.

Countries and
COUNTRIES AND
PORTRAITS OF CONTRACTORS
portraits of
contractors

AUSTRIA



From left to right, taken at the 2017 Contractor Day 2017 : Éric Tanzer (AgrarCommander), Klaus Penzlin (president, BLU Deutschland), Manfred Humer (president, VLÖ), Markus Baldinger (director general, Pöttinger), Dettlef Walter (advisor, AGROprob), Kurt Herbing (FarmFacts) and Helmut Scherzer (director general, VLÖ)

Key figures

Created in March 2010, the Austrian association of agricultural contractors VLÖ (Vereinigung Lohnunternehmer Österreich) currently has 187 members. From 2010-2014, the VLÖ worked closely with Maschinenring Österreich (Austrian machinery ring), before it began to function independently in May 2015. It now has its own director general (Helmut Scherzer) and offices in St. Florian, near Linz, in the federal state of Upper Austria.

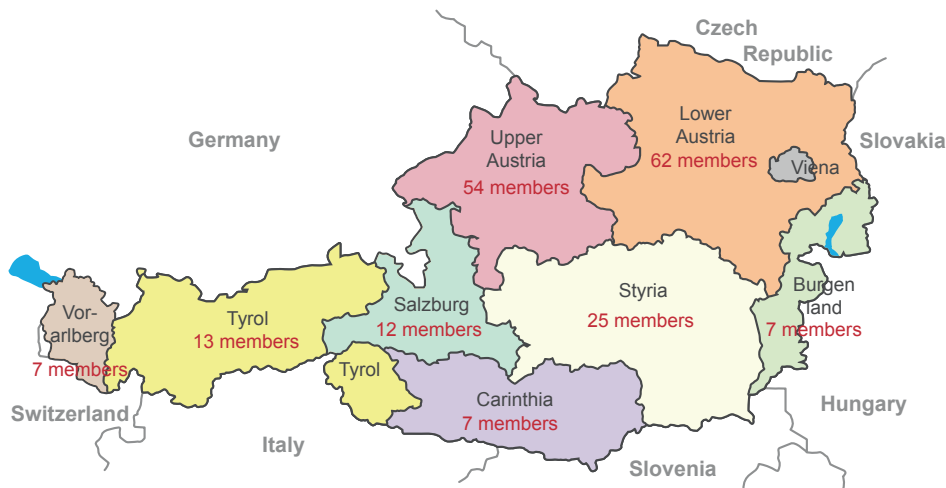
Activities : the VLÖ's members are distributed across all the different regions and over 90 % of them are family businesses, which work in various sectors (see chart). With a 60 % share, agriculture

remains the biggest sector (tillage, sowing, fertilisation, harvesting), followed by public works (20%), forestry (15%) and earthworks (5%).

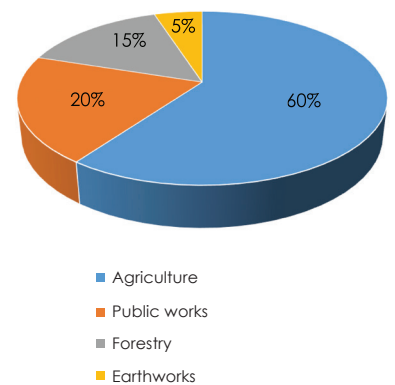
Turnover : although no official surveys exist, the turnover per contractor can be estimated at € 350,000 – 400,000. The 187 VLÖ members generate an annual turnover estimated at approximately € 70 million.

Employment : it is estimated that the agricultural services sector (agricultural contractors) consists of 400 - 450 contractors based in Austria, with a total of approximately 1,500 employees and an average of 3 - 4 employees per contractor.

Regional distribution of VLÖ members



Distribution of VLÖ members by sector



Activities and projects

Main activities of VLÖ in 2016 and 2017: Increasing the number of members, forging partnerships with contractors in the sector, in order to consolidate the association's financial position, improving the image and raising awareness of services offered by contractors, by means of active communication (monthly Lohnunternehmer-Aktuell magazine, public relations, Internet, etc.), providing advice/professionalisation of the sector, lobbying in order to represent the interests of contractors in relation to public authorities, training contractors and their employees, developing services for members, highlighting benefits for customers who

work with contractors, improving acceptance of contractors by society as a whole (contractors work with large machines and may be considered a nuisance on the roads). Current issues for Austrian agricultural contractors are competition with other players who offer agricultural services (machinery rings and communities), maintaining an economic balance by means of cost-effective prices, use of roads (acceptance of machines on public roads), recruiting skilled employees (incentives and creation of acceptable working conditions), development of agricultural structures (major specialisation in some sectors, with many farmers going out of business due to lack of economic profitability), technical qualifications for employees.

Peter Kircher

The company Peter Kircher

Providing a comprehensive range of services

Based in Neukirchen an der Vöckla in Upper Austria, Peter Kircher began to work as a service provider in 1992 at the age of twenty. After focusing initially on sowing and straw baling, the company broadened its range of services to include grass and maize silaging, and the associated transport.

I enjoy my work as an agricultural contractor for two reasons – I get work in a natural environment, while remaining firmly anchored in the world of agriculture, explains Peter Kircher, whose aim is to help his farming customers improve their productivity by providing them with services. Most of the company's customers are located within a 30 km radius, but liquid manure sometimes needs to be delivered to biogas installations up to 250 km away. "We are based in a region of intensive dairy farming, which is characterised by small structures and rolling countryside" says Peter Kircher. We offer a very wide range of services – from all kinds of agricultural tasks (tillage, sowing, fertilisation, crop treatment, cereal and maize harvesting, forage harvesting for cattle feed, silaging, liquid manure spreading, etc.) to working for local authorities, landscape maintenance and winter services (snow clearing). Its main great objective of work remains forage harvesting for cattle farmers with silage harvesters and trailers. The company was presented with the LU-Award 2016, in the category for companies with more than four employees, as part of a competition that recognises the country's best contractors.

Reliable, high quality services

Peter Kircher currently has 14 permanent employees and produces a turnover of between €1.5 - 2 million. Its staff consists of 10 permanent drivers, two people in the workshop and two others who work on administrative tasks.

The company has a large equipment fleet due to the diverse nature of its work. « We have to be very cautious with our investments as the agricultural machinery sector in Austria is characterised by very stiff competition and a price war » remarks Peter Kircher who invests both in brand new and used machines. How does the company set prices for its services? "Because we have permanent employees, we have to be very vigilant when it comes to costs" explains Peter Kircher, adding that his services tend to fall within the upper price bracket. "We can allow our-



Peter Kircher : « Providing customers with a reliable, high quality service »

elves to be more expensive than the average, as long as we provide reliable services that leave our customers fully satisfied", says the contractor. His charges are based on an hourly rate or a combination of the time spent and area covered, in the case of small farms with higher costs or customers who are used to being invoiced for the area covered.

Optimize the logistic approach

Current concerns for the company include finding competent and reliable employees (which the company has to train in-house) and unfair competition from farmers who offer services at lower prices. "Unfortunately, these farmers benefit from tax benefits for flat rate farming (they do not pay social contributions or taxes), without the politicians or Austrian authorities being concerned about the problem" says Peter Kircher.

However, despite these underlying problems, he is not short of projects. "My primary goal is to develop existing services in order to achieve even greater professionalism," states the contractor. For example, digital parcel maps came into use this year, which make it possible to record completed work tasks. "This allows us to optimise how the customer tackles logistics" explains Peter Kircher who will eventually include data from this digitalisation process in business management software. "We have to strike a balance between legal and practical requirements. But, sooner or later, we will be taking orders by computer" says the contractor.

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Director: Helmut Scherzer
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For more information



BELGIUM



Belgian agricultural contractors achieve an annual turnover of around € 1.45 billion a year

Landbouwservice / Agro-Service

Key figures

Approx. 1,200 professional agricultural contractors provide an increasingly wide range of services (inc. earthworks, transport) so that their employees are kept busy throughout the year.

Total turnover for the sector : approx. 1.45 billion euros per year - 20 % of total agricultural production (source: Agro-Service).

Employment : on the joint committee for agricultural contractors, 1,600 full-time and 2,000 part-time employees. The latter work for approx. 400 companies and therefore represent approx. one third of employees.

Cost distribution for contractors : investments and amortisation of equipment: 46 %, replacement parts and repairs: 21 %, salaries and social contributions: 17 %, diesel (8 %), other: (5 %), insurance for machines (2 %), taxes (1 %).

Services provided by the National Agro-Service Centre for its members : training, insurance, legal guidance (in return for a fee), certification of services.

Activities and projects

Social negotiations

On 2 June 2017, a social agreement for the period of 2017-2018 was concluded for agricultural contractors and their workers. The wage cushion is limited by law, to 1.1% of effective and incremental wages for the period of 2017-2018. The end-of-year bonus will be increased, without this costing the contractors anything.

In terms of social dialogue, the trade unions have asked for the threshold to be lowered to 10 workers for the trade union delegation. This demand is unacceptable for Agro-Service. About 10% of companies within the sector employ over 10 workers. The social agreement of 2 June 2017 maintains the current rules (the current threshold being at 50 workers). Agro-Service will invest more in trainings, for contractors and workers.

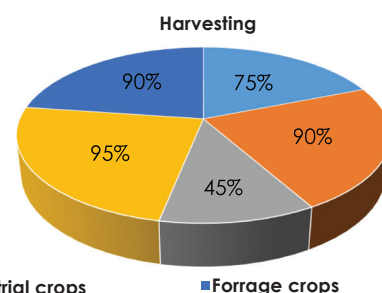
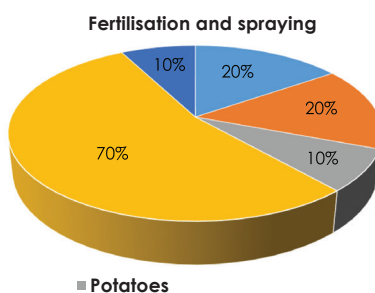
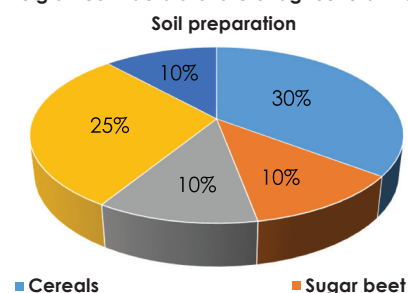
Combating fraud

On the initiative of minister Willy Bor-sus and secretary of state Philippe De Backer, a plan for fair competition in the green sectors was signed on 17 February 2017. Agro-Service was one of the signatory parties. Although this plan consists mainly of points of action for agriculture, it may also prove useful for the agricultural contractor sector.

Exceptional transport

The legislation on exceptional transport lacks clarity, mainly due to regional differences. The secretariat will produce sheets concerning compliance for each type of agricultural vehicle. A congress has been organised at the Agro-Service general meeting on 15 December 2017.

Belgian contractors' share of agricultural work



For more information

**Landbouw-service
Agro-service**



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Annie Van Landuyt

The company Annie Van Landuyt

Objective : profitability

Annie Van Landuyt became the co-president of Agro-Service in February 2013. She is an agricultural contractor in Walloon Brabant, a province located to the south of Brussels.

I have always been fascinated by agricultural machinery and I started with purchasing one beet harvester, two combine-harvesters, two beetroot seed-drills and two balers, states Annie reminding us that her father had already been a contractor. From that moment on, the agricultural activity began to increase steadily. First with harvesting, followed by the works linked to the development of maize silage. Then by the pressing and taping of giant bales and by the distribution of manure and fertilizer (lime, slag, moist lime etc.) or the threshing of maize.

As Annie emphasises, one of the turning points of her business had been the purchase of her first integral root beet harvester Ropa in 1999. It was the first machine of this type in the region and the pulling activities flourished quickly.

More recently, the grain sowing and the spraying of crop protection products completed these activities. The spraying offers more and more work within Annie's business, which offers moreover a complete monitoring of cultures for its clients, all situated in a radius of 30 to 40 km around Braine-le-Château.

In order to work more rationally, the storage place of crop production products of some clients is now situated within the company. The company has also built a second shed to stock the machinery, which has increased over the years.

Not only does Annie's business offer agricultural activities, it also provides a maintenance of roadsides and hedges. The company aims to help out both the municipality and the farmers, without giving up working during the winter, as it also removes the snow on the roads.

A broad range of activities

In 2014, Annie started up a new business named Agri Minon to integrate the arrival of her son Guillaume. He left for Bapaume (France) to get his Bachelor's Degree specialised in agricultural machinery. Guillaume works fulltime in the business since 2011 and is very involved in it.

According to Annie the arrival of Guillaume encourages them to develop new activities. An example



Annie Van Landuyt accompanied by her son Guillaume in front of their new forage harvester

is the recent purchase of a self-loading trailer Jumbo Combiline. This machine collects wilted grass. This investment facilitates the working site and is appreciated by clients.

"My objective is to have high-quality material and to provide the client the best service he or she can receive, even though some activities are less profitable than others", explains Annie, who specifies that the main goal is to have a high level of productivity. Her business with four employees, next to Annie and Guillaume, has at present a massive turnover of one million euros a year.

Her range of activities varies a lot, from sowing to harvesting (400 ha of beet sowing, 400 ha of maize sowing and 300 ha of grass cutting) Other activities as harvesting in husk or in silos (1100 ha of grain and barley as well as 250 ha of maize and 850 ha of beet pulling) take also place in Annie's business. Not to mention the spreading of manure and fertilizer.

Confédération belge du bois Belgische Houtconfederatie

La Confédération belge du bois Belgische Houtconfederatie represents the forestry and timber sectors. It has over 250 members. In Belgium, forestry and timber contractors include 419 companies (648 employees) and 1914 self-employed workers.



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DENMARK



Bent Juul Jørgensen, director of the Danish association DME (right), with the contractor Lars Kildsgaard and his son Christian. This company (LK Skovservice) owns 50 ha of plantations and sells about 230.000 Christmas trees a year

Key figures

The DM&E is one of a group of 14 regional associations of agricultural contractors. Its members include agricultural contractors, as well as other contractors working in different sectors, such as construction, forestry and sewer maintenance.

Approximately 700 agricultural contractors, approximately 500 of which are members of the national DM&E association. The latter has grown from 602 members in 2007 to 730 members in 2016.

Total turnover per sector (2015 figures): approximately 375 million euros generated by agricultural contractors, which represents 4.4 % of total agricultural production, 454 million euros from rural constructors (construction, sewer maintenance, etc.) and 41 million euros from forestry contractors (source: DM&E).

Average turnover produced by agricultural contractors : € 660,000 per year.

Average turnover produced by forestry contractors : € 230,000 per year.

Employment : an average of 4 to 8 employees per contractor, but with very different profiles, ranging from 1 to over 100 employees.

Investments : agricultural contractors make the largest investments (200,000 € per employee, acquisition and maintenance).

Cost distribution for contractors : wages and social contributions: 30 %, investments and amortisation of equipment: 26 %, replacement parts and repairs: 13 %, diesel: 13 %, insurance for machines: 3 %.

Services provided by DM&E for its members : training, insurance

for machines and employees, legal advice (free of charge), profitability analysis.

Contractors' share of agricultural work : the Danish agricultural contractors only play a small part in soil preparation, fertilisation and spraying (except for forage crops, for which they conduct 30 % of soil preparation and 50 % of fertilisation and spraying work). Most of their agricultural work comes from harvesting (50 % for industrial crops/sugar beet and 80 % for forage crops).

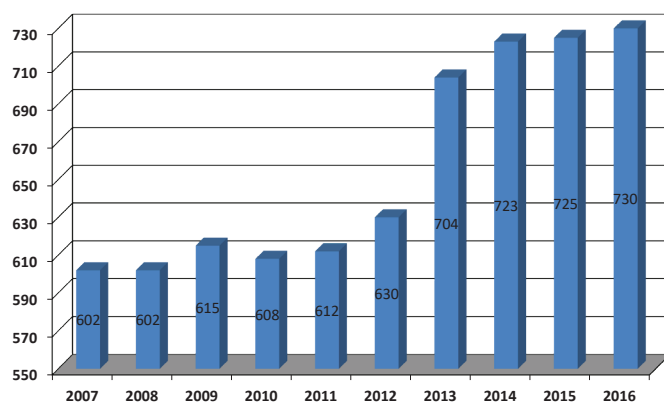
Activities and projects

The situation for agricultural, rural and forestry contractors is good in Denmark. Businesses are growing and their turnover is increasing.

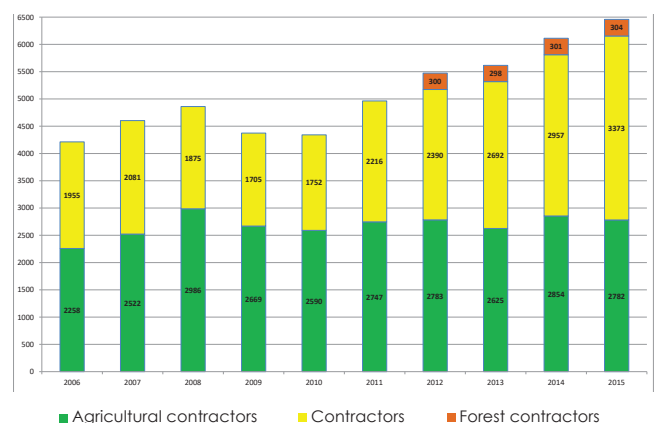
The countries low unemployment rate (less than 4 %) leads to a rise of wages, especially near big cities. Businesses need to employ foreign workers.

This increasing professionalization of the sector made the DM&E association large its team in order to multiply its services in 2017, and to develop new activities (such as the creation of an association for young contractors or a new 3-year formation cycle).

Changes in the number of DM&E association members from 2007-2016



Changes affecting gross turnover for DM&E members from 2006-2015 and distribution according to activities





The company MR Skovservice ApS

Specialisation in total care solutions

MR Skovservice ApS of the forestry contractor Martin Riggelsen is located in the village of Kelstrup, to the south-east of Haderslev. The company exists since 2002 and is today a thriving business with 13 permanent employees and a couple of hired independent contractors. It can handle virtually any thinkable forestry contractor jobs and particularly specialises in providing a number of comprehensive care solutions for forest owners in the South Jutland region.

From 1 January 2002, Martin Riggelsen was able to start life as an independent forestry contractor with his company M.R. Skovservice where his chainsaw and company car were the first machinery. Already after one year, the company got its first employee who works in the company up and till now. "In the first few years, we continued to offer manual forestry services, a bit of planting and cultivation work, but around 2006-2007 we got our first major machine, a Silvatec 854 harvester" announces Martin and adds that, the next years, he started working with forwarders, both a Timberjack 1410 and a couple of John Deere 810. "Yes, we moved fast in those years and also invested in a large mobile wood processor for trees up to Ø 85 cm" continues the contractor who, at that time, had most of the country as his workplace.

Concentrate on getting the best results

"We are not running around the whole country offering our services cheaper than our colleagues, but are specialising, to a much greater extent than before, in comprehensive care solutions for the forest owners around our own part of the country and Northern Germany, which has undoubtedly been a success" says the forestry contractor. "The fact that, about 5 years ago, I chose to stop working as a regular driver on the machines to provide a service instead for the people and get involved at the workplaces, meet customers and concentrate on getting the best results from buying and selling wood and, in general, focus on developing the business as best as possible, has, in my opinion, also had a really good effect on the business" stresses Martin Riggelsen. The forestry contractor Martin Riggelsen is today 37 years old and lives with his wife Anja, who is the manager of the breeding pig farm at their property Højbo-gaard near Øsby, to the east of Haderslev.



Martin Riggelsen

Specialisation in total care solutions

Martin Riggelsen can perform a long series of jobs for the forest owners, such as manual and mechanical logging, forwarding/skidding, branch crushing/root cutting, chipping and piling, machine planting, mechanical and manual cleaning, spraying, wood care/special logging, nature conservation, hedge trimming, consulting and total care solutions, including purchase/sale of wood, chips etc. "For example, we have good colleagues we cooperate with on branch crushing, root cutting and chipping" says the forestry contractor who, in recent years, has developed his company especially in the field of total care solutions. "We have chosen to offer total solutions with special focus on the owners' preference to get the most out of our work when we were there and cleared or fully processed their woodlands" says Riggelsen.

Currently, MR Skovservice has about 1,700 hectares of forest in the South Jutland area operated 100 % by the company, with the largest individual customer having 300 hectares. The jobs typically range from the purchase of plants and auxiliary materials, planting, care/maintenance of cultures, felling, forwarding, purchase and sale of wood, chips etc. To give the customer the best access to sales channels for wood, chips etc. from his woodlands and the best prices, MR Skovservice makes use of good cooperation with a number of colleagues – be it selling logged hardwood to the Far East (Vietnam, China), softwood to Dansk Træemballage A/S (DTE) or chips to a number of heating plants in Jutland.

For more information



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Denmark

FINLAND



Finnish forest contractors made a record harvest of nearly 62 million m³ of wood in 2016. Photo Michael Moroney

Key figures

There are approx. 1,500 forestry contractors in Finland, about 80 % of which are members of the Koneyrittäjät association. The Finnish association Koneyrittäjät unites around 2,400 contractors in three major sectors: forestry work and firewood (1,200 members out of a total of approx. 1,500 in Finland), bio-energy generated from peat (250 members out of over 400 companies working in this sector) and earthworks (900 members out of approx. 8,000 companies).

Round wood harvesting in 2016 : 61,8 million m³ (record).

Firewood production : 7,3 million m³.

Total turnover for the forestry sector : € 700 million.

Average turnover per forestry contractor : € 0,6 million.

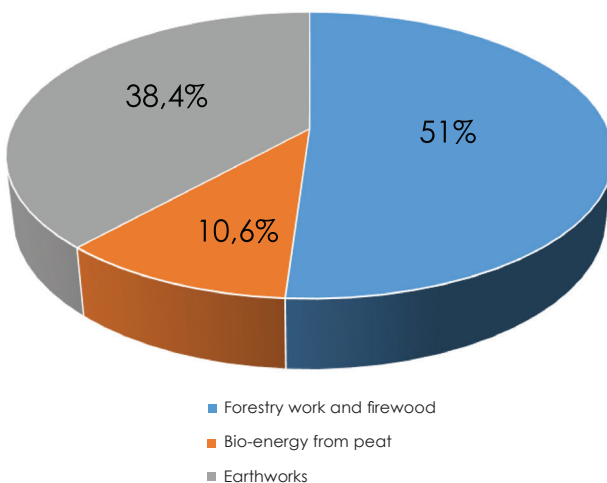
Average operational profitability for forestry contractors in 2016 : 2,0 % (16 % have an operational profitability of over 10 %).

Finnish machinery fleet : 2,000 harvesters, 2,100 forwarders and over 150 shredders for producing chips (20 % overcapacity resulting in a fall in the prices paid to contractors).

Employment : over 4,500 jobs (contractors and their employees)

Profile of forestry contractor customers : forest industry (75 %, 3 main companies), national forest organisation (10 %), forest owners (12 %).

3 key sectors



A variety of profiles in term of activities (Koneyrittäjät members)

Sector	Average income (€/year)	Operational profitability (2016)
Forestry work	600 000	2,0 %
Earthworks	120 000 - 180 000 for a 1 st group of 560 companies (paid by the hour) 480,000 for a 2 nd group of 340 companies working mainly as subcontractors	1,6 %
Bio-energy from peat	470 000	3,9 %

Activities and projects

Faced with a highly competitive situation at local level and very low profitability in the sector, the Koneyrittäjät association is stepping up its lobbying activities, both internally and externally (the first parliamentary dinner was held in 2016).

In order to facilitate internal communication, a new Smartphone application has been introduced for members, which also aims to en-

courage the latter to sign up for events and training courses. Finally, the Koneyrittäjät association created a new working group in 2017, in order to update recommendations and ownership rules for "Forest machine data", which includes a wide range of information on the private and public forest industry in Finland.

Metsäkonepalvelu Oy

The company Metsäkonepalvelu Oy

Aiming to produce 2 million m³ of wood by 2018



Teemu and Timo Tolppa: "Forestry contractors have to stand out for the innovative services that they offer."

Based in Hämeenlinna, about 100 kilometers north of Helsinki, the Metsäkonepalvelu Oy company, which was established in 1970 by Tauno Tolppa, is now in the hands of the second and third generation of his family – Timo Tolppa and his son Teemu Tolppa.

After working in different parts of the forestry sector, fifteen years ago, Metsäkone-Palvelu refocused its strategy on the field, at which it excelled: cutting and harvesting timber for its customers. While doing so, he focused on becoming the leading provider of services in this field and the biggest employer of forestry machine drivers in the Scandinavian countries. He is currently on his way to achieving this aim, as the company is equally active in southern Finland and the south of Sweden, where it set up business three years ago. "Out of the 1.6 million m³ of timber cut every year, Finland produces 1.1 Mm³ and we expect to produce 2 million m³ by 2018" states Teemu.

About twenty customers

What makes the company special is the profile of its customer base, with 50 % of its work being done for the UPM group. "UPM has chosen to work with us and awarded us a six-year contract for 1.1 million m³", explains Teemu. The company is currently wor-

king for about twenty customers (in Finland and Sweden), which have a varied profile (paper groups, such as UPM, forest owner associations, private sawmills, etc.). The contractor is paid per m³ harvested (an average of 10.80 €/m³ in Finland for clear cut timber). The prices listed by Metsäkonepalvelu Oy range from €7 to €13-14 per m³, depending on the customer and type of cut. "Less than 10 % of our turnover comes from subcontracting to other forestry contractors," adds Teemu. These forestry contractors are generally small (1-2 employees) and assist with specific tasks. What is the profile of Metsäkonepalvelu Oy employees? We have over a 100 forestry machine drivers who need to have the necessary skills in various fields (driving, safety, environment) » says Teemu while emphasising how difficult it is to find qualified staff.

New skills

The young contractor thinks it is a pity that "training centres attach greater importance to the number of young people being trained than the quality of training" before adding that "it is simply not enough to chop down trees - forestry contractors now need to develop new skills (such as management and leadership), in order to survive in a highly competitive world. It is not down to the size of the company, it is important that forestry contractors stand out for the innovative services that they offer" stresses Teemu.

For more information

KONEYRITTÄJÄT



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FRANCE



The 85th FNEDT Congress was held in February 2017 in Agen (Lot-et-Garonne) on the theme « Be entrepreneurs of agricultural work tomorrow ». For two days, 560 entrepreneurs from all over France took stock in a friendly atmosphere on many current topics

Key figures

Number of contractors: 21,520 agricultural, forestry and rural contractors (ARCs) were known to exist in 2015. From the latter, about 64 % are agricultural contractors, 32 % are forestry contractors and roughly 4 % are silvicultural contractors.

Turnover: the turnover generated by all agricultural contractors is around € 3,424 million (13,055 contractors). The combined turnover produced by all forestry contractors is between approx. 800 million - € 1 billion, depending on estimates (8,929 contractors).

Economic importance of the services provided: in 2013, 60 % of farms made use of external services provided by agricultural contractors and agricultural machinery cooperatives. Agricultural contractors account for 91 % of the 11,700 AWU (annual work units) generated by these services. The use of services is increasing significantly with the growth of the UAA (utilised agricultural area) and stabilising at about 80 % for farms with over 60 ha.

The trend for outsourcing agricultural work continues apace: the volume of work conducted by agricultural contractors doubled between 2000-2010 and the average number of days, on which agricultural contractors were used, increased from 5 to 10. Viticulture and field crops represent 35 % and 27 %, respectively, of all the

work undertaken by agricultural contractors. Agricultural contractors take care of 1.4 % of the total volume of agricultural work.

Employment: taken as a whole, agricultural, forestry and rural contractors entered into 112,768 permanent and casual contracts in 2015, with 97,403 permanent and casual employees or 31,451 full-time equivalent. 11,267 contractors employ workers.

Agricultural, rural and forestry contractors are highly fragmented, as a very high number of them have only a few FTE employees. However, the curve in the number of agricultural contractors with 5-50 FTE employees is rising sharply.

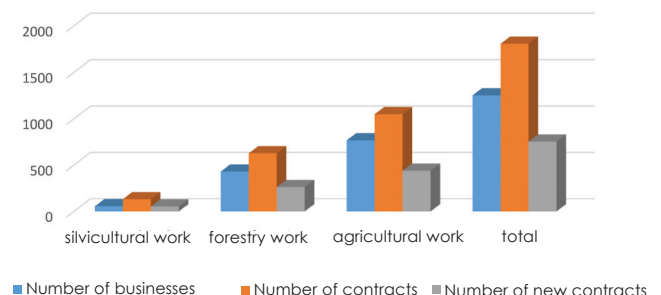
The abolition of exemption from social charges on casual worker and job-seeker contracts has had a direct impact on the number of jobs with contractors. For the first time since 2004, the number of employees with agricultural contractors fell between 2014-2015. The agricultural service sector lost 879 employees, including both permanent and casual workers.

Training: apprenticeships are by far the most popular form of alternance training for agricultural, rural and forestry contractors. 1,252 contractors have 1807 apprentices. This means that some contractors have 2 or even more apprentices.

21,520 contractors in 2015

FNEDT CCMSA		2015	2015/2014
ETA	Number of businesses	13 762	102 %
	Number of contracts	80 426	99 %
ETFs	Number of businesses	839	100 %
	Number of contracts	2823	101 %
ETFe	Number of businesses	6 919	100 %
	Number of businesses	14154	107 %
Total construction companies		21 520	101 %

807 apprentices with 1,252 contractors in 2015



Activities and projects

Internal activities of the FNEDT: greater legal recognition of the association in social dialogue, increased stability in the number of member contractors, E 2020 strategy review followed by the launch of a digital platform, initiatives aimed at developing professional apprenticeships and adjustments for the transition from 22 to 13 regions.

For agricultural and rural contractors: increase in the number of payments owed by farms, fewer public contracts from local au-

thorities, growth in the number of complete services, ever-increasing prices for machines and parts, and excessively low market prices for services, resulting in insufficient margins, despite work being available.

For forestry contractors: more active participation by the FNEDT in France Bois Forêt, stable prices for services, recovery of demand for oaks and resinous woods in 2016 (and good prospects for 2017), a 1.5 % increase in the plant sales and a downturn for wood energy.

Fred Piazza

The company ETF Piazza

How forestry contractor Fred Piazza looks after the forest in Meurthe-et-Moselle

Fred Piazza has been a woodcutter since 1984 and is motivated by a real passion for forest maintenance. His son Cédric joined him as an employee six years ago.

"I started off working for myself in February 1984, after completing an apprenticeship at the ONF (Office National des Forêts) from 1979-1981. I am a registered woodcutter and have three types of customer: the ONF, local authorities and Forêt & Bois de l'Est, a forestry cooperative that unites over 6,000 forest owners" explains Fred Piazza when we meet him on a work site. His work for Forêt & Bois de l'Est started the day before and will take a total of three days. It involves protecting an area of forest that borders onto a residential area in the town of Villerupt, about 100 km north of Nancy. "Forest protection work is becoming increasingly common, following strong winds over the last few winters" explains Fred Piazza who generally works on felling sites for local authorities in the Moselle region. "You need a proper technique to fell trees and it has to take place in several stages" says Fred Piazza who works in tandem with a logger with a skidder, which is equipped with a cable, in order to



Fred Piazza and his son Cédric on a tree felling site

determine where the trunk falls. "It takes ten years to make a good woodcutter" states Cédric Piazza who completed a CAP course for woodcutters at the CFP-PA in Bar-le-Duc (Meuse) from 2010-2012, before working with his father. "Timber felling takes place from mid-August until late March - under a waning moon - before silvicultural work, planting and forest maintenance take over," says Cédric who is pleased to work in a profession that allows him to spend his days out in the fresh air. "We take care of the natural environment," expresses the young woodcutter happily, as he clearly loves his work.

Benoît Dufay

The company ETA Dufay

A pioneer of fodder beet in the Doubs region

At an altitude of 500 m and very close to the Swiss border, young contractor Benoît Dufay started a new fodder beet sowing and harvesting business in 2012.

"I was looking for a crop with a strong added value" reports Benoît Dufay who, since the first year, has taken orders for fodder beets from cattle farmer customers in the AOC Comté cheese region who wanted to improve the quality of their milk. "I produced 5 ha on my farm for 3-4 customers in the first year, which rose to 18 ha in 2016, following a rise in demand" says Benoît who uses a Monosem 6-row seeder, together with a small Kleine self-propelled harvester. The supply of fodder beet seeds and harvesting will develop steadily, after increasing from 50 ha in the first year to 110-115 ha in 2016, with 160 ha predicted for 2017. "I was the first to offer this short circuit service for farmers based in the altitude plateau area, with an average of 4-5 ha



Benoît Dufay in front of an equipment shed

of beets for their herds" explains Benoît Dufay. "Beets are a fresh and sweet food, which makes them very palatable for cows and keeps them in better condition," adds Benoît. In addition, his new collapsible 12-row Monosem planter is more technically advanced than the previous version and will enable him to work more accurately.

For more information



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France

GERMANY



German agricultural contractors have to face new road circulation regulations since the 1st of June 2017

Key figures

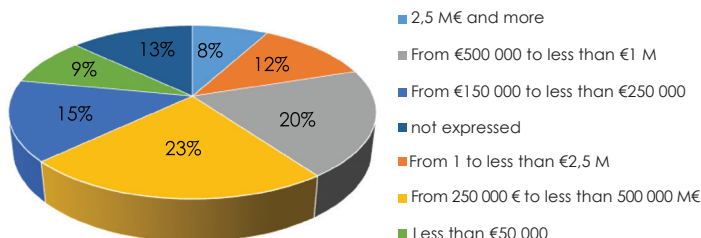
Today, about 6,000 professional agricultural, rural and forestry companies are operating in Germany. However, more than 40% of these companies are exploited by agricultural companies as complementary activities.

The global turnover of the branch reaches € 3,3 billion per year. Agriculture remains to be the best represented group, having a share of 70 % and services ranging from seeding to harvesting. Thanks to the € 600 million per year generated in the last ten years, the waste supply and disposal of biogas installations used in energy production have today become an essential part of the turnover. It is estimated that agricultural contractors obtain a market share of more than 90 % in this sector that comprises 8.000 installations throughout the country. Furthermore, it is considered

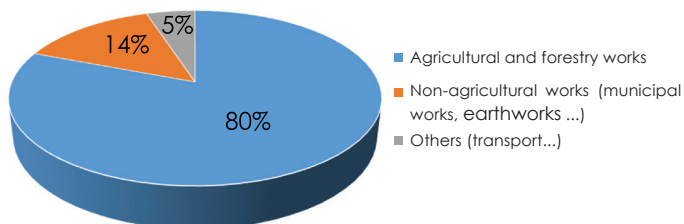
that about 30 % of the agricultural, rural and forestry contractors' turnover comes from activities carried out on behalf of local authorities and municipalities.

Having an average annual turnover exceeding a million euros, the German agricultural, rural and forestry contracting companies have a varied profile and are able to employ up to hundred people. They are estimated to invest about € 800 million per year in order to make their clients benefit from technical progress in the agricultural sector and to and to acquire new market shares. The branch of agriculture, rural and forestry companies currently employs some 16,000 people on a full-time basis and 20 000 others on a part-time basis. Consequently, some 20,000 full-time equivalents work in German agricultural, rural and forestry enterprises. For the last ten years, employees of those companies are offered a training to access the craft. Each year, 230 young people complete their professional apprenticeship as agricultural service workers and form a skilled workforce for agricultural, rural and forestry enterprises. For more complex tasks related to the management of a farm, it is possible to undergo further training of "Mastership in agricultural services."

Distribution of the turnover of the German contractors in 2016



Distribution of the turnover of the German contractors by activity



Average investments in machinery and equipment by German agricultural contractor in 2016 and 2017 (€ 1,000)

Machines	April-Sept 2016	April-Sept 2017
Machinery and equipment	139	155
Tractors + telescopic + transport	103	139
Harvesting machines (self-propelled, combine harvesters)	209	226
Equipment for crops: plowing, sowing, fertilization ...	58	51
Forage harvesting machinery	80	80

Source LU aktuell 07/2017

Activities and projects

In addition to the latest successful DeLuTa fair that took place early December in Bremen and brought together some 12 000 contractors, BLU's priority is to build a thorough knowledge of the theoretical and practical aspects through the creation four thematic working committees (Technique and electronics, law and personnel, organisation and economy, services towards municipalities), the cooperation among contractors, and the exchange with multiple professional or political bodies (European

Commission, CEETAR, etc.). There are numerous topical subjects in the profession namely vocational training, working time, image and acceptance of the profession, development of the new branch "Junger BLU", digitisation and Big Data...). The objective of BLU is to help contractors develop and set a course and profitable activities. "There are still real opportunities for development in traditional agriculture," says Dr. Martin Wesenberg, who runs BLU since early 2016.

Gerhard Strompen

The company Gerhard Strompen



Passion for service
for three generations

With three pillars in its activities (agriculture, earthworks and bioenergy), the company Gerhard Strompen aims for more cooperation with other contractors, with the desire to distinguish itself by unique and quality services.

Since its creation by Laurenz Strompen in 1965, the company Gerhard Strompen passed to a second generation from 1984 to 2012 with Gerhard Strompen and his wife Wilma, to be finally managed by a third generation since 2013, by brothers Michael and Rainer Strompen. The company has developed a comprehensive portfolio of services covering three sectors: agriculture, from sowing to harvesting, earthworks (sewer construction and land transport for municipalities) and bioenergy since 2010.

Within the company, the two brothers Strompen complement each other, Michael taking care of the technical aspects (technical direction, workshop, repair of machines) and Rainer of the commercial aspects and customer relations. Rainer is also a member of the Präsidium of BLU, the German Association of Agricultural Contractors.

Varied services

The company's customers are located within a 25 km radius, with a varied profile, farmers in the region being cattle and hog producers, or also vegetable producers. The dominant crops are cereals (wheat and barley), maize (for silage or green harvest), forage, but also potatoes and sugar beets. The agricultural services proposed by the company are therefore very varied: tillage, sowing, fertilisation, lime spreading, crop protection, harvesting, logistics and transport (agricultural products or manure). «Our current priority is to develop cooperation with other entrepreneurs to increase efficiency,» says Rainer Strompen. For example, beet harvesting has been carried out in cooperation with other



Michael and Rainer Strompen

contractors since 1995 and nine contractors have gathered in a single structure since 2016 to harvest a total of 1 800 ha of beets with three Grimme harvesters.

Develop niches

The company's services in the field of earthworks are very varied as well: land clearing, road construction, soil replacement, sewerage and drainage works, infrastructure for paving stones, delivery of building materials...

As for the bioenergy section, it was created in 2010 with the construction of a biogas plant by a consortium of companies that went bankrupt in 2014, which resulted in Strompen retaking it in 2015. "We deliver annually about 15,000 t of corn silage and 13,000 t of bovine and pig manure to this biogas plant, which produces 1000 kW of steam per hour and 800 kW of heat used for heating tomatoes in greenhouses" states Rainer Strompen.

What are Strompen's current concerns? "We are under increasing pressure from our industry (price increase for agricultural machinery manufacturers cannot be passed on to customers)" says Rainer Strompen, who believes that the future of the company will be based on partnerships and more cooperation, and on the development of niche services or special techniques that are not offered by other entrepreneurs.

Gerhard Strompen in figures

- Located in Straelen in North Rhine-Westphalia
- 28 employees including 10 temporary employees
- 3 fields of activity: agriculture, earthmoving, bioenergy
- A total turnover of €5,2 million
- 3 500 ha of agricultural land as a contractor

The company has been awarded the «AFB» label (Anerkannter Fachbetrieb = Recognised specialised company) by BLU, it is a guarantee of quality work and customer satisfaction. Approximately 60 German contractors have been awarded the label to date, five are in the process of being awarded.

For more information



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Germany

IRELAND



Typically Irish countryside: Irish agricultural contractors generate an estimated annual turnover of 750 M€

Key figures

Approx. 1,800 professional agricultural contractors.

Total turnover for the sector: €750 M per year (source FCI).

Employment: each contractor employs, on average, 4 people full-time and 12 part-time; this amounts to an estimated total of 10,000 full-time or part-time machine drivers.

Approx. 20,000 tractors owned by Irish agricultural contractors (which consume 500 million litres of diesel per year)

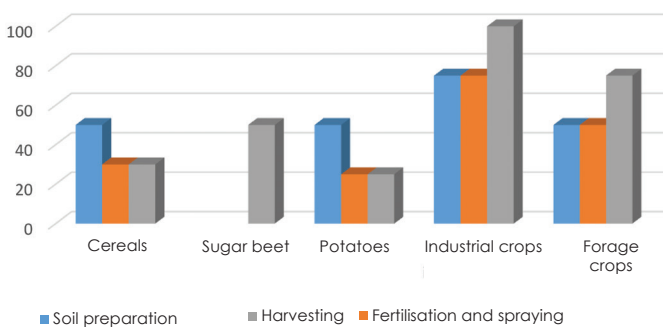
- Irish agricultural contractors harvest over 5 million bales of silage per year and spread more than 10 billion litres of liquid manure on Irish farms every year.

- €150 million invested in tractors and machines each year (cf. graphics)

Cost distribution for contractors: investments and amortisation of equipment: 40 %, taxes (20 %), spare parts and repairs: 15 %, salaries and social contributions: 10 %, diesel (10 %), insurance for machines (5 %).

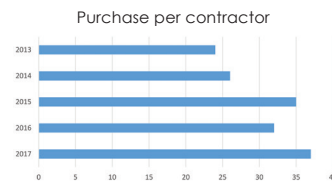
Services provided by the FCI to its members: training (for example, for crop treatment operators), legal advice.

Contractors' share of agricultural work (%)



Source CEETTAR survey

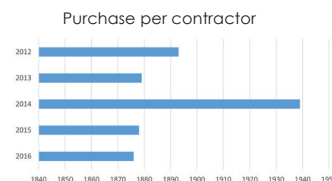
Self-propelled forage harvester sales in Ireland



154 machines have been sold over the last five years, which means that Irish agricultural contractors invested a total of €40 M

Source CEETTAR 2017

New tractor sales in Ireland



Irish agricultural contractors represent 25 % of the total market, while purchases of the largest tractor category represent an investment estimated at 47 €M in 2016

Source CEETTAR 2017

Activities and projects

One of the major concerns of the FCI (Association of Farm Contractors in Ireland) is the growing amount of debts owed by farmers to contractors. According to a survey conducted by the FCI at its last general meeting, these debts add up to an average of €35,000 per contractor. These amounts owed by the contractors' customers represented a total of €12 million before the start of the silaging season in 2017.

At their last general meeting, FCI members decided to change the name of their association, in order to include forestry contractors. The FCI therefore became the Association of Farm & Forestry Contractors in Ireland, with the long-term objective of creating a forestry section within the organisation.

The Road Safety Authority (RSA) has confirmed to the FCI that the EU regulations on the testing of T5 tractor, which are made to run

at speeds in excess of 40 km/h, will be enshrined in Irish law in May of this year, before coming into force in May 2018.

The FCI is pushing ahead with its initiative of lobbying the Irish Ministry of Agriculture, so that the agricultural contractors can benefit from the SBCI fund of €150 million (Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland), of which farmers can take advantage, in order to reduce the interest payable on loans.

The FCI would like to attract more young drivers for agricultural contractors, as the latter are finding it increasingly difficult to find skilled employees and particularly during peak periods, such as silaging.

The FCI considers that the scheme currently in place in Ireland, which aims to combat ammonia emissions, could be improved, by setting aside aid for farmers who make use of contractors with spreading technologies with the lowest ammonia emissions.

Richard White

Richard White, FCI National Chairman

"Give professional answers to the changing needs of our farming clients"

Located in the dairy region of Tipperary in the southwest of Ireland, Richard White is not only National Chairman of the FCI, but also farm contractor with two of his brothers. Grass silage and slurry spreading are the two main parts of the White brothers' business.

Richard and his family have been involved in farm contracting since the 1960's at Drangan in Tipperary, when his father Pat started a small farm contracting business with a small square baler and tractor.

The White family moved to silage harvesting in 1973 with the arrival of a Kidd double chop silage harvester powered by a Zetor 8011 tractor. Richard joined the business after school and has been part of the team since his early teenage years. He completed a study year at Gurteen Agricultural College and came home to Drangan in Tipperary, to become actively involved in the farm contracting business with his father.

In 1997, Richard joined forces with his younger brothers John and Martin (both working outside of the farm contracting business) to establish Slievenamon Agricultural Services Ltd (SAS), a limited company to run the expanding farm contracting operations. Richard White became involved in farm contracting from an early age.

"I have always been interested in the machinery in our contracting fleet and I became fully involved in the business when I took it over from my father Pat in 1989, as I had a vision of where we needed to be in providing a modern contractor service in this thriving farming area of Tipperary", he says.

Forming a company

When the White brothers started SAS in 1997 the company turnover with a limited amount of machinery was in the region of €150,000. In the 20 years next they have embarked on a huge investment in machinery.

The turnover at SAS is now in excess of €1 million with a range of machinery that has a replacement value of close to €2,5 million. The brothers have kept machinery investment at pace with developments in farming. They will invest in new technology if it brings benefits for their farming customers and can expand their range of services in a more ef-



Richard White, FCI National Chairman: "Develop more services that bring savings to our members"

ficient way. At the summer peak time, the White Brothers employ a team of 12 operators including themselves and team numbers drop to six full-time from November until April. Grass silage harvesting is the dominant operation for SAS and between grass silage, whole crop cereal silage and maize silage, this aspect of their business accounts for more than 50 % of their turnover.

Slurry spreading is the second most important part of the business and now accounts for close to 25 % of turnover. They use a range of different slurry spreading machine options to satisfy local customer's needs. "The needs of our farming clients continue to change over time, as farms get bigger and put more emphasis on grassland management," says Richard White.

More recognition

"We are still looking to grow membership numbers and have created a database of over 500 working contractors in Ireland who are having growing contact with. Our priorities for FCI include getting more recognition for the role of the farm and forestry contractor in the Irish Government and among other farming bodies" says Richard White. We are constantly looking for new opportunities to develop services that bring value to our membership, covering areas such as training and development and services that bring savings to our members", says Richard White.

For more information



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Out of 14,600 agricultural contractors operating in Italy today, 9,800 offer their services to one million farms

Key figures

Following a lengthy initiative that first began back in 2013, UNIMA and CONFAL, the two associations that represent Italian agricultural and rural contractors, decided to officially create a new organisation on 27 May 2017: Confederazione Agromeccanici e Agricoltori Italiani (CAI).

CAI represents 14,600 agricultural contractors and several thousand farmers who generate a total turnover of 3.7 billion euros, which is equivalent to 7.5 % of the total agricultural production (source: Istat).

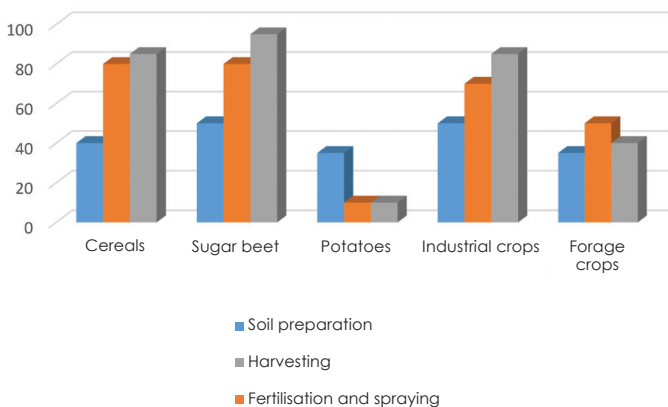
Confederazione Agromeccanici e Agricoltori Italiani represents over 85 % of Italian agricultural contractors and includes six regional federations (Lombardy, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Piedmont, Tuscany, Marche) and 55 regional associations.

Out of 14,600 agricultural contractors currently working in Italy, 9,800 provide services for one million farms, which represent over 65 % of agricultural services provided by the latter.

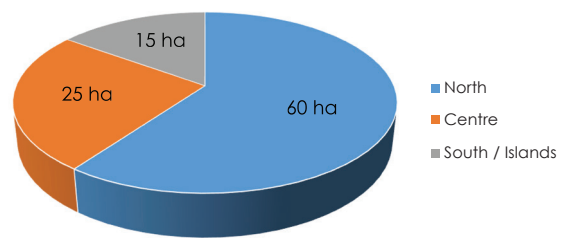
According to the results of the latest agricultural census, 212,000 farms (13 % of the total) have entrusted all their agricultural work to these contractors, which represents a total of one million hectares.

Distribution of contractor costs: investments and amortisation of equipment: 25-50 %, salaries and social contributions: 20-25 %, diesel: 5-15 %, replacement parts and repairs: 5-10 %, taxes: 10-20 %, machine insurance (2-5 %).

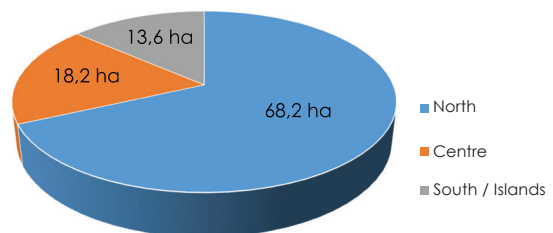
Contractors' share of agricultural work (%)



Geographical distribution of agricultural machinery contractors in Italy



Agricultural land worked by each agricultural machinery contractor



Source CEETAR survey of UNIMA

Activities and projects

The merger of UNIMA and CONFAL has had many positive consequences: reinforcement of initiatives and the representation of agricultural contractors in relation to reference institutions, consolidation of service structures and greater efficiency of the services provided.

Proposed law on agricultural contractor qualifications and their image as professional agronomists, in line with the principles of the European legislation on rural development.

Closer institutional and public links, particularly with (national and regional) governments, in order to standardise the strategic message of CAI that we must simultaneously strive for real sustainability and greater competitiveness.

Ensuring that this union of UNIMA and CONFAL leads to a process of integration, in the future, for the world of agriculture in Italy. Research partnerships and shared objectives with the institutions.

First Oscars

From EIMA INTERNATIONAL in Bologna

Six agricultural contractors are awarded their first Oscars



The Oscar winners in Bologna were selected by a jury consisting of members of the UNIMA and CONFAL associations, together with a technical committee and journalists from the Contoterzista magazine, the journal of Italian agricultural contractors

The Italian agricultural contractors did not go unnoticed at the last edition of EIMA, which took place in Bologna from 9-13 November 2016. For the first time, prizes were awarded for the year's best contractors in six categories: technological innovations, precision agriculture, female contractor, diversification, young contractor and agricultural supplies.

Technological innovations category: the winner is Agromeccanica Negroni Srl (Stezzano – BG), which won this award for its successful innovations in the fields of anaerobic digestion and biogas.

Precision agriculture category: Venetian company Agro T. e C. snc (Musile di Piave – VE) was awarded the prize for its work and investments in state-of-the-art machinery designed for precision agriculture, which is operated using satellite technology and land parcel mapping, in order to control the spreading of products and crop yields.

Female contractor category: Rossella Guizzardi de Meccanica Guizzardi Snc (Granarolo dell'Emilia – BO) was named female contractor of the year because of the leading role, which her family company has always played in the region and the support of her customers. This role has become wider, both politically and professionally, as Rossella is

president of FERIA (Emilia Romagna Federation of Agricultural Machinery Contractors) and ATMA in Bologna.

Diversification category: this prize was awarded to Marco Speciali de Speciali Antenore srl (Roncoferraro – MN), a contractor who has always managed to remain at the cutting edge of the market because of its strategy of diversifying its activities, which have developed from traditional services, such as harvesting, to include specialist work, such as cereal drying, storage and refrigeration, as well as milling, flaking and extrusion.

Young contractor category: the winner of this category is Carlo Feletto (Fontanelle – TV), a young contractor who set up his own company in the Trévis region ten years ago, when he was twenty years old. After focusing initially on milling, the Carlo Feletto company later successfully broadened its range of services, in order to meet the needs of wine growers who cultivate Prosecco vines.

Agri-food category: the company Petri Luciano e Mauro snc (Montemarciano – AN) from the Marche region was awarded this prize for managing to survive the beet crisis by offering farm management services. This included managing contracts for the supply of low protein cereals for the Barilla pasta subsidiary.

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Covering 3.354 Mha, forest represents 52 % of the area of Latvia. Photo credit: Daugavpils County Council

Key figures

Created on 4 August 2003, the Latvian Association of Independent Timber Harvesting Companies (LNMA) is a public organisation, whose objective is to represent and protect the interests of its members. The latter work in a variety of sectors, both in Latvia and abroad, including cutting and transport of timber, chip production, wood processing and other associated industries. The LNMA is a member of the Latvian Forest Industry Federation and Latvian Employers' Confederation. The LNMA has 30 permanent members (forestry contractors) and 7 associate members (most of which are equipment and machinery dealers and service providers). The LNMA's members represent 30 % of the forestry market (and own a total of 167 forestry machines), 35 % of the timber transport market and own approximately 15 % of machines used for chip production.

Activities: Latvia has 562 forestry contractors. Out of this total, 39 % are dedicated to forestry work (logging), 32.7 % to timber transport and 28.3 % to both of these activities.

Based on a survey of 100 contractors, it is possible to define the average contractor's profile. The company has one or two owners, is specialised in three or more types of work and can be described as a "family business". It works in two or more regions in Latvia. In many cases, it is also a forest owner, with approx. 28 employees, 2-5 trucks (for logging and/or transport). Over 40 % of its work comes from contracts with the Latvian public forest. They are constantly struggling to cope economically.

Total number of trucks registered in Latvia for the transport of timber (probably owned by contractors): 700.

Employment: The sector has approximately 2,000 employees.

Turnover: according to the 2012 statistics, 5 out of 338 contractors, which declared forestry (logging) as their main type of work, represent 46 % of the total turnover produced by the sector (cf. chart).

Activities and projects

Cooperation with similar organisations abroad: since 2012, organisation of visits and sharing experiences between members, with trips to Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Closer links between LNMA and CEETTAR now enable the Latvian association to discuss, on a regular basis, problems facing European contractors with professionals from a variety of other countries.

European funding: the LNMA strives to keep a close eye on its sector, in order to attract European funding. Rather than using European subsidies to purchase machines for specific contractors, which would create a distortion of competition and open the door to a fall in prices for public invitations to tender, the LNMA advocates the use of available European funding for training contractors' employees and for scientific research. The objective is to reinforce efficiency and profitability for contractors.

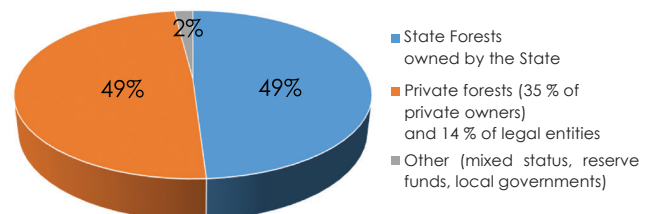
Legislation: in relation to current or future issues, close cooperation with other players in the Latvian forest industry, such as the Latvian Forest Industry Federation or the Latvian Forest Owners' Association, is vital. The strength of these partnerships lies in the shared goal of making the Latvian forestry more competitive, by means of an added-value chain. More precisely, the current concerns of contractors include the law on public contracts (state-owned forests account for 50 % of the services market), legislation on the transport of round wood (the gross weight of a logging truck is only 40 t or 52 t on asphalted roads, but only if the contractor holds a special permit) and taxes (how to combat the black market within our sector).

Cooperation with the public forestry company AS "Latvijas valstsmeži": as this organisation represents 50 % of the services market, there are always matters that need to be discussed. The state-owned forests invest regularly and seriously in research and development, with the aim of enabling contractors to benefit from the latter.

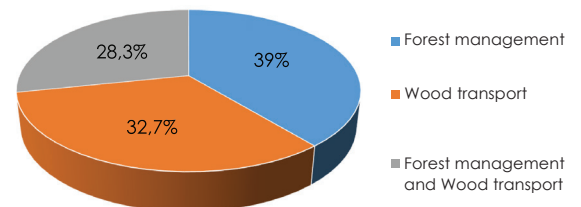
PEFC certification for forestry contractors: This certification is currently at an experimental stage and should help the relevant contractors to position themselves more effectively, when it comes to invitations to tender for public contracts.

Training and communication: the LNMA plays an active role in determining the content of examinations for professional qualifications and also communicates with the general public, in order to explain forestry processes.

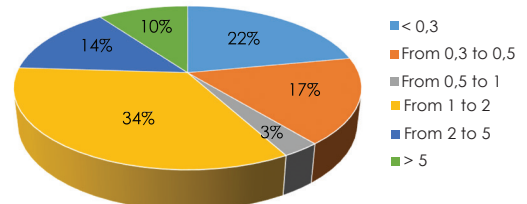
The Latvian Forest: an annual harvest of 10.5 Mm³



The contractor's businesses



Distribution of the annual turnover of the forest contractors (million euros)



Vairogi

The company Vairogi

A family success story

Founded in 1992, "Vairogi" farm works in forests since 1996 with two main activities: timber harvesting and roundwood transportation.

We decided to specialise in forest to survive as there was not enough land to live on the farm", explains Andris Kalnozols, the manager of "Vairogi" farm.

"We made a grab holder for the tractor to be attached to the rear and carried one log at a time from the forest outside to the place where you can drive by car. This is how we earned our first money" he remembers.

Until 1999, the farm only worked in private forests, but later began to work with SIA Latsin (now SIA Billerudkorsnas Latvia), the largest private forestry company in Latvia. In 2002, a timber truck was purchased, but today Vairogi carries logs with five Volvo cars. Two harvesters and two forwarders are involved in timber cutting. Vairogi has become the largest forestry company and is one of the largest employers in the parish.

Main orders in state forests

Since 2008, the farm has been focusing on providing services to Joint Stock Company "Latvia's State Forests". At present, the volume of works in state forests makes up 90 % of all orders. A. Kalnozols explains: "The conditions of the contracts are strict. The safety and environmental requirements of working in state forests are very high, but it is also the priority of our company, so we have some common ground". The entrepreneur emphasizes that business is sustainable only if most orders come from long-term partners. Therefore, the farm also chooses its partners and employees, depending on whether they are capable of giving a good pass and pick one up at the right moment - similar to hockey.

Andris says that since 2010, together with his brother Girts, they have thought of a technique to produce chains that would be more lenient and more suitable for the climatic conditions in Latvia. "Chains cost a lot of money, but we produce them ourselves, as needed, in different circumstances, and we also



Three generations of Kalnozoli family! Andris and Girts Kalnozols, company "Vairogi", Latvia; Photo : <http://www.ponsse.com/ponsse-people/ponsse-and-me-gallery>

repair them" he says. The entrepreneur emphasizes that in Latvia one must try to fight for the survival of the logging services business which, in compliance with all social, safety and environmental requirements, is currently economically unprofitable.

Better train the harvesting operators

Andris Kalnozols is an active member of the Latvian Association of Independent Timber Harvesting Companies (LNMA or LAITHC in English) from the time of its launch in 2003. Since 2010, Andris Kalnozols has been continuously elected as the member of LAITHC board, concurrently and actively resolving issues concerning both timber harvesting and transportation.

For example, together with colleagues in the Association they have made a vision of how to better train the harvesting operators in the Ogre technical school, and now a vocational program for new timber truck drivers is being prepared.

Kalnozols argues: "A lot of time and money are being spent on training new employees, the basic things that are going on in the forest, how to organize the work place, and how to put tools in place, even not to mention harvesting skills. We will continue to climb up slowly and wisely, and to increase the capacity of the existing machinery", concludes Andris with confidence about the future.

The company Vairogi

Founded in 1992.

Located in Daudzese civil parish of Jaunjelgava, Latvia.

Activities: logging and timber transportation.

In 2016, the farm produced 170,000 m³ and transported 160,000 m³ of timber with a turnover of € 2.9 M.

Nb of employees: around 50 people.

Vairogi is a family business : father Aivars Kalnozols - chief engineer ; mother Ligita - accountant ; son Andris - head of company ; son Girts - technical director ; and daughter Laura - office manager. There are ten children in the family.

Name: Latvijas Neatkarīgo Mežizstrādātāju Asociācija

Timber Harvesting Companies

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For more information

LNMA

SPAIN



Agricultural contractors conduct a wide variety of specialist works in Spain, such as cotton harvesting, as seen here in the south of Andalusia

ASEMFO : Forestry contractors

Key figures

ASEMFO has around forty members, whose activities include reforestation, silvicultural treatments, preventing and fighting forest fires, forest biomass and natural space management, environmental training, hydrological restoration and enhancement of degraded areas and landscapes.

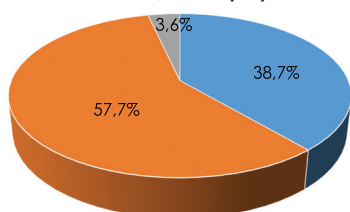
Turnover : 300,000 - 100,000,000 euros per company.

Customers : public authorities represent 90 % of the companies customers, only 10 % of whom are private individuals. 75 - 100 % of contracts are agreed in writing for a period of 6-12 months

(2017 CEETTAR survey). Public authorities award 85 % of contracts to ASEMFO member companies.

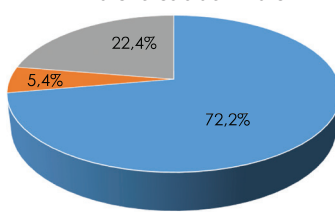
Employment : ASEMFO members collectively represent approx. 60,000 employees each year (cf. graphic). With its forest owners, forestry contractors and the wood/paper industry, the Spanish forestry sector employs a total of around 190,000 workers. The majority of jobs with forestry contractors are temporary and reach a peak during the summer forest fire fighting campaigns.

A total of 62,610 employees



- Planning
- Manual workers
- Machine drivers

Private forests dominate



- Private forests
- Forests owned by the state
- Forests owned by local authorities

Source 2017 CEETTAR survey

Activities and projects

The general meeting of 8 June provided an opportunity to take stock of key aspects of the association's activities in 2017. In terms of working on institutional relations, the monitoring of planning and institutional relations has been approved by the central government authorities and Autonomous Communities, which includes: implementation of the government's Forestry Action Plan with the platform Juntos por los Bosques (Together for the Woodlands), monitoring and analysis of approved rural development programmes, and monitoring of autonomous community and central government budgets. Among other practical projects, this year, Asemfo is working on the tenth edition of the sectoral reference document entitled "Study on Investment and Employment in the Forestry", which provides up-to-date information, every year, on investments and employment in the forestry sector. As well as other special days and events, in the last week of June, Asemfo took part in the Spanish Forestry Congress, which is held every four years, and the international Expobiomasa exhibition that took place in Valladolid from 26 - 30 September.

For more information



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AMACO-ANESA : Agricultural contractors

Key figures

AMACO-ANESA started arvesting machines who were the only service providers existing at the time. It changed its statutes and name in 2003, when the association expanded to include all types of agricultural contractor and agricultural machinery.

AMACO-ANESA has approximately 250 members on a national level, all of which have different legal forms: limited companies, cooperatives, independent companies, etc.

Since December 2016, AMACO-ANESA has been a recognised member of the National Rural Network (Red Rural Nacional). The latter consists of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Autonomous Communities, the Federation of Municipalities and many different agricultural organisations, including AMACO-ANESA and ASEMFO. The role of the National Rural Network is to reinforce the sharing of information and experience between its members, in order to achieve sustainable rural development.

Activities : all agricultural work, including services specific to Spain, such as cotton, rice and olive harvesting.

Customers : the customer profile is changing: along with medium-sized farms that were already using service providers, you now also see large-scale farms, which call upon agricultural contractors due to the lack of skilled labour and financial burden of investing in equipment.

Employment : approximately 15,000 people work in the agricultural services sector, with the majority of temporary contracts being made permanent due to the expansion of contractors.

Activities and projects

AMACO-ANESA has concluded various partnership agreements with different agricultural equipment suppliers, such as Claas, Agrisur, Grupo AGCO, COP and Michelin, which means that its members can benefit from special prices.

This year, the association has organised six meetings at different locations across the country, which enable members to get together and to be kept abreast of current issues, such as standards or the latest developments in agricultural machinery.

The association is continuously working with the public authorities on national and European level, in order to secure recognition for a regulatory framework for the contractor sector. As the body appointed to represent the sector, AMACO-ANESA has taken part in negotiations focusing on the restructuring of the sugar beet and cotton sectors.

Being officially recognised as the only representative body within its sector enables AMACO-ANESA to protect its members' interests in relation to the Ministry of Agriculture and, for this purpose, it contributes to a variety of on-going initiatives (standards, subsidies, changes to the CAP, driving of harvesting machines on roads, etc.)

Jose Pita The Pita company

Focusing on diversification

Situated approximately 160 km north of Madrid, the Pita company is one of the leading Spanish contractors for beet harvesting.

With twelve employees, including seven drivers, the company has several strings in its bow, such as agricultural machinery sales in Spain, as well as Chile, for the Holmer and Ropa brands.

Its equipment fleet consists mainly of four beet harvesters (three Holmer Terra Dos T3 and one Ropa Tiger), two Horsch seeders (6 m/8 m wide) and two Fendt tractors (300 HP/936 HP).



José Pita

"70 % of the company's turnover comes from providing services for farmers," says José Pita, one of the three brothers that head the company.

Pita currently sows approx. 2000 ha per year as part of its services, while its beet harvesting services cover 1,200 ha.

"Growing competition in the field of services for farmers recently prompted us to diversify our company to include vines," explains José Pita, as this is a growing sector in Spain, for which his son Inacio is responsible.

For more information



AMACO-ANESA

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SWEDEN



Over three quarters of Sweden are covered by forest

SE: Forestry contractors

Key figures

Sweden has 5,606 contractors who work in a variety of fields: logging (88 %), silviculture (39 %) and forest planning and management (8 %). The forestry contractors' share of the market is estimated at 90-95 % for logging and silviculture and less than 5 % for forest management and planning (Source: CEETAR survey, March 2017).

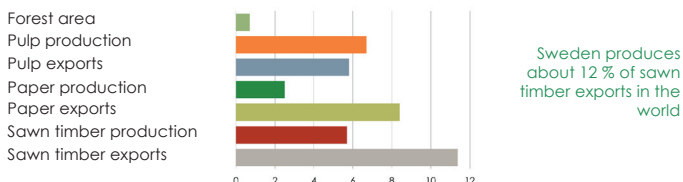
The Swedish association of forestry contractors (SE) celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 2015, by publishing a 50-page booklet, in which its founders and contractors talk about their work. It was formed in 1975 from two associations, which were based in the north and south of Sweden. In 1993, they merged to form a single association that now boasts 850 forestry contractor members.

Activities: according to the CEETAR survey, 1,500 – 2,500 harvesters work in the Swedish forests, plus 1,500 - 2,500 forwarders. Although the contractors operate on a small scale with an average of four employees, they work for major customers, including international groups, such as SCA, Holmen, StoraEnso and others.

75-100 % of contracts are written. Most of them are multi-annual, except in the silviculture sector, which is seeing an increase number of annual contracts. The basis for payment is 100 % by weighbridge and sometimes according to the amount of time spent, if the site is very difficult. The payment period is generally 20-30 days, but sometimes 60 days for small sawmills. The average turnover per forestry contractor is 5.6 MSEK (approx. €0.56 M).

Employment: the total number of employees working in the forests is estimated at 10,000, 8,000 of which are machine drivers and 2,000 are manual workers. The proportion of foreign workers is estimated at 30-35 % in silviculture and 0 % in transport activities.

Sweden's share of the world – a world leader in terms of the forest and its products



For more information



Activities and projects

- Skogsentreprenörerna (SE) was given a new name and logo in 2017 and now focuses on providing services for its members, which aim at helping them improve their profitability.
- More strategic lobbying at national level, aimed particularly at increased cooperation with politicians
- Recruitment of a communications manager
- Working with the Institute of Forestry Research, in order to highlight soil protection issues
- Developing courses and training aimed at improving administrative skills of forestry contractors (contractors are not machine drivers), including accounting and preparation of service contracts

The SE association has itself set five strategic focus areas:

1. More accurate logistics: as part of the value chain, increasingly sophisticated techniques are used to measure timber. Digital cameras are replacing manual measurements. These techniques are not yet accurate or reliable, but precise measurements are vital for the market as they represent the basis, on which the contractor and private forest owner are paid.
2. Standardised measurement of shipping distances: the latter are subject to discussion and debate (How can shipping be valued and paid?) and the SE association wishes to clarify this matter.
3. PEFC certification on equitable terms: PEFC is a strategic tool when it comes to public opinion on the subject of organic forestry. Forestry contractors play a key role in this area, by providing high quality forest management.
4. Investing in machinery: a wide range of general legal conditions apply to the purchase, repair and provision of services using equipment. Some sections need to be updated, particularly those concerning contractors' skills when purchasing machines.
5. Big Data is probably the most important issue currently facing us. Harvesters produce a large volume of data that is sent to the SDC and other authorities, with little or no control for the contractors. The SE association insists that this data belongs to those who generate it (in this case, the contractors) and should be sold to anyone that is interested. This point still needs to be clarified for the entire Swedish timber industry.

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Maj-Lis Norman

Maj-Lis Norman, contractor's wife

"I'm the one who may say no"

Our children were born in 1980, 19881 and 1983. And the machines joined our family in 1984. So you imagine it is tough sometimes to be married to such a forest machine galling. You remember how it was. I have handled the finances and all administration. He sent the invoices. I said no to a lot of sellers and made sure that my husband did not buy anything unnecessarily, of course. I am the one who may say no. But I am good at that you will know it! And it has been quite crowded here, for a while we had three machines and 5-6 employees, twice, some years ago. Salary? What is this? I have not received any, but half the company is mine anyway. But it has been good too! What very nice friends we received – from all around Sweden. We usually bring the employees also at the fairs and meetings that SE is organising. Last we went to Åland on boat, we enjoyed it! Good talks of talented entrepreneurs. It is an exciting networking; we learn a lot and the younger contractors get wiser. Yes, now they sit there with the kids around their legs, and we, we remember how it was."



Maj-Lis Norman, Norman & Son Skogsavverkning AB, Säter

Association of agricultural contractors

Key figures

No official statistics exist concerning the number of agricultural contractors in Sweden, but, according to Per Dellrud, president of the LSM association, there are approx. 250 agricultural contractors across the country. Out of this total, approx. 150 are members of the LSM association.

Activities: sugar beet production represents the main work of contractors in the south of Sweden and covers approx. 18,000 ha out of the total 32,000 ha planted (1.3 billion tons). Information concerning activities in the rest of Sweden is highly fragmented. However, all of them work on farms, road construction, etc. In 40 % of cases, they work according to long-term, verbal contracts, while the other 60 % work on the basis of temporary contracts.

Employment: contractors consist of 3-4 employees and a team leader who is fully trained by the contractor.

Activities and projects

The LSM association is committed to responding as effectively as possible to its members concerns.

The key issues currently facing Swedish contractors are the training of employees, stability of the rural development programme, issues linked to insurance, the need for investments (need for capital) and the possibility of including all costs when invoicing customers. The main concern for contractors in 2017 has been the very poor weather (rain), which has hindered their work.

One of the association's priorities is to increase the number of its members. The association is currently considering a risk sharing system, in order to meet needs more effectively throughout the country and compensate for the shortage of contractors in the north of the country.

The LSM association plans to develop its cooperation and partnership with a larger number of stakeholders, including far larger machinery rings than the LSM. A closer relationship with the SE association of forestry contractors would also enable the two organisations to share ideas and work together, for example, by sharing administrative tasks. It has been planned that the association's next general meeting will be held in the south of Sweden in the first week of February 2018 and focus on the technical theme of GPS.

For more information



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THE NETHERLANDS



Actions aiming at more safety of agricultural traffic are among the current topics of CUMELA

CUMELA Nederland

Key figures

Approx. 3,000 agricultural/rural, landscape management, public works, infrastructure and civil construction contractors (1,943 of which are members of CUMELA Nederland).

Total turnover for the sector: approx. 1.8 billion Euros per year, which represents 10 % of total agricultural production (CN Kompas analysis) and €650,000-700,000 invested in machines each year.

Average annual turnover: €1,376,000 (2013), which represents €801,000 from construction work, landscape management, road construction and forestry work, €364,000 from agricultural work and €92,000 from liquid manure spreading.

Activities of CUMELA contractors: transport of more than 22 million tons of liquid manure per year, maintenance of over 10,500 km of roads, more than 11,000 ha of sports grounds/playing fields and over 140,000 km of streams, canals, rivers and river banks. Over 70 % of public works.

Dutch contractors own 15,000 tractors, over 5,000 harvesting machines, 18,000 machines dedicated to construction work (excavators, wheel loaders, 6x6 articulated dump trucks, bulldozers).

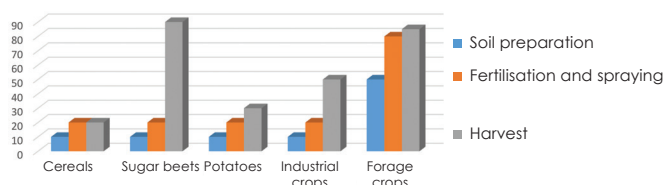
Cost distribution for contractors: salaries and social contributions: 42 %, investments and amortisation of equipment: 36 %, diesel: 15 %, spare parts and repairs: 4.5 %, other: 1.5 %, insurance for machines: 1 %.

Employment: over 30,000 workers (10-12 employees per contractor on average).

Activities and projects

- Organisation of debates and discussions concerning problems associated with liquid manure in the Netherlands
- Initiatives aimed at improving agricultural traffic safety + compulsory registration plates for tractors and mobile equipment
- Initiatives aimed at ensuring fair and legal competition between contractors
- Promotion of agricultural contractors as experts on soil (contractors know how to treat, modify and restore soil so that it is fertile, for example, by using efficient machines)
- Campaign aimed at promoting bumpers on tractors: €500 bonus per bumper sold to our members, subject to a limit of two bumpers per company. Target: 500 bumpers within three years

Contractors' share of agricultural work (%)



AVIH association of forestry contractors

Key figures

Approximately 80 forestry contractors out of a total of 200 in the country conduct 95 % of forestry work (timber, silviculture, forest management, biomass).

Employment: 300 manual workers, 250 vehicle drivers and 100 people working in forest planning.

1.2 Mm³ round wood harvested per year (of which 0.6 Mm³ comes from private forests).

For more information



Activities and projects

- Lobbying on various themes linked to legislation (application of the Birds Directive, typology and classification of products produced from forests).
- Communicating with the general public on sustainable forestry + work focusing on the carbon footprint of forest products.
- Growing concern: invitations to tender issued by the public authorities, which are dragging down prices for services provided by forestry contractors.

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The company Loonbedrijf Van Dun BV

Contractor Van Dun on all fronts in Flevoland

Starting in 1981 with drainage and canal maintenance activities, Kees Van Dun was able to develop his business to become one of the largest in the Netherlands. Live report of the northeast Polder at 4.5 m below sea level.

Being a farmers' son starting with half a parcel of land (each inhabitant was at the time entitled to one or half a parcel), Kees Van Dun created at the age of 19 a small company specialising in drainage after leaving agricultural school in 1979. Over time, he had the opportunity to take over other businesses from neighbouring villages and develops his own business. "Van Dun is one of the largest agricultural contractors among our members", says Hannie Zweverink, Managing Director of Cumela Nederland, the Dutch organisation that supports and provides services to nearly 2 000 companies in the Netherlands. The company "Loonbedrijf Van Dun BV" is located in Flevoland, one of the most fertile agricultural regions of the Netherlands, with a very varied agriculture: livestock, field crops, horticultural and vegetable crops, and floriculture.



Kees and Adriëne Van Dun

10,000 ha per year

The 600 clients served from the company's headquarters in Rutten and its two detached offices in Espel and Blokzijl have very varied profiles, for example in the tulip bulb sector ranging from 0.5 ha to 100 ha. "Our customers are an integral part of our history. We see how they evolve, how they develop. To contribute to their development is a source of motivation to me", adds Kees Van Dun. This close relationship with customers, the flexibility and open-mindedness were three decisive factors that are still essential to the development of the company: "We dare to change, to react quickly

to innovations and to invest in the right time" says Kees Van Dun partially explaining their success. A range of special machines enables them to meet with specialised services such as milling machines of rows for the gardening market or the cultivation of flower bulbs in nets, a technique that Van Dun was the first to offer to specialised horticulturists in the cultivation of flowers bulbs.

Kees and his wife Adriëne insist on two points: their staff to whom they are very attached and the family dimension of their company that they hope to one day pass on to one of their five children.

The company Loonbedrijf Van Dun BV

Situated on the northeast Polder, 4.5 m below sea level in Rutten, one of the ten villages in the community of Noordoostpolder, in the province of Flevoland.

- 38 full time employees from 18 to 65 years old.
- €6 to 7 million turnover.

- On average 10,000 ha of services provided per year: 84 % of the services for agricultural contractors (40 % on field crop, 20 % on livestock, 25 % on floriculture, 5 % on technical crops), 10 % on earthmoving.
- 600 clients.
- 28 self-propelled machines, 27 tractors.

For more information



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UNITED KINGDOM



Around 6,000 British agricultural contractors generate annual sales of around € 750 million

Key figures

Approximately 6,000 professional agricultural contractors.

Total turnover for the sector: approximately €750 million per year, which amounts to 3.8 % of total agricultural production (Source: Cambridge University).

Average turnover per contractor:

- £25,000-£100,000 for small contractors with 1-3 employees.
- £100,000-£250,000 for medium-sized contractors.
- £250,000-£1,000,000 and more for the biggest contractors.

Employment: estimated number of people working in the sector: approximately 15,000.

Training: The NAAC organises various training courses. The training programme is available at <http://www.nptc.org.uk/>.

Services provided by the NAAC for its members: training courses, specially tailored insurance for machines and employees, legal advice (free or subject to fees), certification of services

Of all the British association's members, 63 % conduct agricultural work, such as field work and crop spraying, 9 % are mobile seed processors and 12 % are green space contractors, while 6% have a mobile feed plant or mixer and 10 % are contractors working with livestock, such as sheep shearing.



63 % of NAAC entrepreneurs carry out agricultural work

Activities and projects

Agricultural transport : it has been a big focus for the NAAC over the past year. In January 2017, 'Agri-Drive Safe' was launched with the aim of improving the reputation of agricultural contractors on the roads, through information and events.

The campaign kicked off with four transport workshops, aimed at ensuring that contractors were fully aware of their legal responsibilities on the roads. These were well attended and gave the subject significant press coverage.

The NAAC has also been lobbying the UK Government to increase tractor trailer weight combinations. The current legislation is thirty years old and has not kept up with current machinery and the pressures that the farming industry face.

Brexit : it adds further challenges for UK agriculture to compete on a world market and the NAAC believes that it will be essential that contractors and farmers have the tools available to work ef-

ficiently and safely. This means higher trailer capacities to keep vehicle movements on the road to a minimum, whilst keeping up with larger harvesting machinery in field.

However, despite numerous meetings and consultations over the past eight years, which have resulted in an increase to the maximum combination weight of a tractor and single trailer from 24.39 tonnes to 31 tonnes, the maximum laden weight of trailers remains unchanged at 18.29 tonnes. This is unacceptable for the industry and, in 2017, the Government announced that it will not proceed further with regulatory change. The NAAC was frustrated and disappointed and will be continuing to lobby for a further increase in trailer weights.

Overall, the NAAC has had a positive year with a steady influx of new members and a new Chief Executive Officer, Duncan Russell.

Martin Hays

Martin Hays, NAAC Chairman

"All stand together to protect the future of our sector"

Martin Hays is agricultural contractor in Derbyshire (a country the East Midlands region) and the new NAAC Chairman, the National Association of Agricultural Contractors, since January 2016.

Over the last twenty four years Mr Hays has built his business from scratch with nothing more than a burning passion for the industry and a strong desire to give customer satisfaction. He now farms 250 acres and offers an extensive range of contracting services, employing one full-time member of staff, shortly to be joined by a second. Martin offers a full range of agricultural operations, including muck and slurry, waste to land services, spraying, hedge-cutting and a complete arable package.

Farming was not in his blood however, coming from a mining family, but at a young age, Martin had a keen interest in farming and machinery. At twenty-five he bought his very first tractor, a Case IH 956XL and set himself up with a small straw baler, driving a lorry in the winter to balance the books. Within two years a second tractor was bought, employing part-time staff and taking on winter work with an umbilical.

Twenty-four years later, he remains fully hands-on doing the job he loves and it is very clear that his drive and determination comes directly from his wish to keep his customers happy.

"The best thing about my job is customer satisfaction and my client relationships. If the day ends with a cup of ten and cake in the farmhouse with a happy grower that is a perfect day."

Repeat business is where Mr Hays has focussed, with some loyal customers remaining with him for twenty four years. "I hate letting people down. It is a tough job having to phone and let someone down who is relying on you and I have to be careful not to get over-stretched so we can always keep up."

Cost-effective work

The business also tries not to chase work as this puts considerably more pressure on pricing. However, in his area, as the dairy sector has crumbled under low milk prices, the competition for umbilical work has tightened, but he is still not tempted to undercut. "It's the road to nowhere. Contractors must cost



Martin Hays

jobs properly and do the work on time. In Cheshire there are some out there doing basic umbilical work for £50/hour. I charge £80/hour. Customers looking at figures alone may opt for the cheaper price but they need to talk to the contractor and think the job through. I have spent thousands on kitting out my machine with a flowmeter, dribble bar and high-tech computer. This means I can be certain that the slurry tank can be accurately emptied at the correct rates on the land available, making my work efficient and, in many cases, more cost-effective on an hourly basis."

All stand together

Mr Hay's drive and passion for his business is equalled in his new role as Chairman of the NAAC. He has already got involved in Defra meetings to discuss funding available for contractors, something he has experience of after securing a substantial grant five years ago to purchase a new slurry tanker with injector. He is keen to ensure that contractors have access to many of the agricultural opportunities available to land owners.

"Contractors are effectively farmers without land and we play a key role in food production. As a professional industry it is vital we all stand together to protect the future of our sector. We need to be a professional industry and we can only achieve that if we work with our association."

For more information



It pays to be professional...

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BULGARIA



The Bulgarian forest is marked by a great diversity of species and a unique biodiversity in Europe

Key figures

Bulgaria is home to approx. 3,500 forestry contractors (source: CEETTAR survey, March 2017) (out of this total). The Bulprofor association has 200-250 forestry contractor members, most of which are family businesses without employees. The forests cover more than 4.2 million hectares and approx. 37 % of the country, which makes it an important sector for the Bulgarian economy.

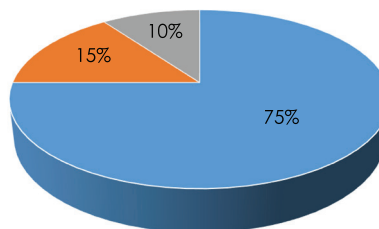
Activities: forestry contractors conduct most of the work (forest planning, silviculture, timber harvesting). They have their own machines and can also hire equipment for larger tasks. Their customers are private forest owners or the state. The machinery fleet used by Bulgarian forestry contractors is old and some contractors are still using horses. It is estimated that the machinery fleet consists of only 10-15 harvesters, about 20 forwarders, 350 skidders and 700 tractors. The contractors work on the basis of written contracts in 75-100 % of the cases, which last for an average of 2-12 months. The payment period is generally 30 days, based on a visual estimate of the quantity of timber felled (in 90% of cases) or a weighbridge is used (in 10 % of cases).

Employment: as in agriculture, the main problem facing the forestry sector is the lack of both skilled and unskilled workers. According to the CEETTAR survey,

a total of 8,120 employees work in the Bulgarian forestry sector. This total figure includes 2,500 manual workers, 800 machine drivers and 120 people working in forest planning.

Training: Bulgaria has 5 specialist professional forestry colleges, which provide approx. 450 forestry technicians each year. Since a few years ago, about twenty agricultural colleges have also offered courses in forestry, which lead to the qualification of junior forestry technician. Finally, Sofia's University of Forestry also offers courses in this field.

Distribution of Bulgarian forest owners



■ State ■ Local authorities ■ Private

Activities and projects

Every year, a "Forest Week" is held, including a seminar aimed at bringing forestry sector professionals together, so that they can discuss and to kept abreast of current issues, as well as new regulations. After an official opening day organised by the government and covered by the national press/television, the event takes place almost all over Bulgaria and provides an opportunity to get up-to-date with a variety of current issues, such as illegal logging, private forest management, forest management under Natura 2000 conditions and the application of new forestry regulations, etc.

Project aimed at the creation, within the next

two years, of a national development centre for the forestry professions, in order to improve professional standards within the sector.

Priorities for Bulprofor: working with several other contractor organisations, most of which are regional, to create a unified national organisation. Identifying new sources of funding, in order to reinforce the association. Continuing to participate regularly in various working groups and committees, for example, in order to create and update normative documents. Attending national meetings on current issues and following up any questions and complaints from its members.

For more information



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LUXEMBOURG



Luxembourg does not have a specific association bringing together agricultural contractors yet

Key figures

In addition to a wide range of farms that provide services for other farmers, Luxembourg has five "real" large-scale agricultural contractors: Reiff Troisvierges, Hess Carlo Oberglabach, Beck Oberdonven, Gengler Josy and Altmeisch & Van der Kley SCA. These companies have all the necessary equipment. For

example, in addition to tractors, the multi-purpose tool par excellence, they have over 25 harvesters. In total, these big five companies employ about 45 people full-time and are members of the German federation BLU, as Luxembourg does not have a specific association that unites agricultural contractors.

Activities and projects

The contractors main activities are maize and grass silage, cereals harvesting, straw/hay baling and spreading activities in development due to new regulatory constraints (liquid manure spreading is only permitted from 15 February - 15 November on meadows and from 15 March - 15 October on crops). These requirements also call for new and expensive direct drilling techniques, which can only be provided by contractors (self-propelled spreaders).

Average customer profile: 40 ha for silage, 45 ha for crops, about forty dairy cows and 2,5 - 3 ha of farming land. As it is a small country, most

agricultural contractors spend much of their time working in neighbouring countries. This is often frowned upon by the local contractors in these countries, as the Luxembourg-based contractors' machines have been partly subsidised. In addition, contractors from Luxembourg can use red diesel, which is taxed at a lower rate. This is not the case in Germany or the Netherlands.

However, two factors make mobility and work more difficult for Luxembourg-based contractors, compared to those in the neighbouring countries: the urban structure of the Grand Duchy and the small areas of land covered by farms.

The company Van der Kley

Get all the contractors around a table

Based in the municipality of Munsbach in the south of Luxembourg, the company LU Altmeisch-Van-Der-Kley was created in 2008 and has seven employees, as well as up to ten seasonal workers.

Its three main activities are grass/maize silaging, spreading and harvesting. The company generates 30 % of its turnover from silaging activities abroad, particularly in Germany and France. "We are not well known and it is very difficult to get all the contractors around a table, so that they can speak with a single voice" says Bert Van der Kley who believes that it will ultimately be necessary to set up an association, as a way of uniting the country's agricultural contractors.



Bert Van Der Kley

For more information



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Luxembourg



The PZPUR Office at Beet Europe 2014 in Dobieszów, southwest of Poland, from left to right: Wiesław Kujawa, Josef Dworakowski, Zbigniew Studiński (President) and Grzegorz Pilch

Key figures

There are no official statistics on the number of agricultural contractors in Poland. Established in Myślicinek, the Polish association of agricultural contractors PZPUR has been a member of CEETAR since April 15, 2005 and now has 14 members.

The profile of the companies is very diverse: on the one hand there are small structures operating on a limited perimeter and a limited number of customers, on the other hand a leading group of four to five large companies also having a dealer activity for leading brands of agricultural machinery in Europe ;

Activities: It is estimated that agricultural contractors carry out 80 % of the beet harvest, where as they intervene only in 10 to 15 % of the grain harvest. Within the PZPUR there is a sugar beet section which includes a dozen entrepreneurs dedicated to this crop.

Activities and projects

- Training farm machinery drivers and operators in the spraying activities with the Deule Institute center in Deula, Germany.
- Meetings and trainings of entrepreneurs active on the market for at least two years to apply for a grant from the European Union under the new agricultural policy 2014-2020.
- Topical concerns: search for new members to strengthen the association, reduce unfair competition among farmers, increase of wage costs (a minimum wage of PLN 12 / hour - about €2.82 - was introduced, an increase of 14 %).

The company Swierkot

Services from Romania to Lithuania

Grzegorz Swierkot is an example of a dynamic Polish farm contractor from the Dobieszów region. Founded in 1992, his company offers a wide range of agricultural work services that he manages with his son, with a dominant activity of harvesting. The company owns 12 Lexion Claas and collects 1800 ha of cereals a year. In November 2009, Mr Swierkot became one of the first Claas authorized dealers, and at present he is the dealer of a large number of brands such as Kuhn, Meijer, Horsch or Pichon.

The special feature of the Swierkot enterprise is to start the harvest around June 20th in Romania, then to continue it in July 20th to the south of Poland, to finish it on the 10th of August in Latvia and Lithuania. Then the company goes back to Romania to harvest



Grzegorz Swierkot

sunflower and maize in mid-September and then go back to Poland in mid-October to finish the harvest in the Baltic States on 10 November. "We have been working on this way since 2008" says the young contractor who also carries out silage projects from Romania to Lithuania from late March to early May, thanks to three Claas Jaguar forage harvesters.

For more information



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PORTUGAL



The work of Portuguese forestry contractors has been greatly affected by the fires in summer 2017

Key figures

Created in 1989, the ANEFA (national association of forestry, agricultural and environmental contractors) has 86 members out of an approximate total of 2,000 forestry contractors in Portugal (source: CEETTAR survey, March 2017).

Activities

The ANEFA represents the interests of a large number of contractors working in a variety of fields: technical services, plant production, forestry, agricultural land and even the processing and marketing of agricultural products. According to the CEETTAR survey from March 2017, the market share of Portuguese forestry contractors is 15 % for forest planning and management services, and 100 % for silviculture and timber harvesting. Most forestry contractors (75-100 %) have only one customer and use written contracts in 50 % of cases. Contractors are paid according to weight (weighbridge) with payment periods ranging from 30 to 120 days, in the case of wood processing industries. Portugal has a fleet of approximately 1,200 forest harvesting machines. The nature and level of investment varies depending on the type of company. Over the last few years, investments have focused mainly on harvesting machines, due to the small amount of work in plantations and forest maintenance, and because subsidies have encouraged contractors to update

their harvesting machine fleets.

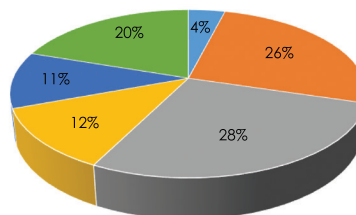
Turnover

No official statistics exist, but it is estimated that the contractors produce a turnover of between 100,000 - €35 million.

Employment

The forestry sector is considered to employ approximately 78,000 people (mainly manual workers), compared to about 250,000 people three years ago. The contractors generally have fewer than ten employees.

Distribution of contractors according to their activities



- Machine and equipment hire
- Forest and agricultural management
- Service providers
- Nurseries
- Landscape maintenance
- Technical services

Activities and projects

The ANEFA is managing a global project, which will involve various initiatives aimed at members and the forestry sector. The Cluster Forest has a variety of objectives: working towards sustainable forestry, by means of more professional management, securing greater recognition by society as a whole of the professional standards maintained by operators and contractors, creating forest management models based on a circular economy, in which certification plays an important role, while ensuring that forest stands are sustainable.

The aim of this project is to create conditions that stimulate investment with greater security and provide growers with more income, while enabling

companies to develop and create jobs in the forestry sectors. In 2016, the ANEFA stepped up its initiatives in the field of training. The association is part of a consortium, whose purpose is to analyse the training needs of contractors and certify contractors, as well as their workers, within their specialist fields. The ANEFA also works in schools to encourage young people to come and work in the forests. In terms of investing in the forests, the ANEFA is also working, in partnership with the universities and equipment/technological solution manufacturers, to study the best models, in order to develop sustainable but productive forests and thus stimulate investment.

For more information



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SWITZERLAND



The main problem for Swiss agricultural contractors is that they are not officially recognised as agricultural players

Key figures

Switzerland is home to approx. 700 agricultural contractors, half of which are now members of the Agro-Entrepreneurs Suisse association (German name: Lohnunternehmer Schweiz). The latter was created in 2003 and is still part of ASETA (Association Suisse pour l'Équipement Technique de l'Agriculture).

90 % of Agro-Entrepreneurs Suisse members are based in German-speaking Switzerland, compared to 10 % in the French-speaking regions, where the association has the most growth potential.

According to a survey conducted by Agro-Entrepreneurs Suisse in September 2017, over 70 % of its members have completed agricultural training (as farmers and masters in agriculture) and run farms.

60 % of members mainly work as agricultural contractors. The majority of agricultural contractors, which are also Agro-Entrepreneurs Suisse members, are small businesses. Over 75 % of them employ fewer than five people or the full-time equivalent. 65 % of contractors are run by individual people, while 35 % of them are companies.

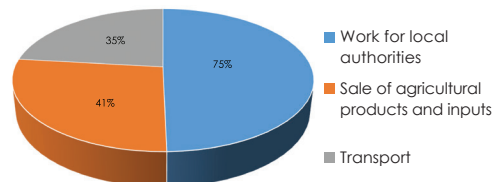
The three main services provided by member contractors (as a % of turnover) are sowing, baling, and harvesting, followed by silaging.

Over 75 % of member contractors provide other, non-agri-

cultural services: work for local authorities (for 75 % of member contractors), sale of agricultural products/inputs (41 %) and transport (35 %).

65 % of member contractors are based in agricultural areas. This is a major problem for the profession, as Swiss law requires agricultural contractors to have their premises in industrial and non-agricultural areas. The agricultural contractors have a positive vision of their future, which compensates for this complex situation: 48 % of contractors that took part in the Agro-Entrepreneurs Suisse survey think that their businesses will grow over the next 5-10 years, compared to only 4 % who believe that they will decline during the same period.

Distribution of non-agricultural activities of Agro-Entrepreneurs Suisse members



Activities and projects

- Protecting members' interests in relation to the general public, local authorities and political powers.
- Improving the image and acceptance of the contractor profession in the eyes of farmers, politicians and the general public.
- Publication of the quarterly members' magazine AGROLUCHS.
- Organisation of this year's LUTACH contractor days, which were held in Fribourg for the first time (25-26 January 2017) and successfully attended by over 500 participants.
- Organisation of courses and continuous training.
- Encouraging discussion between members

by organising various events (barbecue evening, this year's study trip to Belgium and Luxembourg, general meeting, etc).

Priorities for 2017-2018

Increasing the number of members, in order to have greater clout with the public powers, consolidate finances in the long term and resolve the main problem for Swiss agricultural contractors: the fact that they are not recognised or accepted in agricultural areas. Creation of a network of consultants and experts, in order to provide members with a personalised advice service (in return for a fee) focusing on current issues, such as the Highway Code or land use planning.

For more information



AGRO-ENTREPRENEURS Suisse
pour une agriculture forte

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European Confederation of the agricultural, rural and forestry contractors



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