



Agriculture and Fishing

Fact sheet

Background

Eurofound's European Working Conditions Surveys (EWCS) have been carried out every five years since 1991. Each wave of the survey provides an overview of the state of working conditions throughout Europe and indicates the nature and extent of changes affecting the workforce and the quality of work. The fieldwork for Eurofound's most recent edition of the EWCS was carried out in 2005 in 31 countries, including the 27 EU Member States, plus candidate countries Croatia and Turkey, as well as EFTA countries Norway and Switzerland. In 2005, the sample size was set at 1000 per country (600 for Cyprus, Estonia, Luxemburg, Malta and Slovenia).

Following the 2005 survey, Eurofound asked TNO Work & Employment to perform a secondary statistical analysis of the data from the fourth EWCS 2005 on sector profiles with regard to working conditions in the 27 Member States. For the analysis, NACE Revision 1.1¹ was applied. The findings are set out in 26 fact sheets, each covering one of the 26 sectors in the NACE classification. Each fact sheet presents:

- a profile of the sector's socio-demographic characteristics based on data at NACE at 1 and 2 digit level.
- a profile of working conditions in the sector based on data at NACE at 1 and 2 digit level.

This fact sheet presents a snapshot of working conditions in the agriculture (including hunting and forestry) and fishing sector.

¹ This is a revision of the 'General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities', known by the acronym NACE and originally published by Eurostat in 1970. The NACE code was subsequently revised (REV. 1.1) in the 1990s.

Sector profile

With regard to the average age of workers, agriculture (together with hunting, forestry and fishing) is a relatively 'old' sector, with 25.2% of workers aged 55 years or older. The sector is also characterised by higher-than-average job stability: 42.8% of workers in this sector have spent 16 years or longer in their current job.

In terms of employment status, agriculture is quite a distinctive sector: over 59% of the workers are self-employed, compared to an average percentage across all sectors of 16.7%. As regards employment contract, agriculture is a sector characterised by a higher proportion of workers on temporary contracts (43.9%), compared to an average of 23.4% for all sectors. It should be noted that preliminary analysis of survey data² has found that agriculture has the highest proportion of employees without contracts (24%). In this sector, workers are also more likely to work in one-person companies and micro enterprises (2 to 9 employees).

Educational level and income are relatively low in the agriculture sector. Most workers in the sector have lower levels of education or no education at all and fall into the lower income category.

² Parent-Thirion, A., Fernández, E., Hurley, J., Vermeylen, G., *Fourth European Working Conditions Survey*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007.

Gender		
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Agriculture, hunting and forestry + Fishing (A+B)	63.6%	36.4%
All sectors	55.5%	44.5%

Age					
	<i>Average age</i>	<i>Age group</i>			
		<i>≤ 24 years</i>	<i>25-39 years</i>	<i>40-54 years</i>	<i>≥ 55 years</i>
Agriculture, hunting and forestry + Fishing (A+B)	44.5▲▲▲	8.9%	27.3%▼▼▼	38.5%	25.2%▲▲▲
All sectors	40.0	11.8%	36.8%	38.6%	12.7%

Years in company or organisation				
	<i>≥ 2 years</i>	<i>3-5 years</i>	<i>6-15 years</i>	<i>≤16 years</i>
Agriculture, hunting and forestry + Fishing (A+B)	14.4%▼▼▼	14.4%	28.4%	42.8%▲▲▲
All sectors	27.1%	20.9%	29.6%	22.4%

Type of employment		
	<i>Self-employed</i>	<i>Employee</i>
Agriculture, hunting and forestry + Fishing (A+B)	59.0%▲▲▲	41.0%▼▼▼
All sectors	16.7%	83.3%

Employment contract		
	<i>Permanent contract</i>	<i>Non-permanent contract</i>
Agriculture, hunting and forestry + Fishing (A+B)	56.1%▼▼▼	43.9%▲▲▲
All sectors	76.6%	23.4%

Company size					
	<i>One-person company</i>	<i>Micro enterprise (2-9 employees)</i>	<i>Small enterprise (10-49 employees)</i>	<i>Medium enterprise (50-249 employees)</i>	<i>Large enterprise (250+ employees)</i>
Agriculture, hunting and forestry + Fishing (A+B)	23.9%▲▲▲	53.6%▲▲▲	14.2%▼▼▼	7.2%▼▼▼	1.1%▼▼▼
All sectors	10.4%	27.5%	27.7%	19.4%	15.0%

Education level							
	<i>No education</i>	<i>Primary education (ISCED 1)</i>	<i>Lower secondary education (ISCED 2)</i>	<i>Upper secondary education (ISCED 3)</i>	<i>Post-secondary including pre-vocational or vocational education</i>	<i>Tertiary education - first level (ISCED 5)</i>	<i>Tertiary education - advanced level (ISCED 6)</i>
Agriculture, hunting and forestry + Fishing (A+B)	3.3%▲▲▲	12.4%▲▲▲	29.2%▲▲▲	42.4%	4.1%	7.8%▼▼▼	0.9%
All sectors	0.9%	5.3%	16.5%	44.5%	7.3%	23.5%	2.0%

Income level				
	<i>Income bands</i>			
	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Highest</i>
Agriculture, hunting and forestry + Fishing (A+B)	45.6%▲▲▲	26.6%	15.1%▼▼▼	12.8%▼▼▼
All sectors	25.1%	23.9%	26.7%	24.3%

How to read the table

The comparison is between the subgroup/sector and the average for all sectors based on the 2005 European Working Conditions Survey sample for the EU27. ▲ (p<0.05), ▲▲ (p<0.01), and ▲▲▲ (p<0.001) indicate differences between the sector profiled and the sample average at different levels of statistical significance (each mean is tested with the t-test). The more triangles, the higher the statistical significance of the figure (i.e. it is more likely to reflect a real difference in the population).

Where estimates are not accompanied by triangles, this indicates that observed differences between subgroups are not statistically significant.

Working conditions and outcomes

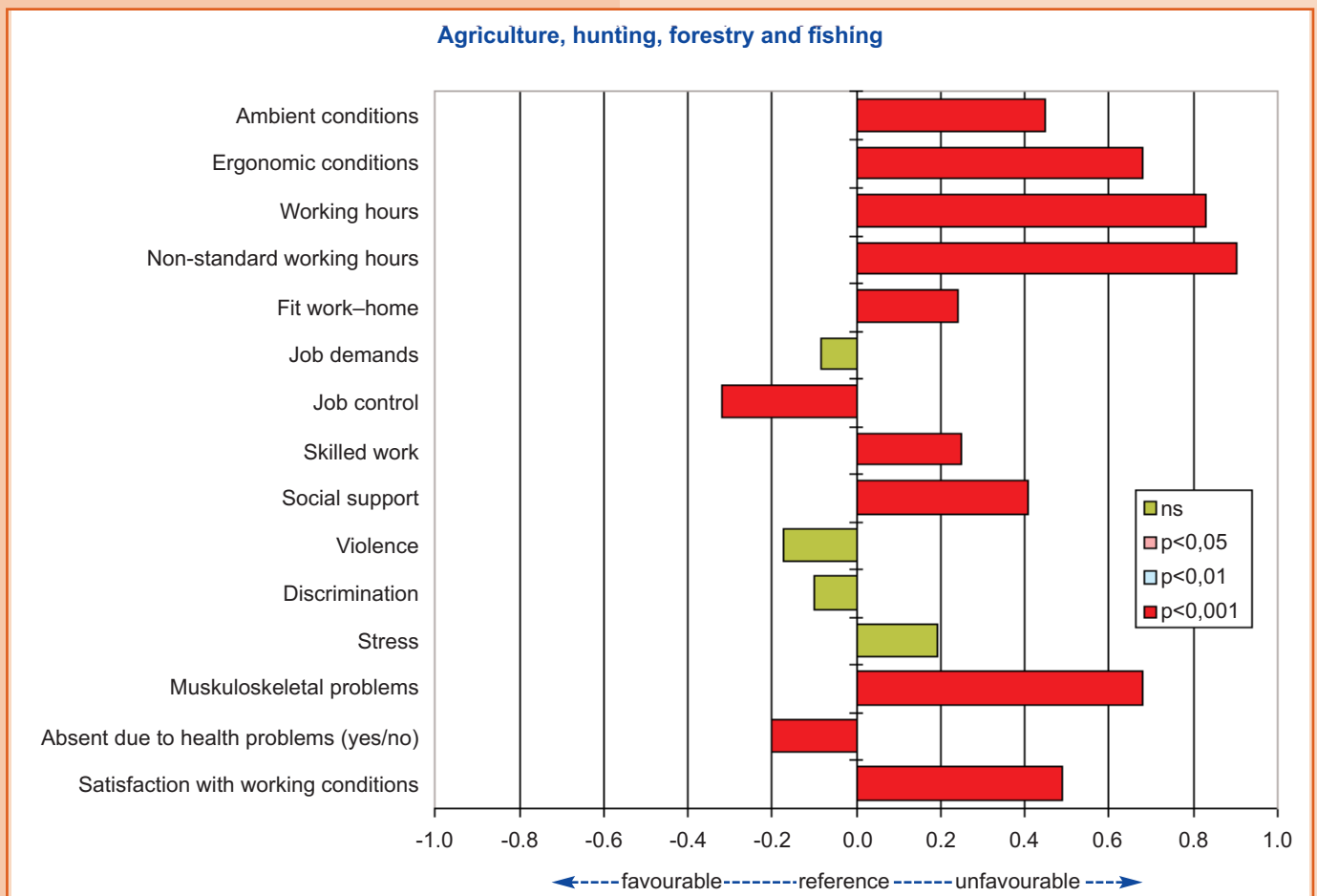
The figure below shows specific dimensions of working conditions with favourable and unfavourable scores in agriculture (together with hunting, forestry and fishing), taking as a point of reference mean exposure (0.0 score in the chart below).

Looking at the statistically significant differences only, workers in this sector are particularly exposed to ergonomic risks (tiring or painful positions, carrying or moving heavy loads, standing or walking and repetitive hand or arm movements) and, although to a lesser extent, ambient risks (exposure to vibrations, noise, high/low temperatures, breathing in smoke, fumes, powder or dust,

breathing in vapours, handling chemical products or substances).

In this sector, workers report unfavourable working times in terms of long working hours, non-standard working hours (night and evening work, Saturday/ Sunday work and more than 10 working hours a day) and poor work–life balance.

Agriculture is also characterised by relatively high levels of unskilled work, lack of social support (from colleagues and/or boss), high levels of work-related musculoskeletal problems and low satisfaction with working conditions. On the other hand, job control is relatively high and absence due to health problems is relatively low.



How to read the figure

For the profiling of the sector, eleven working conditions (mainly composite indexes based on several variables) and four outcomes (stress, musculoskeletal disorders, absence due to health problems and job satisfaction) were taken into account. In the chart above, $p < 0.001$ represents the highest level of statistical significance, while $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$ indicate comparatively lower levels of statistical significance; 'ns' stands for no statistically significant difference. Statistical differences from the average can be either favourable (scores on the left side of the chart) or unfavourable (scores on the right side of the chart) on a specific set of working conditions. Score values greater than ± 0.2 indicate a small deviation from mean exposure (0.0) while score values ranging from ± 0.2 to ± 0.5 and greater than ± 0.5 indicate respectively substantial and very substantial deviation from mean exposure. For example, the chart above shows that values indicating exposure to ambient conditions are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and greater than $+ 0.5$, meaning that agricultural workers report a comparatively higher level of exposure than the average.

Key findings

- In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, agriculture is a relatively 'old' sector with higher-than-average job tenure and a high concentration of self-employed workers and employees with temporary contracts. In this sector, educational and income levels are relatively low.
- Overall, workers in the agriculture sector have an unfavourable sector profile with a high exposure to ergonomic and ambient risks, low level of social support and, albeit to a lesser extent, lack of skilled work. Because this sector is located on the 'unfavourable' side of the risk dimension, work-related musculoskeletal problems are highly prevalent.

Methodology

The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) is carried out every five years by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), a tripartite European Agency based in Dublin. The questionnaire is developed by the Eurofound team in close cooperation with an expert questionnaire development group. This group comprises representatives of the European social partners, other EU bodies (European Commission, Eurostat, European Agency for Safety and Health at work), international organisations (OECD, ILO), national statistical institutes, as well as leading European experts in the field. The sample of the EWCS is representative of persons in employment (according to the Eurostat definition this comprises both employees and the self-employed aged 15 years and over) resident in the countries covered for the respective periods. In each country, the EWCS sample followed a multi-stage, stratified and clustered design with a random walk procedure for the selection of the respondents at the last stage. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in the respondent's own household.

Further Eurofound research on the sector

Representativeness of the social partners:

Agricultural sector

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/studies/tn0608017s/index.htm>

Industrial relations in agriculture

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2005/09/study/index.htm>

Impact of ICT on the fishing industry: Two scenarios

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2003/103/en/1/EF03103EN.pdf>

The impact of ICT on Europe's fishing industry: a case study approach

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emcc/publications/2003/ef03118en.pdf>

Further information

The Fourth *European Working Conditions Survey* report and secondary analysis of survey data are available on the *European Working Conditions Observatory* website:
<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/surveys/ewcs2005/>

For further information please contact:
Sara Riso, Information Liaison Officer
sri@eurofound.europa.eu