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publication for Scotland



# June Agricultural Census 2021

12 October 2021



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## Introduction

### **Crop area and livestock numbers see small rise in challenging year**

This year winter planting rose compared with planting in the previous very wet autumn. This was followed by a decrease in spring planting. The area of land used for growing cereals has remained similar to 2020. The area used for planting oilseeds rose by eight per cent compared to last year.

The number of cattle in Scotland has increased slightly on the previous year. This breaks a ten year decline. A rise in the number of calves held on farms resulted in the increase.

Sheep numbers have increased since last year. Estimates suggest sheep over one year old not being used for breeding has increased by 39 per cent. An inability to move sheep off farms may have contributed to the increase. Breeding ewe and lamb numbers were both one per cent higher than the previous year.

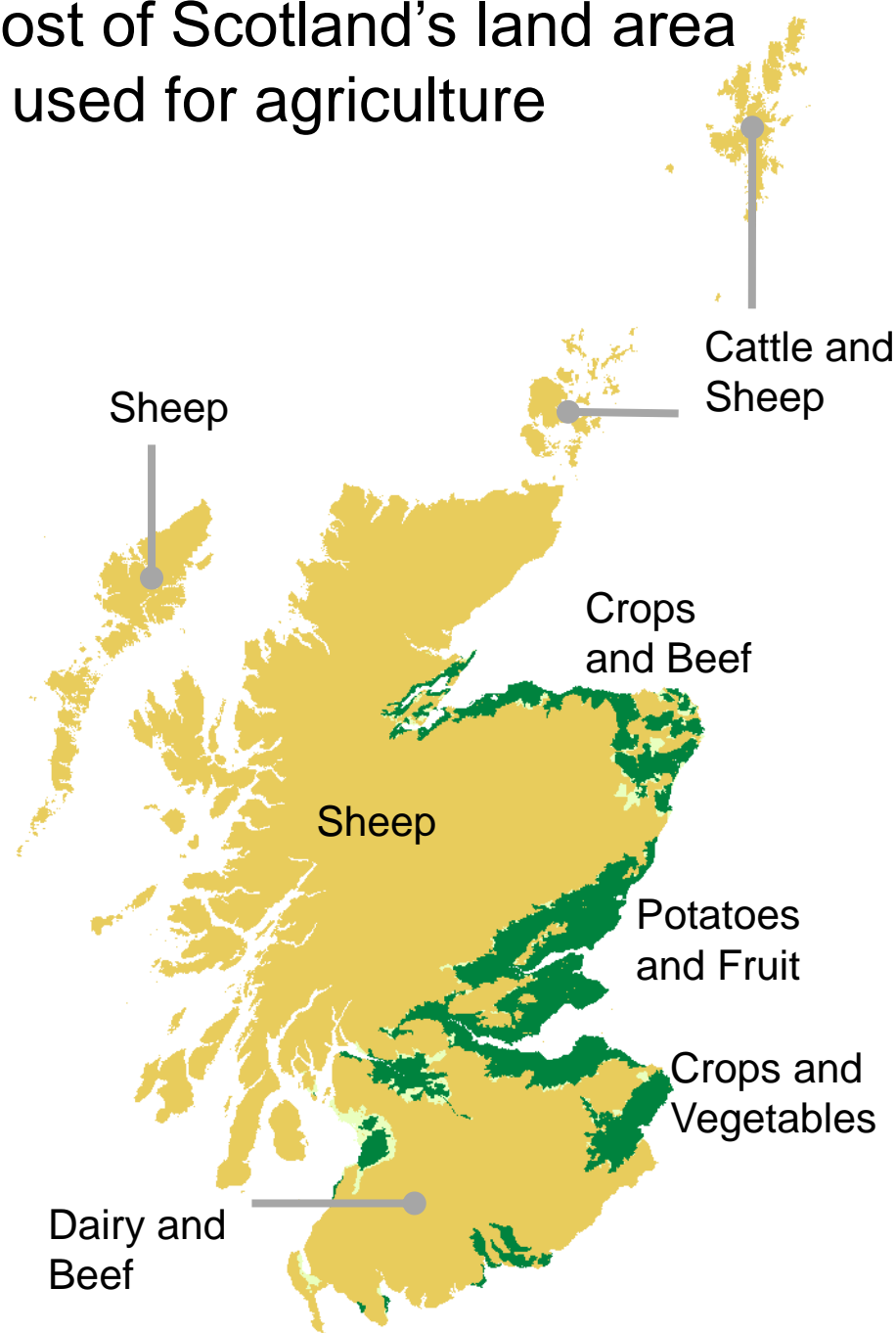
Growing areas of vegetables, excluding potatoes, for human consumption grew by five per cent. The amount of area used to grow vegetables for stock feed remained stable.


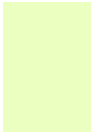

The total workforce on agricultural holdings increased by one per cent to 67,400 people.

# Most of Scotland's land area is used for agriculture



Agricultural area 5.64 million hectares



-  Orange areas have limited growing potential, usually hilly or rocky land more suitable for livestock than crops.
-  Light green areas have better soil and can support crops usually grown for animal feed.
-  Dark green areas can support vegetables, fruit and cereal farming for human consumption.

This map shows the main farming types found in each area.

**Hectares (ha)** is the land measurement used in agriculture. One hectare, or 10,000 square metres, is roughly the full size of a rugby pitch.

# Increase in winter planting followed by a decrease in spring crops

## Spring Planting - Barley & Oats



## Winter Planting - Wheat, Barley & Oats



The area used to grow winter crops increased by nine per cent compared to the previous year. This is mostly due to a 12 per cent increase in the area used to grow wheat, which rose to 104,600 hectares.

The increase in winter planted crops is linked to improved weather conditions last autumn compared to the previous year.



Area used to grow cereals and oilseed rape

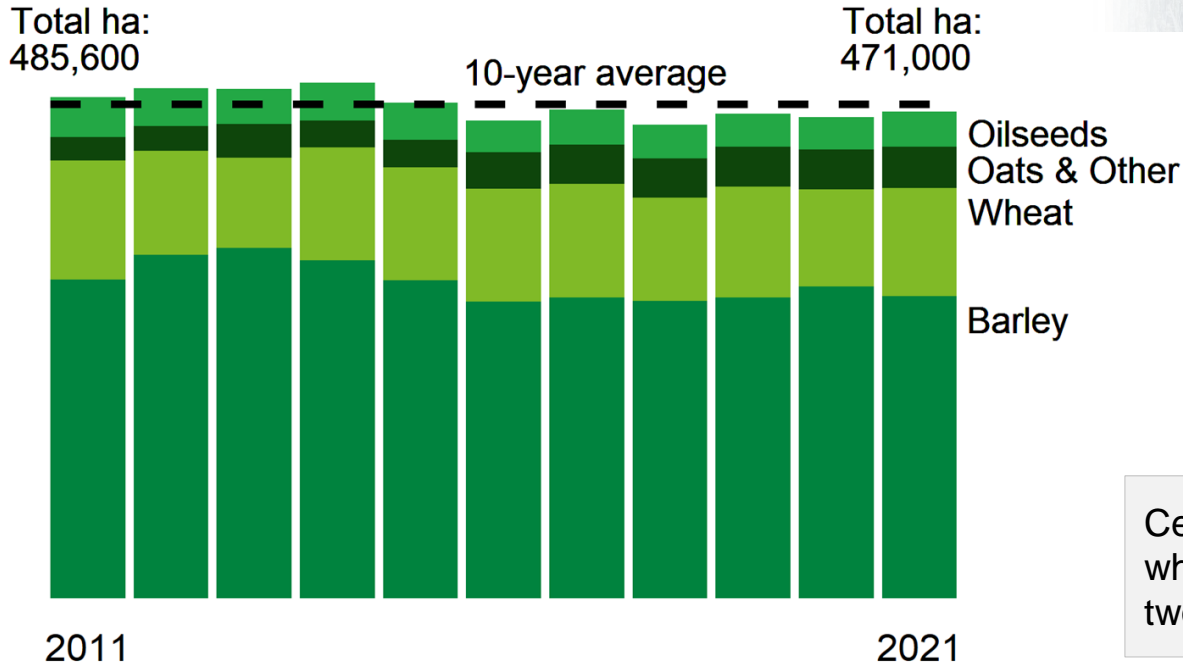


**471,000 hectares**

Winter planted crops are generally sown in autumn and grown during the winter. Spring planted crops are generally sown during the first three months of the year. Poor weather conditions, such as heavy rainfall, make it difficult for farmers to sow their crops.

The increased area of winter planted crops was followed by a decrease in spring planting. Spring planted crops decreased four per cent compared to 2020. This was driven mainly by a four per cent decrease in the area used to grow spring barley.

# Total area of cereals and oilseed rape increases on previous year



Area of barley 292,200 ha

Area of wheat 104,600 ha

Cereals have a strong association with the whisky industry. Both barley and wheat, the two biggest crops, are used to make whisky.

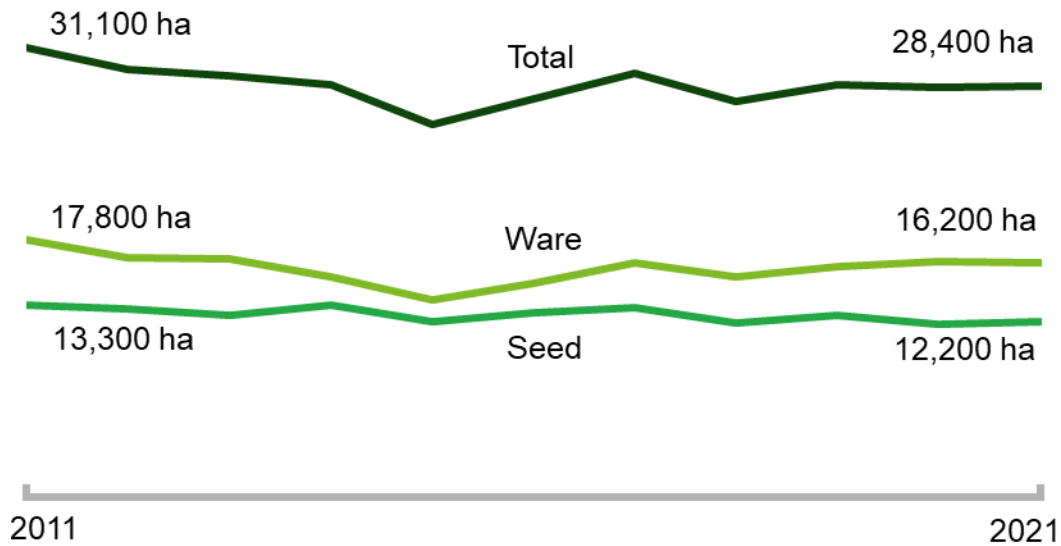
The total area of cereals and oilseed rape increased slightly compared to the previous year, likely due to the disruption to winter planting in the previous year. Around 471,000 hectares were used to grow cereals and oilseeds.

The total area planted was below the ten-year average. Barley makes up 62 per cent of the total area used to grow cereals and oilseeds, down from 65 per cent in June 2020.

Around 24 per cent of cereal area was used to grow wheat, up from 22 per cent in the previous year.

The area used to grow oats has decreased by less than one per cent since June 2020. The area used to grow oilseeds increased by eight per cent. Other crops grown, such as rye and triticale, are still minority crops amounting to around 7,100 hectares in 2021.

# Planted potato area remains steady



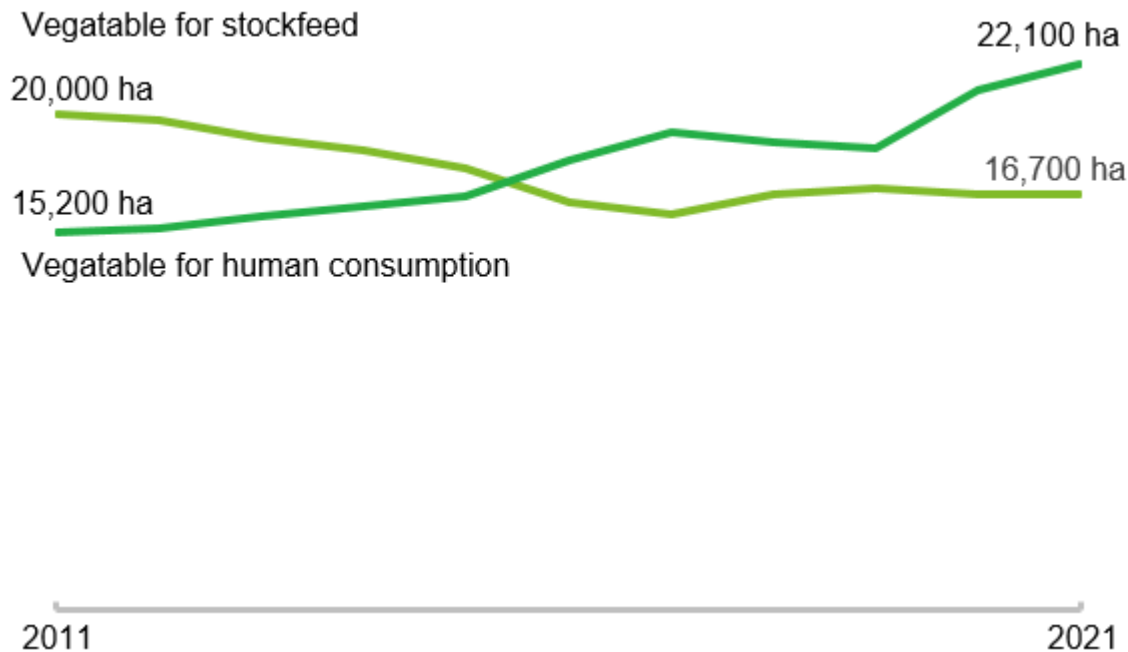
Area used to grow potatoes : 28,400 hectares

Scotland has a reputation for growing high quality potatoes, particularly seed potatoes. Scottish seed potatoes are sold all over the world and a register of seed potato producers is kept by Scottish Agricultural Science Agency (SASA).

The total area of planted potatoes was 28,400 hectares. Although the total planted potato area remained steady compared to the previous year, there was an increase in seed (planting) potatoes and a slight decrease in ware (eating) potatoes.

The area of planted seed potatoes is 12,200 hectares, an increase of one per cent from 2020. The area of planted ware potatoes fell by less than one per cent to 16,200 hectares.

# More area used to grow vegetables for human consumption



Area used to grow vegetables for human consumption

**22,100 ha**

Area used to grow vegetables for stock feed

**16,700 ha**

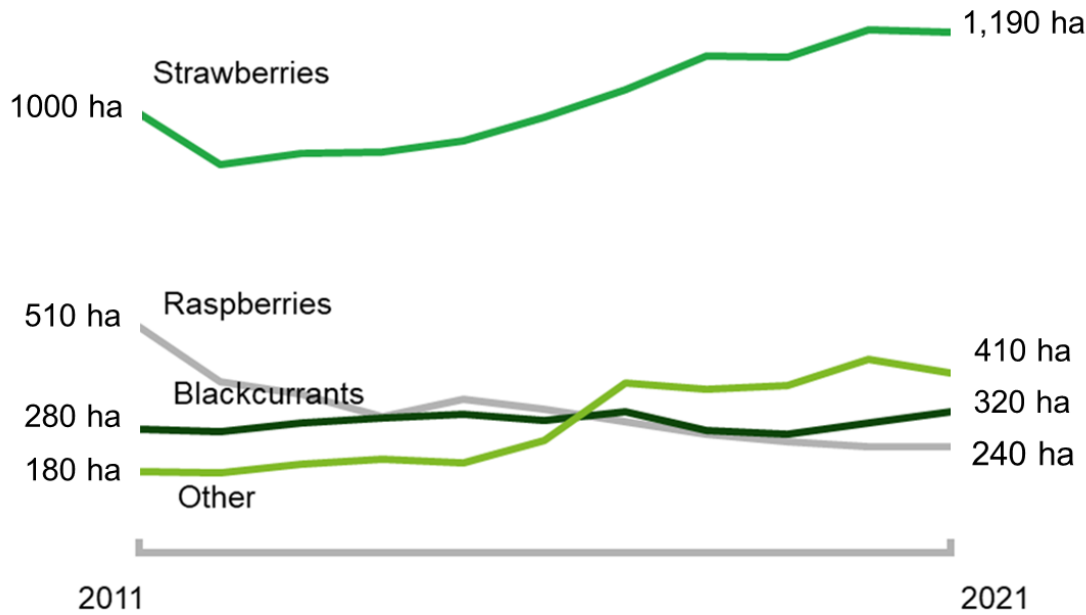
The area used to grow vegetables intended for human consumption (excluding potatoes) grew by five per cent over the past year. In June 2021 there were 22,100 hectares of vegetables.

The area used to grow animal feed decreased by less than one per cent. The total area of vegetables for stock feeding was 16,700 hectares.

# Small decrease in soft fruit growing areas



Area of soft fruit 2,200 hectares



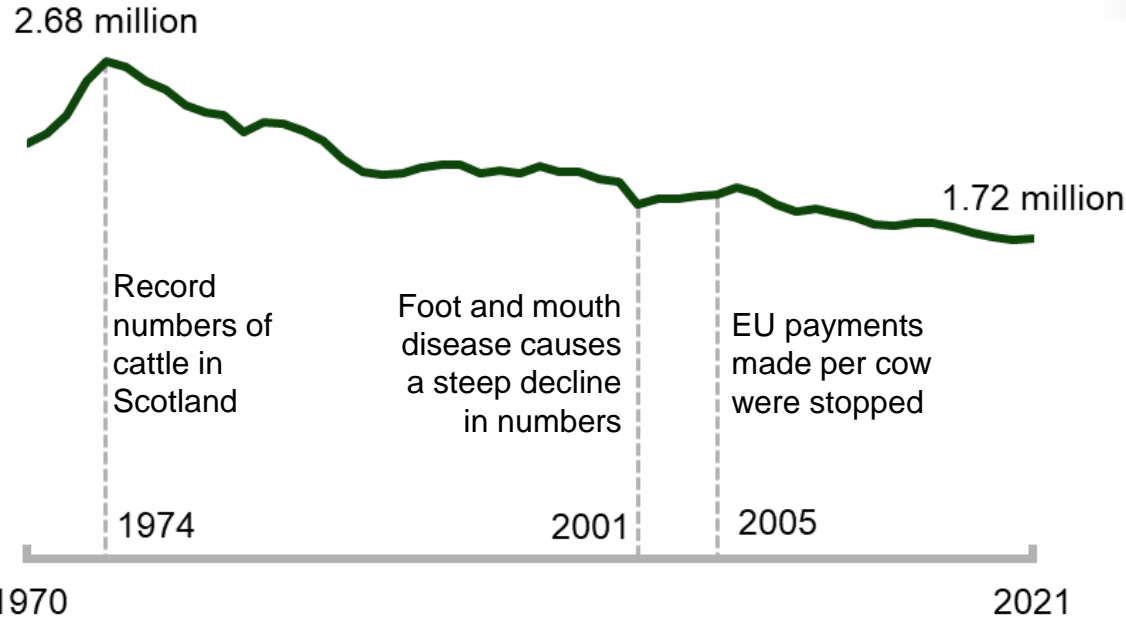
Most fruit is grown under cover in either glasshouses or walk-in plastic structures called 'Poly-tunnels'. This allows for a much longer growing season and 75 per cent was grown this way in 2021.

Over the past year, total soft fruit growing areas decreased by less than one percent. The estimated total area in June 2021 was 2,200 hectares. Strawberries are the most popular grown fruit.

The area used to grow blackcurrants increased, while the area used to grow other soft fruits, such as blueberries, fell slightly. The area used to grow raspberries has been in long-term decline, but remained stable this year compared to last year.



# Halt in decline of total cattle numbers



Number of cattle 1.72 million

Office of National Statistics environmental figures show greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture fell by just over 13 per cent between 1990 and 2019. This reduction is partly linked to a fall in livestock numbers.

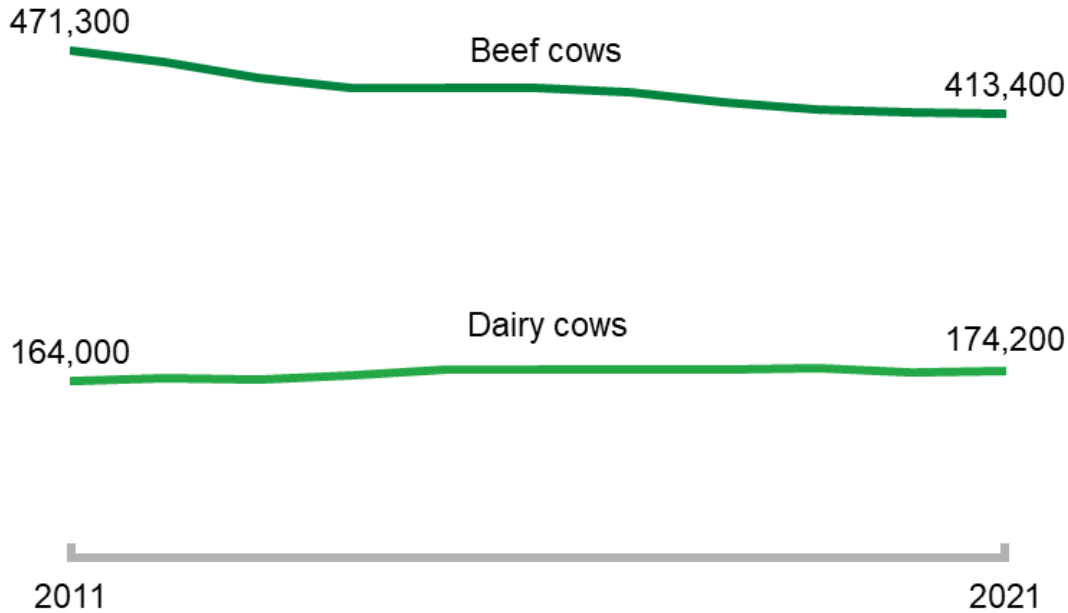
Total cattle numbers slightly increased in 2021, following a steady long term decline which saw a new 60 year low in 2020. In 2021, there were 1.72 million cattle in Scotland, a rise of less than one per cent on the previous year.

Factors that may have contributed to this rise could be current high beef and dairy prices and a shortage of labour for processing animals. The slight increase in cattle numbers was driven by an increase in the number of calves, female dairy and beef cattle aged 1-2 years held on farm.

Cattle numbers in Scotland have been trending down since a peak in 1974 when there were 2.68 million cattle.

The long term downward trend in cattle numbers has been driven by a fall in their profitability. This has been due to a number of reasons, such as an increase in costs and the end of support based on the number of cattle owned (coupled support) in 2005.

## Long-term decline in beef cows as number of dairy cows remains stable



Over the past 10 years, there has been a 12 percent decline in the total beef breeding herd, but the number this year was stable compared to the previous year, at 413,400.

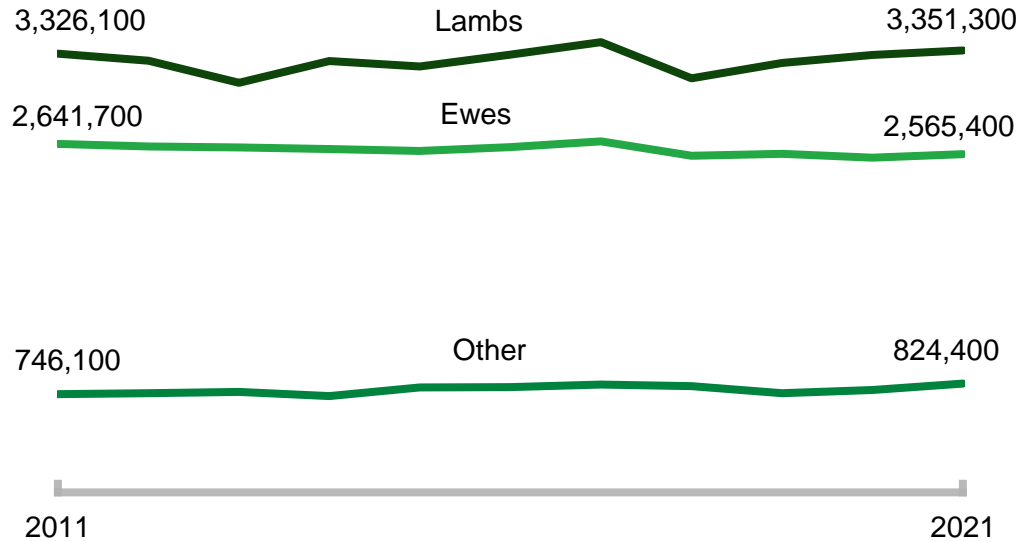


Number of  
beef cows 413,400

Number of  
dairy cows 174,200

The total number of dairy cows has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years. In 2021 dairy cows numbered 174,200, an increase of less than one per cent on the number in 2020.

## Scottish sheep flock continues to recover



Number of  
sheep

6.83 million

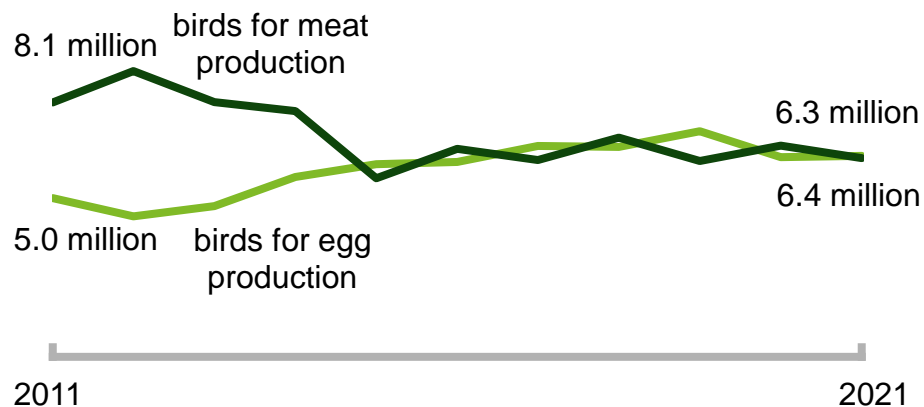
A favourable spring and mild winter provided a good lambing season, which saw lamb numbers increase by one per cent compared to 2020.

The number of breeding ewes increased by one per cent to 2.57 million in 2021, and the total number of sheep increased by two per cent to 6.83 million sheep.

The overall increase in sheep numbers was partly driven by a large increase in the number of sheep over one year old being kept on farm. This may be due to the knock-on effects of Coronavirus (COVID-19) which reduced both abattoir capacity and demand.



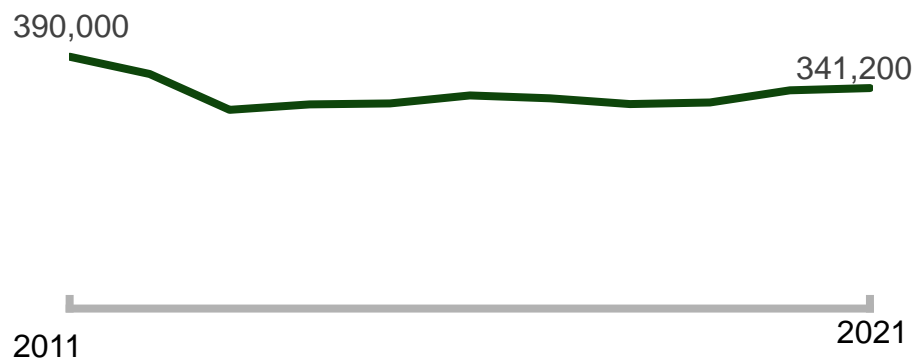
Number of poultry | **14 million**



Poultry numbers decreased over the past year. In June 2021, there were an estimated 14 million poultry birds in Scotland, a drop of three per cent on the previous year. The number of birds for egg production increased by less than one per cent, to 6.4 million. The number of birds for meat production decreased by six per cent, to 6.3 million.



Number of pigs | **341 thousand**

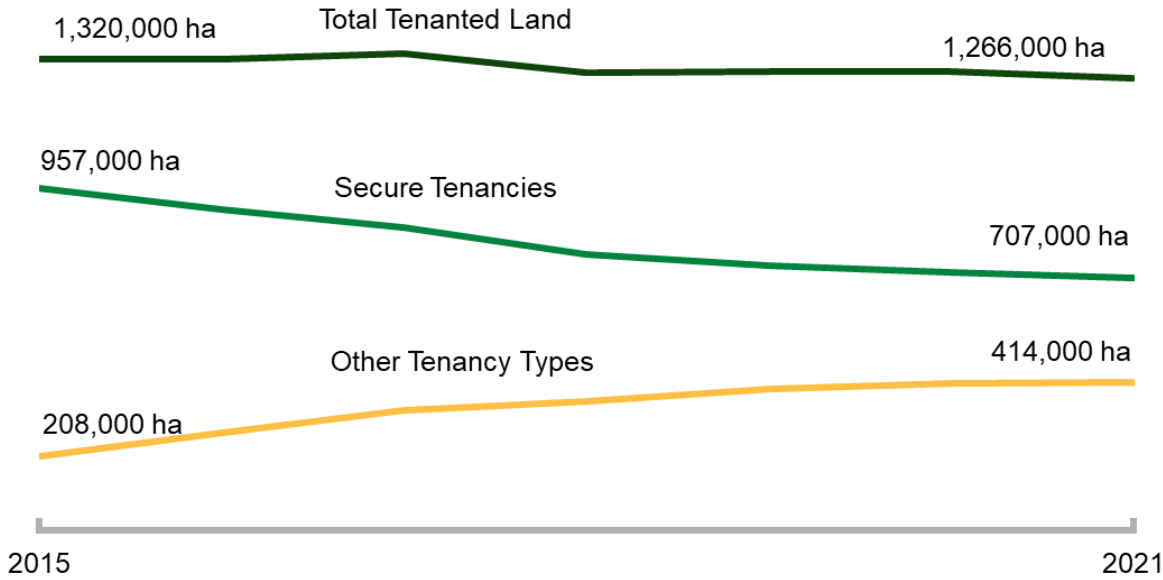


The number of pigs increased for the third year in a row. In June 2021, there were around 341,000 pigs, a rise of one per cent on the previous year. However, there was a fall of nine per cent in the total breeding herd, to 32,800 pigs.

**Other livestock:**

34,200 horses    17,100 farmed deer  
 1,500 donkeys    4,500 beehives  
 7,800 goats    2,200 camelids

# Area of rented land remains stable as shorter term tenancies increase



Area of rented land | 1.27 million hectares

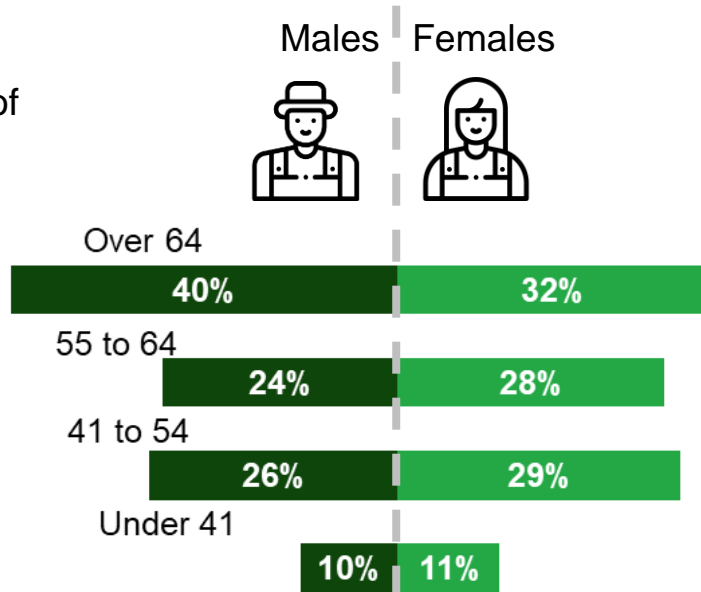
The total area of tenanted land decreased by two per cent compared to 2020. The area of secure tenancies fell by two per cent, and the area of other tenancy types remained fairly stable.

Newer, limited period tenancy arrangements have been increasing in recent years. These arrangements accounted for just over one third of all tenancy types in 2021.

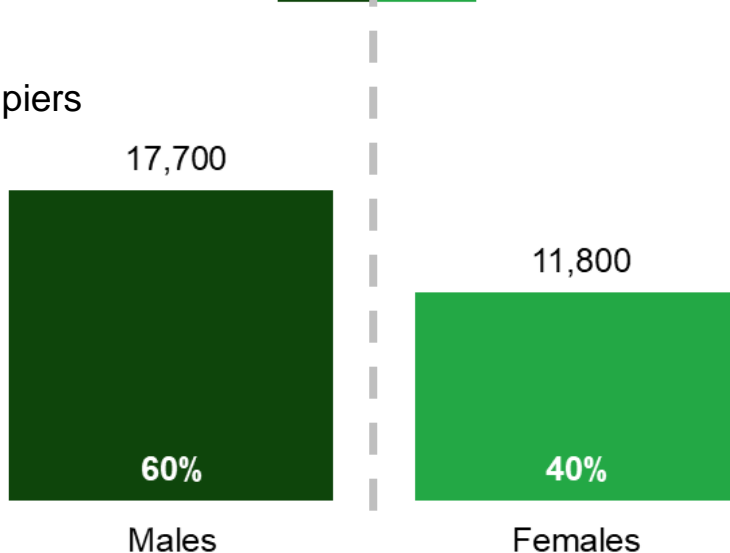
Over the longer term, the amount of rented agricultural land has fallen steadily over the past ten years from 25 per cent in 2011 to 22 per cent in 2021.

# The majority of working occupiers (occupier and spouse) are older than 55

Age profile of working occupiers



Working occupiers by sex



Agricultural workforce **67,400**

The total agricultural workforce is estimated to be around 67,400 workers. Although this estimate may not include some family members who also provide some labour.

The majority of the workforce are owner-occupiers, made up of people who own or rent the farm and work on it. Of all working occupiers (occupier and spouse), 60 per cent are male and 40 per cent are female.

Working occupiers are getting increasingly older. In June 2021, only 10 per cent of the total working occupiers were under 41. Male occupiers are generally older than female occupiers. Where 40 per cent of male farm occupiers were older than 64, this was true for only 32 per cent of female farm occupiers.

# Regular employees steady while seasonal employees drop

Full-time staff	2021	13,400
	2020	12,900
Part-time staff	2021	7,700
	2020	7,600
Seasonal labour	2021	8,000
	2020	8,200



Agricultural employees **29,100**

In June 2021, there were 29,100 regular and seasonal employees working in agriculture. This is an increase of one per cent compared to June 2020. Mostly due to the number of working partners and family members increasing by eight per cent.

The number of casual and seasonal workers decreased by three per cent compared to the previous year, to 8,000.

Evidence suggests that the levels of migrant labour fell which might have impacted production.

# June Agricultural Census 2021

## Data sources and more information

### Data source

This data is collected via an annual Agricultural Census run by the Rural and Environmental Science & Analytical Services Division of the Scottish Government. The census collects various data from agricultural holdings across Scotland.

A full quality assurance and methodology report can be found accompanying this report.

<https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80201-479-2>

For more information on the data in this publication contact Anwen Bill [agric.stats@gov.scot](mailto:agric.stats@gov.scot)

### Data tables

The data used to create the charts in this publication are available online in the accompanying spreadsheet.

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