

26 February 2009

DECEMBER 2008 AGRICULTURAL SURVEY RESULTS PUBLISHED

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) have published the results of the December 2008 sample survey of farms in Northern Ireland.

This survey is required by EU legislation and is undertaken to provide estimates of the numbers of cattle, sheep and pigs on farms at the beginning of December. In addition, the survey provides information on levels of hay and silage production and sowings of winter cereals.

Since some of the estimates of livestock numbers and crop areas are derived from a sample survey, rather than a full census, they are subject to sampling error.

The main changes between December 2007 and December 2008 are:

- **Dairy herds:** In December 2008 the estimate of 287,611 dairy cows indicates no change in the dairy herd numbers.
- **Beef breeding herds:** The number of beef cows increased by 3 per cent to 257,726 compared with December 2007, while the number of beef heifers-in-calf increased by 6 per cent.
- **All cattle:** In total, there was a 1 per cent increase in the total cattle on farms in December 2008 compared to December 2007.
- **Sheep:** There was a 3 percent decrease in the sheep breeding flock between December 2007 and December 2008.
- **Pigs:** The estimate of 36,539 sows and gilts was 5 per cent more than in December 2007.

- **Hay and silage:** Hay yields increased by 4 per cent during 2008, and the overall production rose by 17 per cent. The production of silage showed little change from 2007.
- **Winter crops:** The area of cereal crops in the ground at 1st December is estimated to have been 12,400 hectares, a 41 per cent decrease compared with 2007.

Tables giving full details of the December Survey results are available at <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/news/press-releases-statistical/press-release-statistical-current.htm>

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Notes for Editors

- 1 The survey results were prepared by the Policy and Economics Division of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dundonald House, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 3SB.
- 2 All media queries to DARD Press Office on 02890524619
- 3 All recent DARD statistical press releases can be found at <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/news/press-releases-statistical>

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Northern Ireland Agricultural Survey

Results for December 2008

Table 1 Cattle

	December 2006	December 2007	December 2008	% Change 2008/2007
				%
Total cows mainly for producing milk for sale	287.2	288.6	287.6	0
Total cows mainly for producing and rearing calves for beef	275.4	249.4	257.7	3
TOTAL COWS	562.6	537.9	545.3	1
Heifers in calf with first calf intended mainly for producing milk for sale				
Heifers in calf with first calf (2 yrs +)	31.2	30.6	33.2	8
Heifers in calf with first calf (< 2 yrs)	28.5	28.6	29.6	3
Total	59.6	59.2	62.7	6
Heifers in calf with first calf intended mainly for producing calves for beef				
Heifers in calf with first calf (2 yrs +)	22.9	20.6	22.6	10
Heifers in calf with first calf (< 2 yrs)	24.1	24.3	24.9	2
Total	47.1	44.9	47.5	6
All other cattle and calves 2 years old and over				
Male	46.9	48.9	54.3	11
Females for slaughter	42.9	38.5	36.8	-4
Females for breeding but not in calf	20.7	18.4	17.6	-4
Total	110.5	105.8	108.7	3
1 year old and under 2 years				
Male	198.1	185.1	177.0	-4
Females for slaughter	100.5	100.2	97.8	-2
Females for breeding but not in calf	83.5	79.3	77.4	-2
Total	382.0	364.6	352.1	-3
6 months old and under 1 year				
Male	137.8	126.4	125.9	0
Female	148.1	141.9	141.5	0
Total	286.0	268.3	267.4	0
Under 6 months old				
Male	89.2	87.1	95.2	9
Female	99.2	102.2	102.0	0
Total	188.3	189.4	197.3	4
TOTAL CATTLE AND CALVES	1,636.2	1,570.1	1,581.0	1

Source - APHIS

Northern Ireland Agricultural Survey

Results for December 2008

Table 2 Sheep and Pigs

		December 2006	December 2007	December 2008	% Change 2008/2007
					%
Sheep					
Breeding flock					
Ewes		742.2	832.4	807.5	-3
Ewe lambs tuppéd		58.1	56.3	56.9	1
Total breeding flock		800.3	888.8	864.3	-3
Other sheep					
Rams for service		25.7	29.6	29.9	1
Other sheep 1 year and over		32.3	34.3	34.6	1
Other lambs					
Other lambs under 1 year old		296.0	318.5	321.7	1
Total lambs		296.0	318.5	321.7	1
TOTAL SHEEP AND LAMBS		1,154.3	1,271.1	1,250.5 ¹	-2
Pigs					
Breeding herd					
Sows in pig		24.2	23.3	23.4	1
Gilts in pig		4.5	3.1	3.1	1
Others sows (being suckled or dry sows kept for further breeding)		9.0	8.3	10.0	21
Total female breeding herd		37.6	34.6	36.5	5
Gilts 50kg (110lb) liveweight and over, not yet in pig		3.8	2.9	3.6	23
Boars being used for service		0.8	0.8	0.8	-2
All other pigs (including culled sows and boars) of liveweight:					
80 kg (175lb) and over		64.5	81.6	86.8	6
50kg (110lb) and under 80kg (175lb)		79.7	81.6	85.9	5
20kg (45lb) and under 50kg (110lb)		106.3	107.9	112.6	4
Under 20kg (45lb)		106.8	103.8	107.9	4
Total		357.2	374.9	393.2	5
TOTAL PIGS		399.4	413.3	434.1	5

¹ Source - Sheep Inventory

Northern Ireland Agricultural Survey

Results for December 2008

Table 3 Hay, silage & winter-sown crops

	December 2006	December 2007	December 2008	% Change 2008/2007
	%			
Hay				
Area cut ('000 ha)	14	11	12	13
Production ('000 tonnes)	107	89	104	17
Yield (tonnes/ha)	7.6	8.0	8.4	4
Silage				
Area cut ('000 ha)	270	272	276	1
Production ('000 tonnes)	8,326	8,571	8,476	-1
Yield (tonnes/ha)	30.8	31.5	30.8	-2
Crops sown by 1 December				
Wheat ('000 ha)	8.6	11.5	6.6	-42
Barley ('000 ha)	5.2	8.0	4.8	-40
Oats ('000 ha)	1.3	1.4	1.0	-28
Total Cereals	15.1	20.9	12.4	-41