

European Rural Development Policy

Possibilities for Social Farming?

By Johan Verstrynghe
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries



Vlaams Ruraal Netwerk

Introduction ...

Agriculture in Flanders



Vlaams Ruraal Netwerk

Flanders = Dutch speaking region
= 5 provinces

Regions are autonomous & competent
for a.o. agriculture and
environment

Federal government is competent for
a.o. public health (food security),
animal welfare, and product
policy

- Federal Agency for the
Safety of the Food Chain
(FASFC)
- Federal public service
Health, Food Chain Safety
and Environment

BELGIUM

THE FEDERAL STATE



THE COMMUNITIES

THE FLEMISH COMMUNITY



THE FRENCH COMMUNITY



THE GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY



THE REGIONS

THE FLEMISH REGION



THE BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION



THE WALLOON REGION



Key characteristics of Flanders

1. Highly urbanized region with high population density
2. Highly scattered built-on surface
3. Central position in Western Europe

=> Text book example of spatial metropolitan and peri-urban development in Western Europe

Highly urbanized region with high population density

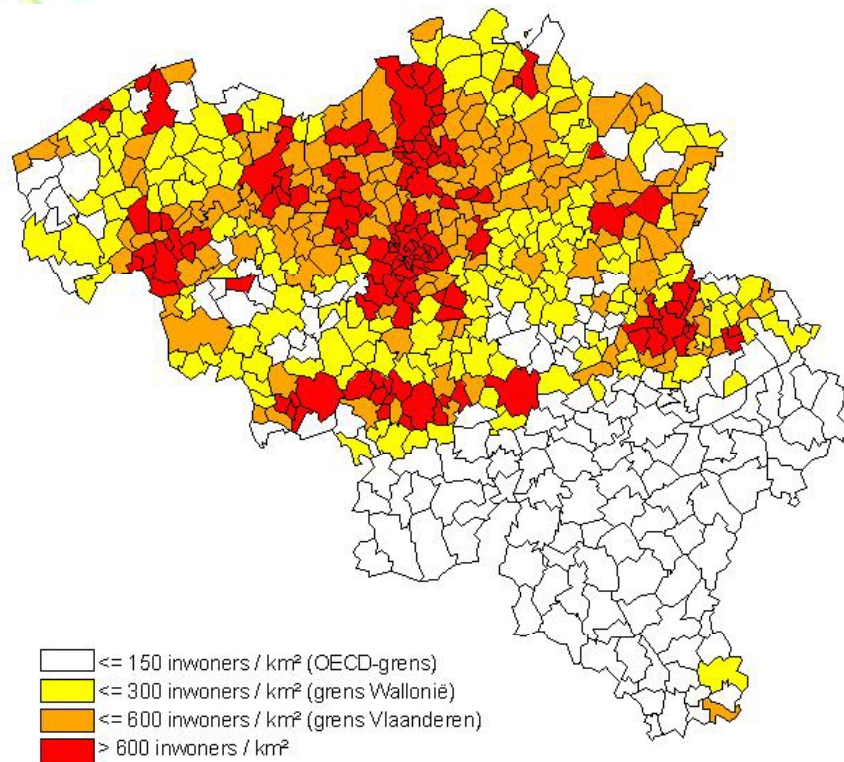
Flanders: 13.521 km² (9.230 km² rural – 1.434 km² forest)
6.162.000 inhabitants (2008)
=> Average of **455** inhabitants/km²

in comparison:

Belgium: **349** inhabitants/km²

Kosovo: **195** inhabitants/km²

EU - 27: **116** inhabitants/km²



Highly scattered built-on surface

Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of Flemish land (24%) has been built on

=> a vast amount of **open spaces** remains

=> Highly scattered built-on surface

Agriculture = principal user of open space

=> important role in preserving and managing open spaces

Central position in Western Europe

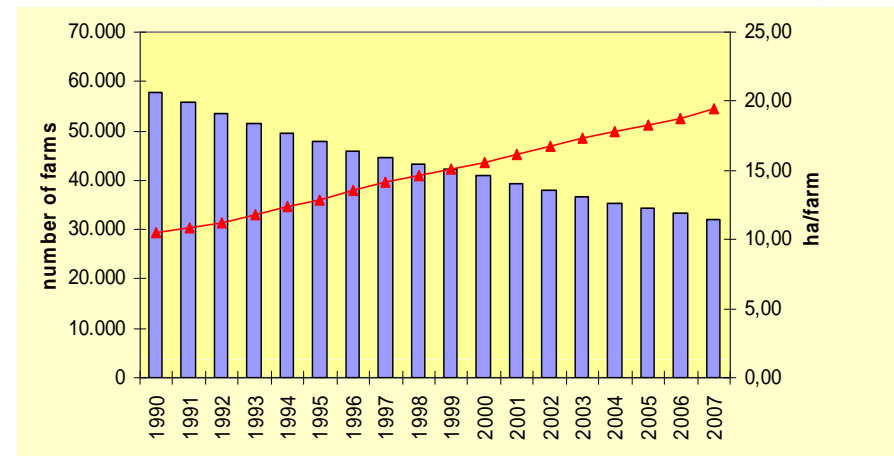
Important junction of transport axis, dense network of roads



Characteristics of Flemish Agriculture

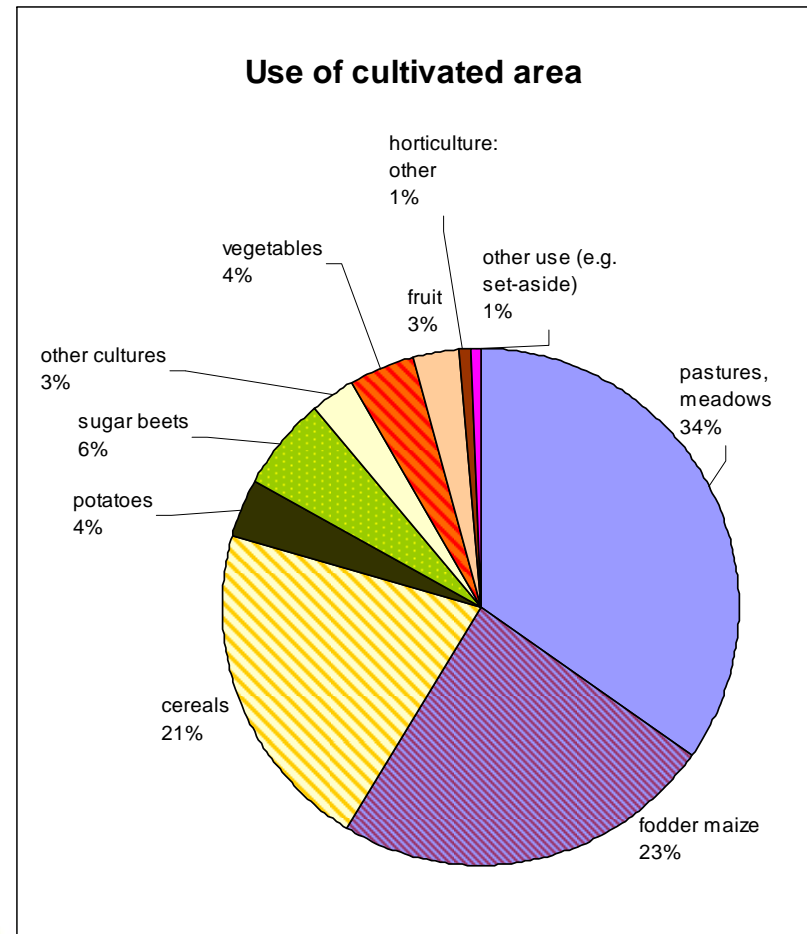
- family based production
 - tasty quality products
- capital-intensive, productive, highly specialised
- integrated production
 - traceability and labelling
- private stakeholders/cooperatives
 - competitive products
- countryside highly populated
 - 455 hab./km²
 - 260 hab./km² in the countryside
- declining number of farms
 - ↕ 1100 farms/year
 - 31.984 farms (62% professionals)
- increasing number of hectares/farm
 - 20 ha (+ 37 % in period 1997-2007)

Farm size & farm number

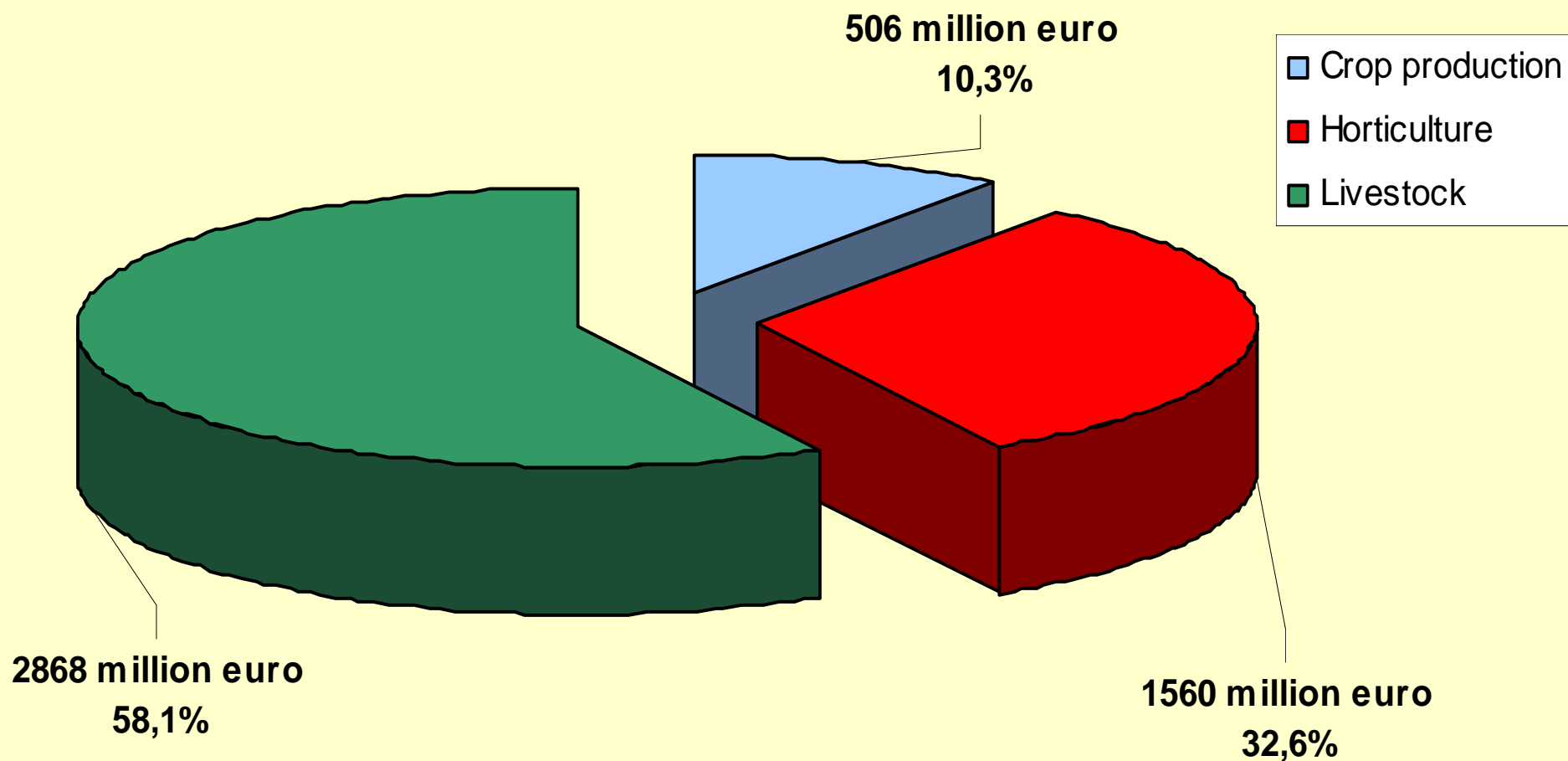


Characteristics of Flemish Agriculture

- 623.698 ha cultivated area
46% of Flanders' area
- 373.161 ha pastures, meadows & fodder crops (maize)
- 197.867 ha arable farming:
65% cereals, 19% potatoes, 11% sugar beets
- 49.154 ha horticulture (but almost 1/3 of turnover)
56% vegetables; 32% fruit



Agricultural Production Value (2007) : 4934 million euro



Source: AMS

European Common Agriculture Policy

- **Food export/import**
 - EU is a major exporter of food products
 - EU is the world's largest importer of food (mainly from developing countries;)
- **Food Production**
 - Farmers use safe, clean, environmentally-friendly production methods
 - providing quality products to meet consumers' demands;
- **Rural Development**
 - The EU farming sector serves rural communities.
 - Its role is not only to produce food but also to guarantee the survival of the countryside as a place to live, work and visit;



European Common Agriculture Policy

PILLAR I

- **Food export/import**
 - EU is a major exporter of food products
 - EU is the world's largest importer of food (mainly from developing countries;)
- **Food Production**
 - Farmers use safe, clean, environmentally-friendly production methods
 - providing quality products to meet consumers' demands;
- **Rural Development**
 - The EU farming sector serves rural communities.
 - Its role is not only to produce food but also to guarantee the survival of the countryside as a place to live, work and visit;



European Common Agriculture Policy

PILLAR I

- **Food export/import**

- EU is a major exporter of food products
- EU is the world's largest importer of food (mainly from developing countries;)

- **Food Production**

- Farmers use safe, clean, environmentally-friendly production methods
- providing quality products to meet consumers' demands;

- **Rural Development**

- The EU farming sector serves rural communities.
- Its role is not only to produce food but also to guarantee the survival of the countryside as a place to live, work and visit;

PILLAR II



Pillar II: Rural Development

- Focus on:
 1. improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector;
 2. improving the environment and the countryside;
 3. improving the quality of life in rural areas
and encouraging diversification of the rural economy.
 4. Using the "Leader approach" in rural development
- One fund: **European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development**



Rural Development: 4 axes

Axis 1

Axis 2

Axis 3

Axis 4

European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development



Vlaams Ruraal Network

Rural Development: Legal

- Legal Framework 2007-2013:
 - EU framework: 2 Council Regulations, 3 Executing Regulations
- Implementation
 - National organisation : National Strategy Document
 - Regional implementation: Rural Development Programs
- E.g. Belgium
 - Belgian Strategy Document
 - Flemish RDP
 - Walloon RDP



Rural Development: financial

- EAFRD:
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
- period 2007–2013 : total of **77.66 billion euro**
 - Flanders' RDP
 - Total: 713.49 million euro
 - Flanders contribution: 459,27 million euro (65%)
 - EU contribution: 254,22 million euro (35%)
- Balance between the four axes
 - Min 25 % axis 2
 - Min 10 % axis 3 and 4



National Rural Network

National Rural Network is compulsory in the rural development regulation!

Belgium = exception ... : Flemish Rural Network and Walloon Rural Network

(in close cooperation with one another)

Flemish Rural Network

- Objectives:
 - Sensitization concerning rural development
 - Activation through detecting, analysing and disseminating good practices
 - Support by passing on general and subject-related information
- Activities:
 - Organisation of seminars, information sessions, study tours, visits, ...
 - Communication: newsletter, website, articles, brochures, ...
 - International networking: international committees, working groups & lobby groups

Axis 1: Economical Issues

- Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector
 - promoting knowledge and improving human potential
 - restructuring and developing physical potential
 - improving the quality of production and products
- Possibilities for social farming?
 - vocational training and information actions,
 - schemes promoting the establishment of young farmers
 - the use of advisory services by farmers and forest holders
 - Investments on farms related to social farming
 - Social farming as a specific production process ...



Axis 2 : ecological issues

- improving the environment and the countryside
 - measures targeting sustainable use of agricultural and forestry land
 - Compulsory : agro-environmental measures
- Possibilities for social farming?
 - Tasks with much handwork with a low threshold
 - Organic Farming
 - Maintaining nature elements; hayes, hedges, ...
 - ...



Axis 3: social issues

- improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy.
 - the diversification of the rural economy
 - the quality of life in rural areas
 - training, skills acquisition and animation
- Possibilities for social farming?
 - diversification towards social farming activities
 - Small scale investments for social farming accommodation
 - support for the establishment and development of social farming related micro-businesses
 - improving the quality of life in rural areas by offering social farming facilities



Axis 4: Leader Approach

- 7 distinctive features
 - Area based local strategies
 - Public-private partnerships (local action groups)
 - Bottom up approach
 - Multi-sectoral and integrated
 - Innovative
 - Cooperation
 - Networking
- Possibilities for social farming?
 - Small scale social farming initiatives
 - Cooperation between farms and institutions
 - Innovative systems of social farming
 - Networking initiatives



Conclusion ...

- Axis 1 : potentials
- Axis 2 : indirect opportunities
- Axis 3 : big potentials
- Axis 4 : big potentials

