

## 8. The structure of crop production

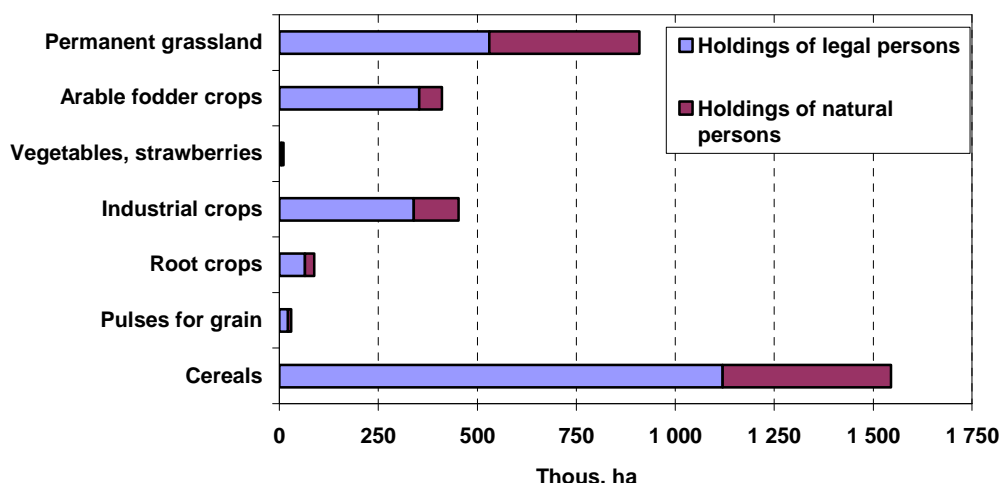
The results of the Farm Structure Survey 2007 confirmed that the area of utilised agricultural area has remained stable with only a slight falling tendency. In comparison with 2005, the area fell by 1.1% in 2007 to 3.518 million hectares. There was also no significant fall between the previous structure surveys (the fall in the area between 2005 and 2003 was 1.7%).

The agricultural land which has begun to be used for industry, transport and commercial use has been permanently devalued for the purposes of agriculture. It is therefore difficult to expect that the area of agriculture land will ever show a growing tendency. As such, the information about the area of the utilised area is essential. From an economic point of view, however, the information on the structure of the agricultural land has a higher predicative ability.

Cereals are grown on 60.2% of arable land. The dominant cereal is wheat, which accounts for half the area of cereals. Barley is grown on a further third of the cereal area. The remainder of the area is used to grow rye, oats and other cereals. The small changes in the composition of the cereal areas between the structure surveys can also be explained by the rotation of crops within the framework of the cropping pattern. In a long-term comparison, however, it is possible to see that the structure of the cereal areas has changed significantly. Whereas the areas of wheat, barley and maize for grain have shown an increasing trend since 1945, the area taken up by oats has fallen tenfold in the post-war period. The change in crop production has also been caused by the changes in the numbers of the individual types of farm animals. The fall in the sown area of oats has occurred in association with the fall in the number of horses (from 449 thousand in 1945 to 200 thousand in 1961), whose work was replaced with heavy machinery in the 1960s. On the other hand, the increasing numbers of poultry over the long-term (and also in the numbers of pigs up to the start of the 1990s) were one of the causes for the change in the cereal structure in favour of wheat.

Whereas there was an increase in the area of maize for grain between 2005 and 2007 (from 83,381 ha to 99,255 ha), the area of green maize fell (from 198,653 ha to 172,979 ha) despite the fact that maize is an efficient crop representing the high production of energy and nutrients from the unit area. The areas of maize have been influenced by the large numbers of cattle, especially the falling numbers of dairy cows and the increasing numbers of suckler cows, for which the use of pasture is predominant.

**Graph 12 – Sown areas in 2007 by legal forms**



In 2007, no large changes (with one of two exceptions) were reported in the structure of the agricultural land in the holdings of legal and natural persons. Cereals dominate in both legal forms and they account for 45.1% of the area of the agricultural land and 58.1% of the area of the arable land in the case of holdings of legal persons and 41.1% of the area of the agricultural land and 66.2% of the area of the arable land in the case of holdings of natural persons. In holdings of legal persons, there was an approximately 3 times higher share of the area of green maize and maize for grain from the overall utilised area than in the case of holdings of natural persons. Holdings of legal persons also grow relatively more rape and turnip rape. Whereas the share of these areas in the overall area of agricultural land is 10.2% in holdings of legal persons, the areas of rape and turnip rape account for 2.5 percentage points less in the case of holdings of natural persons. On the other hand, holdings of natural persons farm more areas of permanent grassland which account for 36.6% of the area of the agricultural land. In holdings of legal persons, the share of the

areas of permanent grassland was 15.2 percentage points lower. Vineyards and hop gardens account for only a marginal share of the area of the utilised agricultural area in both holdings of natural and legal persons, while the share of vineyards is slightly higher in both legal forms and accounts for approximately 0.5% of the area of their utilised agricultural area.

Between 2005 and 2007, the area of rape and turnip rape increased by 25.2%. The growth in the areas of rape has been influenced by the subsidy for the production of the methylester from rape seed oil for use in bio-fuels. Some experts have pointed to the negative impact of the excessive subsidisation of bio-fuels, the production of which must lead to an increase in the price of foodstuffs and to the suppression of traditional crops. The overloading of processors who do not have the capacity to process sunflower oil is also one of the causes for the fall in the area sown with sunflowers. Since 2005, this area has been reduced by 39.3%.

Among the marginally grown crops, there has been a significant fall in the area of fibre flax in the last 2 years (by 80.3%).