



IRELAND

RURALIZATION



Rural areas

- ▣ Ireland's settlement structure is considered as a predominantly rural country.
- ▣ The agri-food and tourism sectors are recognised as a crucial part of the rural economy in Ireland. Organic agriculture is a small but growing part of the agri-food sector.
- ▣ Predominantly rural regions show slower growth than the national average.

Demographics



- ▣ Over the 2011-2016 period the overall population of rural areas increased, but at a lower rate than the urban population (1.7% versus 4.8%).
- ▣ Across all farm systems, the average age of the farm holder is 58 years.
- ▣ Across all farming systems in Ireland the vast majority of farm holders/managers are male (95%).



Labour force

- ▣ Unpaid farm family labour is an important part of labour on Ireland's farms. Following the pattern of male dominance of the farming profession, male unpaid labour is much greater, however female unpaid labour is significant (on average one unpaid female labour unit for every nine male).

Farm succession



- ▣ Irish family farms are strongly associated with continuity.
- ▣ Young people's entry into the agricultural industry is low in Ireland, which is a reason for the farming population's high age profile.
- ▣ The proportion of farmers over 65 years across all farming systems in 2018 equated to 29% of the farming population, which makes the issue of succession critical.



Farm income

- ▣ Farmers are not solely dependent on farm income. Across all households about 52% are also reliant on off-farm sources of employment and income.
- ▣ Farm income also varies widely by region, driven by type of farm, scale, profitability and direct payments as well as natural soil and climatic conditions within each region. Those areas, where dairy production is more prevalent, are generally more profitable and have a lower reliance on direct payments.

Migration



- ▣ Recent decades show considerable stability in terms of international migration spatial patterns, in which Ireland's cities are key destinations.
- ▣ Return migration is an important rural phenomenon that impacts population renewal.



Challenges

- ▣ There is an increased awareness of the need for Irish agriculture to embrace multifunctional agricultural practices, e.g. farm diversification or social farming.



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