

The influence of ARCs on the structure of employment in European agriculture

- *To survey the national situations*
- *To provide information*

In 2000 - 2001, the European Organisation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors (CEETTAR) conducted a survey in order to highlight more effectively the increasing economic and social importance of the ARC sector in the European Union,

ARCs are increasingly seen as service providers, specialising in consulting and working for clients in the private, public, agricultural, rural or forestry sectors.

In general, agricultural services include two major categories of activities, which vary greatly according to the structure and evolution of agriculture in the individual Member States:

- **Services for cultivation (plant or forest cultivation)**, such as the preparation of land (ploughing, spreading, sowing), crop protection (phytosanitary treatments), harvesting, operation of irrigation systems, etc.;
- **Livestock breeding services**, including the stabling of animals, artificial insemination, milk recording and performance control.

To a major extent, ARCs were created as part of the historic process of diversification experienced by agricultural enterprises. They also benefitted from major expansion following mechanisation in the wake of increasingly efficient agricultural machinery.

The key distinctive features:

A specific professional approach

In the ten countries surveyed between June 2000 and March 2001 (Germany, Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom):

- For almost 2/3 of the sample, the 1970's were the most intensive period for the creation of new enterprises;
- In the **Netherlands** and **Denmark**, between 30% and 37.5% of enterprises were established before 1950, compared to a mere 4 % in **Germany**;
- In **Ireland** and **Germany**, 20 % of enterprises were founded during the 1950's;
- **Portugal** holds the record for the proportion of enterprises (67 %) created in the 1980's.

- Over 60 % of ARCs in the **United Kingdom** and 76 % in **Italy** are small businesses (1-5 workers), compared to only 13 % in the **Netherlands** and 18 % in **France**;
- In **France** and **Portugal**, the majority of ARCs are large enterprises (over 10 workers) (67 and 59 %)
- The highest proportion of medium-sized enterprises (6-10 workers) can be seen in **Belgium** (58%), the **Netherlands** (50 %) and **Germany** (44 %).
The majority of ARCs are involved in traditional agricultural tasks.
- 90 % of contractors involved in the survey work for farmers as their main clients;

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The study demonstrates the problems encountered when preparing consistent and comparable data for this sector. It also highlights the lack of attention paid by government and statistical departments to the ARC sector. The quality of information at Member State level is very patchy and does not appear to keep abreast of developments.