# The working time in Walloon dairy farms

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## Objectives

To analyse the working time in Walloon dairy farms and the parameters that modulate it.

## Material & Methods

- **41 farms specialised in dairy production** (95% of dairy cows in the herd and no cash crops).
- « **Labour assessment method »** (French method : Bilan Travail) was used :
  - Different kind of works : routine work (which can't be deferred or concentrated), seasonal work (on herds and lands) and return work.
  - Different kind of workers : basic group (permanent workers engaged into the farm work and its organisation) and other workers (retired workers, volunteers, salaried, mutual help and contractors)

## Results & Discussion

- The number of persons in the basic group of workers (pBG) has some impacts :
  1. Farm size increases as the pBG increases but not in direct proportion. So the area, the number of cows, ... per pBG decreases as the pBG increases (table 1).

Table 1. Farm characteristics in link to the size of the basic group of workers

| | | Size of basic group 1 | 2 | 3 et + | Total sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Farms | | 20 | 18 | 3 | 41 |
| size(ha) | | 55 | 69 | 84 | 63 |
| Quota (1.000L) | | 432 | 595 | 642 | 519 |
| Dairy cows | | 62 | 82 | 82 | 72 |
| Number of LU | | 86 | 120 | 127 | 104 |
| By pBG | size (ha) | 55 | 35 | 28 | 44 |
| | Quota (1.000L) | 432 | 298 | 127 | 357 |
| | Dairy cows | 62 | 41 | 27 | 50 |
| | LU | 86 | 60 | 42 | 72 |

Table 2. Routine work depending on the size of the basic group of workers

| | Size of basic group 1 | 2 | 3 et + | Total sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Farms | 18 | 17 | 4 | 38* |
| RW (h/year) | 2.883 | 3.890 | 4.147 | 3.433 |
| RW/pBG (h/year) | 2.118 | 1.723 | 1.382 | 1.883 |
| RW/1.000L (h/year) | 7h20 | 7h45 | 6h20 | 7h30 |
| RW/LU (h/year) | 35h | 35h | 32h | 35h |

* Without farms with high level of automation

2. The **routine work (RW) takes 7h30/ 1,000 L of milk.** It decreases as the pBG increases (table 1).

- It is possible to do some **scale economy** for the RW (table 3). Be careful than a bigger farm required more workers !

Table 3. Routine work depending of the size of milk quota

| | Quota (1.000L) < 300 | 300-450 | 450-600 | 600-750 | > 750 | Total sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Farms | 6 | 13 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 38* |
| Quota (1.000L) | 247 | 367 | 523 | 673 | 1.187 | 520 |
| Dairy cows | 45 | 60 | 69 | 87 | 140 | 72 |
| RW/1.000 L (h/year) | 10h | 8h26 | 6h12 | 6h52 | 3h51 | 7h30 |
| RW/LU (h/year) | 39 | 35 | 33 | 42 | 23 | 35 |

* Without farms with high level of automation

- A high level of automation (robot milking, automatic feeder, mixer operator...) can save 3h50/1,000 L or 1,500 hours of work per year for a farm with a milk quota of 400,000 liters.
- The **seasonal work (SW) demands 102 days/year**. Most of this time is for agricultural land management (63%) and especially for the harvest of grass. The SW on the herd (disease prevention, moving of animals,..) takes 29 days/year. 10 days are spend for territory maintenance (hedge, fence,..).

## Conclusion

**This study highlights the variability of the working time recorded on Walloon dairy farms. Some factors like the number of pBG, the size of the farm, the automation,.. have an impact on this parameter. This allow the definition of conditions to implement in order to improve working condition.**

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