



Farms with Equines in French Agriculture:

Reflections on the Evolutions of the Equine Sector in the 21st century

Jacques VESLOT
Geneviève BIGOT
UMR Territoires

Introduction

- **The horse industry in France**
- 1 million of equine heads these last years

type of breeds and uses	Saddle horses and ponies for riding	Race horses for trotting & galloping	Heavy draft horses for meat production	donkeys
% national herd	68%	14%	8%	10%

(annuaire ECUS 2021)

- 12 300 companies

type of structures	Riding schools	Professional trainers	Breeders (with more than 5 births)
% total of firms	77%	10%	13%

- difficulties to follow the evolution of the horse industry
 - a great diversity of activities and productions sectors ...
 - Different sources of data, coming mainly from professional organizations often linked to a specific sector as sports, races, etc...

Relevance of the database of the French Farm Structure Survey

- **Main reasons for choosing the French Farm Structure Survey (FSS)**
 - Database on structural features of farms (vegetal and animal productions, ...), required by Europe.
 - Each decade, similar data collected: interesting to analyze evolutions of farms (or horse companies).
 - In France, data on equines collected according to the kind of animals characterized by:
 - type of breeds :
 - warm blood horses (saddle horses, race horses and ponies),
 - cold blood horses (heavy draft horses),
 - Donkeys (and mules),
 - « broodmares » and « other horses » distinguished in horse breeds.
 - This agricultural database was a significant sample of the French horse industry
 - in 2010, number of equines in the FSS amounted to 50% of the total livestock assessed at the national level. (*Bigot et al, 2020*),
 - Distribution per type of breeds was comparable to the national assessment.

Method

To assess evolutions of farms with equines in the XXIst century,
we studied farms with at least 1 equine on 1 of the 3 last census : 2000, 2010 and 2020.

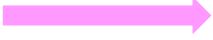
- We developed an “a priori” typology of farms with equines based on previous studies (*Bigot et al, 2020*).
- We analyze this typology in each census.

Typology based on 3 criteria

1- Size of the equine herd (for impacts on economy and workforce of farms)

- - from 1 to 3 heads  leisure activity
- - 4 heads or more  economic activity

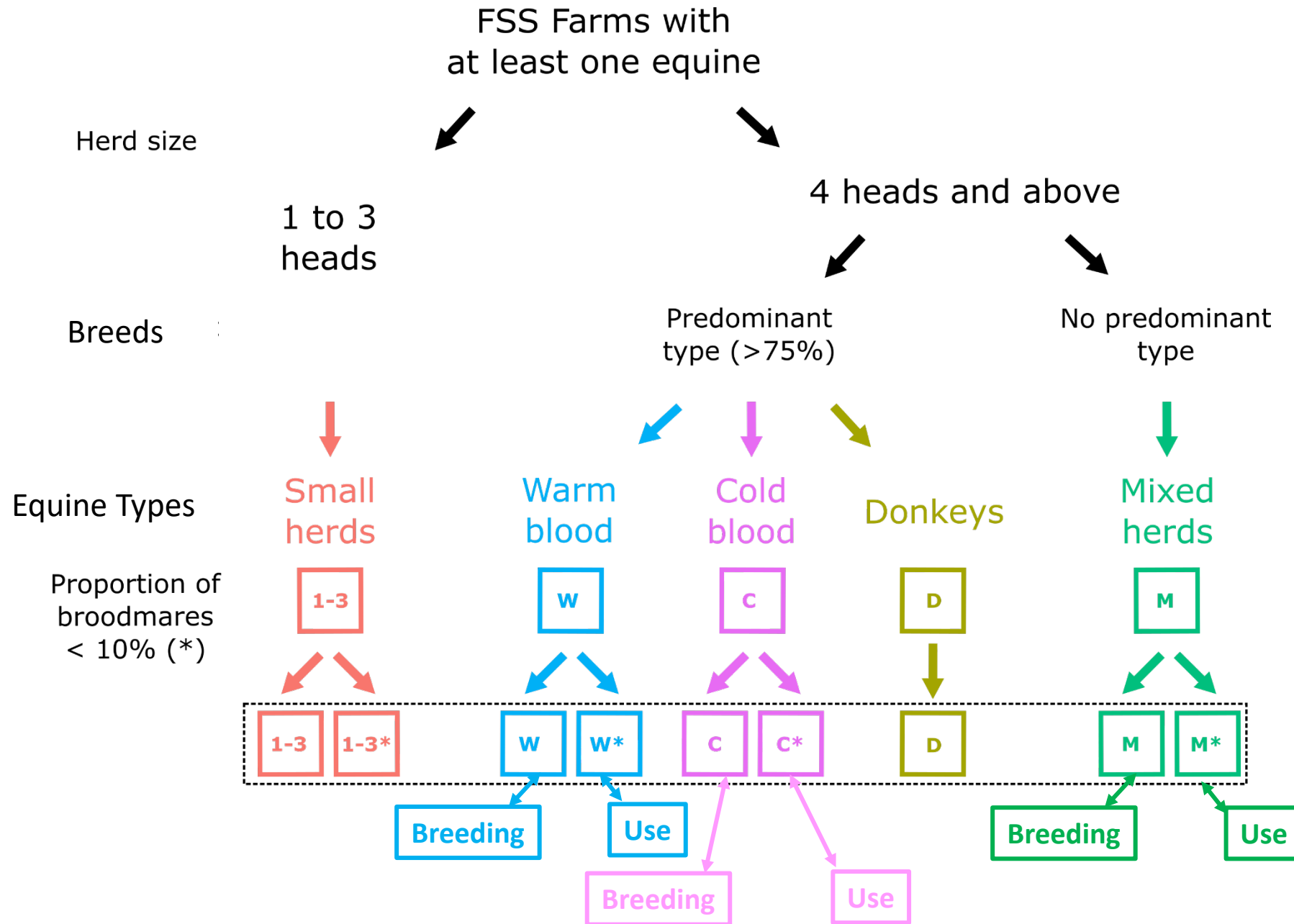
2- Type of Breeds (different production sectors)

- - Warm blood horses  riding and racing sectors (no possible distinctions in the French FSS)
- - Cold blood horses  meat (and work) sector
- - Donkeys  specific sector (tourism, work, pet, ...)

3- Presence of broodmares (data available only for horse breeds)

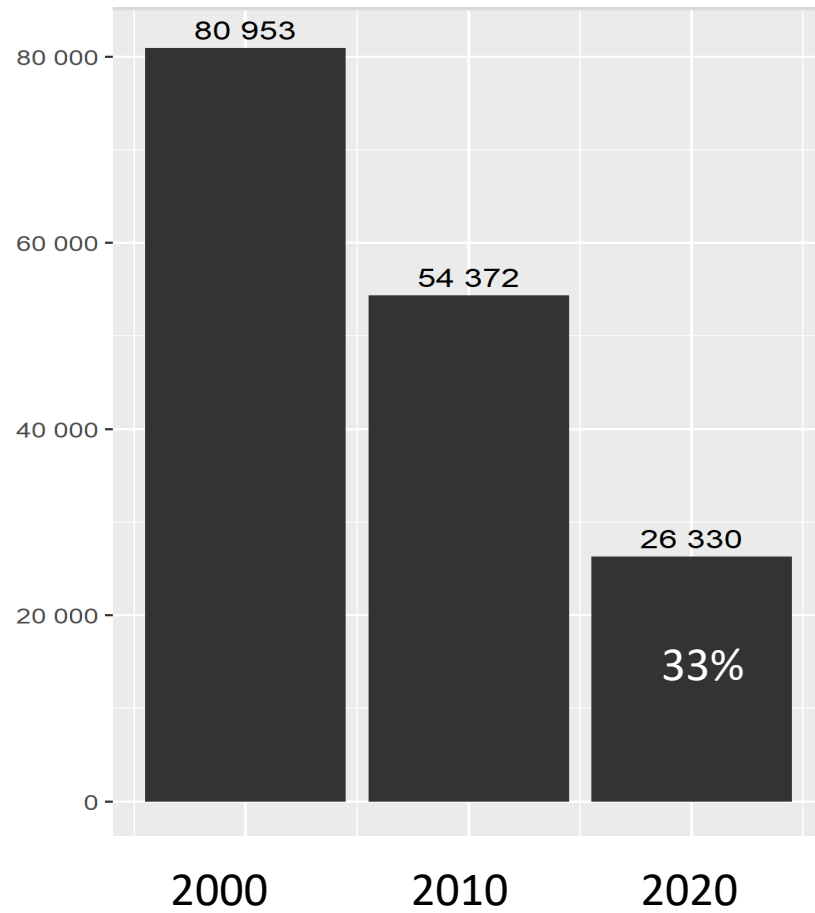
- to differentiate breeding farms from riding and training centers (later called« farms -with horses for- Use»)

Method : a typology with 9 groups in each census



1- General trends on the period

Number of farms with equines



farms with horses/
Total farms in FSS

12 %

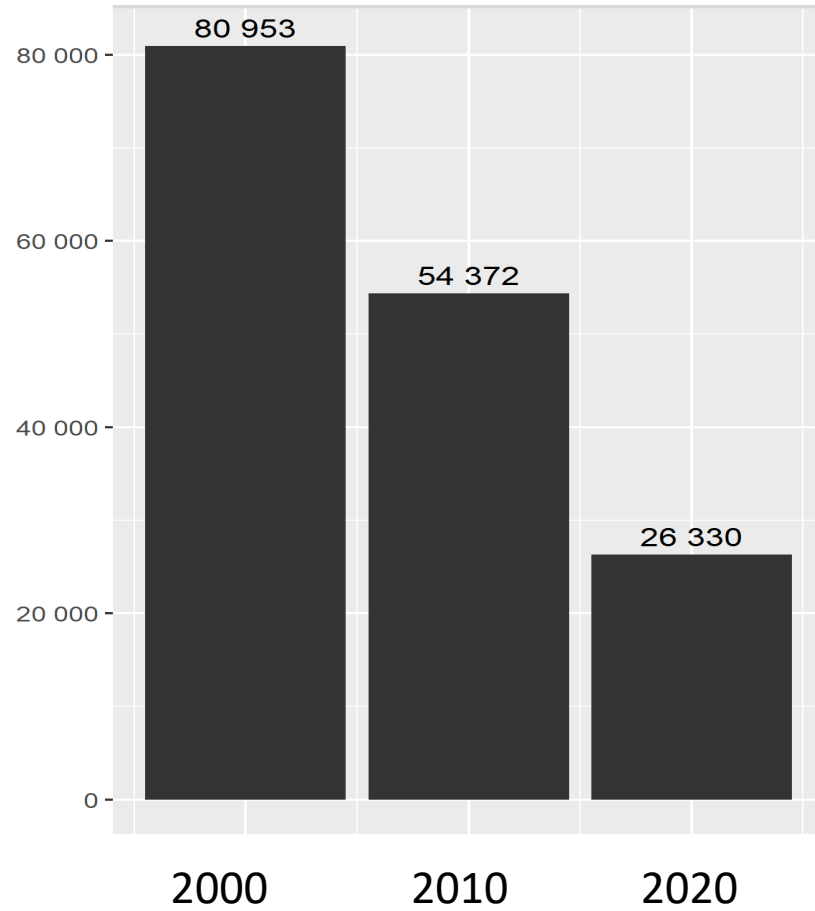
10 %

6 %

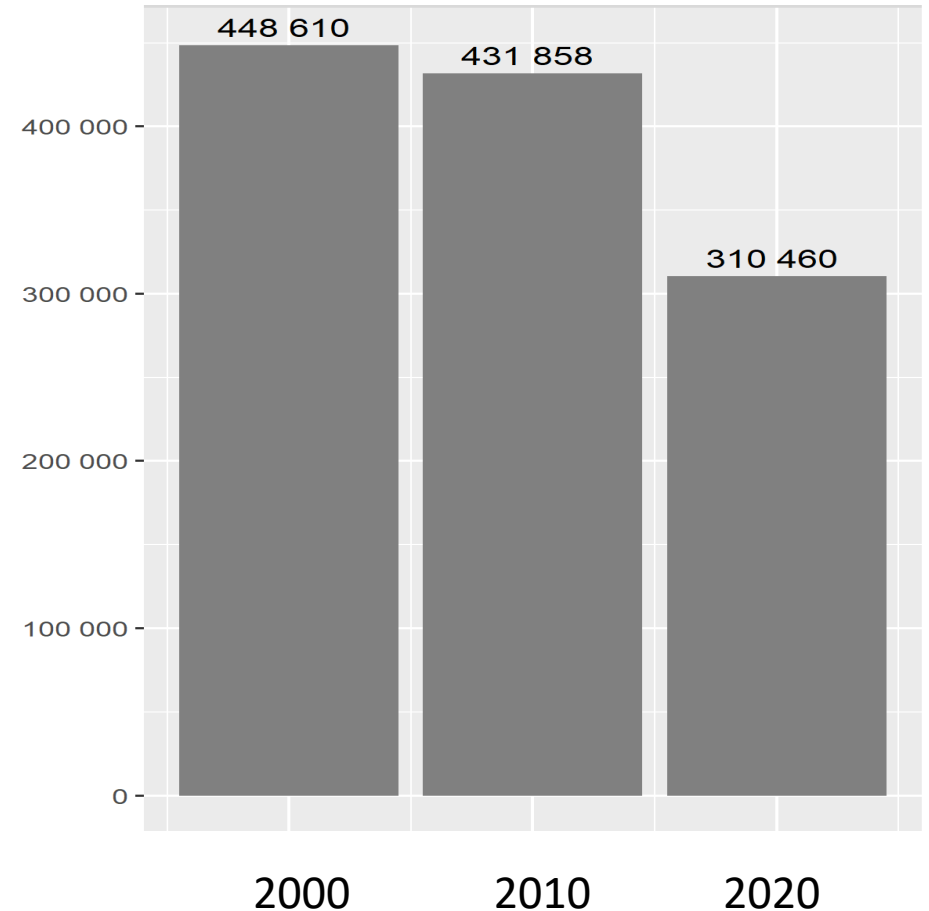
Results

1- General trends on the period

Number of **farms** with equines



Number of **equines**



farms with horses/
Total farms in FSS

12 %

10 %

6 %

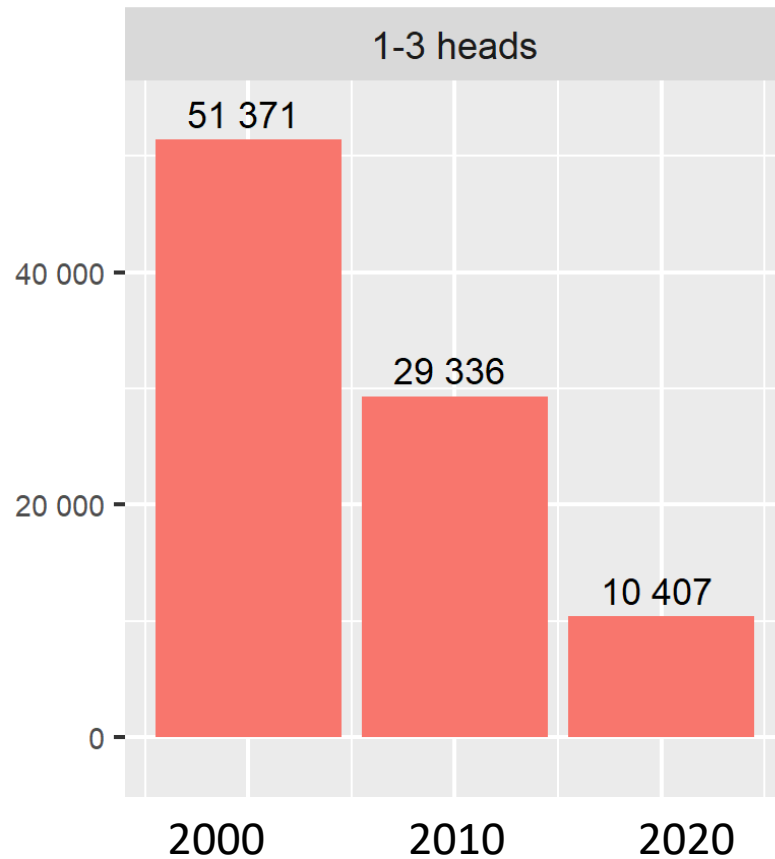
Average equine herd
(number of heads)

6

8

12

2- Evolution of the number of farms per type



farms with small herds (1-3 equines) decreased a lot :
Their number in 2020 represented only 20% of the number 2000

Possible reasons :

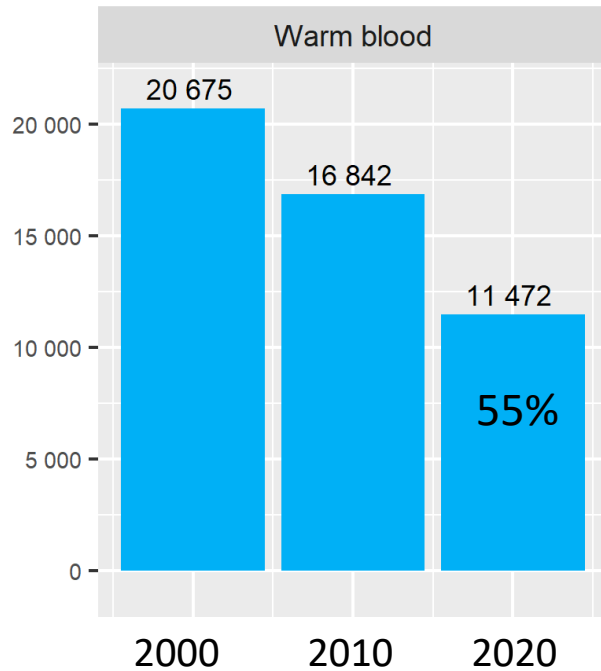
- A real decrease of the number of this type
- Farmers did not declare very few equine livestock
- In 2020, new national constraints aimed to limit the survey of farms with only small equine herds.

Results

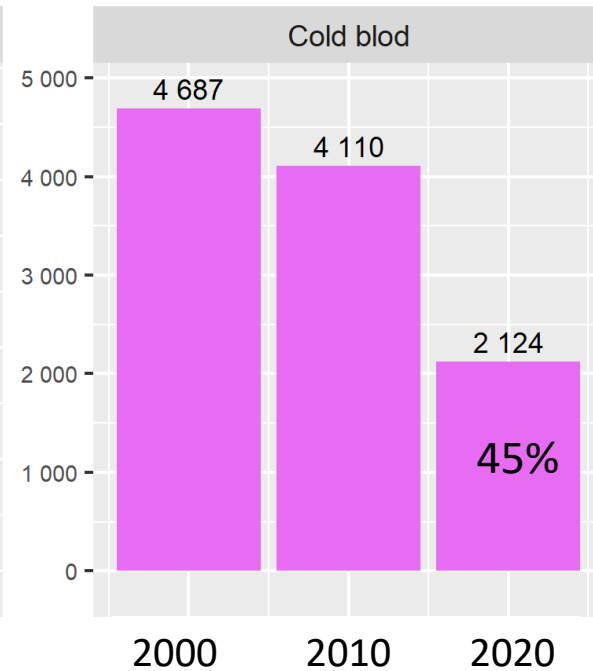
2- Evolution of farm numbers according to the type of breeds

The number of farms with larger herds decrease less, and differently per breed type.

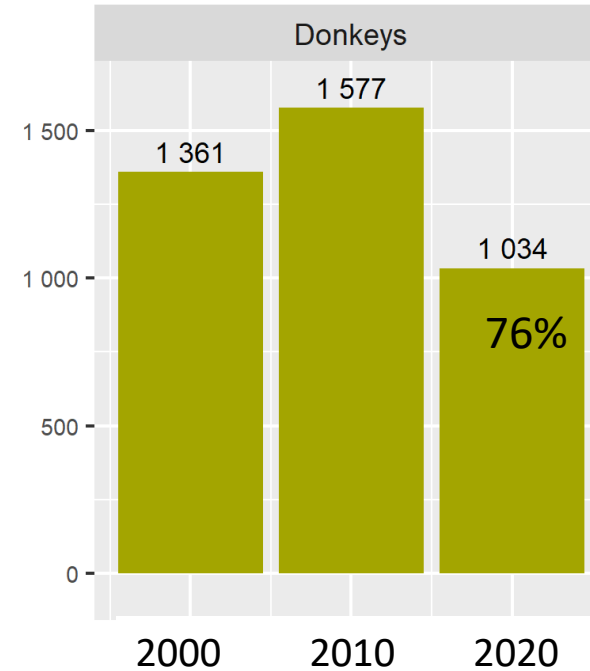
Farms with 4 equines and above



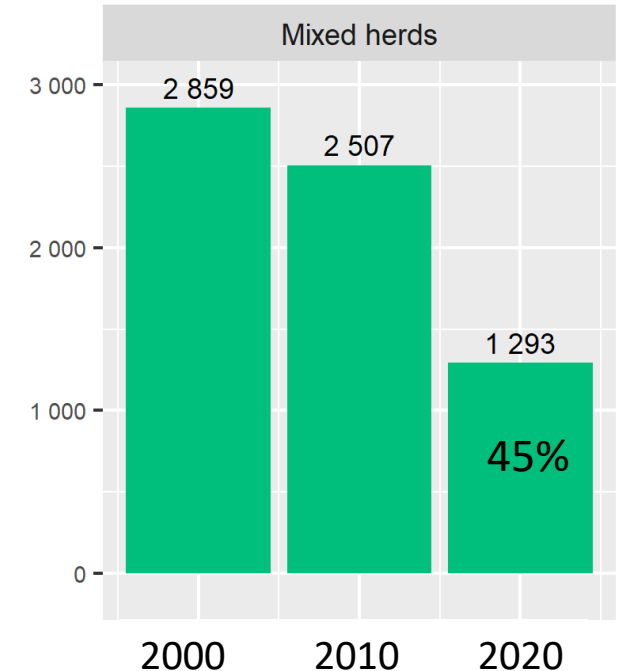
Regular decrease at each period



Important decrease
between 2010 and 2020
(significant reduction of national
public aids for this sector on this
period)



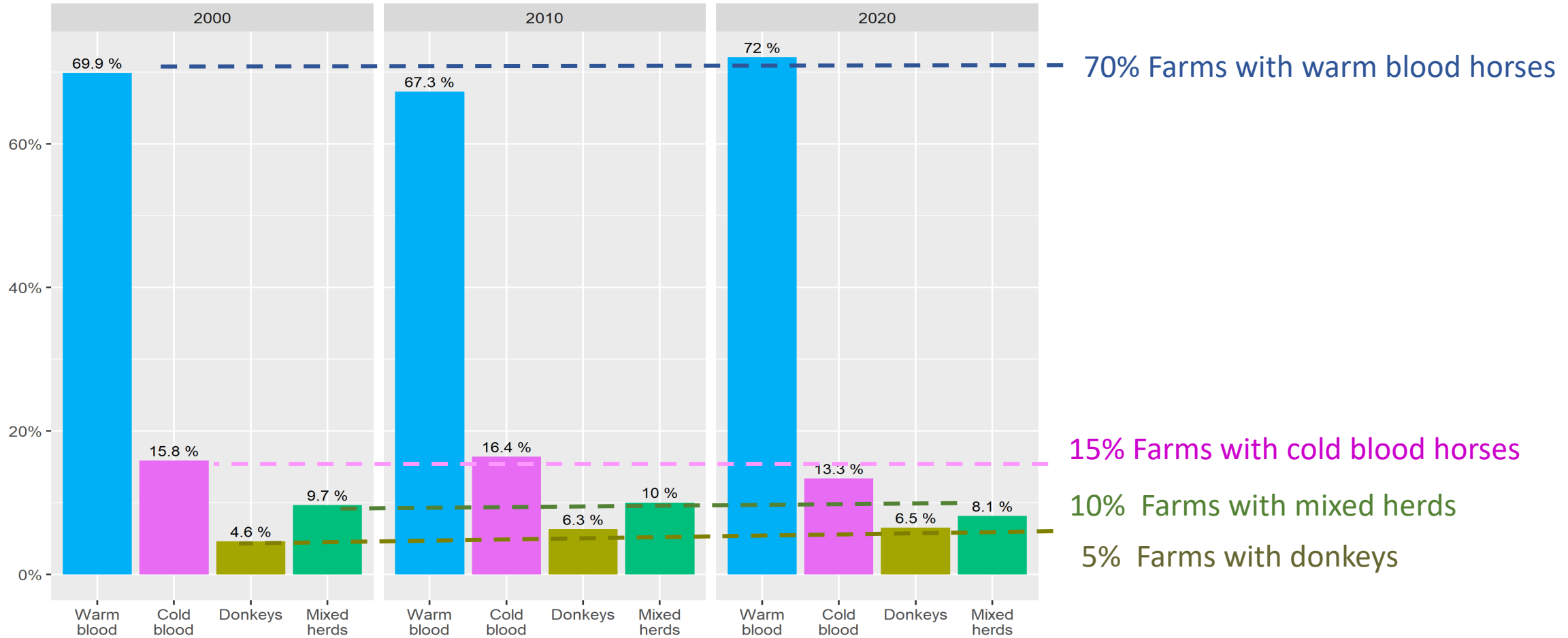
Variations ?
*few farms and little
information on this sector*



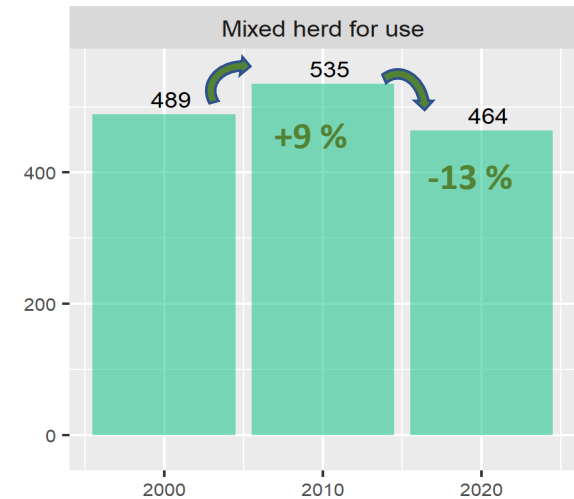
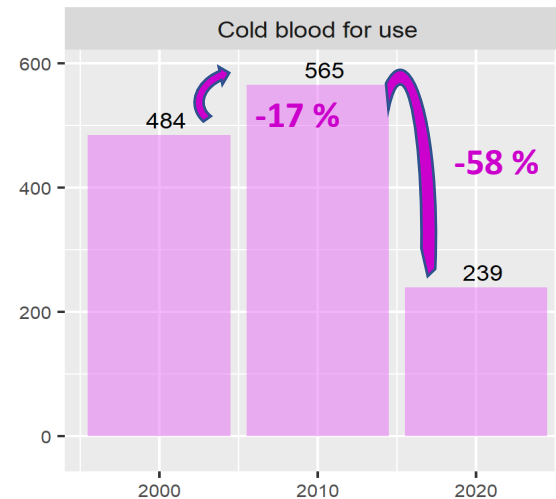
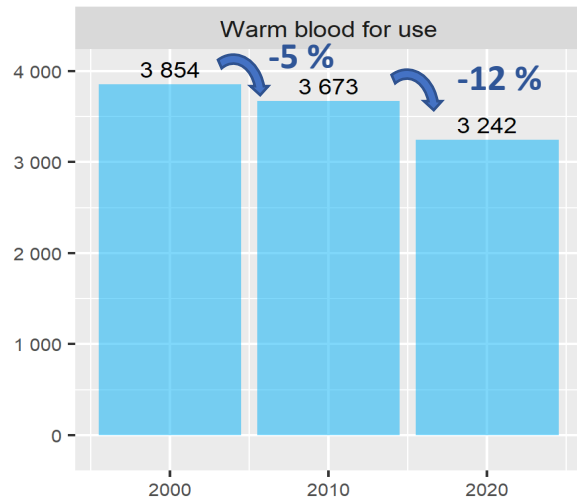
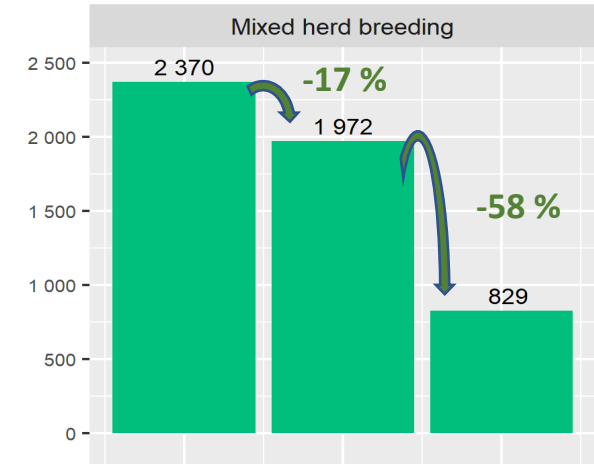
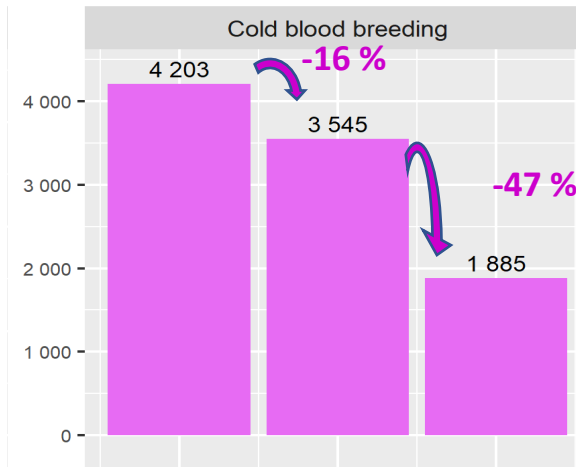
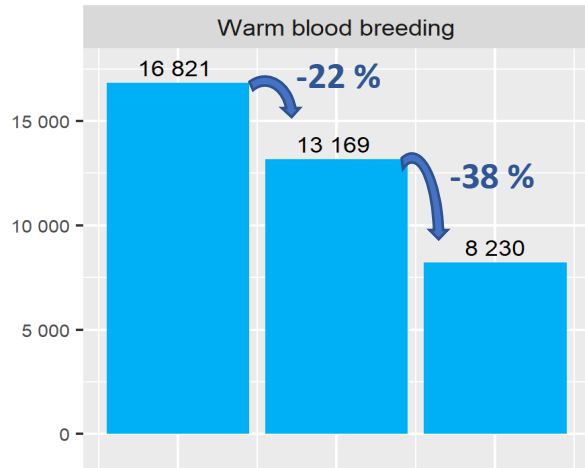
decreases similar to farms
with cold blood horses

2- Evolution of part of breed types

Farms with 4 heads and above



2- Evolution of farm types according to production objectives of horses: breeding or use

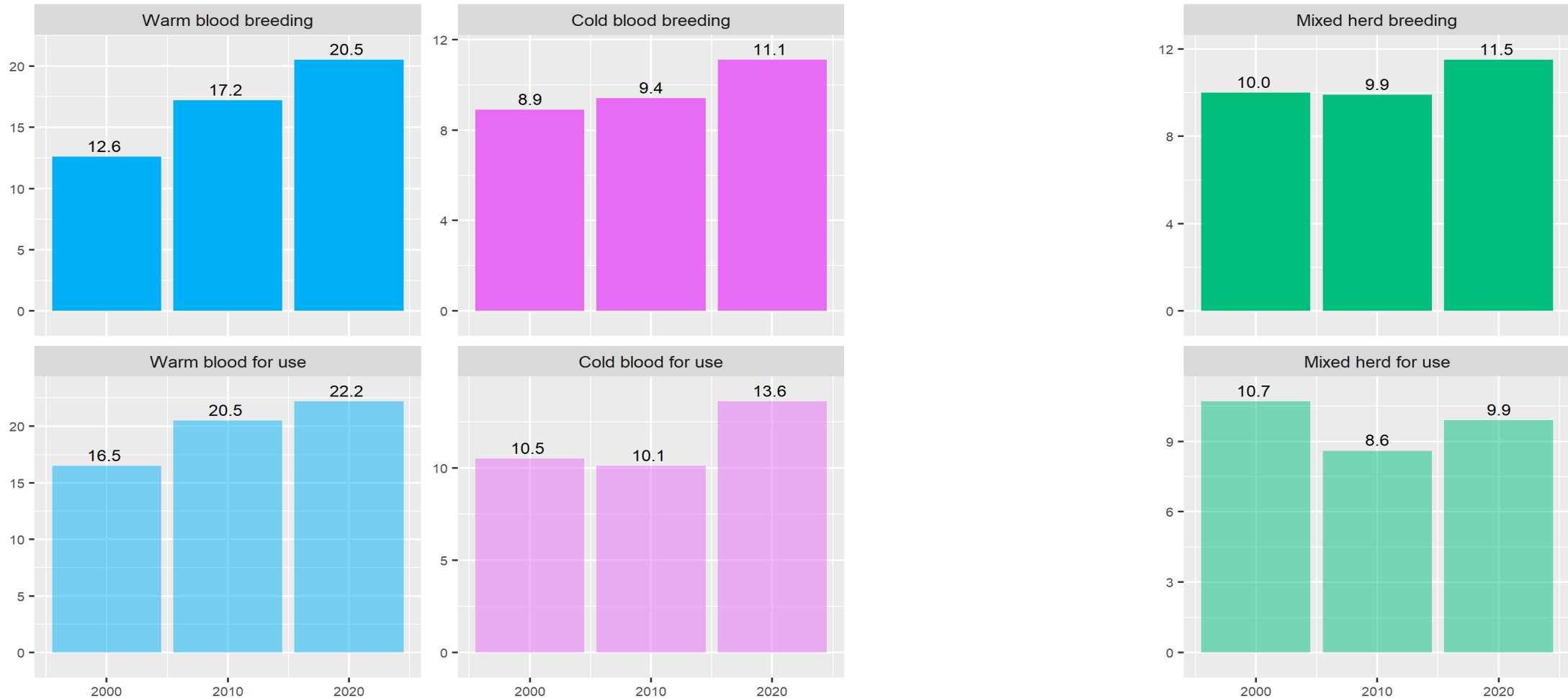


Farms with horses for use were fewer than breeding farms regardless of breed type.

Their number staid more stable in warm blood and mixed types.

(a French law in 2005, agreed the agricultural status for all activities with horses even if only horses for use)

3- Evolution of the average equine herd per farm type



the average herd size staid higher on farms for use than for breeding in warm blood and cold blood types.

There were no significant tendencies in mixed herds.

Conclusion: take home message

- **The French Farm Structure Survey (FSS) gathered data on an important sample of the horse industry:**
 - The number of horses represented between 30 % into 50 % of the total livestock according to the census.
 - A great diversity of keepers of different kinds of animals (from donkeys to race horses), and the only base with data on keepers of very small herds.
- **This typology highlighted farms sensitivities variable with breed types and production objectives to the economic context and French policies.**
- Decreases in the number of farms with equine could be explained by the French context of agriculture and specific constraints to survey farms with horses.
- Increases of the herd size highlighted the professionalisation of equine activities in agriculture.

Perspectives

- Now, we are studying trajectories of farms with equines on the three periods: if they were present or not in each survey and if they kept equines each time.
- But this analysis will be presented another time ...



Thanks
for your attention