



# Agriculture Industry in Shropshire

June 2021



# Structure of the Agricultural Industry in Shropshire at June 2021

## Results of the Defra June Survey of Agriculture (Released July 2022, Defra Farm Statistics, UK) Summary Report and Analysis Autumn 2022

The June Survey of Agriculture details land and crop areas, livestock populations and agricultural workforce estimates for England, the UK and Local Authority as of 1st June each year. The results come from the long-running June surveys of agriculture and horticulture that are carried out each year in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The information includes long-term trends or detailed results for different types of farms, farm size or geographical area. The series is updated as new results become available.

On average the survey sample size is small to reduce the burden on farmers; however, every 3 to 4 years a larger sample survey is run and every ten years a Census is undertaken. This enables good quality estimates for detailed geographies in those years. The latest geographical data available is for the June 2021 Census; prior to that a larger sample survey was run in 2016. Geographical breakdowns at local authority level are only available in these years. National data is available more frequently.

This report will look at two aspects of the survey: firstly, land and livestock data and secondly labour and workforce data.

To put into context agriculture is a large part of Shropshire life and economy.

- Shropshire has the largest number of farm holdings out of all county and unitary authorities in England.
- Shropshire is the ninth largest county and unitary authority in terms of the amount of farmed land, the largest being North Yorkshire.
- Shropshire has the sixth largest amount of people working in agriculture out of all county and unitary authorities, behind Devon, North Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Cornwall and Somerset.

### Key Points

- In 2021 there were 3,686 farm holdings in Shropshire.
- A decline of 33 (0.89%) farm holdings since 2016.
- A decrease in the amount of farmland between 2016 and 2021 from 264,325 hectares to 257,821 hectares. This is due to a small decline in larger farms over 100 hectares and an increase in smaller farms. The longer-term trend shows the amount of farmland has not fallen at the same rate as the number of farms but has declined by 14,000 hectares (5%) since 2007. This is similar to England with a decline of 4%.
- The majority of farmland in Shropshire was grassland (60%) followed by cereals (27%).
- The majority of livestock were poultry (90.8%) followed by sheep (6.6%).
- A 7.7% increase in farm workers between 2013 and 2021, mainly from a growth in full and part time farmers.
- A decline of 10.4% in the amount of casual labour since 2016.
- A longer-term decline in the total workforce and a decline in regular full-time workers but an increase in the proportion of salaried managers and farmers.

## Land and Farm Holdings

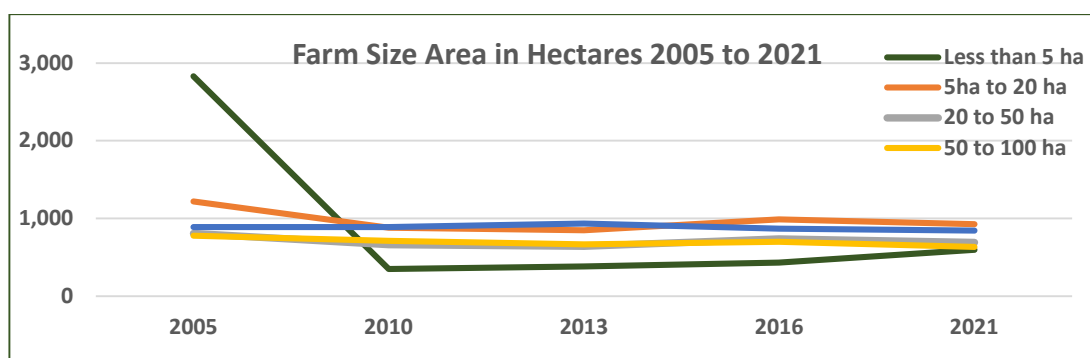
In 2021 there were 3,686 farm holdings in Shropshire. This is a fall of 33 since 2016. In the longer term there has been an increase of 215 or (6%) from the number in 2013 of 3,471 and also a rise from 3,485 holdings in 2010. These increases are due to an increase in the number of smaller farms of less than 5 hectares and between 5 and 20 hectares. The number of larger farms has remained more constant. In 2021 the largest number of farm holdings were between 5 and 20 hectares. (Table 1). Chart 1 shows the decline in smaller farms since 2005. In 2005 farms of less than 5 hectares accounted for 43% of all farms in Shropshire by 2021 this had fallen to 16% (Chart2).

*Please note: The large decline in the number of smaller holdings since 2005 is also due to a change in the way Defra collected the June survey of agriculture and horticulture data which was brought in in 2010. (more details at the end of this report). This will have affected the data significantly.*

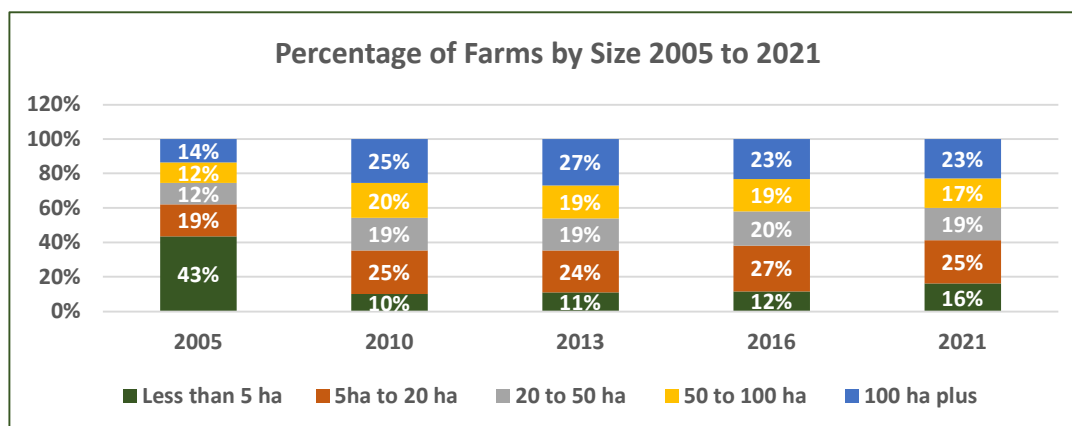
**Table 1: Number of Farm holdings and size in Hectares**

Year	Less than 5 ha	5ha to 20 ha	20 to 50 ha	50 to 100 ha	100 ha plus	Total holdings
2005	2,832	1,219	808	777	888	6,524
2010	350	879	659	711	886	3,485
2013	381	846	643	666	935	3,471
2016	431	988	735	699	866	3,719
2021	595	924	690	633	844	3,686

**Chart 1: Farm Size in Hectares**



**Chart 2: The Percentage of Farms by Size 2005 to 2021**



Despite an increase in holdings between 2010 and 2021, the overall amount of farmed land in this period has decreased from 258,996 hectares to 257,821 hectares a (0.4%) decline (table 2). The decline is larger between 2013 and 2021 as the amount of farmed land in this period, fell from 270,543 hectares to 257,821 hectares, a decline of (4.7%). This can be explained by the fall in the number of larger farms over 100 hectares between 2013 and 2021. This number fell from 935 holdings to 844. There was also a rise in the number of smaller farms less than 5 hectares, 5 to 20 hectares and 20 to 50 hectares. This resulted in a corresponding small decline in the total area farmed.

Since 2013 there has been an increase in the amount of land farmed within smaller holdings of less than 5 hectares, between 5 hectares and 20 hectares and 20 to 50 hectares. This is a similar theme nationally.

Agricultural land has been in decline in the United Kingdom and globally for the last 20 years. Reasons for this include transport infrastructure, building, woodland expansion (which has more than doubled in the last 20 years) nonagricultural use (golf courses, minerals, etc.) and some has been lost to the sea.

**Table 2: Farm Size Area in Hectares**

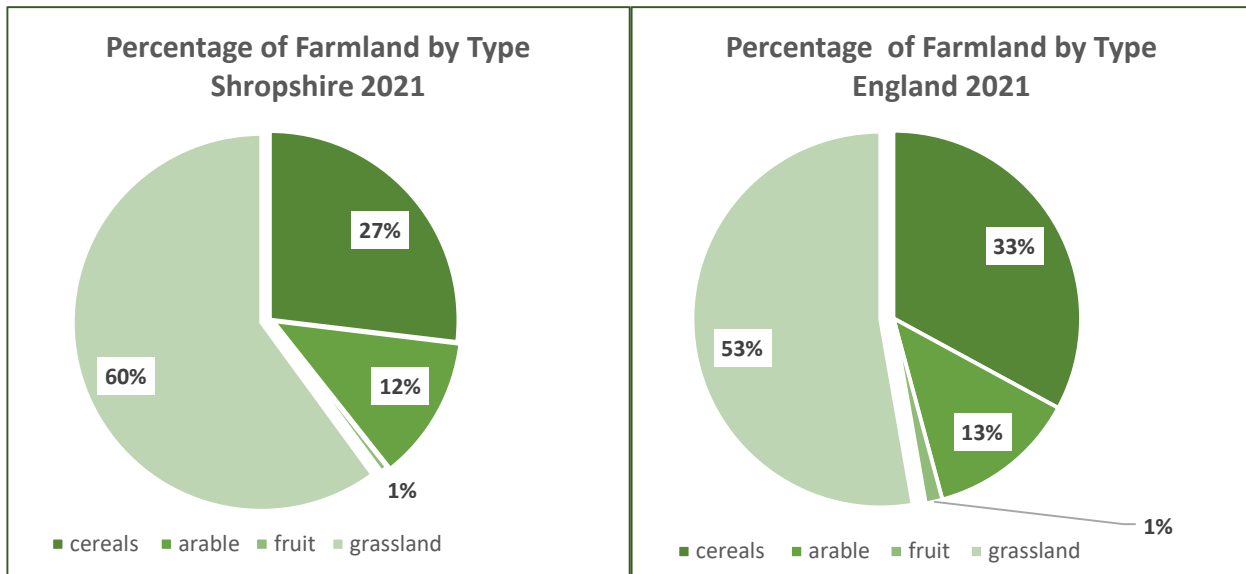
Year	Less than 5 ha	5ha to 20 ha	20 to 50 ha	50 to 100 ha	100 ha plus	Total hectares
<b>2005</b>	*	*	*	*	*	267,827
<b>2010</b>	702	9,622	22,077	52,187	174,408	258,996
<b>2013</b>	842	9,348	21,619	49,021	189,713	270,543
<b>2016</b>	999	11,155	24,782	50,457	176,932	264,325
<b>2021</b>	1,040	9,986	22,623	45,708	178,465	257,821

### Farmland by Type

In 2021 the majority of farmland in Shropshire was grassland (60%) followed by cereals (27%), arable (12%) and fruit (just 1%) see (Chart 1). This is similar to England; however, Shropshire has a greater amount of grassland (60%) compared to (53%) for England. Shropshire also has less cereals (27%) of farmland compared to (33%) in England.

In Shropshire between 2016 and 2021 there has been a 3% decrease in the amount of land used for cereals from 64,489 hectares to 64,704, a 7% drop in arable crops from 32,244 hectares to 29,878, a 2% drop in grassland from 148,084 hectares to 144,438 and a 5% increase in fruit from 1,405 hectares to 1,482. There has been a small decline in the amount of farmed land in Shropshire.

**Chart 3: Farmland by Type**



**Number of Livestock**

In 2021 there were 9,549,701 poultry accounting for (90.8%) of all cattle and livestock, 695,800 sheep (6.6%), 50,696 pigs (0.5%) and 219,630 cattle (2.1%). Since 2007 there has been an increase of nearly double in the number of poultry from 4,934,734 to 9,549,701. There has also been a decrease in pigs from 71,133 to 50,696. Cattle and Sheep have remained at a more consistent level. (NB 2007 has been used for comparison as prior to this livestock has been categorized slightly differently). Shropshire had the fifth highest number of sheep than any other local authority in England (the greatest being North Yorkshire), the sixth greatest amount of cattle and the fourth greatest number of poultry (behind Lincolnshire Herefordshire and Breckland). (Note this is county and unitary councils). Chart 5 shows numbers of cattle, sheep and poultry have changed over time in Shropshire. The number of pigs has remained similar since 2010.

**Chart 4: Livestock**

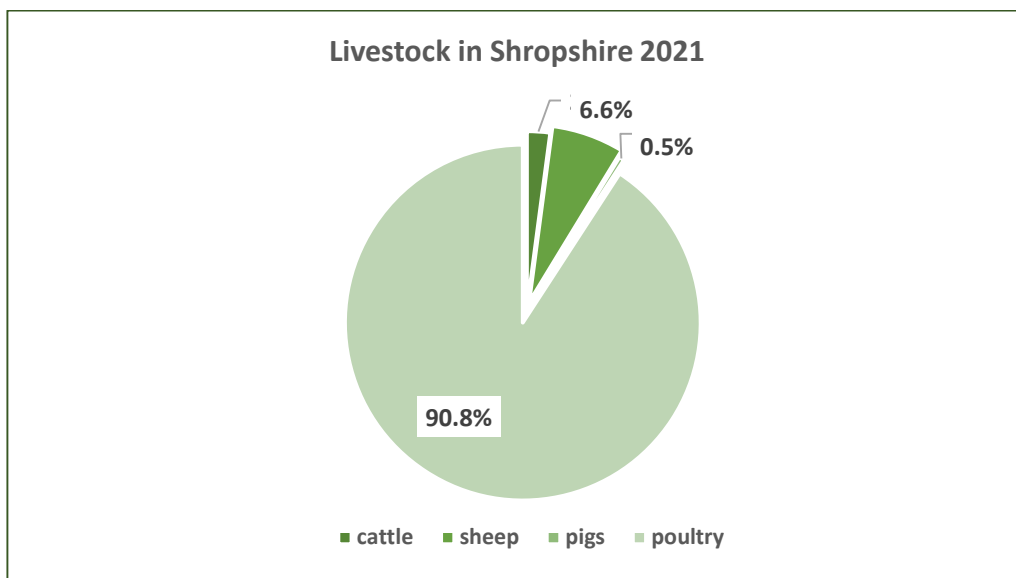
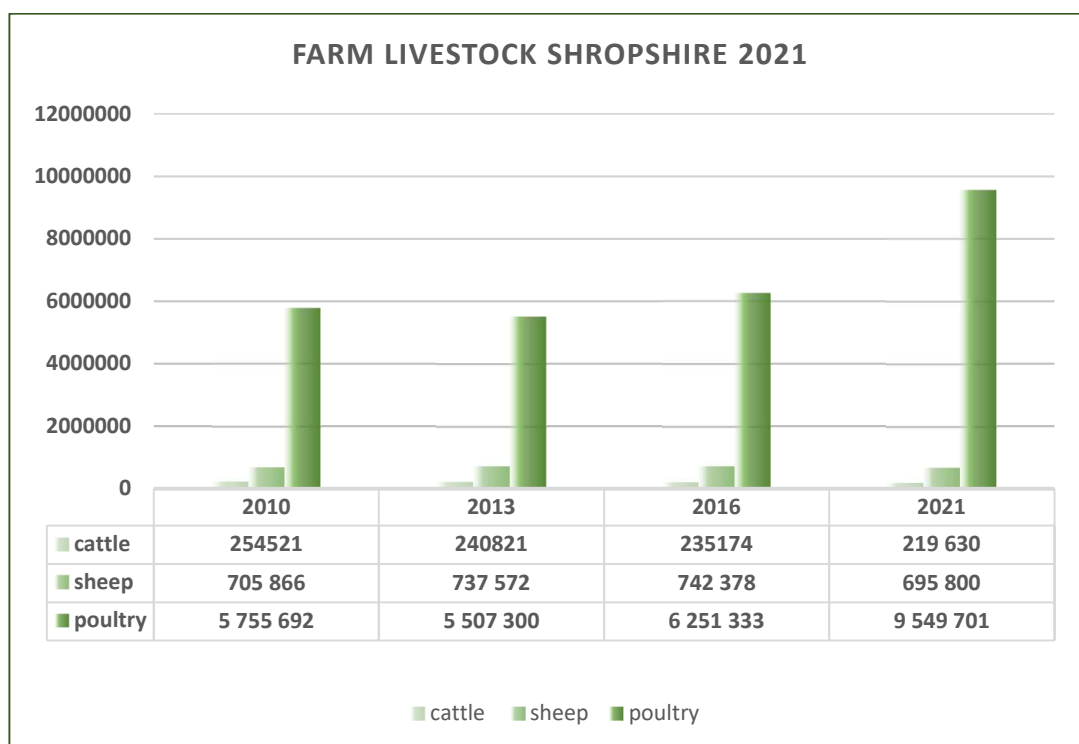


Chart 5: Livestock 2007 to 2016



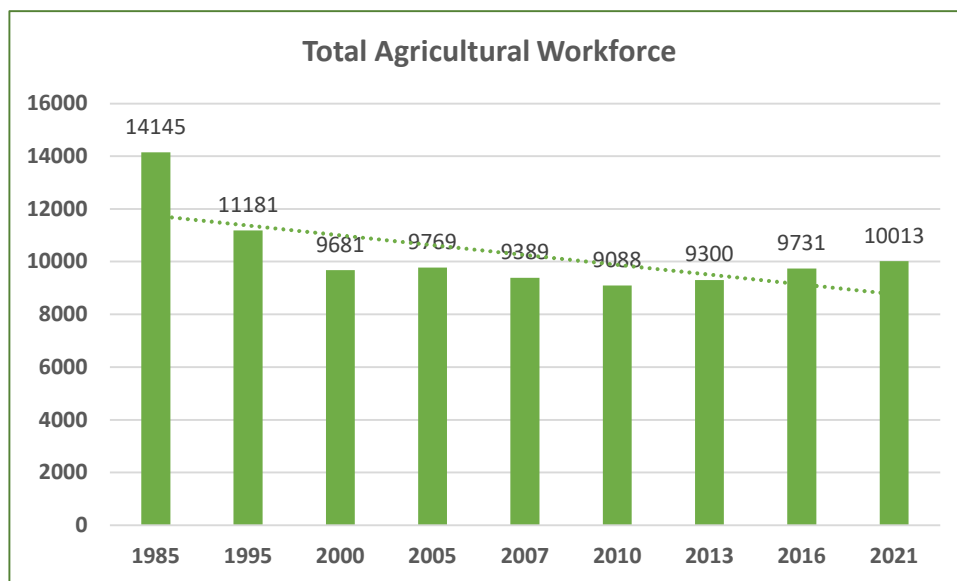
### Agricultural Labour Force

In 2021 there were 10,013 people working in agriculture. This was an increase of 713 or (7.7%) from 9,300 in 2013 and an increase of 2.9% since 2016. The majority of the workforce are farmers, partners, directors and spouses full time (36%). The growth in the total labour market between 2013 and 2021 can be attributed to a rise of 498 or (8.2%) in full time or part time farmers, partners, directors and spouses. Interestingly there has been a rise of 48 or (19%) in the number of salaried managers, all of this rise has taken place since 2016. There has been a large increase of 107 or (14%) in regular part time workers. The number of casual farm workers has declined since 2016 by (10.4%); this is possibly because of the UK leaving the European Union in this time.

Table 3: Farm Labour by Type 2013 to 2021

Farm Labour Type	2013	2016	2021	% difference 2013 to 2021	% difference 2016 to 2021
<b>Farmers, Partners and Directors and spouses fulltime</b>	3,291	3,369	3,559	8.1%	5.6%
<b>Farmers, Partners and Directors and spouses part time</b>	2,802	2,957	3,032	8.2%	2.5%
<b>Salaried managers</b>	252	242	300	19.0%	24.0%
<b>Regular workers fulltime</b>	1,246	1,270	1,301	4.4%	2.4%
<b>Regular workers part time</b>	763	831	870	14.0%	4.7%
<b>Casual workers</b>	946	1,063	952	0.6%	-10.4%
<b>Total labour</b>	9,300	9,731	10,013	7.7%	2.9%

**Chart 6: Total Agricultural Workforce over Time in Shropshire**



There has been a gradual decline in the total workforce since 1985 from 14,145 to 10,013 a decline of (29%). This trend has been mirrored in England. Some of the decline can be explained by increased mechanisation in farming. Since 2013 there has been a slow increase in the workforce from 9,300 in 2013 to 10,013 in 2021.

Table 4 below looks at how the structure of the workforce has changed since 1995 in Shropshire (note 1995 has been used as data for 1985 was categorised differently to 2016). There is a lower number and proportion of full-time regular workers in 2021 compared to 1995. In 1995 there were 2,161 representing 19% of all workers. By 2021 this figure was 1,301 and 13% of all workers in agriculture. There has been a decline in part time workers from 995 in 1995 to 870 in 2016, the proportion remains similar at 9%. The proportion of farmers has increased from 60% in 1995 to 66% in 2021. There has also been an increase in farm managers since 1995 from 134 to 300. Proportionately farm managers made up 3% of the workforce in 2016, compared to 1% in 1995.

**Table 4: Farm Labour Changes in Type 1995 to 2021**

Farm Labour Type	2021	%	1995	%
<b>Farmers, Partners and Directors and spouses fulltime/part time</b>	6,591	66%	6734	60%
<b>Salaried managers</b>	300	3%	134	1%
<b>Regular workers fulltime</b>	1,301	13%	2161	19%
<b>Regular workers part time</b>	870	9%	995	9%
<b>Casual workers</b>	952	10%	1157	10%
<b>Total labour</b>	10,013	100%	11181	100%

*Please note changes to the Agricultural Survey categorisation in 2010 could have a small effect on labour numbers and type.*

Farming and Agriculture remains an important industry in Shropshire. In 2020 agriculture, forestry and fishing accounted for £317 million (5.2%) of total GVA. (Source ONS 2022). The sector accounted for 19.8% of enterprises in Shropshire and 8.2% of employment, compared to 4.6% of enterprises in Great Britain and 1.6% of employment. (Source ONS, BRES 2021, IDBR 2022).

Farm support in the UK is changing. The UK took part in the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for decades. In 2019, the UK received some £4.7 billion of CAP funding. Around 80% of this was provided as 'direct payments' under the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) based broadly on how much land was farmed. A further tranche of CAP money was spent on rural and environmental programmes such as England's Countryside Stewardship (CS) scheme.

Since Brexit, the [Agriculture Act 2020](#), has been passed to provide a legal framework for the Government to develop very different approaches to supporting agriculture in future. The [Government has guaranteed the current annual budget to farmers in every year of this Parliament](#), ending by 2024. However, in England this money will be spent in different ways in future. The Government is phasing out CAP-style direct payments and is introducing payments for farmers to provide public goods such as environmental and animal welfare improvements. These changes are taking place during a seven-year 'Agricultural Transition' period running from 2021.

**Source of all information in this report: Structure of the UK Agricultural Industry in England and the UK at June 2021, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published July 2022. Please see link below.**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-in-england-and-the-uk-at-june>

**Other useful links - Shropshire Economic Profile** <https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/4196/shropshire-economic-profile-january-2017-v2.pdf>

**Note:** *The decline in the number of holdings is due to a change in the way Defra collect the June survey of agriculture and horticulture data. In 2010 Defra changed to only surveying those holdings who had previously recorded "commercial" levels of farming activity. Prior to this Defra surveyed all holdings. This change offered many benefits which included reducing the administrative burden on the smallest holdings.*

*Commercial holdings are classified as any holding with more than 5 hectares of agricultural land, 1 hectare of orchards, 0.5 hectares of vegetables or 0.1 hectares of protected crops, or more than 10 cows, 50 pigs, 20 sheep, 20 goats or 1,000 poultry.*

*All results with the exception of cattle are sourced from the Defra June Survey of Agriculture, a large sample survey sent to representative sample of holdings across England. As a result are based on a sample survey and subject to a degree of sampling error and other bias such as non-response or administrative data errors. The last full Census of Agriculture was in 2021. Other years are based on a smaller sample of surveys.*