

Employment in the Tasmanian Agricultural Sector

Agriculture is a key pillar of the Tasmanian economy. It directly employs 3% of the total Tasmanian workforce and creates a range of downstream employment opportunities, bringing many social benefits to rural and regional communities.

Using data from the 2016 ABS census, this fact sheet summarises employment in the Tasmanian agricultural sector, with a particular focus on changes since the 2011 census.

Total employment in agriculture

There were 7,847 people employed in agriculture in Tasmania in 2016. This represents around 3% of the Tasmanian workforce (236,202 in 2016), or 1.5% of the total 2016 population of 509,565. This is a similar proportion to the 1.4% employed in agriculture at the last census in 2011. In each of the three main agricultural regions (Cradle Coast, North and South), the number of people employed in agriculture has increased by around 20% since 2011.

Sheep and beef

The largest category of employment in the agricultural sector is Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain farming with 2,451 people in 2016. The number of people employed in this category has fallen by 16.8% since 2011. Over the same period, meat cattle numbers have remained relatively steady, while total sheep and lamb numbers have decreased by approximately 13%.

This suggests that the reduced number of people employed in this category in recent time is due to efficiency gains with fewer employees per head of livestock, as well as a shift away from sheep farming. The increase in wool prices since October 2016 appear to have halted the decline in sheep numbers. The number of people employed in shearing services increased from 66 to 103 over the 2011-2016 period.

Growing employment in horticulture

Several key irrigation schemes were completed in the period between 2011 and 2016, opening regions traditionally suited to grazing and broadacre cropping to more intensive enterprises such as horticulture. There has been a 36.5% increase in the number of people employed in fruit growing since 2011, with a large proportion of this increase the result of major expansions in intensive berry production in the North and North West of Tasmania.

Fruit picking is particularly dependent on seasonal workers. Last harvest season, Fruit Growers Tasmania estimated that between 6,000 and 8,000 workers were required to harvest the Tasmanian fruit crop. Expansion continues to create a high demand for pickers during the peak season of December to February, with berry, cherry and pome fruit growers expecting this demand to grow with continuing increases in production over the next five years.



Employment changes in other industries

The number of people employed in poultry farming (including egg production) has increased from 90 to 131 people since 2011 due to an increase in people employed in the North and North West of the state.

Another industry to have experienced significant growth in the number of people employed is Dairy Cattle Farming, increasing by 23.6% since the 2011 census to 1,565 people in 2016. This has been accompanied by a 6% increase in dairy cow numbers from 2010-11 to 2015-16, and a 25% increase in milk production over the same period. Dairy production continues to trend upward with milk production reaching 913 million litres in 2017-18, 29% higher than in 2010-11.

Vegetable production, a major industry with over 900 employees, remained steady over the 2011-16 period.

Background and methodology

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) conducts an Agricultural Census and a Population Census every five years, providing data relating to employment in the Tasmanian agricultural sector. However, changes in reporting between each census mean that employment figures for some agricultural industries are not directly comparable between years.

In order to permit comparison between 2011 and 2016 employment numbers, we have restricted analysis in this fact sheet to only include employment categories equivalent to those reported in Table 1 of the previous [fact sheet](#).

[The Tasmanian Agri-Food ScoreCard](#) provides further information about the economic value of each of the industries mentioned in this fact sheet.

Contact: AgriGrowth Tasmania

Phone: 03 6165 3225

Email: AGT.Admin@dpipwe.tas.gov.au

Visit: www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au

Table 1. Number of people employed in the Tasmanian agricultural sector (ABS 2016 Census). Items marked with an asterisk (*) were not included in the analysis of the 2011 census provided in the previous [fact sheet](#), and have also been omitted from calculations in this fact sheet. Total values may not exactly match the sum of smaller values due random adjustment by the ABS to maintain confidentiality.

Category of Employment	Cradle Coast	North	South	Tasmania
<i>Agriculture, not further defined</i>	288	435	237	960
<i>Nursery and Floriculture Production</i>	141	55	152	348
<i>Mushroom and Vegetable Growing</i>	544	167	192	903
Fruit and Tree Nut Growing, not further defined	26	43	79	148
Grape Growing	6	98	115	219
Berry Fruit Growing	118	121	45	284
Apple and Pear Growing	36	47	157	240
Stone Fruit Growing	7	12	67	86
Olive Growing	3	3	3	9
Other Fruit and Tree Nut Growing	4	6	14	24
<i>Fruit and Tree Nut Growing total</i>	201	323	479	1003
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Farming, not further defined	6	7	6	19
Sheep Farming (Specialised)	36	360	374	770
Beef Cattle Farming (Specialised)	532	471	172	1175
Beef Cattle Feedlots (Specialised)	5	20	0	25
Sheep-Beef Cattle Farming	29	155	109	293
Grain-Sheep or Grain-Beef Cattle Farming	17	52	25	94
Rice Growing	0	0	0	0
Other Grain Growing	13	36	26	75
<i>Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Farming total</i>	633	1094	714	2441
<i>Dairy Cattle Farming</i>	915	563	87	1565
<i>Poultry Farming</i>	58	27	46	131
<i>Deer Farming</i>	0	3	3	6
<i>Other Crop Growing</i>	9	12	36	57
<i>Other Livestock Farming</i>	28	73	40	141
Agriculture total	2805	2756	1994	7555
<i>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Support Services, not further defined*</i>	3	0	5	8
<i>Forestry Support Services*</i>	33	56	42	131
Agriculture and Fishing Support Services, not further defined	9	11	7	27
Shearing Services	3	61	39	103
Other Agriculture and Fishing Support Services*	173	150	80	403
<i>Agriculture and Fishing Support Services total*</i>	184	221	120	525
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Support Services total*	215	278	164	657
<i>Fishing, Hunting and Trapping, not further defined*</i>	8	14	15	37
<i>Fishing*</i>	121	99	264	484
<i>Hunting and Trapping</i>	0	3	7	10
Fishing, Hunting and Trapping total*	134	116	289	539
Aquaculture total*	253	129	1198	1580
Forestry and Logging total*	256	334	300	890
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, not further defined	56	43	36	135
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHING TOTAL	3722	3669	3988	11379
TOTAL AGRICULTURE USING 2011 CATEGORIES	2889	2884	2074	7847

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Table 2. Changes in employment for different categories in the Tasmanian agricultural sector. Where employment has increased between 2011 and 2016, categories are shaded blue. All data are based on 2011 and 2016 ABS censuses.

Category of Employment	2010-11	2015-16	Change (%)
Dairy Cattle Farming	1266	1565	23.6%
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Farming	2947	2451	-16.8%
Poultry Farming	90	131	45.6%
Other Livestock Farming (including deer farming and beekeeping)	154	147	-4.5%
Hunting and Trapping; Agriculture and Fishing Support Services; Shearing Services	91	140	53.8%
Fruit and Tree Nut Growing	740	1010	36.5%
Vegetable and Mushroom Production	928	903	-2.7%
Nursery and Floriculture Production (including Turf Growing)	227	348	53.3%
Other Crop Growing	69	57	-17.4%
Undefined Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	472	1095	132.0%
Total	6984	7847	12.4%

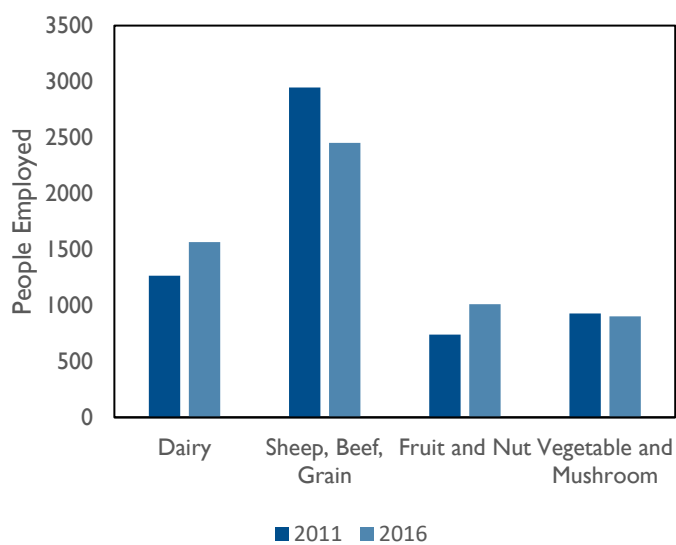


Figure 1. Major agricultural employers in Tasmania. The number of people employed in dairy cattle farming, sheep, beef cattle and grain farming, fruit and tree nut growing, and vegetable and mushroom production is shown for 2011 and 2016. All data based on 2011 and 2016 ABS censuses.