

Land Use in Germany

The size of Germany is approximately 138,000 sq. mi., of which 53% is taken up by agriculture, 29% by forests, 13% by housing and transport, and 5% by miscellaneous (half of which are surfaces of water). Naturally, these proportions change mainly due to the constant increase in land requirements for housing and transport and a simultaneous decrease in the use of land for agricultural purposes.

German forests cover a total area of 41,000 sq. mi. Most of the forest land is found in the uplands and mountains. The northern forests of Germany are predominately a mixture of oak and birch, whereas the southern forests are a mixture of spruce and fir. The states of Rhineland-Palatinate and Hesse have the greatest percentage of their surface in forests, with 40.5% and 39.8% respectively.

With 74,000 sq. mi., agricultural land-use covers the greatest part of Germany. Especially Bavaria (32,690 hectares) and Lower-Saxony (26,190 hectares) are the biggest producers of agricultural goods. The number of farms in Germany however is decreasing: Between 2001 and 2003 3.1% of all German farms had to shut down. The decline has mainly affected smaller farms up to 30 hectares in size. On the other hand the number of farms that measure 75 hectares and more has increased. The average farm size is 44 hectares.

The importance of organic farms is growing. In fact, the total amount of both organic farms and organic used land has more than doubled during the last ten years: There are now some 15,626 organic farms, with a total area of 696,978 hectares which equals 4%.

(For comparison:	Sweden	13.5%
	Italy	9%
	Austria	8.7%
	Finland	7%)

The number of people employed in agriculture continues to decrease as well; between 1993 and 2003 it decreased by almost 30% to 1.3 million workers.

Germany mainly produces wheat, potatoes, oilseeds, vegetables, sugar, milk, wine, beef and pork.