sciendo
10.2478/eual-2025-0002

EU Agrarian Law
volume XIV.
number 1/2025

THE FARM REGISTER IN ITALY: LEGAL FRAMEWORK, FUNCTIONS, AND A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN MODELS

REGISTER POĽNOHOSPODÁRSKYCH PODNIKOV V TALIANSKU: PRÁVNY RÁMEC, FUNKCIE A POROVNACIA ANALÝZA EURÓPSKYCH MODELOV

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I. Legal Sources and Regulatory Framework

The legal foundation of the farm register is embedded in a network of both European and national regulations, which outline its creation, management, and the functions it serves. The introduction of the farm register was mandated by Article 9 of Presidential Decree No. 503 of December 1, 1999, a cornerstone in the regulatory structure governing the agricultural sector in Italy. This provision required the establishment of a unified and systematic record for all agricultural enterprises involved in farming, agri-food, forestry, and fisheries activities, facilitating administrative harmonization and ensuring transparency in agricultural data management.

The primary objective of the farm register, as initially conceived, was to centralize the information regarding agricultural holdings to streamline administrative processes and enhance the interaction between agricultural enterprises and public authorities[1]. As a mandatory instrument, the register plays a critical role in ensuring that enterprises comply with various legal obligations, including those related to subsidies and grants. Notably, it forms the foundation for accessing

[1] In accordance with Article 25, paragraph 2, of Decree-Law No. 5 of February 9, 2012, the data contained in the farm register have official status in relations with public administrations and serve as a reference for control and monitoring activities carried out by the competent authorities.

Abstract (EN)

The farm register was introduced by Article 9 of Presidential Decree No. 503/1999. It is a mandatory instrument for all entities engaged in agricultural, agri-food, forestry, and fisheries activities. It simplifies administrative procedures and serves as the foundation for accessing support under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and national or regional schemes. Managed within the National Agricultural Information System (SIAN), the register has evolved into an integrated digital platform aimed at enhancing efficiency and transparency. Despite technological advancements, challenges persist in data management and in the interaction with control mechanisms. These difficulties highlight the need for further reforms to simplify the system. This analysis explores the legal framework, procedural aspects, content, and operational challenges of the farm register.

Keywords (EN)

farm register, National Agricultural Information System (SIAN), Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Abstrakt (SK)

Register fariem bol zavedený článkom 9 prezidentského dekrétu č. 503/1999. Je to povinný nástroj pre všetky subjekty zaoberajúce sa poľnohospodárskymi, agropotravinárskymi, lesníckymi a rybárskymi činnosťami. Zjednodušuje administratívne postupy a slúži ako základ pre prístup k podpore v rámci Spoločnej poľnohospodárskej politiky (SPP) a národných alebo regionálnych schém. Register, spravovaný v rámci Národného poľnohospodárskeho informačného systému (SIAN), sa vyvinul na integrovanú digitálnu platformu zameranú na zvýšenie efektívnosti a transparentnosti. Napriek technologickému pokroku pretrvávajú problémy v oblasti správy údajov a interakcie s kontrolnými mechanizmami. Tieto ťažkosti zdôrazňujú potrebu ďalších reforiem na zjednodušenie systému. Táto analýza skúma právny rámec, procedurálne aspekty, obsah a prevádzkové výzvy registra fariem.

Kľúčové slová (SK)

register fariem, Národný poľnohospodársky informačný system (SIAN), Spoločná poľnohospodárska politika (SPP)

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support mechanisms under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and national and regional measures targeting the agricultural sector. Furthermore, the farm register is a necessary condition for the submission of aid applications and serves as the basis for managing relationships with Paying Agencies such as AGEA (Agenzia per le Erogazioni in Agricoltura) and regional Operative Programmes (Ops).

The regulatory framework has evolved continuously, leading to the integration of the farm register into the National Agricultural Information System (SIAN). This sophisticated digital platform was designed to improve the efficiency and transparency of data management. It also enhances interoperability between public databases and allows for a more streamlined flow of information among farmers, public institutions, and regulatory authorities.

The digitalization of the farm register marks a significant milestone in the modernization of the agricultural sector, ensuring more accessible, transparent, and accurate management of agricultural holdings.

However, despite these advancements, operational challenges persist, particularly regarding data management and the system's integration with control mechanisms. The need for periodic updates, the accuracy of data entries, and the ongoing interaction with various control and verification processes pose significant challenges to the system's overall functionality. As a result, there is increasing interest in evaluating potential reforms to simplify and enhance the register's operation. These reforms would aim to address the operational difficulties faced by agricultural enterprises and improve the effectiveness of public funds management.

This chapter will further explore the legal framework governing the farm register, focusing on the sources of law that have shaped its development, the administrative procedures it supports, and the practical implications of its use in the agricultural sector. Additionally, it will address the broader legal context in which the farm register operates, considering its role in managing public funds and ensuring compliance with both European and national regulations. Through a critical examination of its evolution, this analysis will highlight the key legal issues that have emerged and will assess the impact of the farm register on the regulation of agricultural enterprises in Italy and beyond.

1.1 The European Regulatory Framework

The farm register operates within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), serving as a crucial tool for managing farmers' subsidies and monitoring agricultural land use. European legislation has gradually defined a structured and digitalized system to ensure transparency and efficiency in the allocation of public resources to the agricultural sector.

One of the primary legislative references is Regulation (EU) No. 2021/2115[2], which governs CAP strategic plans for the 2023–2027 period. This regulation imposes an obligation on Member States to adopt management and control tools to ensure the proper use of agricultural funds, introducing specific measures for monitoring beneficiary enterprises. Complementary to this framework is Regulation (EU) No. 2021/2116[3], which regulates the financing, management, and monitoring of the CAP, establishing criteria for the digitalized management of farm data and the coordination of Paying Agencies responsible for the distribution of aid to farmers.

Another key reference is Regulation (EU) No. 1306/2013[4], which established the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS)[5], mandating that Member States implement digital registers for tracking agricultural land, livestock, and businesses receiving EU subsidies. The objective of this system is to ensure effective monitoring and prevent the risk of irregularities.

In addition to these general regulatory instruments, several technical regulations establish the operational procedures for managing and controlling agricultural funds. Notably, Delegated Regulation (EU) No. 907/2014[6] and Implementing Regulation (EU) No.

2 European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) No. 2115/2021 of 2 December 2021, establishing rules on support for the strategic plans that Member States must prepare under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and funded by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), repealing European Parliament and Council Regulations (EU) No. 1305/2013 and No. 1307/2013 of 17 December 2013.

3 European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) No. 2116/2021 of 2 December 2021 on the financing, management, and monitoring of the Common Agricultural Policy, and repealing Regulation (EU) No. 1306/2013.

4 European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) No. 1306/2013 of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management, and monitoring of the Common Agricultural Policy, and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No. 352/78, (EC) No. 165/94, (EC) No. 2799/98, (EC) No. 814/2000, (EC) No. 1290/2005, and (EC) No. 485/2008.

5 For further information on this topic, please refer to De Vivo et al. (2005) p.365.

6 Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No. 907/2014 of 11 March 2014 supplementing Regulation (EU) No. 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and Council as regards Paying Agencies and other bodies, financial management, clearance of accounts, guarantees, and the use of the euro.

908/2014[7] govern financial reporting mechanisms and the control of aid access, requiring Member States to adopt strict verification procedures to safeguard the integrity of disbursements.

To ensure transparency in the management of public resources, European legislation requires Member States to establish national farm identification systems, integrated with the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS)[8] and the National Database (BDN)[9]. These instruments allow precise monitoring of declared land areas and agricultural activities, contributing to fraud prevention and the proper management of EU funds.

This set of legal provisions has led to the progressive digitalization[10] of agricultural management, making the farm register not only an administrative tool but also a central element in enterprise oversight and financing in the primary sector.

1.2 The National Regulatory Framework

In Italy, the regulation of the farm register was introduced by Presidential Decree No. 503 of December 1, 1999,[11], which established the Agricultural Enterprises Registry, identifying the register as the primary instrument for collecting and managing information on agricultural sector operators. This decree governs the unique identification of agricultural enterprises through the Unique Farm Code (CUAA)[12] and sets the conditions for data access and updating by competent authorities.

The central role of the farm register was later reaffirmed by Legislative Decree No. 173/1998[13], which, in defining the general principles for the organization of the agricultural sector, recognized it as an essential tool for enterprise monitoring and administrative simplification.

With Ministerial Decree No. 162 of January 12, 2015, the management of the Agricultural Enterprises Registry and the functioning of the farm register were regulated. This decree established the obligation for annual updates and defined verification procedures for the recorded information. Further amendments were introduced by Ministerial Decree No. 99707 of March 1, 2021, which reinforced the update requirements and introduced measures for digitalization and data transparency.

The Agenzia per le Erogazioni in Agricoltura (AGEA) has issued multiple circulars to provide operational guidelines to Paying Agencies and Agricultural Assistance Centers (CAA), ensuring uniform application of the regulations. Among these, AGEA Circular No. 67143[14] of September 12, 2023, defines the farm register as an essential element for all administrative procedures related to the disbursement of EU, national, and regional agricultural subsidies. Subsequently, AGEA Circular No. 81268[15] of November 2, 2023, introduced modifications and additions to the previous circular, updating the provisions governing the farm register.

II. Legislative Developments and Reform Prospects

In recent years, sector-specific legislation has promoted a process of digitalization and the progressive integration of the farm register with other public information systems, including the Land Registry, the Business Register, and fiscal and social security databases. This development aims to simplify administrative requirements for agricultural enterprises, reducing duplicate declarations and improving access

7 Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 908/2014 of 6 August 2014 laying down detailed rules for the application of Regulation (EU) No. 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and Council as regards Paying Agencies and other bodies, financial management, clearance of accounts, control rules, guarantees, and transparency.

8 For further details, see infra paragraph 6.3.

9 The traceability of livestock, with regard to cattle, is regulated by Regulation (EU) No. 2016/429, commonly known as the Animal Health Law, which entered into force on 21 April 2021.

10 The recent migration of the SIAN to the national cloud represents another step towards the digitalization and interoperability of agricultural databases, with implications for the management of the business file and the efficiency of administrative controls.

11 D.P.R. No. 503, 1 December 1999, Regulation laying down rules for the establishment of the Farmer and Fisherman Card and the Agricultural Business Register, in implementation of Article 14, paragraph 3, of Legislative Decree No. 173 of 30 April 1998.

12 The Single Identification Code for Agricultural Enterprises (CUUA) is the tax code and/or VAT number of the enterprise that, in any capacity, engages in relations with the Public Administration.

13 Legislative Decree No. 173 of 30 April 1998, Provisions on Containment of Production Costs and Strengthening of Agricultural Enterprises, pursuant to Article 55, paragraphs 14 and 15, of Law No. 449 of 27 December 1997.

14 AGEA Circular No. 67143 of 12 September 2023, regulating the business file, which forms the basis for the submission of aid applications under the FEAGA and FEASR Funds, for national and regional agricultural aid, as well as for the issuance of certificates and registration in agricultural registers. Available at: https://www.agea.gov.it/documents-apigw/documents/d/agea/circolare-agea-2023-67143-del-12-09-23-fascicolo-aziendale

15 Available at: https://www.agea.gov.it/documents-apigw/documents/d/agea/circolare-agea-2023-81268-del-02-11-23-modifica-e-integrazione-pascolamento-1

to information by competent authorities. At the same time, enhanced data interoperability allows for stricter and more effective oversight of public subsidies, mitigating potential irregularities in resource allocation.

Despite these regulatory and technological advancements, several operational challenges remain, particularly regarding the management of land tenure rights and the difficulty of ensuring timely and uniform data updates. The fragmentation of responsibilities among various entities poses an additional obstacle, as overlapping roles between Regions, AGEA, Paying Agencies, and Agricultural Assistance Centers (CAA) complicate the implementation of standardized procedures nationwide.

Another critical issue concerns aligning national legislation with the new CAP 2023–2027[16], which has introduced advanced monitoring systems, including satellite observation and automated land use controls. These tools could significantly impact the structure and functions of the farm register, necessitating further revisions of national regulations to ensure full compliance with European standards and greater efficiency in administrative checks.

The evolving regulatory landscape raises key questions regarding the future reform of the farm register, particularly concerning the dematerialization of procedures, the simplification of declaration obligations, and the centralization of data within a single platform interconnected with other public databases. The following analysis will explore the operational aspects of establishing and managing the farm register, highlighting the main practical challenges and potential future developments, with the objective of identifying solutions that ensure greater efficiency, transparency, and uniformity in access to public support mechanisms.

III. Establishment and Updating of the Farm Register

The farm register serves as the primary administrative instrument for managing information related to agricultural enterprises and constitutes the official reference for all interactions with public authorities. Consequently, it is designed as a dynamic tool that must be continuously updated to accurately reflect the structural and operational characteristics of the enterprise[17].

Its function extends beyond the mere initial registration of enterprise data; it also encompasses the management of subsequent structural and operational modifications over time. Proper maintenance of the farm register is a fundamental requirement for accessing various support mechanisms, including direct payments under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), funding from Rural Development Programs (RDPs), and national or regional incentives. Failure to establish or update the register in a timely manner may result in sanctions, exclusion from benefits, or even the recovery of previously disbursed aid.

3.1 General Principles and Mandatory Nature

The farm register must necessarily be established before applying for any form of public funding. Its purpose is to systematically collect and organize, both in paper and electronic format, all administrative, cadastral, economic, and production-related data of the enterprise.

The obligation to maintain a farm register applies to various categories of entities operating in the primary sector. It is mandatory for individual agricultural enterprises, provided they hold a VAT number or are registered with the Chamber of Commerce, as well as for agricultural companies and cooperatives[18] engaged in farming activities. Additionally, it applies to public and private entities managing agricultural land or agroforestry activities.

To establish the register, the enterprise must contact the competent Paying Agency[19], which is determined based on the legal headquarters of the company or, in the case of individual enterprises, the residence of the farmer. If the farmer prefers not to manage the register directly, they may delegate its administration to an Agricultural Assistance Center (CAA)[20] by

16 On 2 December 2021, the agreement on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was formally adopted. The new legislation, which entered into force on 1 January 2023, paves the way for a fairer, greener, and more results-oriented CAP.

17 It is necessary to keep the business file updated, in accordance with the procedures defined in Annex 3 of AGEA Coordination Circular No. 67143 of 12 September 2023.

18 See Tedioli, (2025), p. 28.

19 Paying Agencies are services or entities from EU countries and, where applicable, their regions, responsible for the management and control of expenditures from the two funds of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

20 Agricultural Assistance Centres (CAA) are private entities focused on simplifying procedures and administrative obligations for agricultural businesses, as well as providing consultancy for the management and development of agricultural activities. They are delegated by AGEA to process applications, upon written authorization from the business owner, related to Paying Agencies, requests for incentive payments, premiums, and indemnities in the agricultural sector.

signing a specific mandate authorizing a specialized entity to handle the register on their behalf.

Upon completion of the registration procedure, the enterprise is officially recorded in the Agricultural Enterprises Registry and assigned a Unique Farm Code (CUAA). This alphanumeric code serves as the primary reference for all administrative operations of the enterprise, facilitating not only access to funding but also improving transparency and efficiency in interactions with public authorities.

3.2 Registration Procedure and Required Documentation

The process of establishing the farm register follows a standardized procedure defined by AGEA's[21] operational instructions, aimed at ensuring uniformity in the collection and management of farm-related data. In order to complete the registration, the farmer or the legal representative of the enterprise is required to submit a set of documents that allow for the precise identification of the agricultural holding and its operational structure.

First and foremost, the applicant must provide proof of identity, including a valid identification document and tax code, which are necessary to verify the personal details of the farm owner. For businesses registered with the Chamber of Commerce, such as agricultural companies or cooperatives, the submission of an up-to-date Chamber of Commerce registration certificate is mandatory. This document confirms the legal nature of the entity and provides details on its administrative status.

A fundamental aspect of the registration process is the demonstration of legal entitlement over the land managed by the enterprise. The farmer must present valid land tenure documents, which may include ownership deeds, lease agreements, loan-for-use contracts (comodato), or public concessions. These documents are essential to prove the legal availability of the agricultural land associated with the farm register and to ensure compliance with the requirements for accessing CAP subsidies and other support measures.

In addition to land tenure documents, the enterprise must submit cadastral extracts and farm maps, which serve to link the declared agricultural areas with their actual land use. If the farm operates within the livestock sector, further documentation is required, including information on the size of the herd and the types of animals raised. This data is recorded in the national livestock database and is essential for verifying compliance with health and safety regulations, as well as for determining eligibility for specific livestock-related subsidies.

Another key requirement for registration concerns financial data. Farmers must provide details of a bank account to which any payments related to CAP subsidies and other public financial support will be credited. This ensures the traceability of payments and aligns with European Union regulations on financial transparency.

Once the registration process is completed, the agricultural enterprise is granted access to the National Agricultural Information System (SIAN). This digital platform allows farmers to consult and update their data in real time. The SIAN plays a crucial role in simplifying administrative procedures. It enables farmers to manage subsidy applications, track payment statuses, and comply with regulatory requirements efficiently and transparently.

3.3 Obligation to Update and Modifications to the Farm Register

Updating the farm register is a fundamental obligation for agricultural enterprises, as it ensures that the recorded data remains aligned with the actual conditions of the business. The proper maintenance of this register is not only essential for administrative purposes but is also a prerequisite for benefiting from financial support under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), as well as from other national and regional aid schemes.

According to Ministerial Decree No. 162/2015[22] and the most recent AGEA Operational Instructions[23], every farmer is required to promptly report any changes that may affect the identification or production structure of the enterprise. Among the modifications requiring immediate updates are changes in ownership or business management, such as transfers, mergers, or successions, which result in the transfer of rights and obligations to new legal entities. Another key aspect

[21] In particular, the Operational Instructions No. 26 of 18 March 2024 outline the operational procedures for the establishment and updating of the business file, in compliance with EU and national regulations, available at https://www.agea.gov.it/documents-apigw/documents/d/agea/agea-2024-0022453-allegato-istruzionioperative2024_fascicoloaziendale_def_signed

[22] Ministerial Decree No. 162 of 12 January 2015, Simplification of the Management of the CAP 2014–2020.

[23] Reference is made to the Operational Instructions No. 26 of 18 March 2024, which outline the operational procedures for the establishment and updating of the business file, in accordance with EU and national regulations; as well as to the Operational Instructions No. 142 of 20 December 2024, which establish that, starting from 23 December 2024, farmers who have established their business file through the Paying Agency AGEA can begin updating the graphical cultivation plan.

concerns land tenure agreements, which must be updated to reflect any new lease contracts, renewals, or terminations, ensuring the legitimate availability of the agricultural land declared in the register.

Modifications related to farm size and cultivated crops must also be recorded to maintain consistency with administrative declarations and eligibility criteria for financial support. Similarly, livestock enterprises are required to update data concerning the number of animals, changes in herd size, and veterinary records, ensuring compliance with health and safety regulations and avoiding issues with subsidy payments linked to livestock farming.

Beyond structural and production-related modifications, the farm register must also be updated in cases where the enterprise obtains new certifications or adheres to quality schemes, such as organic farming or environmental sustainability programs. These updates are particularly important as they may impact the farm's eligibility for targeted support measures and preferential funding schemes

To ensure compliance, updates to the farm register must be submitted by June 30 of each year. Missing this deadline may result in the suspension of public subsidies, preventing the enterprise from receiving payments until the necessary corrections are made. If the register remains unvalidated for two consecutive years, it is classified as "dormant," and the farm loses access to all CAP-related benefits and other public funding schemes until it rectifies its administrative status.

Given the central role of the farm register in managing public aid and facilitating administrative oversight, farmers must take a proactive approach in ensuring that their records remain accurate and up to date. Regular monitoring and timely updates help prevent legal disputes, financial penalties, and interruptions in the allocation of subsidies, ultimately contributing to the farm's economic stability and regulatory compliance.

3.4 Transfer and Closure of the Farm Register

In addition to being subject to continuous updates, the farm register may also need to be transferred or closed in specific circumstances related to the enterprise's management. The transfer of the register occurs when an agricultural enterprise relocates its legal headquarters or changes its Paying Agency of reference. In such cases, the farmer must formally request the transfer by submitting an application to the new Paying Agency, which then carries out a verification process to ensure that all data recorded in the register is accurate and complete. This review is essential to guarantee the consistency of the farm's administrative records and to prevent any pending issues or irregularities before the transfer is approved. Once the compliance checks are successfully completed, AGEA authorizes the migration of the register into the new management system, allowing the enterprise to continue its activities without administrative disruptions.

Conversely, the farm register must be closed when the agricultural enterprise ceases to exist or no longer meets the legal requirements for registration. Closure may occur at the farmer's request, if the business is permanently discontinued, or by administrative decision, if the enterprise has been inactive for more than two years. In the latter case, prolonged inactivity leads to the farm's automatic removal from the Agricultural Enterprises Registry. A further reason for closure is the death of the farm owner. In such situations, the register may either be transferred to the heirs, provided they continue the agricultural activity, or permanently closed if the enterprise ceases to operate.

These administrative procedures ensure that the farm register remains an effective and reliable tool for the public administration, accurately reflecting the operational status of agricultural enterprises and preventing discrepancies in the management of public funds.

3.5 Consequences of Failing to Maintain the Farm Register

Failure to comply with the obligations related to the establishment, updating, or proper maintenance of the farm register can have significant legal and financial repercussions for an agricultural enterprise. An outdated or missing register results in the automatic exclusion from CAP subsidies and other public support measures, potentially jeopardizing the farm's economic stability[24].

Beyond the loss of financial aid, non-compliance may also lead to administrative sanctions. Depending on the severity of the irregularity, these may include a reduction in the amount of granted subsidies, the suspension or revocation of already approved payments, and, in cases of serious violations, the obligation to reimburse funds previously received.

[24] Cf. Taranto Court, July 6, 2020, No. 1168, which states that the preparation and validation of the farm register, as well as the declaration of updated data to the CAA (Agricultural Assistance Centers), enables the activation of any administrative procedure and constitutes a mandatory requirement for contractual operations and for the enterprise's access to certifications, incentives, or benefits granted under EU or national regulations. In summary, keeping the farm register updated and accurate is an essential prerequisite for conducting agricultural business activities, accessing all forms of benefits related to land cultivation and agricultural exploitation, and facilitating government controls.

If the discrepancies in the register are linked to intentional misconduct, such as false declarations or fraudulent claims, the authorities may impose further penalties, including criminal liability under national and European regulations governing the protection of public financial interests.

Given these potential consequences, it is essential for farmers to ensure that their farm register remains continuously monitored and promptly updated. Any modifications affecting the enterprise's ownership, structure, land tenure, or production activities must be reported to the relevant Paying Agency or Agricultural Assistance Center (CAA) without delay. Proper management of the register not only facilitates regulatory compliance but also serves as a safeguard against administrative disputes and financial risks, ensuring uninterrupted access to public support mechanisms[25].

IV Structure and Contents of the Farm Register

The farm register serves as a single, official administrative archive designed to systematically collect all relevant information concerning an agricultural enterprise. By consolidating data in a structured manner, it ensures transparency and verifiability in dealings with public authorities. The primary function of the register is to document the legal structure of the enterprise, land tenure rights, production activities, land and livestock holdings, as well as all data relevant to the management of public subsidies.

The contents of the farm register are organized into specific sections, each addressing different aspects of the enterprise's administrative and productive profile. The structure of the register is governed by Presidential Decree No. 503/1999[26], which introduced the obligation to maintain this instrument, and by Ministerial Decree No. 162/2015[27], which defines its detailed structure and management procedures. The AGEA[28] Operational Instructions, in compliance with European regulations on agricultural subsidies, have further refined the methods for data collection and updates, ensuring their alignment with the ongoing digitalization of the sector.

4.1 Identification Section and Enterprise Registration

The identification section of the farm register represents the first and fundamental component, as it contains all the essential data needed to legally recognize the enterprise and determine its eligibility for public subsidies. This section plays a crucial role in the administrative classification of the farm and in ensuring transparency and traceability in its relations with funding authorities.

Within this section, the register records the details of the owner or legal representative, including the business name, tax code, and VAT number. These elements are indispensable for uniquely identifying the legal entity operating the farm and verifying its eligibility for public support measures. Additionally, the enterprise is assigned a Unique Farm Code (CUAA) – an alphanumeric identifier that allows for the unambiguous recognition of the enterprise within the National Agricultural Information System (SIAN) and in all dealings with the Paying Agency.

Another crucial aspect is registration with the Chamber of Commerce, which is a mandatory requirement for agricultural companies, cooperatives, and individual farms whose primary activity falls within the agricultural sector. This registration is often a prerequisite for accessing certain subsidy schemes, as it serves as official confirmation of the enterprise's legal and economic status.

Moreover, the identification section may include information regarding the enterprise's membership in consortia, cooperatives, or business networks, which can influence its eligibility for specific funding programs and incentives. Participation in associative structures may provide access to preferential financing conditions or eligibility for dedicated rural development programs.

From a legal and administrative perspective, this section is central to public control mechanisms, as the verification of the enterprise's registration data represents the first step in assessing its eligibility for agricultural aid. Incomplete or outdated records may lead to the rejection of subsidy applications, the suspension of payments, or, in more serious cases, the revocation of already disbursed funds. Therefore, ensuring that all identification data is correct and regularly updated is of paramount importance for maintaining a compliant and financially sustainable agricultural enterprise.

25 A careful and timely management, possibly supported by specialized consultants or Agricultural Assistance Centers (CAA), is an essential condition to ensure the administrative compliance of the farm enterprise and to safeguard its access to the economic support measures provided by the public aid system.

26 Italy, Presidential Decree No. 503 of December 1, 1999 – Regulation establishing the Farmer and Fisherman Card and the Farm Register, implementing Article 14(3) of Legislative Decree No. 173 of April 30, 1998.

27 Italy, Ministerial Decree No. 162 of January 12, 2015.

28 Cf. Operational Instructions No. 26 of March 18, 2024, previously cited, and Operational Instructions No. 28 of March 31, 2024, which provide clarifications on the obligation for farmers to declare all plots of land available to them in the farm register.

4.2 Land Holdings and Land Tenure Rights

The land holdings section of the farm register is of fundamental importance, as it collects all information regarding the cultivated surface area, land tenure rights, and the intended use of the managed plots. This aspect is directly linked to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) subsidy system, which ties funding eligibility to the availability and legitimate use of agricultural land. Under European regulations, direct payments and rural development aid are granted exclusively based on land that is effectively managed and legally available to the enterprise, making the accurate documentation of land tenure rights an essential requirement.

To meet these regulatory requirements, the farm register must contain detailed information on each cadastral parcel under the farm's management, specifying its location, use, and the type of agricultural activity practiced. A central element of this section is the registration of land tenure rights, which serves to confirm the farm's legal possession of the declared land. These rights may derive from ownership, lease agreements, loan-for-use contracts (comodato), public concessions, or other recognized legal instruments governing land use in the agricultural sector.

Ensuring the validity and accuracy of land tenure records is a prerequisite for avoiding disputes and ensuring compliance with CAP regulations. Competent authorities systematically verify that the declared parcels match those effectively available to the enterprise, cross-checking the information with cadastral records and on-site inspections.

In this context, updating the register is critical. Any land acquisitions, transfers, or lease terminations must be promptly recorded to maintain full consistency between administrative records and the farm's actual land use. Failure to update this information can lead to penalties, subsidy reductions, or the exclusion of certain parcels from CAP support schemes.

Beyond compliance aspects, the accurate registration of land tenure rights also helps prevent legal conflicts between different claimants to the same land. Cases where multiple farmers declare the same parcel have led to legal disputes and administrative exclusions, making it imperative that farmers carefully manage the documentation of their land tenure arrangements[29].

4.3 Cropping Plan and Digital Mapping of Agricultural Land

Within the farm register, the cropping plan is a fundamental element, as it provides a detailed record of the crops cultivated by the agricultural enterprise and offers a comprehensive overview of land use[30].

Starting from the 2024 campaign, the management of the cropping plan has undergone a significant transformation with the introduction of the Graphical Cropping Plan (PCG), a system that enables farmers to declare annually the crops present on their agricultural land with greater accuracy and detail. The PCG is based on plots, meaning the portions of reference parcels that fall within the farm's perimeter. Each farmer is required to precisely describe all cultivated crops, specifying the areas involved and their spatial distribution. This system allows for stricter verification of the consistency between declared data and the actual situation, as assessed through cartographic tools, such as the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS).

Once the PCG has been completed, the farmer validates the information through a specific validation sheet, which holds probative value for Paying Agencies. Following this validation, the farm register is automatically updated, and the enterprise can submit aid applications, which are pre-filled both for administrative data and for the graphical management of land parcels. Consequently, the PCG is a mandatory step for accessing EU, national, and regional agricultural subsidies, serving as the basis for various obligations related to farm management and regulatory controls.

One of the primary uses of the PCG concerns the management of direct payment applications under the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF)[31] and area-based aid within the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

29 For this reason, accuracy in recording and updating cadastral and legal data is a guarantee not only for the agricultural enterprise but also for the entire system of public aid management and distribution.

30 The registration of this information is not merely an administrative formality but an essential requirement for accessing public aid, both within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and in relation to rural development measures financed at the national and regional levels. The type of cultivation practiced and the compliance of agronomic techniques with environmental and production standards set by regulations are key factors in determining farm eligibility for support schemes.

31 The European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) was a structural fund of the European Union, established by Regulation No. 25/1962 and later amended by Regulation (EEC) No. 728/70. It formed part of the broader Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding framework, serving as its financial arm.

(EAFRD)[32]. Thanks to the graphical update of land parcels, it is possible to ensure greater alignment between farmers' declarations and the eligibility criteria established for different support measures. The PCG is also used for applying for aid under Regulation (EU) No. 2021/2115, including risk management measures and national support schemes for agriculture.

The integration of the PCG has also introduced important innovations in the management of certifications and quality schemes, making it possible to automatically generate graphical notifications for organic farms and to pre-fill the National Quality System for Integrated Production (SQNPI) register[33]. These features facilitate faster verification of farm compliance with required standards, reducing bureaucratic burdens for farmers participating in these certification schemes.

Another area in which the PCG plays a strategic role is risk management, particularly in the preparation of individual insurance plans, mutualization plans, and farm income stabilization tools (IST). By keeping farm surfaces up to date, the effectiveness of protection measures against adverse climatic events and market crises is improved, facilitating access to national and European financial support mechanisms.

The PCG is also essential for participation in calls for tenders and regional, national, and EU support measures, where land occupation is a fundamental eligibility requirement for funding. Its integration with the Digital Farm Logbook (QDCA)[34] ensures greater traceability of agronomic practices and enables compliance checks with conditionality rules, both in terms of Member State obligations and direct requirements for farmers.

Finally, continuous updating of the PCG facilitates compliance with obligations related to the registration of phytosanitary treatments and fertilization practices, providing essential data for environmental monitoring and food safety. The interoperability between the PCG and the farm register allows Paying Agencies to conduct more timely and effective checks, reducing the need for manual verifications and improving the efficiency of agricultural aid disbursement.

4.4 Cropping Plan and Digital Mapping of Agricultural Land

In recent years, digitalization has profoundly transformed the management of agricultural enterprises, leading to an increasingly integrated system between the farm register and the Digital Farm Logbook (QDCA)[35]. The QDCA has become an essential tool for the computerized recording of phytosanitary treatments and fertilization practices, enabling more efficient and transparent traceability of agronomic operations. Today, the QDCA[36] is an integral part of the National Agricultural Information System (SIAN) and serves as a fundamental instrument for ensuring compliance with European and national regulations on food safety, environmental sustainability, and access to public subsidies.

Starting from 2026, Regulation (EU) No. 2023/564 will require Member States to adopt a digital register of phytosanitary treatments, anticipating a digitalization process that has already begun in Italy through the integration of the QDCA within the digital farm register. This system allows agricultural enterprises to automatically record all treatments carried out on their plots, eliminating the need for paper documentation and reducing the risk of errors or incomplete declarations.

The interconnection between the QDCA, the Graphical Cropping Plan (PCG), and the farm register offers significant advantages both for farmers and for authorities responsible for control and subsidy disbursement. The QDCA ensures consistency between declared crops, applied treatments, and the requirements needed to access agricultural funding, while also reducing the need for on-site inspections by Paying Agencies. Through the digitalization of data, farmers can submit pre-filled aid applications, directly using the information already recorded in the system. This simplifies administrative procedures and reduces waiting times for the disbursement of subsidies.

The adoption of the QDCA also contributes to strengthening traceability and food safety, ensuring compliance with European regulations

32 The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) is a structural fund of the European Union, dedicated to supporting agricultural activities and rural areas through targeted financial aid schemes for various categories of investment. The fund has a limited duration and is managed under a seven-year programming cycle. It was established on September 20, 2005, following the adoption of Regulation (EU) No. 1290/2005, aimed at financing Rural Development Programs under a co-financing regime with Member States. Operational since 2007, it replaced the previous European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF).

33 The National Quality System for Integrated Production (SQNPI) is a certification scheme aimed at enhancing the value of plant-based agricultural products obtained in compliance with regional integrated production guidelines. The quality system is recognized under Regulation (EC) No. 1974/2006.

34 See the following paragraph.

35 For an in-depth analysis, see Palazzoni (2025), p. 69.

36 The QDCA, integrated into the farm file in 2024, will be mandatory from 2026. The year 2025 will be useful for testing the application with the companies that wish to use it, also in order to prepare for the new bureaucratic burden set out in Regulation (EU) No. 564/2023.

on the sustainable use of pesticides and fertilizers. Each intervention carried out on the farm is recorded in real time and made available for potential audits by control bodies, ensuring greater transparency in resource management and more reliable farm data. Furthermore, the QDCA plays a central role in the implementation of environmental conditionality rules and in the management of the Farm Logbook, which is becoming an increasingly strategic document for assessing the agricultural practices adopted by enterprises.

According to AGEA Operational Instructions No. 58 of May 2024, the Paying Agency, through the QDCA, will assume a key role in the management and analysis of collected data, using it to support national and European agricultural policies and to more precisely monitor cultivated areas, applied treatments, and compliance with production standards. This integration results in a more effective control system, allowing authorities to prevent irregularities, improve funding management, and ensure a fairer and more efficient distribution of public subsidies.

4.5 Environmental and Landscape Constraints

In addition to classifying crops and describing agronomic practices, the farm register must include information on the environmental and landscape constraints affecting agricultural land. In certain areas, agricultural activity is subject to specific restrictions aimed at protecting natural heritage. Among the most significant constraints are those concerning the protection of flora and fauna, the limitations imposed in hydrogeological protection zones, and the specific regulations applicable to land within Natura 2000 sites, where land use must comply with particularly strict environmental directives.

This section of the farm register therefore plays a crucial role in the administrative management of the farm, as well as in agronomic and environmental planning, ensuring a close correlation between productive activities and the regulatory obligations established to protect the ecosystem. The accurate recording of these data allows the competent authorities to verify compliance with environmental regulations, while also enabling farmers to access economic support instruments designed to promote more sustainable agricultural practices, fully integrated within the territorial and ecological context in which the farm operates.

4.6 Livestock Holdings and Veterinary Records

For agricultural enterprises operating in the livestock sector, the farm register assumes an even more critical role, as it must include a dedicated section on livestock holdings, recording the number and type of animals raised, as well as health data and the mandatory veterinary certifications required by law. This aspect is particularly important, not only to ensure livestock traceability and compliance with health regulations, but also because many of the support measures provided under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Rural Development Programs are directly linked to livestock management and compliance with animal welfare standards[37].

The farm register must accurately record all information concerning livestock population, specifying the number of animals for each species raised and referencing data contained in the National Animal Identification System (BDN – Banca Dati Nazionale dell'Anagrafe Zootecnica). This database, managed by the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale, enables the monitoring of livestock farm distribution and helps prevent potential health risks associated with animal movement.

Another fundamental element concerns mandatory health records, which include data on vaccinations administered, veterinary treatments performed, and biosecurity certifications required by current legislation. The accurate management of these aspects is not merely an administrative requirement, but represents an essential safeguard for public health and the prevention of epidemics and diseases that could jeopardize the entire livestock sector.

Beyond health obligations, the farm register must also contain information regarding the farm's participation in specific animal welfare programs, a fundamental requirement for accessing certain forms of public aid aimed at livestock farms adopting practices to improve animal living conditions. Compliance with high animal welfare standards is, in fact, one of the key priorities of recent European agricultural policies[38], which encourage the adoption of measures such as increasing available space for livestock, improving feed quality, and implementing more environmentally sustainable farming systems.

This section of the farm register therefore represents a central element in livestock management, as it enables control authorities to verify compliance with health regulations and animal welfare standards, ensuring that farming practices align with the legal and ethical principles established at both national and EU levels.

[37] Cf. Celentano (2021), p.79.

[38] European Court of Auditors, Animal welfare in the EU – Closing the gap between ambitious goals and practical implementation. Special report No 31, 2018, Publications Office, 2018, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2865/950259

4.7 Register of Public Aid and Subsidies

A fundamental component of the farm register is the register of public aid and subsidies, which systematically records all amounts received by the agricultural enterprise under the support measures provided by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Rural Development Programs (RDPs), and other forms of public funding at both the national and regional levels. This section of the farm register serves a dual function: on the one hand, it enables farmers to track the payments received and monitor the consistency between the amounts granted and the declared land or activities; on the other hand, it allows competent authorities to conduct more effective checks to prevent undue subsidies, duplicate claims, or irregularities in the allocation of resources.

One of the most significant aspects of the register of public aid is its integration with the National Agricultural Information System (SIAN), which enables cross-referencing of payment data with the information contained in other sections of the farm register. This mechanism ensures greater transparency in the management of public funds and reduces the risk of irregular overlaps in aid received for the same land areas or activities.

From a regulatory standpoint, maintaining an up-to-date register that accurately reflects the enterprise's situation is essential to avoid administrative sanctions or the forced recovery of disbursed amounts in the event of inaccurate declarations. The verifications carried out by Paying Agencies (AGEA or regional OPs) and control authorities are primarily based on the consistency between the information recorded in the farm register and the enterprise's actual production reality. Any discrepancies between declared data and field inspections may lead to serious consequences, including criminal liability where fraudulent conduct is detected in attempts to unlawfully obtain public subsidies.

Another key aspect to consider is the obligation of transparency in receiving public aid, which requires the publication of certain data related to beneficiaries of funding provided through European resources. In accordance with Regulation (EU) No. 1306/2013, Member States must ensure the public disclosure of information regarding recipients of CAP aid, specifying the amounts received and the type of funded intervention. This transparency principle is intended to enable public oversight of the management of EU resources and to prevent the accumulation of funds or the undue concentration of subsidies among a small number of large agricultural operators.

Finally, the register of public aid does not merely serve as an ex post control tool but also represents an important planning instrument for farmers, allowing them to strategically plan their economic activities and assess the opportunity to participate in new support schemes offered by national and EU agricultural policies. Proper management of this register enables agricultural enterprises to avoid disputes with funding agencies and operate within a legally secure framework, reducing the risk of forced repayment of funds already received or exclusion from future financing programs.

V Access and Administrative Controls

The farm register is not only an essential administrative tool for agricultural enterprises but also serves as a key instrument for governmental oversight and verification activities. By consulting the data contained within the register, competent authorities can verify the accuracy of the information declared by farmers, assess whether the eligibility criteria for public subsidies are met, and monitor the proper allocation of financial resources.

Access to the farm register is primarily managed through the National Agricultural Information System (SIAN), a digital platform administered by AGEA (Agenzia per le Erogazioni in Agricoltura). This system collects and updates in real time all relevant information on Italian agricultural enterprises, ensuring efficient and transparent data management[39].

5.1 Access and Administrative Controls

Access to the farm register is strictly regulated and reserved for a range of public and private entities that, for administrative or control purposes, require consultation of agricultural enterprise data. This selective access system ensures not only the proper management of agricultural procedures and public funding but also the protection of business confidentiality, preventing unauthorized use of collected information.

The primary entity authorized to access the register is the agricultural enterprise itself, which can consult its own data through the online services provided by the National Agricultural Information System (SIAN). Alternatively, the farmer may delegate the management of the register to an Agricultural Assistance Center (CAA), which acts on behalf of the enterprise in transmitting

[39] The SIAN represents the technological infrastructure that allows Paying Agencies (PAs), Regions, Chambers of Commerce, and other competent bodies to consult company data and perform cross-checks with other public databases, such as the Land Registry, the Business Register, and the Zootechnical Register.

and updating the necessary information. This mechanism facilitates the bureaucratic management of agricultural businesses, ensuring technical support in the correct completion and validation of data.

Among the main public entities with access to the farm register are the Paying Agencies (AGEA and regional OPs), which play a central role in verifying the consistency between declared data and the eligibility criteria for public subsidies. By analyzing the information contained in the register, these agencies verify the legitimacy of aid applications, confirm the effective availability of declared agricultural and livestock areas, and ensure that public resources are allocated in compliance with current legislation.

Additionally, Regional Authorities and the Managing Authorities of Rural Development Programs (RDPs)[40] use the farm register to evaluate the eligibility of agricultural enterprises for EU-funded support measures. The information stored in the register allows these authorities to determine whether a farm meets the necessary requirements to access specific funding programs, particularly those related to environmental sustainability, technological innovation, and rural development.

Other authorized entities include the Italian Revenue Agency (Agenzia delle Entrate) and the National Institute for Social Security (INPS), which use farm register data to verify the fiscal and social security compliance of agricultural enterprises. The ability to cross-check farm data with tax and social security records helps prevent tax evasion and irregularities, ensuring that beneficiaries of public aid fulfill their tax and social security obligations.

The farm register also serves as a crucial data source for environmental control agencies, such as the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) and regional environmental protection agencies. These entities use the register to verify compliance with agri-environmental regulations and sustainability standards. By analyzing the information contained in the register, they can assess compliance with landscape and hydrogeological constraints, the proper management of agricultural waste, and adherence to standards for crops and livestock operations located in protected or sensitive areas.

Finally, access to the farm register may also be requested by judicial authorities and economic-financial police bodies, which use it in investigations related to alleged irregularities in the receipt of public subsidies. The availability of a centralized archive of farm data facilitates the detection of potential violations, false declarations, or improper use of public funds, enabling authorities to more quickly identify cases of fraud or the unlawful acquisition of national and EU financial resources.

Access to the data contained in the farm register is governed by strict security protocols, designed to ensure the protection and confidentiality of business information. These measures prevent unauthorized use of data and ensure that consultation is strictly limited to authorized entities, in full compliance with privacy regulations and cybersecurity standards. In this way, the farm register serves as a transparent and effective control tool, balancing the monitoring needs of public administration with the protection of sensitive agricultural business data.

5.2 Access and Administrative Controls

The continuous updating of the farm register is not only a legal obligation for farmers but also a fundamental prerequisite for the proper conduct of administrative controls. The primary entities responsible for verification procedures are the Paying Agencies (AGEA and regional OPs), which examine the consistency of the information recorded in the register with the eligibility criteria for public subsidies[41].

Verification procedures are generally classified into documentary checks and on-site inspections. Documentary checks involve the examination of the data declared in the farm register and cross-referencing it with information contained in other public databases[42]. Through these assessments, Paying Agencies verify aspects such as land ownership, livestock holdings, the validity of land tenure agreements, and compliance with commitments undertaken by the farmer under aid schemes.

On the other hand, on-site inspections are conducted directly at the farm and involve the physical verification of declared land, the inspection of crop conditions, and the confirmation of registered livestock presence. These

[40] The Managing Authority (MA) is responsible for the management and implementation of the Program in accordance with the principle of good and sound administrative and financial management. It is part of the Central Directorate for Agro-food, Forestry, and Fisheries Resources – Rural Policies and Information Systems Service in Agriculture.

[41] The Agency for Payments in Agriculture (AGEA) is proceeding with the activation of controls on the farm dossiers and surface area applications for the years 2018–2022, for a total of 2 million cases.

[42] The controls are carried out through a business analytics tool. Technological evolution indeed enhances the overall capacity to streamline data, refine the detection phase in terms of predictability, and thus maximize the efficiency of the process. Starting from the risk indicators identified through data processing, a series of potentially irregular files are extracted, which will undergo thorough document checks and, if necessary, on-site inspections.

verifications are carried out by authorized inspectors, often with the assistance of satellite technologies and drones, which enable high-precision verification of the consistency between declared data and the farm's actual production reality.

A particularly significant aspect is the use of satellite monitoring within the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS), which helps detect potential discrepancies between declared and effectively cultivated areas. In the event of anomalies or irregularities, the Paying Agency may adopt corrective measures, including reducing or revoking payments and, in more serious cases, recovering unduly received funds.

5.3 Consequences of Irregularities Identified During Controls

The detection of irregularities or discrepancies between the information recorded in the farm register and the actual condition of the farm may lead to various consequences, depending on the nature and severity of the violations. In cases of formal errors or unintentional omissions, the farmer is generally required to correct the information within the deadline set by the Paying Agencies or as specified in the applicable AGEA Operational Instructions[43], thereby avoiding the application of sanctions.

If, however, the identified irregularities are more severe and have an impact on the granting or amount of aid received, the Paying Agency may order the reduction or revocation of funding and, in cases of false or fraudulent declarations, initiate proceedings for the recovery of unduly received amounts.

More serious violations, such as document falsification or the declaration of non-existent land areas, may result in administrative and criminal sanctions, exposing the farmer to the risk of exclusion from aid schemes for a specified period. In particular, in cases of fraud against the State or the European Union, the competent authorities may forward the case to judicial authorities, potentially leading to criminal consequences under the Italian Penal Code and EU regulations on the protection of the Union's financial interests.

5.4 The Importance of Proper Management of the Farm Register

Given the central role of the farm register in granting and monitoring public aid, it is clear that accurate and timely management of this instrument is essential to ensure the lawful operation of agricultural activities and to avoid sanctions or exclusion from funding programs. Farmers are therefore required to continuously verify the accuracy and updating of the information contained in the register, ensuring that it correctly reflects the actual situation of the farm. This is crucial to prevent irregularities that could lead to financial penalties or the loss of access to subsidy schemes.

The adoption of digital tools for managing the farm register, along with the support of specialized Agricultural Assistance Centers (CAA), can facilitate compliance with administrative obligations and reduce the risk of errors or omissions. At the same time, the increasing digitalization of control mechanisms, including satellite technologies and artificial intelligence systems, has made transparency and accuracy in declarations even more critical. Ensuring that the farm register remains a reliable and efficient tool for agricultural enterprises is essential so that it continues to serve as a simplification instrument rather than becoming a source of legal and administrative complications.

VI Land Holdings and Tenure Rights

One of the most legally significant and complex aspects of the farm register concerns the territorial consistency of the agricultural enterprise and the legal availability of the land under its management. To qualify for Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) aid and national or regional public funding, the applicant must demonstrate legitimate control over the agricultural land through a legally valid tenure title. Proof of land availability is therefore a fundamental requirement, as the allocation of subsidies is strictly linked to the actual area held by the enterprise, regardless of the specific productive activities carried out[44].

The need to ensure legal certainty regarding land ownership and tenure has led to the introduction of strict regulations concerning the registration of tenure titles. In this context, AGEA Operational Instructions

[43] The deadline for correcting formal errors or unintentional omissions in the farm file depends on the specific violation identified and the provisions set out in the current AGEA Operating Instructions. In general, the farmer is required to make corrections within the deadline indicated in the official communication from the Paying Agency, which may vary depending on the nature of the irregularity and the type of aid requested. In some cases, the AGEA Operating Instructions set specific deadlines, as was the case with the extension to February 16, 2023, for correcting obvious errors related to the 2022 Single Application (Operating Instructions No. 5 – prot. 7230 of January 31, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to refer to the relevant regulations and official updates to determine the applicable deadlines for each specific case.

[44] Cf. Jannarelli, (2018), p. 67.

require farmers to include a copy of the legal document proving land availability in the farm register. This measure aims to prevent the disbursement of subsidies to ineligible recipients and to eliminate uncertainties regarding the landowner's consent for the use of the declared agricultural surfaces[45].

6.1 Land Tenure Titles and Administrative Requirements

The registration of agricultural land tenure within the farm register is an essential step for accessing public subsidies, as it allows for the verification of legitimate land availability and helps prevent irregular declarations. Agricultural enterprises must prove their legal entitlement to the land they cultivate, following an administrative process regulated by AGEA Operational Instructions, often carried out with the assistance of delegated entities, such as Agricultural Assistance Centers (CAA).

A fundamental aspect of this procedure is the registration and official recording of land tenure titles, which must be kept in both paper format within the farm register and digitized in AGEA's computerized system. This dual registration process ensures maximum transparency and allows for the immediate consultation of data by Paying Agencies, regional authorities, and control bodies.

In cases where land tenure is not based on direct ownership, it is necessary to collect the tax codes of the parties involved and obtain the explicit consent of the grantor, thus preventing the registration of land that the farmer does not lawfully possess. This requirement is particularly relevant for land leased, granted in loan for use (comodato), or managed under other legal arrangements.

Another crucial step is the identification of cadastral parcels subject to tenure, specifying whether the management is full or partial and providing detailed information on land use. This process prevents overlapping declarations from different farmers claiming the same land, which could lead to legal disputes or exclusion from CAP subsidies.

The requirement to provide a duly registered land tenure title has undergone significant regulatory changes. The recent AGEA Operational Instructions No. 28 of March 26, 2024, introduced new rules on objective land use management, modifying criteria for identifying managed land areas. Specifically, land identification is no longer based solely on cadastral data but rather on the intersection of the Graphical Cropping Plan (PCG) with a georeferenced reference layer. This system automatically detects discrepancies between declared land areas and those effectively used.

In cases of overlapping claims on the same land by different applicants, the system automatically flags the anomaly, and the Paying Agency suspends aid disbursement until the conflict is resolved. This innovation is intended to strengthen control mechanisms and prevent public funds from being allocated to entities without legitimate tenure rights.

6.2 Legal Availability of Agricultural Land and Challenges in Proving Tenure

The legal availability of agricultural land is an essential requirement for accessing CAP subsidies and other public support programs. Farmers must declare in their farm register only those land areas for which they have a legitimate title, ensuring transparency in the allocation of public resources and preventing unjustified overlapping claims. However, in practice, proving land tenure has led to numerous legal disputes, particularly regarding the distinction between formal land tenure and actual land use, as well as the validity of different tenure titles, including loan for use (comodato) agreements and verbal contracts[46].

One of the most debated issues concerns the distinction between legal tenure and actual land use. Some interpretations have suggested that mere factual possession of land could be sufficient to justify CAP aid eligibility, emphasizing the substantive relationship between the farmer and the land. However, prevailing national[47] and European[48] case law has consistently

45 Regional Agency Calabria for Agricultural Payments, Operating Instructions No. 6 – Management of the farm file for the 2024 campaign, www.arcea.it/publisher/Istruzioni%20Operative/2024/Istruzioni%20Operative%20Fascicolo%20Aziendale%202024.pdf

46 Ministerial Decree (d.m.) of January 12, 2015, No. 162, provided specific provisions regarding the management of the farm file, establishing the obligation for farmers to declare all the land areas at their disposal. In case of failure to declare these areas, the Paying Agency imposes a sanction, as provided by Article 6 of Decree-Law No. 42 of March 17, 2023.

47 According to Cass. II, 11 February 2016, No. 2861, in www.osservatorioagromafie.it, the agricultural operator must provide a formal legal title that certifies the legitimate management of the land. This decision highlights that mere de facto use, for example, through a loan contract (comodato), does not guarantee the necessary stability for accessing public aid, instead requiring a title that offers greater guarantees in terms of continuity and legal certainty.

48 Cf. Court of Justice EU, 24 June 2010, Case C-375/08, Luigi Pontini et al., in Rec. 2010 I-05767, which reiterates that, to access CAP aid, it is necessary to demonstrate legal availability of the land through valid titles, and mere de facto use of the land is not sufficient. This interpretation requires

ruled that farmers must provide a valid legal title[49], such as a deed of ownership, a lease agreement, a registered loan for use (comodato), or an administrative concession.

In particular, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), in Case C-375/08 of June 24, 2010, established that Member States have the right to require proof of legal land tenure as a precondition for granting subsidies, in order to prevent overlapping claims and ensure the proper use of EU funds. This principle has been upheld by Italian case law[50], which confirms that competent authorities[51], especially Paying Agencies[52] and AGEA, must carry out verification procedures[53] to confirm the truthfulness of farmers' declarations, including random sample checks. These audits may include requests for additional documentation, database cross-checks, and on-site inspections, aimed at preventing fraud[54] and ensuring that subsidies are granted in compliance with current regulations.

One of the most controversial issues concerns the validity of loan for use (comodato) agreements as proof of land tenure. Although fully valid under civil law[55], their precarious nature has raised doubts about whether they should be accepted as sufficient proof for CAP[56] aid eligibility. A restrictive interpretation by the Italian Court of Cassation[57] has clarified that loan for use agreements, unless they include specific obligations for the grantee[58], cannot be equated to more stable agricultural contracts, such as lease agreements or usufruct. The lack of economic consideration and the grantor's right to revoke the agreement at any time create uncertainty regarding the continuity of land tenure, making aid eligibility questionable[59].

However, part of Italian case law[60] has adopted a more flexible interpretation, considering that loan for use agreements can be accepted if they are formalized

that the Member State be able to verify the legitimacy of the management with strict criteria, thereby ensuring a transparent and controlled management of public resources.

49 T.A.R. Campania – Naples, Section III, 24 December 2018, No. 7327, in Redazione Giuffrè amm., according to which it is the burden of the petitioner to make available the relevant documentation or to provide a self-certification of the underlying contractual relationship, in accordance with the implementation regulations of the aid schemes issued by AGEA with Circular No. 35/2001. The latter requires proof of the legal title for land management with an authenticated copy of the registered title (as well as providing an authenticated proxy if the application is submitted by one co-owner on behalf of all), unless the applicant, in case of inability to produce the required documentation or in the case of a verbal contract, is allowed to use self-certification.

50 Cass. Sec. Un. 15 November 2023, No. 31730, in Dir. & giust. 2023, 16 November; Cons. State, Sec. I, Opinion, 22 September 2021, No. 599, and 10 November 2021, in www.ildirittoamministrativo.it

51 In the agricultural sector, the authorities responsible for verifying the truthfulness of declarations substituting affidavits of notoriety are primarily the public bodies to which these declarations are submitted. These include the Regions, Autonomous Provinces, and recognized Paying Agencies, which are responsible for managing and overseeing agricultural funding. Additionally, the Agency for Agricultural Payments (AGEA) and the relevant territorial offices play a key role in the verification process. These authorities are tasked with conducting checks, including random sample checks, on the truthfulness of the declarations made, as stipulated in Article 71 of Presidential Decree No. 445 of December 28, 2000. Such checks are essential to ensure the authenticity of the information provided and to prevent potential falsifications or fraudulent statements.

52 Article 71 of the same Presidential Decree (d.p.r. 28 dicembre 2000, n. 445).

53 Article 71 of the same Presidential Decree (d.p.r. 28 dicembre 2000, n. 445).

54 Cons. State, Sec. IV, 21 October 2018, n. 6404 in Dejure, which states that the Paying Agencies must carry out cross-checks and exercise the utmost caution in verifying the ownership of agricultural land before granting CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) aid.Cf. also, TAR, Apuglia, Bari, Sec III, 22 January 2016, n. 56, in Dejure.

55 This contract is governed by Article 1803 of the Italian Civil Code, and it involves the gratuitous provision of a good with the obligation of its return.

56 According to Germanò (2015), the agricultural loan contract, although valid under civil law, intrinsically presents elements of precariousness. This precarious nature could make it inadequate to guarantee the certainty of land availability required for accessing CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) aid, as it does not provide the necessary stability to reliably prove the right to cultivate. This interpretation emphasizes the importance of having more solid contractual titles, such as lease or usufruct, which ensure greater continuity and certainty for the disbursement of public subsidies.

57 In particular, see Cass. Sez. III, 17 December 2015, No. 25358, in Onelegale, according to which the loan contract does not fall within agricultural contracts and, therefore, does not grant the borrower rights such as agricultural preemption.

58 This refers, for example, to commitments regarding cultivation or long-term management of the land.

59 Cass. Sez. II, 12 February 2016, No. 2861, cit.; Trib. Ascoli Piceno, 24 October 2016, No. 1103, in www.tedioli.com

60 Cass. Sez. I, 6 April 2018, No. 8571, in Guida dir. 2018, 20, 53, recognized that this contract can take atypical forms and have conditional durations, as long as it is deserving of protection under Article 1322 of the Civil Code. In particular, the Court emphasized that the loan for use can be used for the use of a property with a determined or conditioned duration, provided that the use is in accordance with the contractual purpose established by the parties. See also Trib. of Savona, 2 February 2022, No. 92 in Dejure, which, examining a case of a loan intrinsically connected to a sub-lease, emphasizes the importance of formalizing the relationship and its duration to ensure the stability necessary for the use of the property.

in writing and have a predetermined duration, thereby ensuring a sufficient degree of stability. The discretionary approach taken by Paying Agencies in assessing these cases has led to legal uncertainties and inconsistent verification procedures, with different outcomes depending on regional practices and the interpretation adopted by various administrative authorities.

Another issue has arisen regarding verbal contracts, whose use was significantly modified starting from January 1, 2023. In the past, in the absence of a written contract, farmers could include in the farm register land managed under verbal lease or loan for use agreements, supported by a self-declaration (dichiarazione sostitutiva dell'atto di notorietà). However, under the new rules, the registration of land now requires a self-declaration signed by the landowner[61], explicitly confirming the existence of the verbal agreement, along with the owner's personal identification data and a copy of their identity document. This amendment was introduced to enhance traceability of land tenure relationships and reduce the risk of disputes or false declarations.

To minimize the risk of irregularities, the AGEA Operational Instructions[62] now allow self-declarations only as a last resort, meaning that written contracts remain the preferred method, and even in the absence of a written contract, the self-declaration must be supported by additional evidence, such as cadastral documents or certifications from the landowner.

Furthermore, the introduction of new control mechanisms has made the verification of land tenure even more stringent. The AGEA Operational Instructions No. 28 of March 26, 2024[63], redefined the system for identifying managed land, introducing the intersection of the Graphical Cropping Plan (PCG) with a cadastral reference layer. This system automatically flags discrepancies between declared and actual land use, requiring confirmation by the farmer during the farm register validation process. Additionally, if multiple applicants claim tenure over the same parcel, the contested land area is deemed ineligible for CAP aid, and the Paying Agency and relevant CAAs automatically notify the affected parties.

In light of these challenges, it is evident that proving legal land tenure remains one of the most critical aspects of farm register management. The main challenge will be to balance the need for simplified administrative procedures with the requirement for an effective and uniform control system. The introduction of traceability tools and digital certification of tenure titles, combined with enhanced automated verification mechanisms, could represent a solution to streamline procedures and ensure a fair and transparent distribution of public aid in the agricultural sector.

6.3 The Role of the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS)

Starting from the 2024 campaign, the farm register has undergone a significant evolution with the introduction of the new Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS – SIPA in Italian)[64], marking a major advancement in the management of agricultural land information. The main innovation concerns the criteria for defining reference parcels, which are no longer based solely on cadastral data but instead rely on the National Soil Map[65]. This transformation has been made possible through the use of automated techniques and artificial intelligence, leveraging EU-wide data sources, including multispectral orthophotos and satellite imagery from Sentinel-2[66].

61 Article 47 of Presidential Decree No. 445 of December 28, 2000. This declaration allows the interested party to certify states, personal qualities, or facts to their direct knowledge, such as the existence of a verbal agreement for the use of agricultural land.

62 The AGEA Operational Instructions of December 12, 2016, No. 44, establish that in the case of rental contracts made verbally, a substitute declaration of notoriety is required to certify the existence of the relationship, including the identification of the Unique Business Identification Code (CUAA) of the landowner. Additionally, a declaration from the landowner is required to confirm the granting of the land. These provisions aim to ensure the legitimacy of the management of declared agricultural land, minimizing the risk of irregularities and misuse of substitute declarations. In particular, the Operational Instructions No. 17 of February 13, 2025, reaffirm the importance of establishing and updating the business file, requiring that the beneficiary possess a valid identity document, which must be included in the file.

63 This provision has amended paragraph "5.3.6 – Objective use of the land."

64 The Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) was established in accordance with Article 5 of Delegated Regulation (EU) No. 640/2014 and was implemented in the Italian national system through Decree-Law No. 76/2020, which formalized the adoption of a unified system for the identification of agricultural parcels across the entire national territory. Cf. European Court of Auditors (2016), The Land Parcel Identification System: a useful tool to determine the eligibility of agricultural land – but its management could be further improved, Special Report No. 25, 2016, Publications Office of the European Union, https://op.europa.eu/s/z19H

65 The National Soil Map (CdSN) is a national cartographic dataset at a 1:2000 scale, based on the WGS84/UTM32 coordinate system, which describes soil use, particularly for agricultural land. It is derived through photogrammetric restitution from aerial orthophotos with a 20 cm pixel resolution and Sentinel image analysis, structured into 14 layers.

66 Sentinel-2 is a mission developed by the European Space

The LPIS functions as a registry that continuously collects and updates information on all agricultural land in Italy, ensuring accurate and verifiable mapping of farmland designated for productive activities[67]. The system is based on a digital archive of orthophotos[68], obtained through aerial and satellite imagery. These images, analyzed using advanced photointerpretation tools, provide qualitative and quantitative data on agricultural land, which is then processed and represented within a Geographic Information System (GIS). The integration with GIS allows for high-precision visualization, analysis, and management of agricultural land, improving administrative controls and facilitating access to agricultural funding[69].

A key feature of the new LPIS is the redefinition of the reference parcel, which is now defined as a continuous land unit with homogeneous land use, delimited by permanent features, such as man-made or natural boundaries resulting from land use patterns. Unlike the previous system, this new parcel definition is constantly updated through semi-automated photointerpretation of orthophotos and has been adopted by all Paying Agencies starting from the 2024 campaign.

The importance of LPIS extends beyond simple land identification, playing a crucial role in monitoring and preventing irregularities in the allocation of public agricultural aid. One of the most critical issues addressed by the LPIS is the phenomenon of overlapping claims, which occurs when multiple applicants declare tenure over the same agricultural land, leading to disputes over CAP subsidy allocation. The LPIS, by automatically comparing farmer declarations with satellite imagery, can detect anomalies in real time, triggering the need for further verification by the competent authorities. If discrepancies emerge between declared and actually managed land, the system provides for the suspension of subsidy disbursements until the dispute is resolved, preventing the risk of undue public fund allocations.

Another fundamental aspect of the LPIS is its ability to reduce errors in land area measurements. By employing advanced detection technologies and artificial intelligence, the system ensures greater accuracy in determining farm size, eliminating discrepancies that may have occurred with previous measurement methods. If differences arise due to new measurement techniques, they are handled in accordance with Article 7(3) of Regulation (EU) No. 809/2014, which stipulates that discrepancies caused by different measurement methods should not result in repayment demands, penalties, or additional payments from the farmer, unless a fraudulent declaration has been made. This provision ensures fairness in control procedures, preventing unjustified penalties for farmers acting in good faith.

The integration between the LPIS and the farm register represents a further step towards efficiency and transparency in the management of public subsidies. All farms managing agricultural land are required to declare their land holdings and annual cropping plans using graphical tools, which are then cross-referenced with LPIS data to ensure consistency with the actual territorial situation. This interconnection not only enables faster and more effective controls but also automatically updates farm data, reducing the need for manual verifications by competent authorities.

Moreover, the LPIS interacts with other farm register components, such as the record of treatments and fertilization, which is a mandatory element under the Farm Logbook (QDCA)[70]. The data contained in this register is essential for demonstrating the farm's compliance with food safety and environmental sustainability standards, facilitating access to subsidies for farms that adopt environmentally sustainable cultivation and livestock practices.

Agency (ESA) under the Copernicus program, aimed at monitoring the Earth's green areas and providing support in managing natural disasters. It consists of two satellites, Sentinel-2A and Sentinel-2B, which will later be replaced by Sentinel-2C, launched in 2024, and Sentinel-2D.

67 See MIPAAF Decree No. 99707 of March 1, 2021. Many provisions of this decree are already in force, such as the graphical application system, but its main contribution is the establishment of a mandatory and more uniform national implementation. Furthermore, it introduces future extensions, such as the requirement to include in the Farm Logbook the information held by farms regarding the register of treatments and fertilization.

68 The LPIS (Land Parcel Identification System) is updated at least every three years using high-resolution photointerpretation techniques. However, more frequent updates may be carried out in the event of significant changes, such as authorizations for new installations or modifications in land use.

69 The Geographic Information System (GIS), also known as a geographic information system or territorial information system, is capable of associating data with their geographical position on the Earth's surface and processing them to extract information. Its primary applications include digital cartography, data visualization, and the study of human and natural phenomena on Earth.

70 According to Ministerial Decree of March 1, 2021, the information held by farms regarding the register of treatments and fertilization, as part of the Farm Logbook, has been a mandatory component of the farm register since January 1, 2022.

The adoption of the new LPIS has resulted in a significant improvement in the management of agricultural subsidies, enabling greater accuracy in land measurements, reducing fraud and inaccurate declarations, and enhancing the efficiency of administrative controls[71].

6.4 The Role of the Farm Register in Risk Management and Insurance Policies

In recent years, the farm register has taken on an increasingly important role in agricultural risk management, thanks to its integration with insurance instruments and the new simplification mechanisms introduced by AGEA and regional Paying Agencies. The growing frequency of extreme climatic events, combined with the need to ensure income stability for farmers, has made it essential to adopt protective measures that enable agricultural enterprises to effectively and promptly respond to adverse events.

The integration of the farm register with the General Insurance Plan (PGA) now allows for a more structured management of data on cultivated areas and crop types, facilitating the determination of insurance parameters and the quantification of damages suffered. A key element of this evolution is the automation of the application process for subsidized insurance policies. Starting in 2024, AGEA has implemented a pre-filled application system to accelerate the processing of insurance indemnity payments, reducing the bureaucratic burden on agricultural enterprises.

From 2025, the farm register will be accessible year-round, allowing farmers to continuously update information on cultivated areas and land tenure titles. This innovation will align the data contained in the farm register with the information used for the preparation of insurance policies, improving the accuracy of coverage and reducing the risk of discrepancies between declared and insured land areas.

In this context, the Risk Management Plan (PGIR) plays a strategic role, serving as the framework for defining risk assessment criteria and applicable insurance parameters for different crops.

The adoption of these measures not only simplifies access to public subsidies for subsidized insurance policies but also ensures faster compensation payments. Starting from February 28, 2024, AGEA has begun sharing insurance data with farmers, with the goal of completing the disbursement of the €150 million allocated to the agricultural insurance sector by the end of the year. This process, in addition to speeding up settlement procedures, ensures greater transparency in the management of public funds earmarked for risk management.

VII The Role and Impact of the Farm Register on Beneficiaries

While the legal and administrative framework of the farm register is well established, the effectiveness of the system must also be evaluated from the perspective of its primary beneficiaries – namely, farmers and public administration bodies. For farmers, the farm register represents not only a mandatory administrative obligation, but also a fundamental prerequisite for accessing public aid, CAP subsidies, and national or regional incentives. The ability to efficiently update and manage the register through digital platforms, such as the SIAN, is generally perceived as a positive development, simplifying compliance and reducing bureaucratic burdens.

However, some critical issues remain. Farmers often report difficulties in navigating complex procedures, especially when multiple authorities or intermediaries (such as CAA – Centri di Assistenza Agricola) are involved. The requirement to provide updated documentation, demonstrate legal entitlement to land, and respond to ongoing administrative controls can result in significant time and resource commitments, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises. Moreover, discrepancies or delays in data processing may lead to interruptions in subsidy payments or exposure to administrative penalties.

From the viewpoint of public administration bodies, the farm register is a vital instrument for ensuring the effective allocation of public resources, monitoring compliance with EU and national regulations, and facilitating the control of land use and environmental requirements. Digitalisation and data integration have enhanced the capacity of authorities to conduct systematic checks, prevent irregularities, and target inspections more efficiently. Nevertheless, the need for greater interoperability among databases, the harmonisation of procedures, and the continuous updating of digital infrastructure are frequently cited challenges.

Stakeholder consultations and recent studies[72] highlight the importance of ongoing dialogue between institutions and beneficiaries to ensure that the farm

[71] The use of the National Soil Map as the primary reference, instead of the digital land registry, represents a significant advancement in the system's ability to accurately and uniformly identify agricultural areas across the entire national territory. This change reduces measurement errors, eliminates reliance on cadastral data, which may sometimes be outdated or inconsistent, and allows for the application of uniform criteria in determining eligible areas for EU and national aid programs.

[72] CREA-PB (2023).

register evolves in response to users' practical needs. Incorporating feedback mechanisms and user satisfaction assessments may represent a further step towards increasing the utility and accessibility of the register for all parties involved.

VIII Regulation of the Farm Register in European Countries

The regulation of the farm register varies significantly from country to country, reflecting the different needs and priorities of various agricultural systems. However, within the European Union, there is a common regulatory framework, established by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which sets rules and standards for European farmers.

As previously mentioned, within the EU, the farm register serves as a key instrument to ensure traceability, sustainability, and compliance with EU regulations. The CAP requires farmers to maintain detailed records of their activities, but each Member State has adapted these rules to suit its national needs.

In order to offer a meaningful and representative comparison, this section examines the regulation and practical functioning of farm registers in a selected group of European countries – namely France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. These countries were chosen to reflect a broad spectrum of geographical regions, legal-administrative traditions, and levels of digitalisation in farm data management within Europe. For each case, the analysis focuses on the main legal framework, the degree of digital integration, the structure and core contents of the register, and any notable recent innovations. This comparative approach aims to identify both convergences and distinctive features that can inform ongoing debates on best practices and future policy developments in the European context.

8.1 The *Cahier de l'Exploitation Agricole* and Farm Management in France

In France, the farm register is closely linked to the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS – SIGC in French), which is the system through which the public administration monitors farmers' compliance with EU regulations, manages direct payments, and conducts control procedures related to CAP subsidies[73].

The farm register therefore compiles fundamental data concerning agricultural land, crop production, livestock farming, phytosanitary treatments, fertilizers used, and other essential agronomic practices. The adoption of this system has led to more efficient and modern management of agricultural resources, in line with EU regulations aimed at promoting sustainable farming practices and reducing the environmental impact of agricultural activities.

At a practical level, the farm register in France is often represented by the *Cahier de l'Exploitation Agricole* (Farm Logbook), a document that gathers all operational information related to the farm's activities[74], including details on crop types, land areas allocated to different productions, agronomic practices, and phytosanitary treatments. This register plays a crucial role, not only in ensuring compliance with agricultural regulations but also in accessing public financial aid and obtaining organic certification, where applicable.

Alongside the *Cahier de l'Exploitation*, there are other registers that respond to specific regulatory requirements. One example is the *Cahier de Culture*, which records all information related to crop production, including practices such as crop rotation, phytosanitary treatments, and fertilizer use, ensuring traceability and compliance with agro-environmental regulations.

Similarly, for livestock management, the *Registre d'Élevage* contains essential data on animal origin, veterinary treatments, and animal welfare practices, making it a key document for compliance with animal welfare regulations and for accessing livestock-related subsidies[75].

Additionally, in organic farming, separate registers are required to document the use of authorized organic treatments and techniques, as these records are essential for obtaining organic certification and demonstrating compliance with EU organic regulations (Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 and No. 889/2008).

With technological advancements, the French farm register system has gradually integrated digital solutions[76], and today, agricultural records are primarily managed electronically. The introduction of digital platforms, geotagging tools, and mapping technologies enables farmers to collect real-time data, monitor their farming operations, and ensure full traceability of agricultural activities[77].

73 The Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS) allows for the collection, processing, and analysis of data related to agricultural areas, production, and farming practices. It is structured to ensure that all information regarding agricultural activities is transparent, verifiable, and accessible to the competent authorities.

74 Gafsi (2006), pp. 491–497.

75 Airieau (2003), pp. 9–12.

76 Cf. Piot-Lepetit (2023); Labarthe (2002), pp. 47–52.

77 Digitalization also facilitates control and verification by the competent authorities, reducing the risk of errors and increasing the effectiveness of inspections. The information collected can be automatically synchronized with the SIGC, thereby facilitating payment management

The farm register in France is also particularly relevant for organic farming, where compliance with both national and EU regulations requires the documentation of all production stages, from sowing to harvest and commercialization. In this context, the *Cahier de Culture* and the *Cahier de l'Exploitation* serve as essential tools for demonstrating compliance, facilitating certification processes, and ensuring greater transparency in agricultural management. The digitalization of farm records further simplifies these procedures, improving efficiency and facilitating access to subsidies.

8.2 The Betriebsbuch in the German Legal System

In Germany, the farm register, known as the Betriebsbuch (Farm Record Book), is essential for ensuring compliance with both national and EU agricultural regulations. This system is designed to monitor and document all agricultural activities, ensuring compliance with environmental laws, food safety regulations, and sustainability standards. In addition to the requirements imposed by the CAP, the German system integrates a series of national regulations that contribute to the transparent and efficient management of agricultural resources.

The main regulations governing the farm register in Germany include the Düngeverordnung (Fertilizer Ordinance), which requires farmers to keep detailed records of fertilizer and pesticide use to reduce environmental impact and enhance agricultural sustainability, and the Lebensmittel- und Futtermittelgesetzbuch (LFGB – Food and Feed Code), which establishes traceability requirements for food and feed products, ensuring that all production-related information is accessible in the event of inspections or audits.

The German farm register is structured into various sections, some of which are mandatory, while others are optional but recommended. The mandatory sections include the Anbauverzeichnis (Crop Register), which records details on cultivated land, crop rotations, phytosanitary treatments, and fertilizers used[78]. Another essential component is the Tierhaltungsbuch (Livestock Register), which contains information on reared animals, veterinary treatments, and animal welfare practices. The Düngemittelbuch (Fertilizer Register) and the Pflanzenschutzmittelbuch (Pesticide Register) are also mandatory, containing detailed data on fertilizer and pesticide use, which are crucial for ensuring compliance with environmental regulations.

As for optional sections, although they are not legally required, they are highly recommended by German authorities. For example, the Agricultural Machinery Register provides detailed tracking of equipment usage, maintenance costs, and energy efficiency, while the Water Resources Register helps monitor irrigation water use and promote sustainable farming practices.

A distinctive feature of the German system is its high level of digitalization. Technological platforms and farm management software allow farmers to digitally manage and monitor their farm records, integrating data on crops, livestock, fertilizers, and pesticides. These tools simplify compliance with regulatory obligations and facilitate real-time tracking of farming activities. Moreover, the use of geotagging and digital mapping technologies enables precise land localization and continuous monitoring of agricultural operations, thereby improving efficiency and reducing environmental impact[79].

The farm register system in Germany is also subject to strict controls and inspections conducted by competent authorities, such as the Dienstleistungszentren Ländlicher Raum (DLR – Rural Service Centers), which perform on-site audits to verify compliance with agricultural practices, fertilizer and pesticide usage, and product traceability regulations[80]. The combination of an advanced digital system, rigorous oversight, and targeted legislation allows Germany to maintain a highly sustainable agricultural framework, ensuring full compliance with EU regulations while preserving the quality and safety of its agricultural products.

8.3 The Cuaderno de Explotación in Spain

In Spain, the farm register, known as the Cuaderno de Explotación or Registro de Explotación Agrícola, is a fundamental tool for agricultural enterprises, particularly those producing high-quality products such as wine and olive oil. This system is regulated by a combination of EU and national regulations, including Regulation (EU) No. 1306/2013 on the management of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Ley 43/2002 de Sanidad Vegetal[81], which governs the use of phytosanitary products, and specific regulations for quality products, such as Regulation (EU)

and ensuring compliance with regulations.

78 Calliess et al. (2007), pp. 57–88.

79 Linsner et al. (2021), pp. 334–350.

80 These checks include field inspections to verify the correct application of agricultural techniques and inputs, document audits to ensure the completeness and accuracy of records, as well as random checks on agricultural products to verify compliance with quality and safety standards.

81 Ley 43/2002, de 20 de noviembre, de sanidad vegetal. Available at: www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2002/11/20/43/con

No. 1151/2012[82] on Protected Designations of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indications (PGI).

The Cuaderno de Explotación includes mandatory records on crop production, fertilizers, and sales, as well as specific sections for quality products, such as wine-making records for viticulture and oil-processing records for olive oil production, ensuring strict traceability throughout all production stages. Traceability is mandatory, and, for instance, each bottle of PDO or PGI wine must be accompanied by a document certifying its origin and compliance with quality standards, while PDO olive oil must be traceable from olive harvesting to the final bottled product.

Furthermore, Spain is actively promoting the use of digital technologies to enhance efficiency and sustainability, with software solutions that enable real-time monitoring of agricultural activities[83]. The adoption of technologies such as geotagging and blockchain is also advancing, allowing for even stricter traceability.

The competent authorities, such as the Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación (MAPA), conduct regular inspections, both on-site and through farm records, to ensure compliance with regulations and quality standards. This system not only helps maintain high product quality standards but also encourages the adoption of more sustainable agricultural practices.

8.4 The Bedrijfsregister in the Netherlands: A Model of Innovation and Sustainability

The Netherlands represents a global benchmark in agriculture, characterized by a high level of mechanization and technological innovation. Despite its small territory, the country ranks third worldwide in terms of agricultural export value, thanks to advanced practices such as hydroponic farming and the extensive use of greenhouses[84].

To ensure sustainability and compliance with both EU and national regulations, Dutch farmers use the Bedrijfsregister or Bedrijfsadministratie, a sophisticated digital system that enables monitoring every stage of production, from sowing to harvest. This farm register is regulated by a combination of EU regulations, such as Regulation (EU) No. 1306/2013, which establishes rules for managing and monitoring the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and specific national laws[85].

Among the national regulations, the Wet gewasbeschermingsmiddelen en biociden governs[86] the use of pesticides, requiring farmers to keep detailed records of applied treatments, while the Meststoffenwet regulates fertilizer use, mandating accurate documentation to reduce environmental impact.

The Bedrijfsregister includes mandatory sections, which vary depending on the type of agricultural activity. These include the Gewasregister (Crop Register), which contains detailed information on cultivated land, crop varieties, and crop rotation, the Meststoffenregister[87] (Fertilizer Register), and the Verkoopregister (Sales Register).

Furthermore, to promote more sustainable agricultural practices, specific registers have been introduced, such as the Emissieregister, which collects data on greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants, and the Watergebruiksregister, which monitors irrigation water use.

8.5 The Ewidencja gospodarstwa rolnego in Poland

In Poland, the farm register, known as the Ewidencja gospodarstwa rolnego, is still in development, but it is gaining increasing importance due to the influence of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and investments in the digitalization of the agricultural sector[88].

From a regulatory perspective, the Polish farm register is governed by a combination of EU regulations and national laws. At the national level, the Ustawa o wspieraniu rozwoju obszarów wiejskich (Rural Development Act) regulates access to EU funds and imposes registration obligations for agricultural activities, while the Ustawa o nawozach i nawożeniu (Fertilizers and Fertilization Act) governs fertilizer use, requiring the documentation of applied quantities to ensure environmental sustainability.

The structure of the farm register in Poland includes various mandatory sections, which depend on the type

82 Regulation (EU) No. 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and the Council of November 21, 2012, on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs.

83 There are also public initiatives for the digitalization of the agricultural sector. The Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación (MAPA) has developed digital tools accessible to farmers to facilitate farm management and regulatory compliance, such as the Sistema de Información de Explotaciones Agrarias (SIEX), which aims to centralize farm data into a single public platform.

84 Van der Ploeg (2011).

85 European Parliament, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Research for the Committee on Agriculture and the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU in the Netherlands, 2016. www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2016/563421/IPOL_IDA(2016)563421_EN.pdf

86 Available at https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0021670/2024-01-01

87 Available at https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0004054/2025-01-01

88 Budzinowski (2018).

of agricultural activity. The Ewidencja upraw (Crop Register) collects information on cultivated land, crop varieties, and phytosanitary treatments used, specifying commercial names, doses, and application dates. The Ewidencja nawozów (Fertilizer Register) documents fertilizer use, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations, while the Ewidencja sprzedaży (Sales Register) records information on marketed products, prices, and distribution channels.

In addition to these general records, specific tools for sustainability are being developed, such as the Ewidencja emisji (Emissions Register), which monitors greenhouse gas and pollutant emissions, and the Ewidencja zużycia wody (Water Use Register), aimed at promoting efficient irrigation water management.

Despite the progress made, some challenges remain. While Poland has a strong agricultural tradition, the modernization process of the sector is still ongoing and faces significant obstacles. One of the major issues is the limited availability of adequate digital infrastructure, which is necessary to implement advanced technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and data analytics, which are essential for precision agriculture and the efficient management of resources. This limitation hinders farmers' ability to adopt innovative solutions that could enhance the productivity and sustainability of their farms.

These shortcomings restrict the adoption of advanced technological tools for managing the farm register in many rural areas. Additionally, the lack of technical training among farmers[89] represents a significant obstacle, making it necessary to implement support policies to facilitate the use of digital tools[90]. However, thanks to access to EU funds and the gradual adoption of innovative technologies, Poland has the potential to modernize its agricultural sector, improving sustainability and traceability in line with the objectives of the CAP[91].

8.6 The Swedish Jordbruksregister

The farm register in Sweden, known as the Gårdsbok or Jordbruksregister, is a key instrument for the management and monitoring of agricultural activities, playing a crucial role in the implementation of sustainability and traceability policies. Unlike other European countries, Sweden has developed a highly digitalized system, allowing farmers to record every aspect of farm management in real-time, from cultivation to product commercialization[92]. This approach fits within a regulatory framework that combines EU directives under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with strict national regulations, such as the Miljöbalken, the Swedish Environmental Code, which imposes rigorous controls on the use of fertilizers and pesticides.

The Swedish farm register is distinguished by its detailed structure, which includes mandatory sections dedicated to recording cultivated areas, applied treatments, fertilizer management, and product commercialization. However, its impact extends far beyond a simple administrative function, establishing itself as a strategic tool for environmental monitoring and sustainability certification.

For organic farms, the Gårdsbok is even more significant, as it enables traceability at every stage of production, ensuring compliance with the stringent standards set by Regulation (EU) No. 2018/848[93] and voluntary certifications[94]. This guarantees full transparency for consumers and regulatory authorities.

The adoption of a digital system has transformed the farm register from a regulatory obligation into a fundamental support tool for farmers, who can access updated data to optimize their management decisions. Digitalization has also facilitated access to EU and national funds for sustainable agriculture, reducing bureaucratic burdens and improving farm management efficiency.

However, some challenges remain, particularly for small farms, which must deal with administrative

89 Another challenge concerns the need for more in-depth training for farmers. Many operators in the sector lack the digital skills necessary to effectively use new technologies. This training gap can be attributed to factors such as the advanced age of a significant portion of the agricultural population and the limited availability of educational programs focused on digital skills in rural areas. The lack of adequate training prevents farmers from fully exploiting the opportunities offered by digitalization, thereby slowing down the modernization process of the sector.

90 Prandecki et al. (2018).

91 To address these challenges, initiatives are underway to improve digital infrastructure in rural areas and promote training programs specifically designed for farmers. For example, Poland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan includes significant investments in the modernization of the agricultural sector, with a particular focus on the adoption of technologies for Agriculture 4.0. These efforts aim to create a more conducive environment for innovation, enabling farmers to integrate digital tools into their daily practices and improve the competitiveness of the Polish agricultural sector within the European context.

92 OECD (2018).

93 European Parliament and Council of the European Union, Regulation (EU) No. 848/2018 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 of the Council of 28 June 2007

94 KRAV is the main certification organization for organic production in Sweden.

burdens and the high standards required for environmental certifications.

Ultimately, the Swedish farm register model stands out as a leading example in Europe, successfully integrating management efficiency, environmental sustainability, and technological innovation. Its future evolution will likely focus on greater integration with artificial intelligence systems and satellite monitoring technologies, further solidifying Sweden's position as a leader in sustainable agricultural resource management.

8.7 The Farm Record Book in the United Kingdom

Following Brexit, the United Kingdom has adopted its own agricultural management system to replace the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union. Although the new regulatory framework is independent of EU directives, it retains many elements of continuity, with a strong focus on traceability, sustainability, and regulatory compliance[95]. The farm register, known in the UK as the Farm Record Book or Farm Management System, is an essential tool for ensuring compliance with national regulations and accessing public incentives. The introduction of the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) has further strengthened the importance of rigorous record-keeping, as the recognition of financial support depends on demonstrating compliance with sustainable agricultural practices.

Unlike the previous CAP framework, which favored subsidies based on farm size and production, the new British system directly incentivizes activities aimed at environmental protection and climate impact reduction[96]. Farmers are therefore required to document in detail their land use, cultivation methods, crop rotations, and the application of pesticides and fertilizers, as well as biodiversity conservation practices.

Beyond ensuring transparency in farm management, the careful maintenance of these records allows agricultural operators to access different funding levels under the ELMS, which is structured into the Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery, and Landscape Recovery schemes.

Digitalization has progressively transformed how British farms manage their farm records. While documentation was traditionally paper-based, today many farms use digital tools to monitor operations and facilitate communication with regulatory authorities. This transition has improved administrative efficiency and reduced the environmental impact associated with paper documentation.

Additionally, voluntary certification schemes, such as those issued by the Soil Association, impose even higher standards in terms of record-keeping and control, ensuring greater traceability of organic and sustainable production.

Despite leaving the European Union, the United Kingdom remains one of the leading countries in the adoption of environmentally friendly agricultural practices, placing the farm register at the core of its agricultural regulation and development strategy.

8.8 Comparative Table of Farm Registers

Table 1 summarizes the main features of the farm registers in the countries analysed, facilitating cross-country comparison and highlighting both convergences and specificities.

This comparative overview provides the analytical foundation for the subsequent discussion on digital innovation and future prospects in agricultural register management.

8.9 Digital Innovation and the Future of Agricultural Registers

In recent years, the management of farm registers has increasingly become the focus of digital innovation initiatives at both national and European level. The integration of advanced digital technologies – most notably blockchain and artificial intelligence (AI) – holds significant potential for transforming the efficiency, security, and transparency of agricultural data management systems.

Blockchain technology is widely recognised as an enabling infrastructure for ensuring transparency, traceability, and trust along agri-food supply chains. Blockchain offers unique opportunities for enhancing the integrity of agricultural registers, particularly in terms of traceability of land tenure, crops, and subsidy applications. Concrete use cases demonstrate how blockchain can store product origins, proof of production, and certification data in a tamper-proof, shared ledger. Notably, some EU-funded pilot projects, such as "AgriBlockIoT", have already demonstrated the capacity of blockchain to improve transparency and accountability in the agri-food chain. These approaches are now being explored for potential application to national farm registers as well, offering valuable insights into both technological integration and governance challenges.

The aforementioned reports highlight that blockchain can also help reduce administrative burdens and costs

95 For further reading, see Rodgers et al. (2025); McNall (2022); Walsh (2016).

96 Scott (2024).

Table 1

Country	Register	Legal basis & structure	Digitalization level	Main content	Access & control
Italy	Fascicolo Aziendale/ SIAN	DPR 503/1999, DM 162/2015, EU Reg.	high	identification, land, crops, livestock, subsidies	AGEA, OPs, CAA, Revenue Agency, INPS
France	*Cahier de l'Exploitation Agricole*, SIGC	CAP, national decrees	high	land, crops, livestock, treatments, certifications	Regional authorities, public agencies
Germany	Betriebsbuch	National & EU rules, Fertilizer Ordinance	very high	crops, livestock, fertilizers, pesticides, machinery	DLR (Rural Centers), agencies
Spain	Cuaderno de Explotación	CAP, Ley 43/2002, sector laws	high (in progress)	land, crops, fertilizers, products, quality labels	MAPA regional authorities
Netherlands	Bedrijfsregister	EU and national acts	very high	crops, fertilizers, emissions, water use, sales	NVWA, Min. of Agriculture
Poland	Ewidencja gospodarstwa rolnego	CAP, national rural laws	moderate	crops, fertilizers, sales, water, emissions	National agencies, EU audits
Sweden	Jordbruksregister (Gårdsbok)	CAP, Miljöbalken (Environmental Code)	very high	crops, treatments, fertilizers, sustainability, sales	SJV (Agric. Board), local agencies
UK	Farm Record Book	National post-Brexit rules	high	land use, crops, environment, biodiversity, subsidies	DEFRA, agencies, ELMS

by centralising information and reducing the need for repeated audits or fragmented verification processes, thereby making agricultural registers more efficient and user-friendly for both authorities and farmers. However, it is also noted that adoption barriers persist, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, due to the costs of implementation and the need for capacity building and digital skills development.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is equally promising for the future of agricultural registers. AI-driven analytics, combined with satellite imagery and remote sensing, enable more accurate monitoring of land use, early detection of irregularities, and risk prediction. These tools are increasingly adopted by Paying Agencies to automate controls related to conditionality and area-based payments. The potential for integrating AI with blockchain-based systems – especially in automating compliance and fraud detection – represents an important research and policy frontier

Interoperability and data integration represent another frontier: linking farm registers with cadastral, fiscal, environmental, and animal health databases enables more holistic and timely cross-checks. The ongoing modernization of the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) and the adoption of open data standards by several Member States are significant steps towards the creation of an EU-wide digital ecosystem for agricultural management.

Despite these advances, challenges remain: the adoption of disruptive technologies is often limited by the heterogeneity of national systems, differences in data governance models, and the need to ensure cybersecurity and personal data protection. A balanced approach is needed, combining innovation with regulatory harmonization and support for the digital capacity-building of farm operators.

In conclusion, the implementation of blockchain, AI, and integrated data systems is likely to redefine the role of farm registers, transforming them from mere administrative tools into strategic instruments for supporting sustainability, transparency, and resilience in European agriculture.

IX Conclusions

The farm register confirms its crucial role in the administrative and financial management of agricultural enterprises, not only in Italy but also across Europe. Regulatory and technological advancements have further reinforced its importance, transforming it from a simple document archive into a dynamic system for control, integration, and access to public funding.

However, the current framework highlights the need for further reforms to address outstanding challenges, such as data fragmentation, bureaucratic complexity, and the variability of controls among different administrative bodies.

The implementation of advanced digital solutions, such as the Graphical Cropping Plan and the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS), represents a step forward toward more efficient management but also raises concerns about the system's ability to balance administrative simplification with regulatory rigidity. Moreover, while strengthening traceability and transparency mechanisms is necessary to prevent fraud and ensure the proper use of public resources, it

also risks increasing management burdens on farms, particularly small enterprises.

Finally, the comparative analysis with other European countries reveals that Italy, despite having made significant progress in digitalization, could further benefit from more advanced models, such as the German[97] or Swedish[98] systems, where the integration of technology, sustainability, and regulatory control is more effective. These experiences demonstrate that an effective farm register should not be just a control mechanism but also a tool for supporting the agricultural sector's development.

The future of the Italian system will depend on its ability to balance control and flexibility, promoting a model that does not become a bureaucratic constraint but rather an opportunity for growth and innovation within the agricultural sector.

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[97] In Germany, for example, the use of centralized and interconnected platforms has led to a reduction in bureaucratic burdens for businesses, while simultaneously improving transparency in agricultural management processes.

[98] Sweden, on the other hand, has focused on a sustainability-driven approach, with a system that combines economic incentives and documentation requirements within a clear and digitized regulatory framework.

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