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**Report Name:** Agriculture in Corsica - France

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**Prepared By:** Marie-Anne Omnes

**Approved By:** Kathryn Snipes

**Report Highlights:**

Corsica is a mountainous French island found off its southern coast in the Mediterranean Sea. Agriculture accounts for 1.3 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and about 1.5 percent of its residents work in agriculture. However, culturally, agriculture remains important to the Corsican identity and it boosts the tourism industry that accounts for about half of its GDP. There are some limited opportunities for U.S. products in its growing hotel and restaurant sector.



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With 3,400 square miles Corsica is about the size of New Hampshire with 335,000 inhabitants of a total French population of

66.8 million people. The Corsican GDP is about \$10 billion and is heavily reliant on tourism with about three million visitors annually staying in total about 10.5 million nights.

**Agricultural Overview and Production**

Agriculture and agri-food only represent a small part of the Corsican economy, despite their potential; however, the sector can rely on a strong recognizable identity within Europe.

Twelve products resulting from Corsican agriculture are protected by a Controlled and Protected Designation of Origin (AOC/AOP): wines, brocciu (cheese), olive oil, honey, chestnut flour, charcuterie (cured meat). The clementine, the pomelo and the hazelnut are distinguished by a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), as are the wines. The Corsican clementine has also obtained a Label Rouge<sup>1</sup>. Numerous other recognition procedures are underway: Protected designation of Origin (AOP) for different types of cheese and for the onion of Cape Corsica and PGI for suckling lamb, goat, and kiwi.

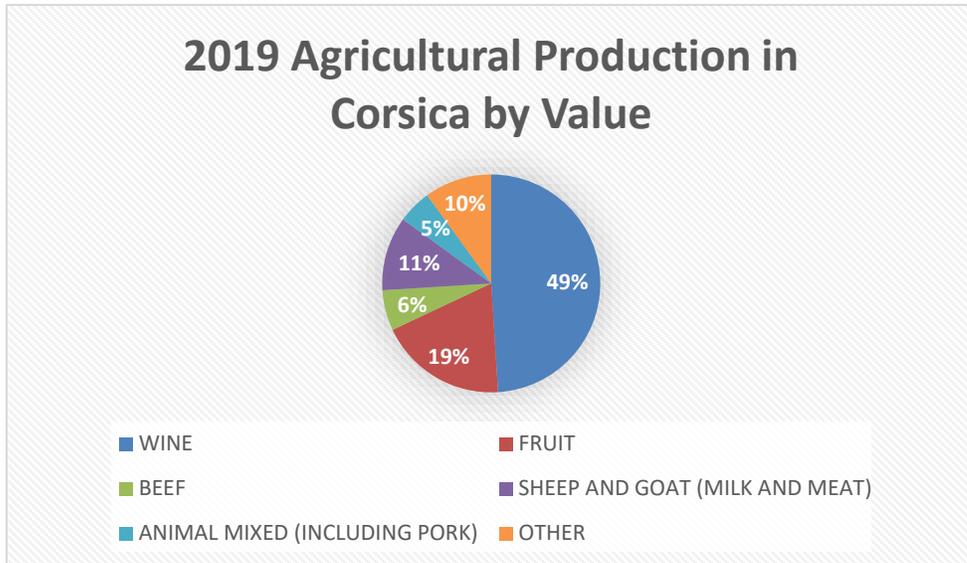
The total value of agricultural production in Corsica was \$305 million in 2019 of which almost half is wine production. Approximately 5,000 people work in the agricultural sector on 2,626 farms, with 65 percent of the farms in animal or mixed animal and crop/horticulture production. The average farm size in Corsica is 50 acres.

The total agricultural area is 414,900 acres or 20 percent of the total area of the island. The agricultural landscape is still composed mainly of small and medium-sized farms. Large farms only represent 13 percent of Corsican farms compared to 32 percent in mainland France.

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<sup>1</sup> Quality label - official endorsement by the French authorities of the superior quality of a food or farmed product.

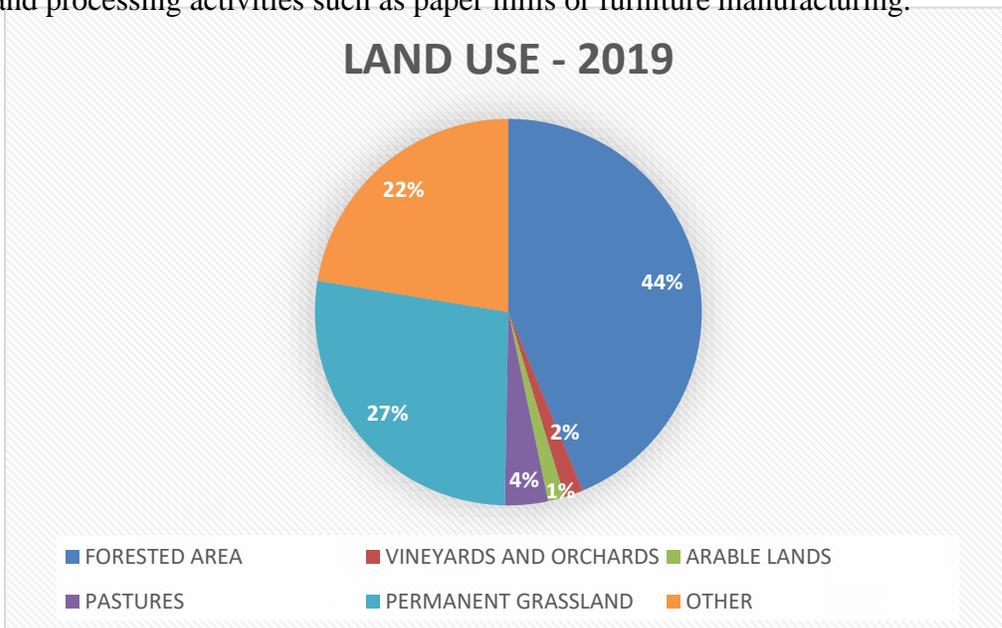
Livestock and meat, milk and dairy products constitute most of the farming in Corsica outside of viticulture and amount to approximately 22 percent of the total value of agricultural production. Cattle breeding is mainly oriented towards meat production (81 percent) and sheep and goat are raised for milk for well-recognized Corsican cheeses.



After periods of crisis, Corsica’s horticultural sector is improving in quality, particularly clementines and other citrus. Its wine sector is also improving as shown by its greater participation and recognition in wine competitions; 65 percent of Corsica’s wine is exported (45 percent to France and 20 percent internationally).

Corsica is the number one French region for hazelnut production and has 78 percent of France’s almond production (however, France produces 2 percent or less of its annual almond consumption).

Corsica is heavily forested, with trees covering 44 percent of its total area. With 500,000 hectares of forest, including 400,000 hectares in production, Corsica is the most forested area in France and in the Mediterranean region. However, it’s not significant to the Corsican economy because there are few local industrial and processing activities such as paper mills or furniture manufacturing.



## Wine Geographical Indications in Corsica



Northern Corsica specializes in wine production and most wines are produced under a Corsican Geographic Indicator. The new winegrowers are focused on quality over quantity; there are about 6,000 hectares (14,826 acres) of vines in Corsica which is only about 20 percent of the area planted to vines thirty years ago.

Citrus fruits, primarily clementines and grapefruit, are grown on the eastern plains of the island. Clementines can be grown without pesticides or other treatments because citrus diseases found on mainland Europe are not present in Corsica.

In France, Corsican clementines are seen as a specialty high-end product with their own protected geographical indication (PGI)<sup>2</sup> granted in 2007. Overall, tree fruits, including olives and tree nuts, represents 19 percent of the of the turnover of Corsican agriculture.

The mountainous areas specialize in pork, cattle and sheep production for milk and meat. Those mountain farms are very large, with free range animals pasturing untended in the forest.



*Cattle grazing under clementine trees*



*Free-range pigs foraging for oak acorns*

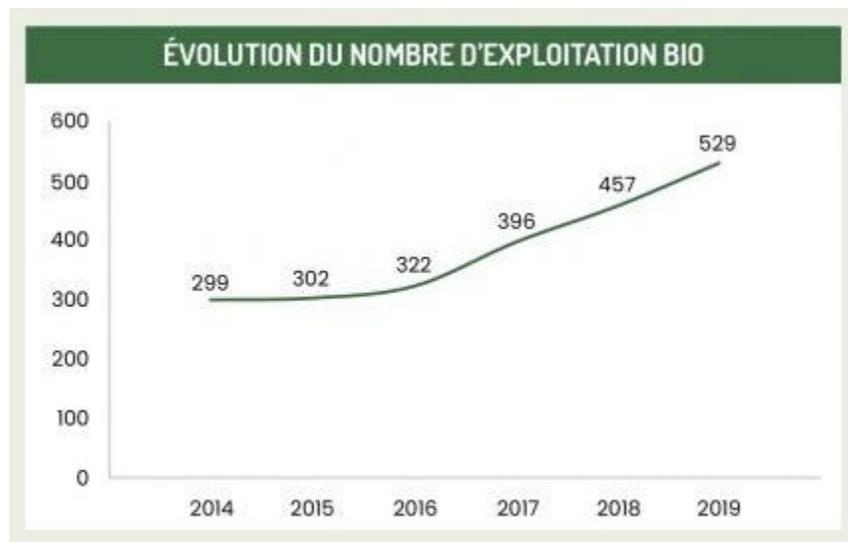
<sup>2</sup> Indication géographique protégée (IGP) in French, European Union quality scheme. Product, with a particular quality, reputation or other characteristic essentially attributable to its geographical origin.

More than seven percent of agricultural land is cultivated organically, making Corsica the third most important organic region in France.

There were 529 organic farms in 2019, mainly in Haute Corse, Upper Corsica (65 percent) for a total of 28,237 hectares (69,775 acres) in organic production.

About fifteen percent of all Corsica farms are now organic and numbers are continuously increasing.

### **Evolution of the number of organic farms**



### **Agricultural Policy**

The implementation of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in Corsica is controversial. Farmers and livestock producers highlight that their unique situation is not accounted for by EU regulations that they cannot implement as written or benefit from it. For example, large forested free-range production areas with shared land face many of the same regulations as large, concentrated livestock producers in mainland Europe. As a result of some of these concerns in 2014 France and the EU agreed to double the direct payment rate for pasturelands to compensate for the differences. Low productivity areas such as forest and scrub used for pasturing became eligible for subsidies. Since 2014 the EU Commission has raised concerns about fraud, claiming people are pretending to be ranchers to get the subsidies. Audits showed a fraud rate over 40 percent (versus 10 percent on continental France) and anti-corruption NGOs estimated that over \$40 million in CAP funds were misused between 2015 and 2019. Investigations are ongoing and in 2018 the EU Commission required France to limit pasturelands eligible for direct payments, reducing the subsidies given to animal producers in Corsica.

Since 1991, the competence in the field of agricultural development is the responsibility of the collectivity of Corsica and is exercised by the office of agricultural and rural development ([ODARC](#)).

## **Consumption Trends**

Most of the Corsica's production is consumed locally by tourists and residents or sold in continental France, such as wine and clementines. Corsican food products are associated with using natural and traditional production methods and are considered high quality. This is a change from twenty years ago when Corsican wine and clementines were seen as inferior to production on mainland Europe. Corsican pork products and Corsican cheeses have also gained in their quality and status as a new generation of young Corsican farmers have focused on quality and marketing their unique production methods and products. Many of those products are sold on the island directly to tourists from farm stands and farmer's markets directly to restaurants.

## **Challenge for Corsican Agriculture**

Economic challenges in the sector remain. For example, the agricultural population is aging as in many countries, such as the United States, and young farmers have a difficult time purchasing or renting land to farm. The number of farms has been decreasing over forty years, from 7,038 farms in 1980 to 2,626 in 2018.

In addition, the impacts of climate change are already perceptible. High temperatures, irregular rainfall, dry soils, and repeated storms have had an impact on regional agricultural production, including wine, clementines and olive oil. Plant production in 2019 was down by nearly 8 percent in volume compared to the previous year.

There are also disease concerns. Chestnut production is suffering, going from 110 tons in 2010 to only 39 tons in 2015, because chestnut trees are affected by cypnis, a disease caused by an insect that feeds on the trees. The local farmers body [Groupement Régional des Producteurs et Transformateurs de Châtaignes et Marrons](#) de (GRPTCMC) and the INRA of San Giuliano are currently working on solutions.

## **Trade and U.S. Market Opportunities**

Corsica has a positive trade balance for agricultural, forestry, fishing, and aquaculture products (+\$5.8 million).

Corsican exports of manufactured food products represent less than 10 percent of national exports and are mainly marketed to Canada, \$8 million, and the Netherlands \$2.5 million. The wine sector exports about \$4 million annually, primarily to the United States and Belgium. Meat and meat products are exported to other countries in Europe and Indonesia.

Corsica imports very little food from abroad and is closely tied to France's mainland economy. However, for the supply chain imports are required, especially for packaging products and sugar.

There are U.S. products sold in Corsica, primarily meat and seafood products to high-end restaurants and hotels with limited sales, only about \$20 million in products are imputed to NAFTA countries in total, although most are transshipped through mainland France and the EU and so it is difficult to estimate the number of sales to Corsica's hotels and restaurants. Almost half of the hotels are restaurants are small, with less than ten employees but the number of slightly larger and upscale hotels are expanding. There are targeted limited opportunities for U.S. food products, but there are opportunities for meat and seafood sales to the expanding number of upscale restaurants and hotels.

**Attachments:**

No Attachments.