

## Vocational Training in Agriculture in Belgium

By MAC-Team aisbl

### Executive summary

Belgium is part of the European countries with long lasting background in terms of educational system related to agriculture and also in terms of agricultural vocational education. This case presents the practical questions a (new) farmer may have and the corresponding advantages brought in by a recognised qualification level which can be obtained thanks to vocational training.

### **Are there any qualifications required to settle in agriculture?**

No certificate of establishment or access is required. To work as a farmer, vocational training is not a legal requirement and regulated, but:

- To benefit from financial support to investment, a certain conditions related to vocational training must be fulfilled.
- Under some regulation, especially in terms of building licenses or leases, titles or degrees/certificate must be submitted or should accompany the application.

### **What are the available training possibilities for a farmer?**

To benefit of these supports (subvention, loans, building licenses...) the Belgian system has put in place certification recognition based on 3 levels/contents with a recognised curricula:

- General training level courses in agriculture (course A)
- Courses on taking over an agricultural exploitation/farm (course B)
- Specialisation courses, depending on the type of farming (course C).

Several training centres and agricultural unions have been accredited in Belgium to deliver these courses and corresponding certificates.

### **I. Quick context of agricultural farm creation in Belgium**

#### **1. Training is essential to get prepared to farming and farmer job**

In addition to the possible experience passed from generation to generation, which is undoubtedly an asset, other skills must be learned. The rapid evolution of technology, the changes in the economic framework within which the farmer has his/her job, require skills and appropriate competences.

Being trained and learning are therefore crucial for both at the start and during running phase. In addition to the academic training schools/paths, a farmer in Belgium can:

- Freely attend a series of further training organized by some vocational training centres
- Participate in various information days and study sessions organized by various actors of the agricultural sector
- Get involved in management group approaches (via rural unions for instance).

## 2. Types of new agricultural activity creation

A farmer can also make a placement within an existing agricultural exploitation (farm...) in order to get introduced to or to develop his/her experience in one or more specific areas.

A new farmer generally has two ways to start his/her business:

- as **farmer "natural person"** in this case, there will be no clear separation between the professional and private assets.
- as **managing director** (or manager) of a company (legal entity). The libretto of Agriculture published by the DGA with references here: "[Chr. Le Borne, Les Sociétés en agriculture, Namur, 2006](#)" encloses a detailed description to understand the different types of companies.

In terms of social status, the facility as a farm "natural person" or "managing director" (or manager) is proved by its membership in a social insurance fund as an independent in principal or accessory.

Whatever the legal form chosen, two scenarios are possible to settle in agriculture: the **taking-over** or the **creation** of a farm:

- either the farmer takes over an existing agricultural exploitation, belonging to an active farmer, family member or not.

Depending on the shares taken over, we can distinguish two cases:

- *Total take over*: the farmer takes ownership of all property of a farm
- *undivided partial recovery* (association): the farmer takes over only part of the movable property of an existing operation, which remains in activity, and it creates an association.

- either the farmer **creates** a new agricultural exploitation.

We can also distinguish two cases:

- *partial take over divided* (split): the farmer takes up only part of the movable property of an existing operation and it creates with this part taken, a new operation
- *creation* on a production site that did not exist

## 3. When does a capacity level recognition become a requirement in agriculture in Belgium?

At farm level, considering administrative matters the creation of an agricultural exploitation means:

- Assignment of a new business number (VAT number activated) and
- Assignment of a new producer number (Technical id card of the farm - Carte Technique d'Identification CTI).

However this is not a legal requirement. It is only required if the farmer wishes to be eligible to obtain compensatory payments/subventions or is subject to the system of milk quotas.

To benefit from financial support to investment, a certain conditions related to vocational training must be fulfilled. (FIA: minimum capacity of first installation).

Under some regulation, especially in terms of building licenses or leases, titles or degrees/certificate must be submitted or should accompany the application.

## **II. Vocational training possibilities for a farmer starting a new activity**

In complement to securing smooth and successful development of a new farm project, vocational training under recognised curricula by the Belgian government enables farmers to benefit of support schemes (subvention, loans, building licenses...).

The Belgian vocational training system in agriculture proposes certification recognition based on 3 levels/contents with a recognised curricula:

- General training level courses in agriculture (course A)
- Courses on taking over an agricultural exploitation/farm (course B)
- Specialisation courses, depending on the type of farming (course C).

Several training centres and agricultural unions have been accredited in Belgium to deliver these courses and corresponding certificates.

The curricula are similar in the Belgian federal states but present a few differences especially in terms of duration (Courses C are defined on an ad-hoc basis):

Federal regions	Course A	Course B	Comments
Flemish region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum 75 hours, (basic knowledge of general and specific agricultural law, economics and business accounting).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 40 additional teaching hours</li> <li>• Attuned to the agricultural sector of the applicant farmer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum of 2 years experiences is required</li> </ul>
Walloon region and German Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum 75 hours</li> <li>• + additional technical teaching requested by the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economics, laws and business management (90h)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 months practical period in a farm.</li> <li>• Minimum of 2 years experience</li> <li>• If 3 years experiences: only course B is required</li> </ul>

### **1. Course A, general agriculture**

These courses on agricultural techniques are delivered in the evening or during the day, usually between November and May. These courses are intended to update the knowledge base in agriculture to potential new farm managers (or willing to re-train). Different subjects are addressed, such as crops, fertilization, mechanization, crop protection, animal husbandry, livestock feed, livestock diseases, genetics and breeding, milk production, rural economy and many other matters

### **2. Course B, farm take over/creation**

These courses are designed to address the practical side of farming. The accounting and management aspects are crucial here.

The aim of these courses is to put in the hands of farmers, all the weapons to manage their operations and thereby facilitating the way towards a successful take over or creation.



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Besides the aspect of management, other key elements are addressed in this course: Legal Aspects (leases, inheritance, marriage contracts ...) and tax (insurance, credit ...), the Common Agricultural Policy, AIDA, measures Environment (MAE, Natura 2000, environmental permits, PDGA, phyto products ...), prevention of accidents and stress, Sanitel regulation, explanation of services to agriculture (rural unions, regional agriculture authorities, comitia ...).

### 3. Course C, Specialisation courses

The agriculture sector is constantly changing, it is important that its key actors continued to undergo training. The topics are many and varied: welding, masonry, carpentry, agricultural mechanics, accounting, crop protection, animal feed, artificial insemination, computer farm, hoof care, improvement of farm buildings, diversification into small farms, development of products soils, floral art, prevention and safety, handling livestock, cheese making, renewable energies, organic farming, etc.

### III. Comments:

This case has been chosen at country level approach as it has been effective for several years. This approach can be further considered after the Agro-MAC VET project when implementing the GRAM curricula.

It also demonstrate how multiplying effect has been implemented at a country level to ensure wide dissemination of the curricula towards its direct beneficiaries.

References and links are provided in the Agro-MAC VET database/compendium.

(more info on the Agro MAC-VET project on [www.agro-net.eu](http://www.agro-net.eu))



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### Lifelong Learning Programme

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