

THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR IN SWEDEN

Although nowadays less than 3% of Sweden's labor force works in agriculture and less than 10% of the country's area consists of farmland, agriculture is still an important sector of the Swedish economy. The largest agricultural acreage and the highest productivity are found in southernmost Sweden, where specialization in grain and pork production predominates, and in the plains of central Sweden. In Norrland, the production of fodder crops, meat and milk predominates. Farming takes place as far north as the border with Finland, where an intensive summer season and fertile river sediments provide good conditions for growing vegetables.

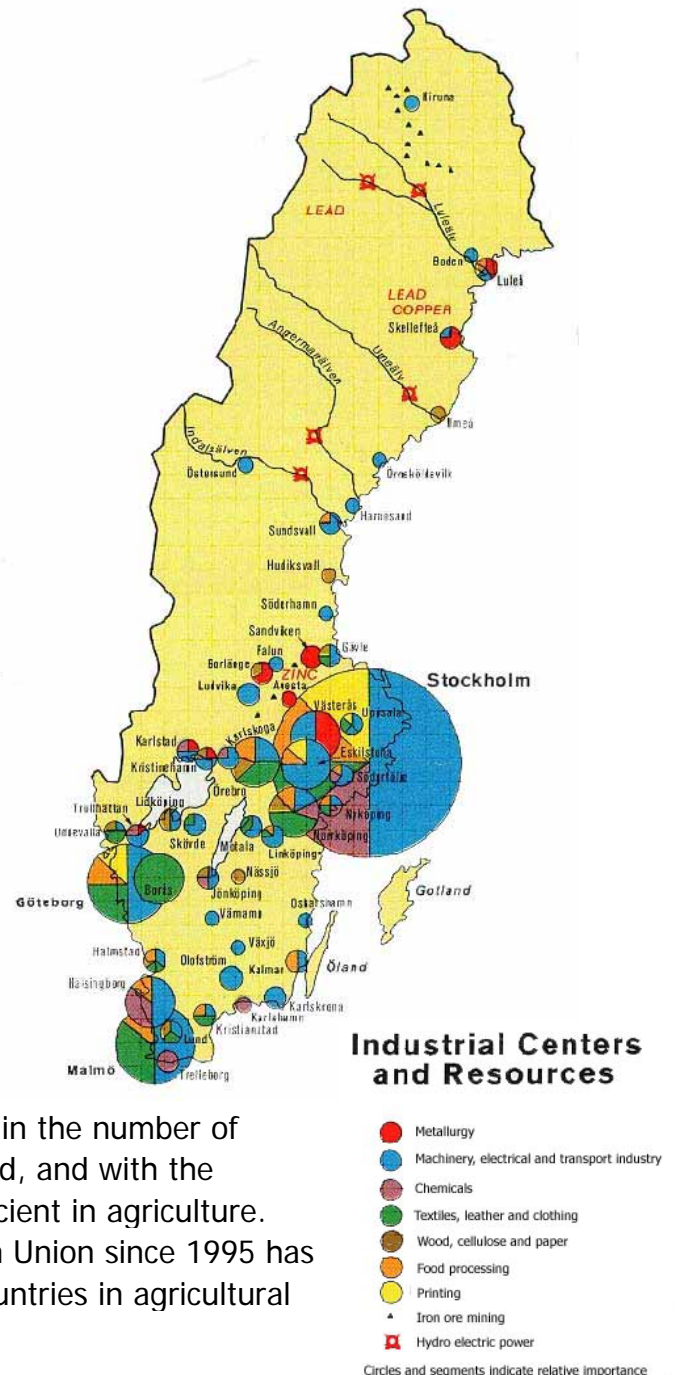
Nearly all Swedish farms are operated by individual families and are relatively small, but in the most important agricultural districts, larger units also exist. Despite a sharp reduction in the number of farms and crop acreage, production has increased, and with the exception of a few products, Sweden is self-sufficient in agriculture. However, Sweden's membership in the European Union since 1995 has led to increased two-way trade with other EU countries in agricultural products and foodstuffs.

Of Sweden's forest land, 10% (mostly in the north) is owned by Swedish state companies, while private companies own 40% (mainly in north central Sweden) and individual owners, mainly farmers, own 50%.

Fishing is a small sector of the national economy nowadays. Because fishing zones have been redrawn by international agreements, Sweden has lost some of its traditional fishing areas in the North Sea and the emphasis has shifted to the Baltic Sea.

Mining has diminished in relative importance, but in northern Sweden the iron ore fields of Kiruna are at the center of a railroad line from the Baltic steel mill center of Luleå and the ice-free Atlantic export harbor of Narvik, Norway.

Sweden's rich natural resources – its forests, ore deposits and hydroelectric power – constitute the historical basis of its industrial economy, but the emphasis has shifted toward increasingly advanced products, often still based on such indigenous raw materials as timber and metals.



The timber and wood product industry is, of course, located close to its sources of raw material. The pulp and paper industry is often situated at the mouths of rivers running through forest regions — including a number along the shores of the Gulf of Bothnia and of Vänern, Sweden's largest lake. Production is concentrated at large, efficient mills, nowadays also including units located in southern Sweden.

Sweden's metal industry still follows a pattern from the days when water power and timberland (for charcoal fuel) determined the location of iron mills. Sweden's metal industry is thus still concentrated in Bergslagen, where some smaller units face increasing competition from larger production sites abroad. The iron and steel mills in coastal Oxelösund and Luleå were built in the 20th century. Otherwise, metal-based industries are dispersed throughout southern and central Sweden and along the Norrland coast.

The automotive and aerospace industry has its main plants in south central Sweden (Göteborg, Trollhättan, Linköping, Södertälje). The electronics industry is concentrated in Stockholm and Västerås.

The pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries are important, especially in the university cities of east central Sweden and in Skåne, where the new bridge/tunnel across the Öresund has encouraged even closer links with similar companies in Denmark.

Distributive trade, transportation, administration and services comprise a larger percentage of the national economy than industry in terms of employees, but account for a small but increasing proportion of exports. This sector is concentrated mainly in major cities, especially Stockholm.