

FAO STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES

6

# Conducting agricultural censuses and surveys



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## FOREWORD

Since its establishment, FAO has promoted national censuses of agriculture through the 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990 Programmes for the World Census of Agriculture.

In October 1995, FAO published the Programme for the World Census of Agriculture 2000 to assist countries with the conduct of their agricultural censuses, in the decade 1996-2005, by providing definitions, concepts, standards and guidelines for this Programme.

This publication 'Conducting Agricultural Censuses and Surveys' is a revised and updated edition of 'Taking Agricultural Censuses', 1978, FAO. It is complementary to the Programme for the World Census of Agriculture 2000 and provides much practical information on the steps involved in actually conducting an agricultural census either on a complete enumeration basis or a sample basis.

The revisions made refer particularly to new technical advances in computer techniques, frame preparations, sampling, etc. The principles for 'getting the job done' are based on many years of on-the-job experience contributed by national and international experts in this field as well as the staff of FAO's Statistical Development Service. FAO is grateful to all who have provided inputs and hopes member countries will find it facilitates and contributes to their conduct of national agricultural censuses so as to advance their qualified knowledge of the agricultural sector.

The Director  
Statistics Division

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## GLOSSARY

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## INTRODUCTION

This publication is intended for national statisticians who are responsible for conducting an agricultural census or survey. Within the census organization there will be many specialists involved in particular aspects of the census. For these specialists, this publication will also provide an insight into all the main aspects of census taking and enable them to better understand their own role within the census organization. It may also be of interest to the government officials involved in deciding if and when to organize an agricultural census, particularly for those who have limited experience of such a major statistical exercise.

Special endeavours have been made to make the document 'user-friendly' by:

- adding a summary at the beginning of each chapter to help the reader select those subjects of specific interest;
- adding specific references at the end of most chapters, providing further information on specialized fields, and;
- the insertion of a glossary of the main terms used in the document.

In different countries the agricultural census may be organized in various ways depending upon the resources available, the importance of agriculture and the tradition in census organization. An agricultural census should be part of an integrated system of agricultural statistics with the objective of providing primary data on the structure of the agricultural sector, such as size of holdings, land use, land tenure, etc., which do not change quickly over time. Detailed data on agricultural production and inputs are part of the system of agricultural statistics, called current statistics, and are collected through specialized agricultural surveys and other sources.

It is recognised that many countries do not have sufficient resources for conducting a series of surveys and collect the most important data through a single survey called an agricultural census. It is also important to note that, by 1960, collecting census data on a sample basis had become an accepted practice and made possible the organization and conduct of censuses in countries lacking the resources required for a complete enumeration. Therefore, there is now no clear distinction between agricultural censuses conducted on a complete enumeration basis and those conducted on a sample basis. Because of this, the title "Conducting Agricultural Censuses and Surveys" was given to this publication.

The Programme for the World Census of Agriculture, 2000, is a joint initiative of the

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