

Programme for the World Census of Agriculture 2000

(WCA 2000)

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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 (WCA).

The Programme for the World Census of Agriculture 2000 is intended to assist countries by providing definitions, concepts, standards and guidelines for censuses in the decade 1996-2005 in order to generate a data base of internationally comparable figures, such as number of farms by size, number of livestock by type and age/sex classification and land use by crops and agricultural inputs. The Census Programme can be considered as the means to achieve harmonization of national practices: FAO encourages countries to follow the Programme as closely as national conditions and practices allow.

The Programme has been prepared by the Statistics Division of FAO in collaboration with many experienced agricultural statisticians all over the world and has been discussed and elaborated in various international meetings. FAO is grateful to all who have provided inputs and hopes member countries will find it facilitates their conduct of national censuses of agriculture so as to advance their quantified knowledge of the agricultural sector.

The Director
Statistics Division

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*A **Census of Agriculture** is a large-scale, periodic, statistical operation for the collection of quantitative information on the structure of Agriculture.*

The word "census" implies a complete enumeration of all agricultural holdings. However, by extension, it can be conducted by a sample enumeration, provided the sample is large enough to generate sub-national data.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statistics for food and agriculture are very important. Detailed analysis, based on objective, quantitative data, of the structure and performance of the food, agricultural and rural sectors is necessary in formulating sector policies, and preparing, monitoring and evaluating development plans and projects relating to food, agriculture, agrarian reform and rural development.

This chapter provides an historical background on the world census of agriculture programme, emphasizes the need for a census of agriculture in an integrated statistical programme, and outlines the basic characteristics of the Programme for the World Census of Agriculture 2000 (WCA 2000).

Background

1.1 By April 1995, 120 countries are expected to have completed, or to be in the process of conducting, an agricultural census for the period 1986-1995 covered by the Programme for the 1990 World Census of Agriculture.

1.2 The Programme for the WCA 2000 will be presented at the 28th FAO Conference to be held in Rome in October 1995. This Programme has been developed taking into account experiences and developments obtained from many national and international experts, agencies and meetings, mainly the 4th session of the FAO/IASI Working group on Agriculture held in 1993 in Buenos-Aires, the 14th session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics held in 1994 in Dakar and the 15th session of the Asian and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics held the same year in Manila.

1.3 The Programme for the WCA 2000 recognizes the wide range in the current status of economic and statistical development in different countries, and encourages countries to develop and implement an agricultural census tailored to their unique situation. Nevertheless, the Programme encourages standardization of a minimum core programme for the agricultural census and a complementary relationship between the agricultural census and more frequent food and agricultural sample surveys, all of which should have a recognized role within the overall national survey programme. FAO has developed a document to complement this Programme, named *Taking Agricultural Censuses* which provides technical guidelines.

1.4 The Programme for the WCA 2000 is the eighth decennial Programme. The first and second Programmes were sponsored by the International Institute of Agriculture (IIA) in 1930 and 1940, respectively. The subsequent five Programmes - centred on 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990 - were promoted by FAO which assumed the responsibilities of the IIA following its dissolution in 1946.

1.5 The present Programme, like the five previous Programmes, is based on Article 1 of FAO's Constitution, the first paragraph of which reads: "The Organization shall collect, analyze, interpret and disseminate information relating to nutrition, food and agriculture."

1.6 World census of agriculture should not be interpreted as a census carried out simultaneously in all countries during a given year. Such an attempt was made in the 1930 Programme by asking countries to carry out their national censuses of agriculture during 1929 if located in the northern hemisphere, and during 1930 if located in the southern hemisphere. The objective was to obtain global data referring to the same time period. A similar request was made in the 1940 Programme. However, because of difficulties countries experienced in taking the census in the same year, and also because the population census was proposed to be taken in years ending with 0, this request

was later relaxed. For example, the 1990 Programme covered national censuses taken during 1986-1995.

1.7 The 1930 Programme was promoted at a time when there was a large gap in agricultural information and data sources for agricultural statistics were not well organized, even in developed countries. The agricultural census was expected to help fill this gap. However, due to its wide scope and emphasis on agricultural output, many countries experienced difficulties in taking their first national agricultural census. Adequate resources for maintaining a large field staff were not easily obtained, their recruitment and training were major concerns when professional staff were limited in number, and completing long questionnaires fatigued both enumerators and respondents. Ensuring data quality was a major problem; even if this was achieved data processing in the pre-computer era was excessively time-consuming leading to belated release of results. All-in-all the whole operation proved to be beyond many countries' capacities.

1.8 Taking these experiences into account, the 1950 Programme proposed a more restricted scope, concentrating on structural aspects of agriculture. The 1960 to 1990 Programmes gradually re-expanded the census scope while keeping agricultural structure as the principal theme. Some countries again experienced difficulties as the scope expanded although others conducted agricultural censuses with an even wider scope.

Census of agriculture in an integrated statistical programme

1.9 Not all food and agricultural statistics can be collected through a decennial census of agriculture. Most obviously, there is a need for annual estimates of production. As early as 1966, attention was drawn to establishing an integrated set of data sources with the census of agriculture as an important component (FAO 1968).

1.10 The 1989 World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), urged countries to develop socioeconomic indicators for monitoring and evaluating programmes on agrarian reform and rural development, thus placing even greater demands on national statistical capabilities. The need for a complete system of food and agricultural statistics, with reference to various data sources, is stressed in FAO publications. Primary data sources include the agricultural census, population census, industrial census and sample surveys such as those on agricultural production, livestock, farm management, post-harvest losses, food consumption, household income/expenditure, and labour force. Administrative records, local community records, technological research and international statistical publications are cited as secondary data sources. These and other sources, some beyond the domain of agricultural statistics, contribute to the data pool needed for a national information system on food and agriculture. Emphasis in these publications focuses on linkages between these data sources, with the following aims:

- (a) Concepts, definitions and classifications compatibility.
- (b) Optimizing the use of available statistical resources.
- (c) Restricting any one census or survey to a coherent and manageable range of data items.

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