

# WYE GROUP HANDBOOK Rural Households' Livelihood and Well-Being – Statistics on Rural Development and Agricultural Household Income

## Progress Report for the Washington Meeting of the Wye Group, May 2010

Berkeley Hill and Graham Eele

### Introduction and background

At the outset it is useful to note the original purpose of the Handbook, as this influences its nature and content. The Preface of the 2005/2007 edition states:

*'The Handbook is intended for the benefit of various groups concerned with rural development and the evolving nature of the agricultural industry. It aims to be a guide for the providers of statistics, not only those who confront measurement challenges for the first time, but also for those who are building on existing programmes. Statistical offices often have to make choices. The Handbook explains the underlying economic and statistical concepts and principles needed to enable these offices to make their choices in efficient and cost effective ways and to be aware of the implications of their decisions.*

*It is also intended for those who use the data to perform analyses and to interpret what the statistics mean for personal and national goals. The Handbook will be of special interest to those in the public sector responsible for setting targets and monitoring policies related to:*

- *The standard of living and well-being of rural households vis-à-vis urban and all households, and*
- *The standard of living and well-being of agricultural households vis-à-vis households of other socio-professional categories.*

*The Handbook is a reference for current **good practice**, drawing upon the collective expertise accumulated in many countries and providing a means of access to this form of social capital. Also, as a living document, it represents a potential repository for findings of new ways to approach measurement of important variables. In this respect, both developed and developing country settings are important.'*

The genesis of the Handbook is also outlined in the Preface. In short, its roots can be traced to a meeting in 2002 on the role of agricultural households, and concrete proposals to a 2003 meeting of the (then) International Working Group on Statistics for Rural development and Agricultural Households Income (IWG-Agri). Drafting first took place in late 2003 and early 2004; the nature of people and organisations willing to contribute meant that this text related very largely to OECD countries. Later (after the Verona meeting in July 2004 of the task force charged with taking the Handbook forward, at which the FAO and World Bank

were represented) it became evident that the Handbook should also be made relevant to non-OECD countries, as far as was practical in the time remaining before publication. Concentrated efforts were made in this direction. However, it was impossible to recast the whole of the text, and the emphasis of the original drafts on OECD countries was still evident in the first edition issued electronically in 2005.

It should be noted that considerable resources were devoted to this first edition. In addition to the contributions from a number of authors, and three 'interns' based at various times in Geneva, the two editors (Jan Karlsson of UNECE and Berkeley Hill of Imperial College, UK) spent much time on the Handbook, including the final nine months before publication, when both were working almost full-time on this project. Publication coincided with both editors retiring from their respective institutions.

When UNECE decided to print a hardcopy version in 2007, some editorial work was done by UNECE and by Berkeley Hill (voluntary and unpaid). However, this did not change significantly the contents of the Handbook.

The Wye City Group was established by the UN Statistical Commission in 2007 to take forward the work of the earlier inter-agency working group. Its purpose is to promote the development and adoption of international standards in statistics for rural areas and agriculture household incomes. Within this remit, the Group aims to support the adoption of comparable methods of data collection across countries. Other concerns are to assess and explore the potential for the use of statistics for the analysis of policies for farm and rural households, natural resources, and regional economic development. The main activity of the Wye group, since its inception, has been to revise and update the Handbook. At meetings in Paris in 2007 and York (UK) in 2008 initial plans were considered. It was not until the Rome meeting (June 2009), however, that concrete plans were made to update and expand the Handbook, with the creation of a Steering Group and an editorial team<sup>1</sup>. At the same time it was agreed to explore the possibility of engaging interns, inviting comments on contents and the submission of text from people were part of the Wye Group or others with specialist knowledge and expertise.

Initially the proposal was to *separately* (a) update the existing Handbook and (b) expand it by putting together a Supplement focussing on the situation in Less Developed Countries (LDCs). At some future, but unspecified date it was expected that the two texts were to be combined in a new combined edition of the Handbook. As will be seen below, later this proposal was abandoned in favour of combining both activities immediately.

Limited progress was made in mobilizing resources for the editing process. FAO agreed to appoint two interns (Elisabetta Aurino and Veronica Gianfaldoni) and they started work early in 2010. They are based at FAO and under the immediate supervision of Carola Fabi, who is the FAO contact person for this activity. Terms of Reference for the interns were agreed

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<sup>1</sup> It was agreed that Berkeley Hill would be the editor for the Update and Graham Eele, who had recently retired from the World Bank would be the editor for the Supplement.

with the two editors. In practice, there have been regular electronic contacts with the three members of the Rome team and the editors. At the same time the World Bank agreed to provide some funds through the trust fund supporting the preparation of the Global Strategy, to meet some of the costs of one of the editors (Berkeley) and to finance the time of the other editor (Graham).

## **Links between the Handbook and the Global Strategy on Agricultural Statistics**

In 2009, as substantive work on the Update and Supplement started it was clear that there were strong areas of overlap between the mandate of the Wye Group and ongoing work to prepare a Global Strategy for Agricultural Statistics. The Global Strategy had been commissioned by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in response to widespread recognition of a general decline in the quality and availability of agricultural statistics globally, but especially in developing countries. Work to develop a global strategy, coordinated by FAO with support from the World Bank had begun in 2008 and was completed in 2009, under the supervision of a UNSC Friends of the Chair Group, chaired by Eduardo Nunes of Brazil. The Strategy was approved by UNSC at its meeting in February 2010 and the Friends of the Chair are now charged with preparing an implementation plan to be presented to UNSC in 2011.

Both the Strategy and the Handbook are directly concerned with improving the availability and use of agricultural statistics and of linking the indicators and data much more directly to the ways in which they are used. In particular, both the Update and the Supplement provide a means of putting many of the main recommendations of the Strategy into effect. Statistics on rural areas and on agricultural incomes are core to many of the main policy concerns facing both developing and developed countries, especially those focusing on rural development, poverty reduction and reducing inequalities. In almost all developing countries achieving the Millennium Development Goals will be impossible unless and until the incomes and well being of rural populations and people dependent on agriculture can be improved. Better statistics, covering a wide range of topics, integrated and coordinated with data from other sources will be essential for setting policy allocating resources and for monitoring and evaluating progress.

## **Progress towards an updated and more comprehensive Handbook**

In March (2/3/10) Graham Eele and Berkeley Hill provided the Steering Group with a note *Next Steps in Updating the Handbook* that outlined the decisions taken by the Group on the structure of the revised and updated text. The key points were as follows:

1. The basic structure of the Handbook was to be retained, including its division into two Parts and the list of Chapters, though modifications could and would be considered.
2. Reflecting the decision to make the Handbook an electronic document, the text was to be reorganised as:

- a) Level 1: A **Core** of general material, relevant to countries at all stages of economic development that will provide readers with an overview of the main issues in compiling and using statistics on rural development and the well being of agricultural households. This Core will contain links to the more specific material for OECD and non-OECD countries.
  - b) Level 2: **Out-Takes** (OTs) of material relevant to specific situations that may be of interest to particular readers. A simple binary division into OECD countries and non-OECD countries is likely to fail to reflect the wide range of conditions found in the latter. Really, a spectrum of situations exists, and the structure must allow for this possibility. Nevertheless, a grouping of non-OECD countries is a useful starting point. Out-takes will include case studies and discussion of the approaches adopted by in a range of situations. OECD and the European Union, for example
  - c) Level 3: **Links** will be provided to background material / other reference documents / research. Though not specified, such links could in principle be placed in both the Core and the OTs.
3. Steps in the updating and expansion of the text have been the following, carried out chapter-by-chapter:
- a) First reading to identify text that is suitable to be removed to form OTs, because it referred almost exclusively to OECD or non-OECD situations. This has been undertaken largely by Veronica and Elisabetta using a colour coding system.
  - b) Editing of the text to form a coherent Core, applicable to all potential users of the Handbook, with the retention or removal of coloured text according to the judgement of the first Editor (Berkeley). Improvements and updating has been undertaken during this editing, which in places has represented almost a re-write. Suggestions for updating and for filling gaps have been noted in the text.
  - c) First editing of OTs has been undertaken by the first Editor (Berkeley)
  - d) Core text and OTs of chapters have been returned to the team in Rome for updating and filling of gaps. V and E have done this, and also have made their own suggestions for improvements (including switching some material between chapters). Colour coding has been used to indicate new material, rearranged material, and passages that were considered redundant.
  - e) Files were passed to Berkeley for a further editing, including that of the new material. The intention was that the output was in a fairly finished form.
  - f) Veronica and Elisabetta have formatted the output from (e) to make it appear better than basic word-processing.
  - g) The intention was for Graham to then examine Core text to establish its suitability for readers from non-OECD countries. It was expected that further OTs relating to non-OECD countries would be suggested. In practice because of pressure on Graham's time this stage is still in progress.
  - h) A check has to be made that the suggestions for improvement coming from members of the Wye Group have been suitably treated (mostly incorporated in the Core or OTs, or treated as additional Level 3 material). Material has come from Italy, Netherlands, Canada, and the UK (mostly for Part II).

- i) The intention was to pass this text to outside reviewers (from the Steering Group or its nominees) for final quality control. This step has not yet happened.
- j) Decisions would be made on which Level 3 material should be covered by Links. This literature will have been built up throughout the revision process, but will obviously include references at chapter ends (where available electronically), and papers selected from those submitted to past Wye Group meetings.

## The present state of revising and updating the Handbook

The Table at the end of the paper gives an indication of the state of Handbook preparation by early May. It is anticipated that further progress will be made by the time of the Washington meeting, and an update will be provided.

### Chapter examples

Two examples of chapters that have gone through steps (a) to (e) are provided in separate files (Chapters I and III). Chapter I, which has been taken to step (f), does not involve OTs and sets the overall context. Chapter III has (at present) nine OTs, but only two are provided here (at the end of the chapter rather than as separate files).

### Comments on how the process has worked

- Because of the decision to produce a text that is applicable to both OECD and non-OECD countries at this stage (rather than update and improving the existing Handbook and producing a separate supplement for LDCs), the process has been far more demanding of time than was originally anticipated.
- However, it is thought that the problems of producing a new Core text and OTs will be smaller when dealing with Part II material than has been encountered with Part I.
- Dissecting the text of Part I has exposed weaknesses that resulted from the speed with which it was assembled in 2005. These short-comings relate to both form and content, and concern mainly the material for non-OECD countries. This is not surprising; the original concept of the Handbook was as work-in-progress that could be improved as time went on; the electronic form of the 2005 edition had this very much in mind. However, it means that quite a lot of work has to be done at this stage to produce a new edition of the Handbook that is of acceptable quality for an international readership.
- There is a suggestion that the peer-reviewing process used for the 2005 edition needs to be strengthened. We are not convinced that there was sufficient scrutiny of the 2005 text by other members of what later became the Wye Group.
- The use of Interns has been very helpful, and the quality of their output is good. However, there is an issue of timing, in that they were engaged before clear ideas of how they could contribute to the updating / expanding had been worked out. Consequently, we have probably not used them in the best way. In our view we should have sorted out the terms of reference of the editors, timings of activities, and resources at the disposal of the editors before engaging interns.
- It is highly likely that work on the Handbook will extend beyond the Washington meeting, and probably beyond that of the end of the World Bank financial year (which is relevant to funding, at least for Berkeley). The Steering Group has to consider how the activities can be continued and the target for which we are striving in this current round of updating and improving. In particular,
  - How does the Handbook relate to the *Global Strategy*?
  - Can the output of this round of updating and improvement be seen as a final aim, or as a milestone on a process of continuing improvement?

- What resources are needed to carry it forward, and how can these be provided, and by whom?

# Handbook - State of updating and revisions by Chapter

Date: 12 May 2010

Chapter number	OECD and LDC text identified	CORE TEXT				OUT-TAKES		Comments
		Text split to core and out-takes	Update mainly by V and E	Core edited B	Core edited G	No of OTs	OTs edited	
Preface								First two sections are key to later contents
Ackw's								To be left to later stages
Exec, Sum.								To be left to later stages
I						0		Minor revisions
II						3		Medium reorganisation
III						9 (+)		Major reorganisation
IV						2		Minor reorganisation. Case study added – more needed
V								Text mostly as OTs –small core
VI								Text most as OTs – small core
VII								To be rewritten – RB outline expected
VIII								
IX								
X								
XI								
XII								
XIII								
XIV								
XV								
Annex 1								
Annex 2								
Annex 3								
Annex 4								
Annex 5								
Annex 6								
Annex 7								
Annex 8								
Annex 9								
Annex 10								
LEVEL 3 literature								