

INTRODUCTION

The FAO Statistical Yearbook provides a selection of indicators from FAOSTAT, the world's largest online agricultural database (<http://faostat.fao.org>). The Yearbook is a means of ensuring worldwide access to data on food and agriculture regardless of access to technology as well as a useful reference for those who can access the data online. It is also a record of how the FAO Statistics Division is continuously expanding and improving both its information base and data quality.

The First Issue of the 2004 Volume 1 presented indicators by topic for all countries ("topical tables") and included a CD-ROM version of the data. This Second Issue presents essentially the same selection from FAOSTAT by country ("country profiles") for all topics. Both issues use a similar thematic structure; this introduction focuses on points of difference.

Country profiles are more focused on basic data. They drop most analytic transformations (notably global distributions). Charts are used to guide readers through the details. Tables begin with a socio-economic overview, followed by one for the agricultural sector. They then pick up the structure of topical tables, detailing agricultural resources, production, trade, prices, food consumption and nutritional status. The result is seven sections separated by grey headers, with identical indicators and charts for every country regardless of data availability.

General/Welfare

The *FAO Statistical Yearbook* puts people first by starting with population and looking for the human welfare and equality issues that give agriculture and food indicators their significance. Per capita income is the second indicator because it is widely used as a broad measure of human welfare but its very breadth means it needs to be qualified. Here a key qualification is that per capita income can vary not only internationally but also across sectors and is generally lower for agriculture than industry or services. The scale of interaction with the rest of the world is suggested by foreign trade, here measured as merchandise exports and imports, which also provide context for measures of agricultural trade that appear later.

Four general measures of inequality are given. Three are Gini coefficients (G) or aggregate numerical measure of inequality ranging from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (perfect inequality). The higher the value of the coefficient, the higher the inequality; the lower the value, the more equitable the distribution. The fourth is the percentage of the population undernourished.

The chart in this section indicates the country's socio-economic performance over time by showing trends in life expectancy and child mortality, generally improving around the world; and real per capita income, where the record is more uneven.

Agriculture in the Economy, Agricultural Resources

A "spider-web" chart compares polygons formed by six analytic ratios on agriculture, for each country (in red) and the world as a whole (in blue). Major similarities and differences between a country's agricultural sector and that for the world are readily apparent in this form. In general, the polygon shrinks as a country develops. This section also reports physical quantities of agricultural real assets (land, livestock, structures, and machinery) and key material inputs (fertilizer and water from rain).

Resources Distribution

Four pie charts highlight major facets of resources used by agriculture. The first shows the

portion of land devoted to agriculture, and the significant differences in national distribution of that land among arable land (including permanent crops), pastures, and other (including forests). The second shows the importance, usually predominance, of agriculture in national water use. Since irrigation is usually such an important use of water, the third pie chart shows how much of arable land (including permanent crops) is irrigated. The last pie chart summarizes FAO estimates of the monetary value of real assets used by agriculture, comprising land, livestock, and produced assets (mainly machinery but also including structures).

Production

This section goes beyond topical tables in detailing production in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. It should be emphasized, however, that a great deal more detail is available in FAOSTAT. The chart summarizes the trend in per capita agricultural production over the past quarter century, weighted by a set of constant prices.

Trade

International trade is obviously important for countries with limited agricultural resources but has become vital even to those that are well endowed because it encourages specialization - not only within agriculture but also between agriculture and other economic activities. This section provides indicators on the degree of specialization and the patterns of trade among individual nations that have emerged.

Prices

As agriculture accounts for a shrinking share of global economic activity, decisions of sectoral producers depend increasingly on relative prices that are usually evident from differences between the overall consumer price index and the food sub index but are also influenced by how (some would say whether) international trade equilibrates price differences among countries. Trends in these measures of prices are shown in the chart, with export and import prices expressed in Dollars. Local producer prices for selected agricultural products are also given, converted to dollars first at prevailing exchange rates and then with a "green" purchasing power parity (PPP). This PPP is calculated by FAO using a basket of agricultural products and the related producer prices.

Consumption

Agriculture is important primarily because its food products nourish people and inadequate nutrition remains a major factor in understanding low levels of human development and life expectancy in much of the world. This section charts the major elements of national nutrition: calories, protein, and fats; the importance of selected food items in the calorie supply is also listed. The spider-web chart compares the composition or sources of national dietary energy consumption with the developed countries average. Finally, a highly summarized version of FAO's food balances is given for some major food categories, to show the process leading from domestic production and international trade to consumption, with allowance for agriculture's own use of its products (notably seed and feed), inventories, etc.

Additional information is provided on the Yearbook web site available at <http://www.fao.org/statistics/yearbook/>

Readers are invited to send comments and suggestions preferably by email to FAOStatisticalYearbook@fao.org