

## FOREWORD

The FAO constitution states that the organization shall collect, analyse, interpret and disseminate information relating to nutrition, food and agriculture. Since its establishment, FAO has cooperated with member countries to improve the coverage, consistency and quality of food and agricultural statistics and has established an on-line database of agricultural statistics.

One of the important elements of FAO's statistical work is the promotion of the decennial World Programme for the Census of Agriculture. There have now been eight rounds of agricultural censuses and, since its founding in 1945, FAO has been responsible for preparing the guidelines on concepts, definitions, classifications and methodology to help countries plan and carry out their census of agriculture. FAO also summarizes the results of the agricultural censuses undertaken around the world, and these summaries are available on the Internet.

Each round of agricultural censuses covers a ten-year period. The present publication presents guidelines for the 2010 round of agricultural censuses, covering agricultural censuses to be undertaken between 2006 and 2015. For this round, a new approach is being used, with the emphasis on conducting agricultural censuses within the framework of the system of integrated agricultural censuses and surveys and in the broader context of the national statistics system.

It is envisaged that countries will undertake their agricultural census in modules, rather than as a single one-off operation. The core module, preferably based on complete enumeration, will cover a limited range of key data required by national policy-makers and for sample frame construction. One or more sample-based supplementary modules will then be implemented as part of the agricultural census to provide more detailed structural data. This approach will reduce costs and allow countries to collect a greater range of data than in previous censuses. The new programme also provides for the collection of infrastructure data at the community level.

The new programme recognizes the high cost of conducting an agricultural census and places emphasis on coordinating the agricultural census with other censuses, especially the population and housing census. Considerable cost savings and added value can be gained by such an approach.

FAO plans to issue a series of publications on agricultural censuses and surveys, covering the whole range of statistics needed for agricultural policy-making and planning. This publication is the first in this series.

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