

Historical outline

From 1934 agricultural censuses have been carried out in the Netherlands every year to cater to administrative needs, to build frame for surveys and to obtain statistical data.

Organization

The census was carried out on the basis of an order issued by Ministry of Agriculture under an Agriculture Act. The census was carried out jointly by Statistics Netherlands and Ministry of Agriculture. Statistics Netherlands provided the technical input by way census planning and questionnaire design, and the Ministry of Agriculture carried out the field work through its executive agency called LASER which has offices in 5 administrative regions of the country.

Enumeration period

From 1 – 5 April 1999 with a follow-up period for non-response.

Reference date/period

The reference date was the census day: 1 April 1999.

Definition

- **Standard Gross Margin (SGM):** The SGM determines the techno-economic orientation and techno-economic size of the holding. It is described as the gross production minus the proportionately variable non-factor cost. It is calculated per hectare of crop or per head of livestock, and is periodically revised on the basis of a sample survey. To facilitate comparison, it is expressed in European currency unit (Ecu) or a bigger unit ESU (equals 1 000 Ecu).
- **Agricultural activity:** for the purpose of agricultural census it is defined as an activity related to a characteristic that is included in the list of characteristics for the census. Implicitly, it is an activity for which a Standard Gross Margin has been fixed.
- **Agriculture:** a set of agricultural activities defined as above.
- **Agricultural holding:** is an economic unit which is engaged in agricultural activities at a scale above a threshold.

Coverage

Geographically, the survey covered the entire territory of the country. Statistically, the census covered all units engaged in agriculture and whose economic size is above 3 ESU. This threshold allowed coverage of about 99 percent of agricultural production. However, this threshold led to a drastic decline in number of holding since 1991 census, as a greater number of units have fallen below the threshold size than the number of units growing above the threshold size.

Frame

In order to become eligible for financial support all holders are required to register with LASER which maintains a National Farm Register (NFR). This register is continuously updated to include mutations and resultant changes in size of holding, the name of holder, his address and telephone number. However, updating of electronic data base is done during April to August each year along with survey data. The register is subjected to various types of checks to correct for errors and reporting biases before being used for statistical purposes. All units in the NFR whose size exceeded 3 ESU constituted the frame for the census.

Method

The 1999 census was carried out as with complete enumeration. Since 1990 the methodology has gradually changes from personal interview to postal survey. For 1999 FSS survey questionnaire was sent by mail in advance before the reference date and the respondents were obliged to complete, sign and return it within 5 days. Refusers and non-respondents were visited by the Agricultural Inspection Service, a kind of agricultural police force. These arrangements lead to nearly 100 percent response. Quality checks were applied and holders were contacted again for seeking clarification or obtaining missing information, if required. Holders received a print out of validated data for confirmation of data entered in the record. They were given an opportunity to change before survey data was processed.

Data source

Farm Structure Survey 1999/2000, 2003 Edition, Agriculture and Fisheries Theme 5, European Commission, Eurostat.

Contact

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