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Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## CONFERENCE

### Thirty-third Session

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### WORLD PROGRAMME FOR THE CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE 2010

#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. FAO is preparing to launch the Ninth World Programme for the Census of Agriculture (WCA 2010) to help countries plan and conduct their national census of agriculture to be carried out during any year of the decade 2006 - 2015.

2. A census of agriculture is a statistical operation for collecting, processing and disseminating data on the structure of agriculture covering the whole, or a significant part, of the country. Typically data is collected on the size of the agricultural holding, land tenure, land use, crop area harvested, irrigation, livestock numbers, assets, labour and other agricultural inputs. Key data is collected by complete enumeration of all agricultural holdings while more detailed structural data is collected using sampling methods. The WCA 2010 provides guidelines on concepts, definitions, classifications and methodologies as well as the integrated statistical system approach.

3. Altogether some 100 countries participated in the 2000 census round representing some 84 percent of the world's population. It is expected that this number will increase for the WCA 2010.

#### II. IMPORTANCE OF THE CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

4. The Census of Agriculture lies at the heart of the national food and agricultural statistics system. It is important for the following main reasons:

- It provides a benchmark against which to judge the success of government policies and development programmes,
- It helps governments diagnose constraints in the agricultural sector,
- Comprehensive statistics help governments act more objectively when setting agricultural priorities,
- Findings help policy makers analyse poverty, food security and gender issues,

- Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals can be better monitored,
- Policy can be better targeted, even down to the level of small communities.
- Policy options can be costed more accurately,
- Statistical methods can quantify why farmers make certain decisions and their likely response to policy actions,
- Data provide a basis for forecasting crop areas, livestock numbers, agricultural production and food supply,
- Data help the private sector, including farmers, make commercial decisions.

### **III. NEW FEATURES OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME FOR THE CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE 2010**

5. The new features of this programme are the following:

- A modular approach has been introduced. The core census covers all agricultural holdings but collects only a limited range of items. Supplementary modules use samples chosen from the core census;
- The role of the census of agriculture in helping to monitor the Millennium Development Goals is highlighted;
- Community data are now covered, which addresses rural infrastructure and food access issues such as the effectiveness of agricultural produce markets; and
- Emphasis is given to integrating national agricultural and population censuses for greater synergy and cost-effectiveness;
- The option of combining the agricultural and the aquacultural censuses is included;
- The option to include households that are not agricultural producers is considered;
- Data content, concepts, definitions and classifications have been updated and improved.

### **IV. INTRODUCTION OF A MODULAR APPROACH**

6. It is envisaged that countries will undertake their census of agriculture in modules, rather than as single one-off operation. The core module, preferably based on complete enumeration, will cover a limited range of key data essential for national policy-makers and required for sample frame construction. One or more sample-based supplementary modules will also be implemented as part of the census of agriculture 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.

### **V. MONITORING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

7. Country-level monitoring of the progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has become an important element in formulating economic development strategies, and countries have begun to focus on the need for MDG-related indicators as a key component of the national statistical programme. A variety of data sources are being sought for this purpose. A census of agriculture is one of the largest national statistical collections undertaken by a country, and its use as a potential source of data for monitoring the MDGs should be taken into consideration in the census planning and design.

8. The new modular approach used for the current round of agricultural censuses, based on the census core and supplementary modules, together with the programme of agricultural surveys, enhances the usefulness of the agricultural census/survey programme as a source of data for MDG monitoring. Countries should look to carrying out regular agricultural surveys, based on the census of agriculture

frame, to provide additional MDG-related data to complement the data collected in the census of agriculture.

## VI. COMMUNITY-LEVEL DATA

9. Community-level data, at the village or the commune level, can be useful for examining the infrastructure and services available to holdings and to help in formulating, executing and evaluating community projects. Data on whether the community is prone to natural disasters or subject to seasonal food shortages can also be of interest for food security analysis. A community-level data collection may cover agriculture-related data that would not be collected from holdings, such as the area of communal land.

10. Given the strong demand for community-level data, a community-level component has been included in the WCA 2010 and countries are encouraged to include this component according to national circumstances and data requirements.

## VII. INTEGRATING AGRICULTURAL AND POPULATION CENSUSES

11. National censuses are extremely large and costly undertakings. There is also considerable commonality between the population and housing census and the census of agriculture. For this reason, FAO has been working closely with United Nations Statistics Division to explore ways in which the relationship between the two census activities can be strengthened that can save costs and enhance the usefulness of the data. These are:

- use of common concepts, definitions and classifications;
- sharing field materials;
- using the population census as a household frame for the census of agriculture;
- making use of agriculture-related data from the population census;
- collecting additional agriculture-related data in the population census;
- linking data from the two censuses;
- conducting the two censuses as a joint field operation.

12. The WCA 2010 stresses that the opportunity for coordinating the various national census activities should be actively explored at an early stage in the census planning process, and be taken into consideration in developing national statistical plans. Countries should make the necessary administrative arrangements to ensure close collaboration between the census development teams and to ensure that all avenues for coordination are explored.

## VIII. COMBINING AGRICULTURAL AND AQUACULTURAL CENSUSES

13. Aquaculture has become increasingly important in many countries, and there is a growing demand for data on the structure of the aquacultural production industry. There is a strong interest in many countries to link aquaculture with agriculture by carrying out the agricultural and aquacultural censuses together.

14. Agriculture and aquaculture are seen to be closely related because:

- Aquaculture involves the raising of fish in captivity or cultivation of aquatic plants, which is analogous to raising of livestock or cultivation of crops under agricultural production.
- Aquaculture is often integrated with agricultural production, such as in rice-cum-fish culture.
- Aquaculture and agriculture commonly share the same inputs, such as machinery and labour.

15. Apart from the close links between agriculture and aquaculture, there are other advantages in carrying out a joint agricultural/aquacultural census:

- The cost of data collection for the two censuses is reduced.
- It can help to provide a link between agricultural and aquacultural data, enabling a wider analysis of data in both censuses.
- It makes it easy to apply standard concepts and definitions in the two censuses.
- There would be organizational benefits in having one enumeration team responsible for data collection in both censuses.

16. The WCA 2010 provides the option to conduct an aquacultural census at the same time as the census of agriculture to cover all aquacultural production. Countries are strongly urged to take this option if aquaculture is an important economic activity.

## **IX. INCLUDING HOUSEHOLDS THAT ARE NOT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS**

17. In considering the socio-economic dimension, particularly of the rural sector, it may be considered important to collect information about the non-agricultural households as well as the agricultural households. The WCA 2010 provides guidance to countries which wish to consider this approach.

## **X. UPDATING OF DATA CONTENT, CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS**

18. The list of recommended items for inclusion in the WCA 2010 has been expanded and updated along with the associated concepts, definitions and classifications. Of particular note is the introduction of the sub-holding and sub-holder concepts to better understand the management practises used on the holding and to better reflect the role of women in agriculture.

## **XI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

19. 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. The first publication in the series, to be released in November 2005, presents the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010.