

INTEGRATING AGRICULTURE INTO NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS: THE CASE OF MEXICO

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ABSTRACT N. 83

In Mexico, there is a decentralized system regarding agricultural statistics: INEGI (*Instituto Nacional de Geografía y Estadísticas*) is the government agency responsible for conducting population, economic and agricultural census. The Ministry of Agriculture (*Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación*, SAGARPA), through its agency SIAP (*Servicio de Información Agroalimentaria y Pesquera*) is in charge of non structural statistics, such as areas planted and harvested, yields and production of the main crops, and meat and dairy products, in both cases on a monthly basis and at state level.

For many years, SIAP relied on technicians working in Rural Development Districts (RDD) to collect and submit information about agriculture production. Most of those technicians reached their age for retirement in recent years and they were not replaced due to budgetary restrictions. On the other hand, also because of the lack of resources, INEGI could not conduct an agricultural census during a long period. Until 1991, this census took place every ten years, but in 2001 Mexico was facing a severe economic crisis that led to an extremely tight budget. It was in 2007 when the Congress approved enough resources to carry out the VIII Census of Agriculture.

Indeed, the facts described above weakened Mexico's institutional capacity to support and develop its agricultural statistic system. Nonetheless, two major modifications in the legal framework were issued in recent years that had contributed to break this undesirable trend. In 2001, a new law that mandates to create an information system with a wider scope, not only related to agriculture production but to sustainable rural development; and in 2008, the law through which it's been established that a National Statistical and Geographical System (SNIEG) will be set up and that an entity with technical, managerial and operational autonomy (INEGI) will regulate and coordinate this system.

Regarding the new sustainable rural development law, ever since it had been issued by the Congress, the resources allocated to its programs has been increasing, in order to strength institutional capacity to generate agricultural statistics on the Rural Development Districts, upgrading human resources skills through technical assistance and providing the information technology tools that are needed.

SNIEG is integrated by four subsystems, focusing on different issues: governance and social security; geography and environment; demography and society; and economy. Since SNIEG regulations are mandatory at federal, state, and municipal levels, this comprehensive approach provides a strong institutional framework to improve data quality.