



**FAO-OEA/CIE-IICA WORKING GROUP ON AGRICULTURAL AND LIVESTOCK STATISTICS FOR LATIN  
AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Twenty – sixth session  
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago  
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## **Response rates to FAO questionnaires and collection issues**

# Objectives and structure

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1. Introduction: challenges and issues
2. Data availability and data quality in the region
  - Overall patterns and trends in the responses to FAO questionnaires  
(Detailed questionnaire analysis are available in the paper)
3. Understanding the possible causes underneath incomplete data provision
  - Questions for feed-back
4. Current measures and possible future strategies
5. Discussion on proposed strategies to formulate recommendations

# 1. Challenges and issues

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## **Increasing data requirements and decreasing data availability**

1. Agriculture has returned to the centre of the international policy agenda as an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, but also as a major utiliser of natural resources.
2. This increased complexity and articulation of policy issues lead to a substantial increase in data requirements and the need to establish links between economic, social and environment data domains and policy dimensions.
3. Yet, data availability and data completeness are decreasing world-wide but also in Latin America and the Caribbean regions.
4. Imputation of missing/low quality data at international level is necessary to compute regional aggregates and derived indicators but generates inconsistencies between national and international data.

## 2. Data availability and quality in the region (2005-2011)

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- FAO dispatches six annual questionnaires + collects Trade flows data through electronic trade data files

- Production

- Producer Prices

- Land Use

- Pesticides

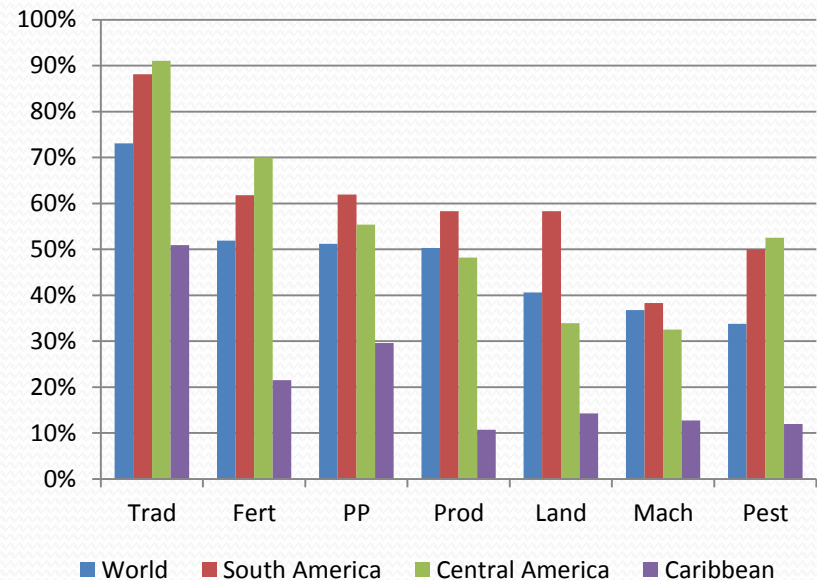
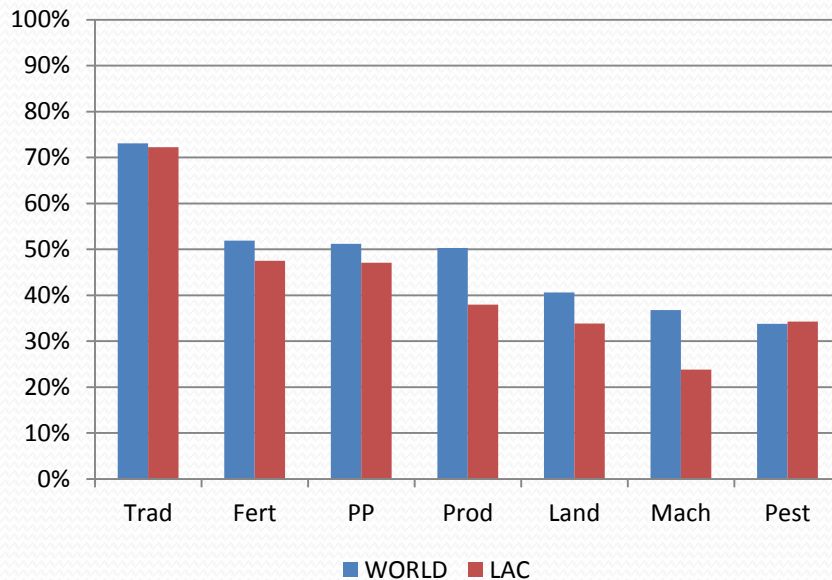
- Fertilizers

- Machinery

- Proportion of responding countries reaches 70% for Trade, but stands below 50% for all other data domains.
- 1 country in 3 report on Machinery and Pesticides
- Large sub-regional differences: South America performs better than the world average, Central America responses vary by questionnaires, Caribbean countries have low response rates.

## 2. Data availability and quality in the region (2005-2011)

Average response rates by questionnaire in the world, the LAC region and the three sub-regions



## 2. Data availability and quality in the region (2005-2011)

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Countries have been divided in 3 groups that can be roughly representative country capacity and can be used to identify capacity development needs:

- **FREQUENTLY REPORTING**: have reported at least 5 times in the period.

Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico and Peru.

Brazil always reported data in some domains, never responded to the Machinery, Land use and Pesticides

- **IRREGULAR REPORTING**: have reported no more than 4 times in the period.

Argentina, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, St Kitts & Nevis, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela

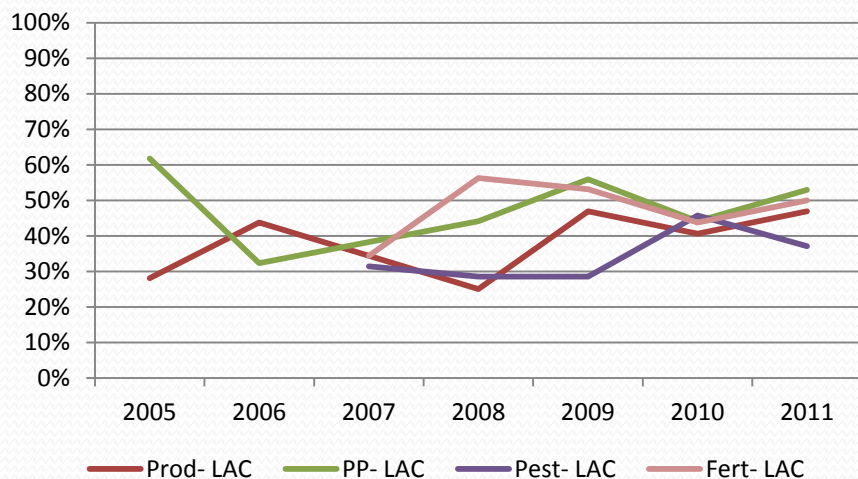
- **NEVER REPORTING**: have never provided data to FAO. Most of small countries and islands.

Antigua & Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint % the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago

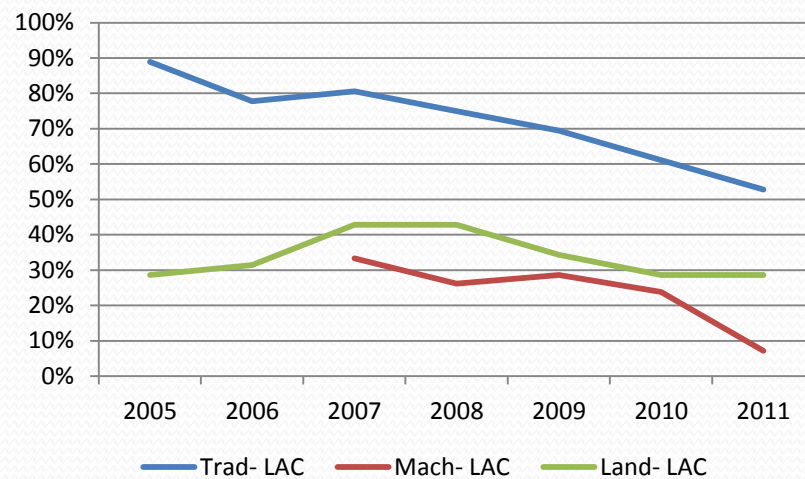
The situation and groups vary for each data domain. Detailed description is available in the paper.

## 2. Data availability and quality in the region (2005-2011)

### Annual response rates by questionnaire in the LAC region



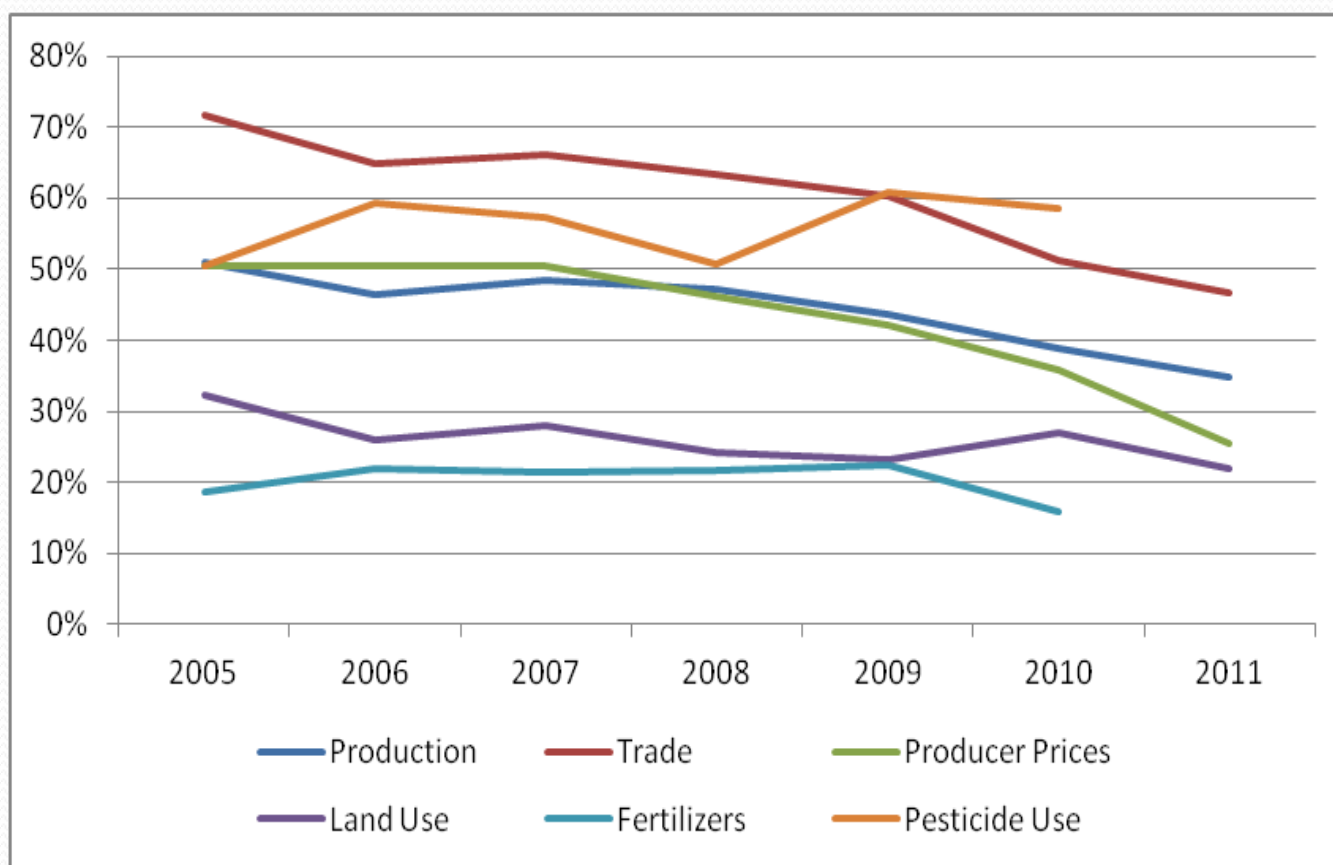
Slow improvements on production, producer prices, fertilizers and pesticides by response rates remain below 60%



Responses decline for Trade, Machinery and Land

## 2. Data availability and quality in the region (2005-2011)

### Questionnaires completeness and data quality





## 3. Understanding the possible causes

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### Questions for feed-back - 1

1. When country reply every second or third year is it due to problems in the reporting mechanism?
  - Is it a matter of addressing the relevant focal institutions or contact person? Could countries check the list in Annex 2?
  - Or data are not available on an annual basis (with countries undertaking ad hoc additional analysis and estimations to report data to FAO)?
  - Are confidentiality issues arising?
2. Response rates are systematically low in some data domains (e.g. machinery and pesticides). Are there different and better ways to collect those data than the annual questionnaires?
3. Is the decrease in data completeness an indication that FAO questionnaires are too complex and/or long to be completed? Is it a matter of resources and/or capacity?

## 3. Understanding the possible causes

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### Questions for feed-back - 2

4. The Caribbean countries have greater difficulties in reporting data in all domains.
  - Is it due to small islands special structural characteristics?
  - Can sub-regional approach to capacity development be considered (example of SPC)?
5. Data sent to FAO may be inconsistent with other national sources or over time.
  - Can IICA members provide metadata on any changes in the time series? (different units, different concepts and/or different methodology)
6. Questionnaire revisions (land and machinery in 2012) seem difficult to manage.
  - Are these changes too disruptive for countries?
  - Do questionnaires come with insufficient explanations?

## 4. Current measures and proposed future strategies

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### Current measures

- Systematic feed-backs to countries on the data, regional workshops on FAO data collection in 2010-2011
- Extensive imputation work by FAO Statistics Division to fill in gaps based on a low information base → countries are not involved in the validation process

### Short-Term solution: enhance data transmission

- Improve communication: up-dating the contact list, improving metadata and information exchanges
- Strengthen statistical capacities: organizing a new round of workshops on imputation methods or other priority topics identified by countries
- Address confidentiality issues: establishing MoU's on data provision and dissemination

### Long-Term solution: establish a platform for peer-reviewing country data published by FAO

- Establish a formal mechanism of country consultation such as a Committee on Statistics

## 5. Discussion on proposed strategies and recommendations

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1. Could member countries assist FAO in identifying the causes of low response rates to questionnaires and inform FAO of the actual data and metadata availability, including data collection frequency, concepts, definitions and methods used in data collection?
2. Could member countries and FAO sign an MoU on data provision and dissemination when countries cannot report data to FAO due to confidentiality issues. In the MoU FAO will commit to only disclosing data to third parties in accordance with national statistical laws.
3. Should FAO involve Member Countries in a consultative process in before adapting questionnaires to emerging needs?

## 5. Discussion on proposed strategies and recommendations

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4. Should FAO review the effectiveness of current data workshops and consider cost-effective alternatives? Should such approaches include specific workshops to increase the response rates to questionnaires, or technical workshops on imputation techniques?
5. Given the low general availability of data for Caribbean countries, should a sub-regional approach to statistical capacity development be adopted in implementing the action plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Rural and Agricultural Statistics (GS)?
6. Should FAO establish a Committee on Agricultural Statistics at Global Level in order to (a) ensure better coordination and standardization of the activities and recommendations emanating from Regional Commissions and bodies; (b) provide a global forum for Country Representatives to review and endorse methodological and other normative work; and (c) create a peer-review process for data published and methodologies used by FAO?

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# THANK YOU

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## Questions & Comments:

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