

Historical outline

Belgium participated in all the rounds of World Census of Agriculture. An exhaustive Agricultural and Horticultural Census is conducted annually on 15 May and 1 December to cover summer and winter crops. The legal basis for the census is provided by the Royal Decree issued pursuant to the Law of 4 July 1962 on public statistics, as amended by the Law of 1 August 1985. Belgium also participates in Farm Structure Survey of European Community.

Organization

The National Institute of Statistics (INS), Ministry of Economic Affairs, has the responsibility for executing periodic large-scale censuses and surveys, and for preparing official statistics. The Mayors of the municipalities are responsible for conducting and supervising both the 15 May and 1 December censuses. The Mayor appoints the enumerators for carrying out personal interviews for the census districts within each municipality.

Enumeration period

The agricultural census is conducted in two phases:

- Between 1 and 31 May to collect information on land use, livestock and agricultural machinery.
- In December to collect information on winter wheat, livestock and farm labour force.

The municipalities have 30 days for the 15 May Census and 20 days for the 1 December Census to return the completed questionnaires to the National Statistical Institute.

Reference date/period

Information on land use, livestock and agricultural machinery refers to 15 May, while data on farm labour force, winter wheat and livestock refer to 1 December.

Definition

The census unit is the agricultural holding, which is defined as a techno-economic unit of agricultural production, situated in a given region, i.e. identified on the territory, under single management, having an output consisting of agricultural, horticultural or livestock products.

Coverage

The census covered all legal and natural persons who have an agricultural holding located in Belgium and who, on the reference date of the census produced for the purpose of selling animal or vegetable products. However, all holdings which operated at least one hectare of land or had animals were included, even if they did not produce for selling.

Frame

A Register of Holdings kept by the National Statistics Office, which provides the starting list to the census enumerators who update it during the process of census. The updated information is recorded in the Register which is used for further sample surveys.

Method

Complete enumeration of holdings is carried out. Information is collected through direct interview; the questionnaire is filled in by the enumerator in the presence of the respondent and signed by both. The municipality supplies to the enumerators census questionnaires, and a list including addresses of holdings prepared on the basis of the Register. The new holdings which have come up in existence since the last census are also listed. The survey is conducted by the enumerator at the place of establishment of the holding in question, i.e. at the place where its main farm buildings are located. If the holding comprises several sub-holdings, relevant data are collected from each sub-holding.

Data source

Report on Farm Structure Survey 1999/2000 of Eurostat, Recensement agricole au 1er mai. Ministère des Affaires Économiques, Institut National de la Statistique.

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