

Historical outline

The first attempt to conduct an agricultural census in the country was the Census of Production in 1921. Partial agricultural censuses were then carried out in 1924 and 1929, with the limited scope of collecting information on crop areas, production and livestock numbers at village level. Subsequently, Agricultural Censuses were conducted in 1946, 1952, 1962, 1973, and 1982. The one scheduled to be undertaken in 1992 was not conducted due to the unfavourable conditions prevailing in certain parts of the country. As a result, the last census of agriculture in Sri Lanka, to which data reported here refer, is the one conducted, after a lapse of 20 years, in 2002.

Organization

The 2002 Census of Agriculture was organized and conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS). About 14 260 enumerators were involved in census field operations.

Enumeration period

Data were collected during the period August to October 2002.

Definition

- **Agricultural Holding** is the one consisting of all land and/or livestock used wholly or partly for agricultural production, operated under single management, without regard to title of ownership, legal form or size, and situated within one Divisional Secretariat (DS) Division. Any land situated outside the DS Division where the operator is resident, should be considered as a separate agricultural holding.
- **Estate or Plantation sector** is an agricultural holding of 20 acres (8.1 ha) or more in extent. In the case that different parcels may add up to 20 acres, the holding is not considered an estate because the estate should have at least one parcel reaching 20 acres in extent. Similarly, a holding with 20 acres or more of purely paddy land is not considered an estate.
- **Small Holdings Sector (peasant)** are those holdings not falling into the category of estates.
- **Marginal or Inactive Holdings** are those holdings reporting an area of less than 40 perches (0.11 ha) and having an agricultural production mainly for home consumption.

Coverage

The census covered the entire country, with the exclusion of the Municipalities of Colombo, Dehiwala, Mount Lavinia and Sri Jayawardanapura Kotte, which are predominantly used for residential and commercial purposes.

Frame

For the **Small Holding Sector**, the list frame was the one prepared for the 2001 Population Census, to investigate housing units, Institutions, collective living quarters and non-housing units in the country, and screening out the agricultural operators.

For the **Estate Sector**, an inventory was prepared prior to the main census.

Method

Two different methods of data collection were applied for the Small (peasant) farm Sector and to the Estate (plantations) Sector

- For the Small Holdings Sector, about 14 260 trained enumerators visited every census unit having personal interviews with the operators.
- For the Estate Sector, information was collected through mail questionnaires by sending them to each and every operator/superintendent.

Data source

Small Holding Sector, Preliminary Data Release. Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka (website).

Contact

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