

History

How the Census of Agriculture began

The *British North America (BNA) Act of 1867* determined that a census would be taken every 10 years starting in 1871. However, rapid expansion in Western Canada at the turn of the last century made a more frequent census necessary. Starting in 1896, a separate Census of Agriculture was taken every five years in Manitoba, and in Alberta and Saskatchewan beginning in 1906.

Expansion of the Census of Agriculture

By 1956, rapid economic growth and development created the need for both national demographic and agricultural information at more frequent intervals. In 1956, the five-year Census of Agriculture was extended to the entire country, and the Census of Population became a regular enumeration every five years. That year the two started a long tradition of being conducted concurrently.

Relationship between the Census of Agriculture and the Census of Population

Although the Census of Agriculture and the Census of Population are conducted at the same time, they do have separate questionnaires. Most of the development, testing, processing, data validation and preparation for disseminating data for the Census of Agriculture and the Census of Population is handled by different groups within Statistics Canada. However, collecting the data and sharing communications activities for both censuses streamlines procedures and reduces costs considerably. Another important benefit of conducting the two together is that information from the two questionnaires can be linked to create the Census of Agriculture–Population Linkage database. This unique database, started in 1971, provides users with information pertaining to the social characteristics of the farm population.

Data collection began in May

Conducting the Census of Agriculture jointly with the Census of Population in mid-May helps streamline collection procedures and saves millions of dollars. In 2011, most Census of Population forms and all Census of Agriculture forms were delivered to households and farm operations by Canada Post.

A question on the Census of Population questionnaire was used to identify farm operators who may have been missed. Head Office might have followed up with a phone call to help the operator fill out the questionnaire.

All Census of Agriculture respondents were asked to mail back their completed questionnaires in the pre-addressed, postage-paid envelopes provided.

Options for completing the Census of Agriculture

The questionnaires were either completed and submitted through the Internet or on paper and mailed back to Statistics Canada's Data Operations Centre for data capture. (For more information please see [Data processing](#).) Farm operators could also complete the form on the phone by calling the toll-free Census Help Line.

The Census Help Line

A Census Help Line was a toll-free telephone service that respondents could call during the collection period to obtain assistance in completing the questionnaire.

The Census of Agriculture and the Internet

In 2011 the option of completing the Census of Population or Census of Agriculture questionnaires over the Internet was offered once again. Both the agriculture and population questionnaires used a single portal, or entry point. Instructions for accessing the website address and the Internet forms were included on the paper questionnaires delivered to respondents, as was the unique secure access code that respondents used to access the electronic questionnaire. This authenticated users and confirmed that a questionnaire was received from that household. The Internet version also included navigational aids, drop-down menus, help pages and online edits.

Internet security—completing your questionnaire online

Statistics Canada takes the protection of confidential information provided online very seriously. A secure login process and strong encryption were key elements in helping to prevent anyone from accessing or tampering with your census information when you completed and sent it online.

Census follow-up

Once the data were collected and captured, Statistics Canada employees edited or checked them for completeness. Any questionnaire with missing or incomplete data was followed up by telephone. A non-response telephone follow-up was required when questionnaires were not returned within a certain period of time.

The *Statistics Act*

The *Statistics Act* requires that all census information be kept confidential. All Statistics Canada employees have taken an oath of secrecy. The confidentiality of your personal census information is your right and it cannot be given to anyone outside Statistics Canada. Your census questionnaire will be retained in accordance with legislative requirements and stored securely.

Data security

Because the security of your information is of paramount importance to Statistics Canada, census data are stored on Statistics Canada systems that are isolated from any other network. External devices, such as telephone dial-in services that connect to Statistics Canada's confidential data storage systems, are not permitted, making it impossible to break into Statistics Canada's databases.

In addition, Statistics Canada's premises have controlled access so that only persons with the appropriate security clearance who have taken the oath of secrecy can enter facilities housing confidential data. Anyone from outside Statistics Canada needing entrance to these premises is escorted by a Statistics Canada employee at all times. **Only Statistics Canada employees see your Census of Agriculture questionnaire and data.**

Privacy and the Internet

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Confidentiality procedures

Statistics Canada places the highest priority on maintaining the confidentiality of information from individual census questionnaires at all stages of the census process. All tabulated data are subject to confidentiality procedures, including a series of computerized checks on each data table to suppress any data that may identify a particular agricultural operation or individual. In all cases complementary data are also suppressed so that aggregate subtotals and totals in each table can be published. Data for geographic areas with very few agricultural operations are not released separately, but are merged with data from one or more geographically adjacent areas.

Data products		
Description	Geography level	Release date
Farm and farm operator data: All farm and farm operator variables for 2011 and 2006 to the census division level. Only 2011 data will be published for the census consolidated subdivisions.	Canada, province, territory, census agricultural region, census division and census consolidated subdivision	May 10, 2012
Selected historical farm and operator data from the Census of Agriculture	Canada and province	December 11, 2012
Agriculture–National Household Survey linkage data: Selected 2011 and historical data on social characteristics of farm operators, farm families and the farm population.	Canada and province	November 27, 2013
Reference products		
Description	Geography level	Release date
Reference maps: The reference maps provide the geographic boundaries, codes and names for all geographic areas appearing in data tables for the 2011 Census of Agriculture.	Canada (excluding the territories), province, census agricultural region, census division and census consolidated subdivision	May 10, 2012
Geography products		
Description	Geography level	Release date
2011 Census agricultural regions boundary file and reference guide: A cartographic boundary file that delineates census agricultural regions, the subprovincial geographic areas created for disseminating agriculture statistics.	Canada (excluding the territories), province and census agricultural region	May 10, 2012
2011 Agricultural ecumene census division boundary file and reference	Canada (excluding the territories), province	June 2012

Geography products

Description	Geography level	Release date
guide: A cartographic boundary file that delineates areas of significant agricultural activity in Canada as indicated by the 2011 Census of Agriculture. This file is generalized for small-scale mapping.	and census division	

Analytical products

Description	Geography level	Release date
Canadian Agriculture at a Glance: Short, analytical articles on the agriculture sector accompanied by charts, tables, maps and full-colour photos.	All available geographic areas as analysis requires	First article: September 2012

Custom products and services

Description	Geography level	Release date
Custom products and services using client-defined data combinations from the 2011 Census of Agriculture farm and operator databases.	Census of Agriculture standard geographic areas and user-defined areas (subject to confidentiality)	May 10, 2012
Custom products and services from the census geographic component database.	Census of Agriculture standard geographic areas and user-defined areas (subject to confidentiality)	Fall 2012
Custom products and services from the Agriculture–Population database.	Census of Agriculture standard geographic areas and user-defined areas (subject to confidentiality)	November 27, 2013
Custom products and services from the historical databases.	Census of Agriculture standard geographic areas and user-defined areas (subject to confidentiality)	Available anytime

Contact information: Census of Agriculture, Data and Subject-Matter Consulting, 1-800-465-1991, 613-951-1090 or agriculture@statcan.gc.ca.