

AUSTRALIA - Agricultural Census 1990 - Explanatory Notes

Historical outline: The Agricultural Census in Australia is conducted annually. In some of the six States and two Territories forming the Commonwealth of Australia, annual agricultural censuses have been conducted for 140 years. Data here refer to the year 1989/90.

Organization: The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), responsible for the collection, compilation and publication of official statistics, including those relating to the agricultural sector, was established under the ABS Act 1975, as a statutory authority responsible directly to a Minister of the Australian Government (currently the Treasurer). The Act also created the office of the Australian Statistician, and established the Australian Advisory Council, with function of adviser to the Minister and to the Statistician. Offices of the ABS are situated in the capital city in each State and in the Northern Territory. The Central Office is in Canberra, the national capital.

Enumeration period: The Annual Census collection date is 31 March. This census was conducted at the end of March 1990.

Reference date: Data refer to the agricultural year 1989-90. Holders are requested to give details relating to their activities during the 12 months preceding the census date. Livestock numbers are reported on the basis of those on the holding on 31 March. For some commodities not harvested by 31 March, production data are collected, by means of a specific supplementary questionnaire, at a later, more relevant time.

Definition: The statistical unit of reference for the agricultural census is the Establishment which is the smallest accounting unit, within a State or a Territory of the Country, that controls its productive activities, and for which a specified range of detailed data is available at least on an annual basis.

- Agricultural Establishments are those engaged mainly in agricultural activity.
- Establishments with Agricultural Activity are establishments that are land-based and engaged in agricultural activity regardless of the unit's predominant activity.

Coverage: The census is conducted in each of the six States and two Territories of the Commonwealth of Australia. The 1989-90 Census covered the Establishments (see definition above), undertaking agricultural activity and reporting, for the previous census, an Estimated Value of Agricultural Operations (EVAO), of A\$20,000 or more.

Frame: Indicative information on all units engaged in agricultural activity is included on a database known as the Integrated Register Information System (IRIS). It provides a list of names and addresses in Australia, to allow distribution of census and survey forms covering all economic statistics, agriculture statistics included.

Methods: A wide range of agricultural items is collected in the census by mail from about 130,000 individual landholders. A computer system is used to print address labels to dispatch forms, to mark in returns received, and to generate sets of reminders. Intensive telephone reminder action, followed if necessary by personal visits, is also taken for some respondents. The final response rate is approximately 95 percent. Upon receipt, returns are subjected to initial clerical examination for accuracy and consistency, and subsequently entered into the computer system for editing and tabulation.

Data source: Australian Bureau of Statistics - ABS Catalogues N. 7102.0, 7221.0, 7330.0.

Mailing address: Australian Bureau of Statistics - Cameron Offices, Chandler Street, Belconnen, ACT; P.O. Box 10, ACT, 2616; Tel. (06) 2527911; Fax (06) 2516009.