
IRELAND - Agricultural Census 1991 - Explanatory Notes

Historical outline: Ireland participated in all World Census of Agriculture rounds. Agricultural censuses were conducted annually between 1847 and 1953, and every five years from 1960 to 1980. As the 1985 Census was cancelled on budgetary grounds, the June 1991 Agricultural Census is considered to be the first full census conducted since 1980. Farm Structures Sample Surveys were also undertaken in 1983, 1985, and 1987.

Organization: The statistical services are centralized in the Central Statistics Office (CSO) which is responsible, in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture, for collecting and compiling agricultural statistics. The 1991 Agricultural Census was part of a major EEC-supported programme, involving the replacement of the traditional agricultural enumeration system by more cost-effective Postal Sample Surveys. Notwithstanding the introduction of the above-mentioned postal surveys, the 1991 Census field work was carried out by 1300 field staff, retained by the CSO after completion of the 1991 Census of Population. This was necessary because of the absence of a comprehensive and up-to-date register of farms on which to base a Postal Census; indeed one of the principal objectives of the census was to construct such a register for future statistical use.

Enumeration period: The census was carried out in June 1991.

Reference date: Data mainly refer to the day of enumeration.

Definition: A holding or farm is a single unit, both technically and economically, with a single management, with an agricultural output. Agricultural production covers crops growing (including horticultural crops) and livestock raising (including intensive production). A farm can consist of two or more separate pieces of land, if worked as a single unit, generally sharing the same labour force and other means of production such as machinery. All farms with an agricultural area of at least one hectare were covered in the census. Farms with less than one hectare, but engaged in intensive production (e.g. of pigs or poultry), were also included in the census.

Coverage: The census covered the entire country.

Frame: One of the principal objectives of the census was to construct a register of farms to be used as a frame for future Postal Surveys. The identification of farms involved the systematic use of the following sources:

- lists prepared on the basis of a filter question on farming activity in the Population Census conducted immediately before the Agricultural Census;
- names of landowners extracted from the 1980 Census of Agriculture records;
- lists provided by the Department of Agriculture and Food from its registers of herd owners;
- information obtained in the course of the field work coupled with the enumerator's local knowledge.

Methods: Over 260,000 cases were individually investigated by the enumerators at local level and, of these, approximately 170,000 were found to be farms within the scope of the census definition. Each of the farms identified was required to provide details of its farming activities. Due to the methodology including the new restricted definition of holding (at least one hectare of agricultural land), care must be exercised in data comparison between 1991 and 1980 Agricultural Censuses.

Data source: Central Statistics Office - Census of Agriculture June 1991 - First results.

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