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Overview of the Handbook and why it has been developed and updated

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Overview

1. Background on the process and methods of work for compiling the handbook
2. Why this handbook has been developed and updated?

1. Background on the process and methods of work for compiling the handbook

The Inter-secretariat Working Group on Agricultural and Rural Indicators (IWG.AGRI) and the first edition of the handbook.

- **Handbook prepared from 2003-2005** under the auspices of the IWG.AGRI composed of: UN-ECE, OECD, FAO, EUROSTAT.
- **In 2003, IWG.AGRI set up a Task Force** on *Rural Development Statistics and Agriculture Household Income*: experts from the IWG.AGRI, the World Bank, national statistical offices known to be active in these areas, and academia.
- **Initiative endorsed by the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/FAO/OECD** bi-annual Meeting on Food and Agriculture Statistics that took place in Geneva in July 2003.
- **Approved** by the UN Conference of European Statisticians (CES).
- **Drafting** the Handbook began in 2003.

Background on the process and methods of work for compiling the handbook

Task Force met in Washington and Rome (October 2003), Paris (November 2003), Verona (July 2004), Wye (April 2005) and Rome (June 2005) back to back with Joint UNECE/Eurostat/FAO/OECD Meeting. This Joint meeting endorsed the Handbook and asked the IWG.AGRI to have it disseminated in 2005.

The first edition of the Handbook was published:

- In 2005 in electronic form hosted on the FAO and UNECE websites
- **In 2007** in a hard-copy version by the UN ECE;

Establishment of the Wye City Group and second edition of Handbook (2007-2011)

Paris June 2006, Final meeting of the IWG.AGRI Task Force agreed:

✓**To establish a new framework** under which discussions of *implementation* of the handbook's method could be carried out.

✓**Possibility of** *revisions* as indicated to the handbook itself.

✓**To** *establish the Wye Group as a City Group* **under the UN Statistical Commission** (UNSC).

Proposal was accepted at the 38th UNSC session in February 2007.

Terms of Reference the Wye City Group

Main objective:

The promotion of the refinement and *adoption of international standards in statistics for rural areas and agriculture household incomes*. Specific tasks:

- ✓ **Consider challenges** to consistency of adoption of comparable methods of data collection across countries.
- ✓ **Give special focus** to the application and value of the data standards in developing countries, especially as it may support the construction of indicators for the MDGs.
- ✓ **Assess and explore** the potential for the use of improved statistics as policy-relevant indicators and in empirical analysis of policies for farm and rural households, natural resources, and regional economic development.
- ✓ **Determine the need** for any changes or updating to the handbook and, if indicated, organize and execute the revision.

Main output:

1. **Revision of the 2005 handbook.**
2. **Published proceedings from periodic meetings of the Group**

Time frame: Spring 2011

Meetings of the Wye Group and outcomes:

2008 York meeting: Identified the need **to extend and deepen the coverage of statistics in developing countries**; for which the material in the Handbook was less detailed than for OECD countries.

2009 Rome meeting: Decided on modalities for the preparation of a second edition.

✓**One publication with core text + focus pieces** (initial intention was 2 publications).

✓**Designation of two general editors** assisted by 2 FAO Interns and a process for receiving contributions from experts.

✓**A small Editorial Group** coordinated by FAO to work on the updating of the Handbook, with a larger group to steer the activities of the Wye Group.

2010 Washington meeting

✓**Identified** a number of specific issues that required inclusion, including gender, well-being indicators other than income and wealth, and the new FAO *Global Strategy*.

✓**Introduced a system** of **assistant editors** at Chapter level, and a peer-review system as an aid to quality control.

✓**Papers** from the York, Rome and Washington meetings provided background material and, new text for the Handbook where gaps existed.

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2. Why this handbook has been developed?

1. Rural development has become a priority area for governments and international organizations over the past decades .

Developed countries the focus is on:

- **Good living conditions and opportunities.**
- **Rural areas are not de-populated.**
- **Policy need to monitor the income situation of agricultural households** (monitoring sectoral performance as well as for its impact on rural development).

Developing countries special focus on:

- **Rural poverty.**
- **Rural populations are either directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture.**

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Why the Handbook has been developed?

In the UN Secretary General's report to the 2003 meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations it was stated that:

- *"Three quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas of developing countries and depend mainly on agriculture and related activities for their livelihood. In 2025, when the majority of the world population is expected to be urban, 60 percent of poverty will still be rural. Thus, the millennium development goals of halving the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day and the proportion of those who suffer from hunger by 2015 cannot be achieved unless rural poverty is urgently reduced"* (UN, 2003)..

The 2008 World Development Report on Agriculture for Development stated that:

- *"In the 21st century, agriculture continues to be a fundamental instrument for sustainable development and poverty reduction. Three of every four poor people in developing countries live in rural areas – 2.1 billion living on less than $2 a day and 880 million on less than $1 a day – and most depend on agriculture for their livelihoods"* (World Bank, 2008).

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Why the Handbook has been developed?

2. Need for reliable statistics for effective policies.

- ✓ **Strong and growing demand for statistics and indicators**
- ✓ **Policy is likely to be more effective with reliable statistics**

3. Rural statistics and agricultural households' income

✓**Rural development policy** – is concerned with: state of rural areas, the economic activities, environmental characteristics, well being of people and social condition

✓**Agricultural policy** – is concerned with: activity of producing commodities and services; the use of resources in this activity; well being of agricultural producers

There is a distinction between "rural" (territorially based) and "agricultural" (activity based) statistics.

There is also an overlap:

- **Rural statistics:** describing and quantifying the well-being of rural residents.
- **Agricultural statistics:**, concerned with the well-being of people who work in the agricultural industry, most of whom are residents of rural areas.

The concept of **well-being** has multidimensional aspects, but it is traditionally measured by economic indicators, such as the level of income, incidence of low income and wealth.

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Why the Handbook has been developed?

4. Weakness in statistical base for rural policies.

In most OECD countries:

Agricultural statistics: Strong and long-established system of agricultural statistics but with narrow focus.

Rural statistics: *In contrast, until very recently territorially-based statistics for rural areas in OECD countries have been weaker and highly fragmented (Hill, 2003).*

"Rural statistics" must go beyond agriculture and cover many economic, social and environmental parameters.

In developing countries agricultural and rural statistics is much less satisfactory:

- Low quality and quantity of agricultural and rural data as well as weak capacity of countries (*cf response rate of FAO questionnaires and other assessments of statistical capacity).*
- Ability of statistical systems to respond has generally declined with a significant decline in Africa

This situation lead to the development of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

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Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

Objective:

To provide the framework for national and international statistical systems to produce the basic data and information to guide decision-making required in the in the 21st century.

This strategy is based on three pillars:

- **Minimum set of core data set to be produced by all countries.**
- **Integration into National Statistical System.**
- **Improved governance & capacity development**.

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Why the Handbook is being updated and overview of its content

As indicated above, the 2008 York meeting identified the need **to update the Handbook in order to extend and deepen the coverage of statistics in developing countries**.

The focus of the two parts of the revised version are:

Part 1. A system of statistics for rural areas (or rural statistics). Five main issues are addressed :

- Coverage of rural statistics
- Finding what data exist, who are the owners, and how they are accessed
- Choice of variables, time periods and basic geographic units
- Data acquisition and management
- Structure for the management

Part 2 Deals with the specific subject of producing statistics on the income situation of agricultural households, tackles a further set of issues. These include:

The Objective on Wye Handbook

To consolidate work done by international organizations, highlight where difference occur and as far as possible to fill gap.

To focus on the **quality** of rural statistics and indicators

The handbook draws on international and national experiences, to **highlight good practices**.

To make an **inventory** of national rural development statistics, with a particular focus on income measures.

The overarching aim is to enable the **benchmarking** of ways of collecting data and constructing indicators so that they can be used to assist policy discussion and design.

Conclusion

Handbook should be regarded as **"a living document"** as **policy for rural development evolves** and needs for new statistics are revealed, as **wider recognition** is given to the role of the household as farm operator in agricultural policy and more refined data are demanded, as **research expands**, and as the ***Global Strategy*** is being implemented possibilities for improving the present text will become apparent.

This Handbook is thus only a provisional document in the pursuit of better statistics on rural development and agricultural household incomes.

Thank you!

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