



Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

Regional Roundtable on the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020 (WCA 2020) Budapest, Hungary, 3-7 April 2017

CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING

Purpose: The Roundtable aimed at disseminating among European and Central Asian countries participating in the event the new guidelines for the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020 (WCA 2020), Volume 1, which covers the period 2016-2025. The meeting was specifically intended to help participants gain a deeper understanding of the new census modalities to data collection and new census themes and items being advocated by FAO through this new Programme.

Participants: In the Roundtable participated 54 participants, including 45 participants from 20 member countries and nine participants from CISSTAT, EEC, Eurostat and FAO (HQ and REU). Member countries included Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Hungary, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The participants were directly involved in the organization of agricultural census (AC) or related statistical operations in their respective countries.

Mr Vladimir Rakhmanin, FAO ADG and Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia delivered his welcoming statement on behalf of FAO. Mr Gabor Valko, Head of Agriculture and Environmental Statistics Department, Hungarian Central Statistical Office, and Mr Istvan Madarasz, Head of Agricultural Statistics and Analysis Unit, Ministry of Agriculture delivered welcoming remarks from the host Government and opened the Round Table. Mr Jairo Castano delivered the opening remarks on behalf of Mr José Rosero Moncayo, Deputy Director of Statistics Division, FAO, and made an introduction to the Roundtable.

1. The participants welcomed the new WCA 2020 guidelines and highly appreciated the content and timing of the Roundtable. The hard copy of the FAO publication on the WCA 2020 (English and Russian versions) and other relevant materials were distributed to the participants for reference during the meeting. In addition, before the meeting, the participants were encouraged to consult the publication also available in both languages on the FAO website at <http://www.fao.org/world-census-agriculture/wca2020/en/> and <http://www.fao.org/world-census-agriculture/wca2020/ru/>.

2. The meeting was organized into 17 technical sessions, each of which focusing on a specific technical aspect of the WCA 2020. Technical sessions comprised both FAO and country presentations, followed by discussions. A total of 52 technical papers were presented and discussed. The meeting programme is presented in the annex.

3. The following countries confirmed/informed plans for conducting censuses under the 2020 round: Albania (2022), Armenia (2024), Azerbaijan (2025), Belarus (2019), Bosnia and Herzegovina (no plan/decision by now), Georgia (2024), Hungary (2020), Israel (2018), Kazakhstan (no plan/decision by now), Kyrgyzstan (2018), Moldova (2022), Montenegro (no plan/decision made), Serbia (2021), Tajikistan (no

plan/decision made), The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (no plan/decision made), Turkey (2020), Turkmenistan (no plan/decision made), Ukraine (no plan/decision made) and Uzbekistan (no plan/decision made). Russian Federation conducted the latest agricultural census in 2016, i.e. under WCA 2020 round and is currently undertaking data processing of the census data.

4. Countries expressed high interest in consulting census materials such as questionnaires and reports from other countries available from the FAO web repository. Some countries' materials related to the census conducted under WCA 2010 (country metadata reports, reports on census results, other census products and material) were provided to FAO during the meeting and more materials will be provided later to complete the existing gaps in the FAO web census repository.

5. The participants acknowledged the importance of census data collection of: all 23 recommended essential items to enable national and international comparison; relevant frame items for building up the necessary frames for follow up regular agricultural and other surveys; and relevant additional items to meet the information and statistical needs of various stakeholders. The census content should be decided by countries taking into account countries' information needs and priorities, based on consultation with data users and the relevant producers of official statistics, as well as the need to enable international comparisons.

6. The country participants acknowledged the necessity to avoid the unjustified duplication of data collection in the census, current statistical surveys and relevant administrative data sources. The participants acknowledged the necessity to focus the census on the collection of the essential census items recommended in the WCA 2020, as well as other items relevant for national needs, especially required at the lowest administrative and geographical level, in order to avoid overburdening census questionnaires. Other (especially non-structural items such as on production, prices, etc.) can be adequately collected through statistical surveys or obtained from administrative sources on a more frequent basis.

7. The participants highlighted a range of existing difficulties related to timely and adequate financing of census operations. Methodological considerations for the census design, taking into account the needs for improving the cost-efficiency of the census were widely discussed. The participants noted that the modular approach (introduced in the WCA 2010) and the integrated census and survey modality (the latter introduced in the new guidelines, where AGRIS is an example) were proposed as cost-efficient approaches and as important steps towards establishing integrated agricultural statistical systems for countries lacking such systems.

8. The participants highlighted the critical importance of good coordination between national institutions responsible for agricultural sector (e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture) and those in charge with official statistics (National Statistical Offices), as well as other interested government agencies and local public administrations along overall census preparatory and implementation activities.

9. The benefits of synchronizing the Population & Housing Censuses (PHC) and Agricultural Censuses (AC) were widely discussed, based on FAO presentation on linking these censuses and country presentation of Georgia, which simultaneously conducted PHC and AC. The use of an agricultural module in the PHC to collect frame items to establish a sampling frame for follow up sample data collection of AC items were discussed in detail. However, the operational difficulties were highlighted, especially those related to: the specificity of some agriculture census items, which are more sensitive and/or more challenging to collect; timing discrepancies; increasing burden on population census; the coordination between different government agencies involved in the two operations; the difficulties related to the adequate inclusion of an agricultural module in the Population Census questionnaire. At least three countries of the region consider to combine the field operations of the Population and Agricultural Censuses during the WCA 2020 round (Belarus has already made the decision while Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine are contemplating such an option). The challenges posed by

such a combination of the field operations and the risks of overburdening respondents and reducing data quality were highlighted.

10. Extensive discussions took place on other specific issues of census data collection, such as:

- The specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which the agricultural census may contribute;
- The scope of the agricultural census;
- When is the modular approach appropriate;
- The problem related to the construction of the frame for the agricultural census and its update in the period between censuses;
- The use of the population census and administrative data sources to prepare the frame of agricultural holdings;
- The necessity to take into account the typology of agricultural holdings when developing the census methodology and tools, and organizing a census;
- Use of administrative sources as a source of data for some census items;
- Difficulties in collecting data on land degradation and the need for good training of enumerators;
- The measurement of working time on the holding, as well as collection of other data related to work on the holding;
- The differences between census data and current statistics (e.g. on work on the holding, livestock) because of the use of different reference periods;
- Reconciliation of the current agricultural statistics with the data of the agricultural census and the problem of backward recalculation of the time series, etc.

11. Community-level data attracted a lot of interest of participants as these complement holding-level data from the agricultural census. The participants also noted the benefits of cross-tabulation between these data sets.

12. Presentations from FAO on new technologies for field data capture and compilation, and country presentation from Russian Federation on the use of CAPI method were discussed. The participants pointed out the significance of the use of new technologies for field data capture.

13. The importance of a good communication and publicity campaign, as well as of a wide and timely dissemination of census results were emphasized. It was pointed out that a good and timely planning and budgeting of all census operations, including publicity campaign and dissemination, should be made in order to secure appropriate funding throughout all census activities.

14. During the meeting other aspects of production and dissemination of census results were also discussed, such as ensuring data confidentiality when presenting census data and the use of relevant standard statistical classifications (such as ISIC), classifications recommended in the WCA 2020 (i.e. of land use, crop, livestock, machinery and equipment) and of tabulation classes to enable international comparison of the main census results. In this respect, it was pointed out that when using their own well-established classifications, countries should ensure the production and dissemination of census results according to the international standards and recommendations mentioned above.

15. The participants highlighted the importance of the development of new FAO guidelines on operational aspects of census taking (WCA 2020, Volume 2) and welcomed FAO efforts. It was emphasized the relevance and usefulness of providing recommendations and best country examples through this publication and other FAO and Global Strategy publications-

16. Participants highlighted the importance of organizing such meetings on census taking, in particular on operational issues, which will be discussed in WCA, Volume 2.

FINAL REMARKS

17. The participants agreed that the Roundtable met its main objective to help the participants gain a deeper understanding of the WCA 2020 for the implementation of their agricultural censuses under the 2020 round.

18. Countries acknowledged the continuous FAO assistance on agricultural censuses in the region and looked forward to receiving further guidance in the new census round.

19. Countries agreed to provide within a month missing census material and reports to FAO in order to facilitate the documentation of censuses and the preparation of good country practices.

20. The participants expressed gratitude to the FAO REU and FAO Headquarters for the good organization of the Roundtable.