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**Impact of COVID-19 on  
agricultural censuses  
in Asia Pacific**

**APCAS29**

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# The World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020 (WCA 2020)

- FAO is the UN agency responsible for providing methodological guidelines and technical support for conducting agri-censuses.
- WCA 2020 is FAO's tenth decennial programme. It covers censuses conducted in 2016 - 2025.
- Roundtables on WCA 2020 in Thailand (2016) and Fiji (2017).
- FAO published "Global review of agricultural census methodologies and results" (SDS 18) in 2020.
- The execution of agricultural censuses has been on the rise since the 1990s.

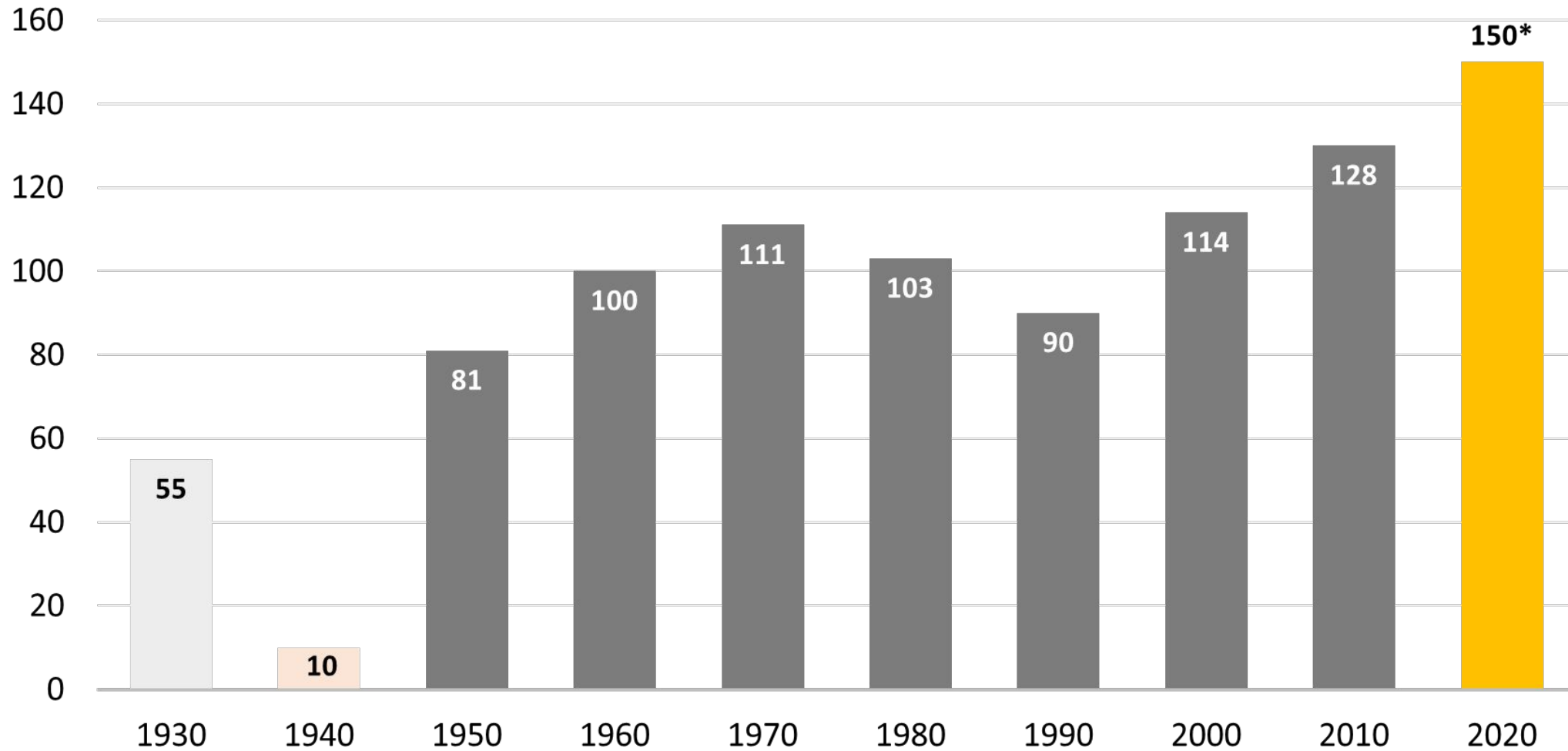
# Participation of FAO member countries by WCA rounds (1)

## Participation of countries and territories in the WCA rounds

Region	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020 (incl. planned)
<b>Participating countries per round</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Africa (56)</b>	28	25	23	20	25	22	35
<b>Americas (40)</b>	30	33	25	23	22	28	28
<b>Europe (43)</b>	17	24	22	20	29	35	38
<b>Asia (48*)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Pacific (20)</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>

\* Asia includes the State of Palestine (not FAO member)

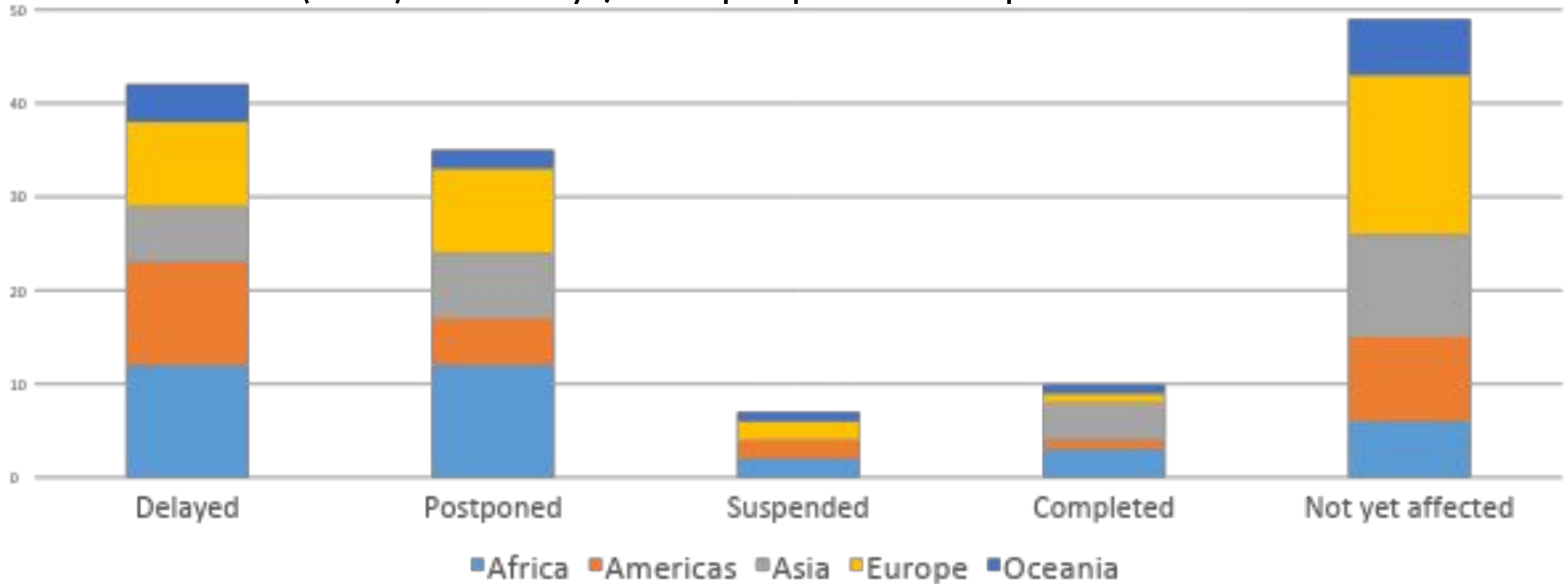
## Participation of FAO member countries by WCA rounds (2)



\* *Projected*

# Impact of Covid-19 on the WCA 2020 round – Global perspective (1)

- At the end of 2020, a study (Castano, 2020\*) reported that of 140 agricultural censuses, more than half (59%) had delays, been postponed or suspended.



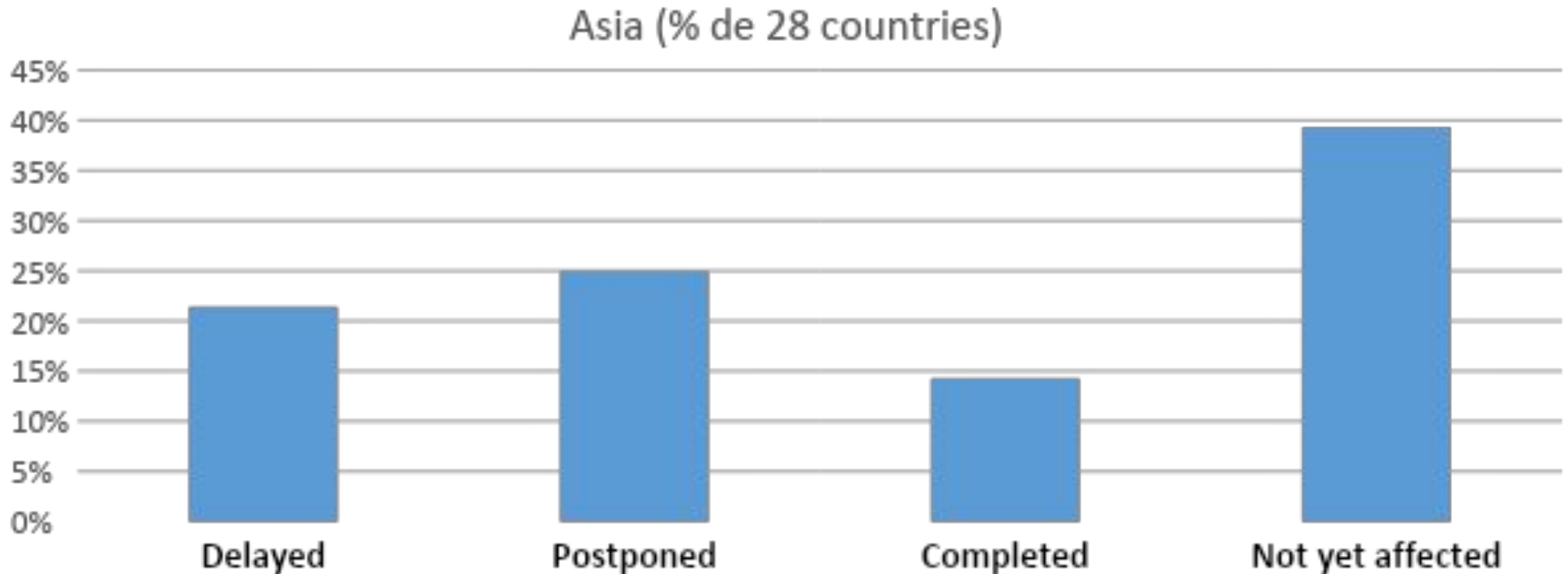
\*Castano, J. 2020. "Censuses of agriculture and COVID-19: Global situation and lessons". *Statistical Journal of the IAOS*. 36: 861–865 – via IOS Press

## Impact of Covid-19 on the WCA 2020 round – Global perspective (2)

- Most of the delays were in Africa (29% of countries), followed by the Americas (26%), Europe (21%), Asia (14%) and Pacific (10%).
- Most of the postponements occurred in Africa (34% of countries), followed by Europe (26%), Asia (20%), the Americas (14%), and the Pacific (6%).
- A third of the countries had not yet been affected but...
- ...mainly because more than half of them were in very early planning stages and aiming to conduct censuses after 2022.

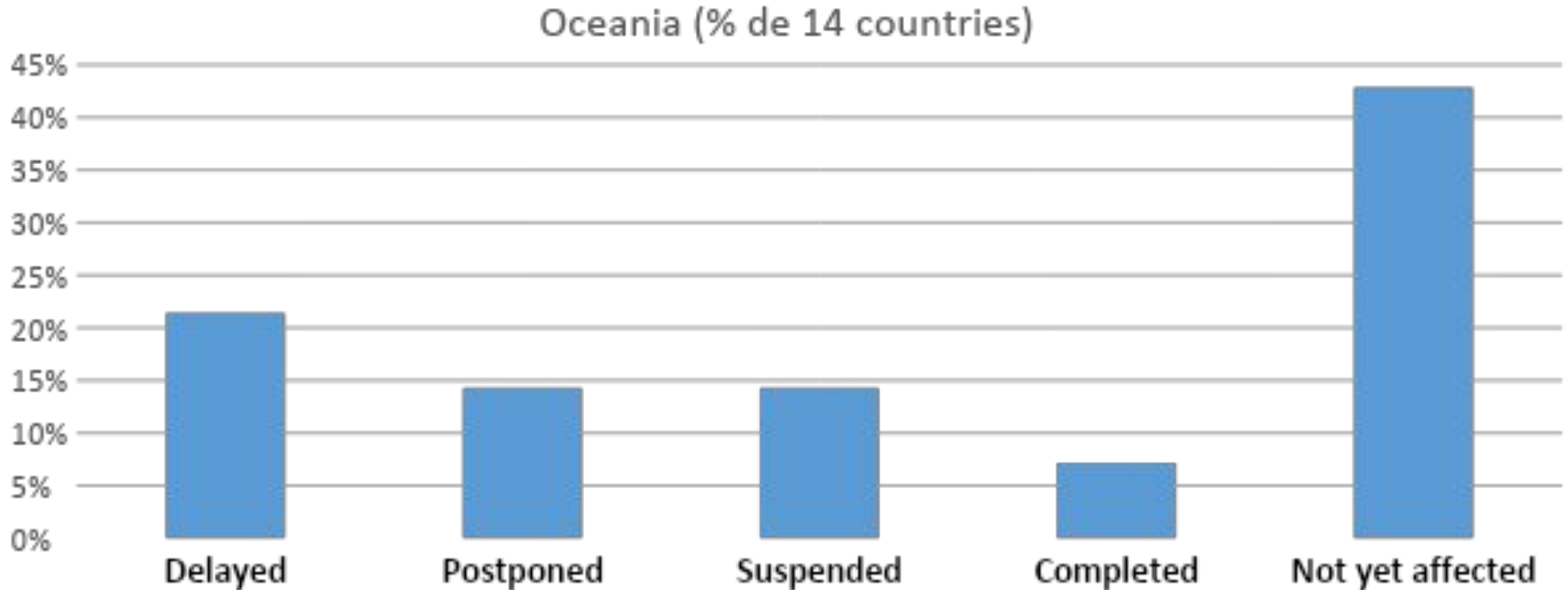
## Impact of Covid-19 on the WCA 2020 round – Asia

- In Asia (as of May 2021), 25% of 28 countries with censuses reported postponed activities and 21% delays.



## Impact of Covid-19 on the WCA 2020 round – Pacific

- In the Pacific, 21% of 14 countries with censuses reported delays, 14% postponed activities and 14% suspended census.





# Impact of Covid-19 on the WCA 2020 round – Asia-Pacific

□ The following table shows the 42 countries in the AP region classified by impact.

Census status	Countries
<b>Delayed</b>	<b>Asia (6):</b> India, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam <b>Pacific (3):</b> Australia, Cook I., Fiji
<b>Postponed</b>	<b>Asia (7):</b> Israel, Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Palestine, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia <b>Pacific (2):</b> Niue, Vanuatu
<b>Suspended</b>	<b>Pacific (2):</b> Samoa, PNG
<b>Not yet affected</b> <i>(planned 2022 or later)</i>	<b>Asia (11):</b> Armenia, Cambodia, Georgia , Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Maldives , Mongolia, Nepal, Oman, Rep. of Korea, Thailand <b>Pacific (6):</b> Am. Samoa, Guam, N. Mariana I., New Zealand, Solomon, Tonga
<b>Completed</b>	<b>Asia (4):</b> China, Bhutan, Jordan, Timor Leste <b>Pacific (1):</b> Micronesia

# Implications of delays, postponements and suspensions in the census

- Higher cost than planned (fixed costs continue despite suspensions) and unforeseen expenses such as personal health protection equipment, relaunch of information and publicity campaigns, review of questionnaires, etc.
- Unwanted changes in the census reference periods and problems with producers recalling answers accurately.
- Risks to continued financing of the agricultural census once it resumes, as governments face other post-COVID-19 priorities.
- Possible data quality issues as census data may not reflect the new reality of the post-COVID-19 agricultural sector.
- Affected population censuses in turn force the postponement of agricultural censuses in countries that depend on the former to establish the list of agricultural households, or that can only organize one census at a time.

# Censuses of agriculture not affected – Why?

- 20 countries and territories (16 European countries, three French territories and Korea) continued their census data collection in 2020-2021 without major disruption.
- These countries have integrated statistical systems, robust information and communications technology (ICT), and use administrative records to cover part of their census needs.
  1. Census preparation activities continued through teleworking and stable internet connections;
  2. Training was online;
  3. Various remote data collection methods (initially planned): online self-interviews (CAWI), telephone interviews (CATI), and postal questionnaires. Personal interviews with CAPI were replaced where possible by remote methods;
  4. More intensive use of administrative records.

## Lessons (1)

- The role of virtual learning and online courses in training trainers, supervisors and enumerators.
- The importance of stable remote access to systems for uninterrupted development of the census ICT infrastructure.
- The need to reduce dependence on face-to-face interviews and to introduce alternative modalities of remote data collection.
- The usefulness of administrative records to meet part of the census needs, avoiding unnecessary duplication of data collection.
- COVID-19 has been a wake-up call for countries to diversify their training and census data collection methods in future rounds.

## Lessons (2)

- The use of CAWI, CATI and mail methods requires access to well-developed and reliable national telecom infrastructures. Some remote rural areas may not have high speed internet access.
- Using snail mail can be difficult in areas where mailboxes are widely scattered.
- Producers with IT limitations may be reluctant or unable to use CAWI. However, CAWI, CATI and post can start with large farms and entities (companies, cooperatives).
- Some countries will be slow to adopt modern technologies due to poor infrastructure, high cost of access, and lack of necessary skills.
- Other countries may make the leap, but will require adequate testing of ICT solutions for online training and remote data collection methods.

**Thank you**

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# Proposed Recommendations *in brief*

- Member countries to use the "Global review of agricultural census methodologies and results" (FAO, 2020) —that compares country census practices— as useful reference material for census planning and implementation.
- Countries to reduce dependence on face-to-face training and interviews, and gradually shift to virtual learning and remote data collection (CAWI, CATI, post). For instance, CAWI, CATI and post can start with large farms and entities (enterprises, cooperatives).