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MAIN FEATURES AND CHANGES OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME FOR THE CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE 2020, VOLUME 1

Introduction

Every 10 years FAO revises the countries' censuses experiences and lessons learnt, and then prepares, publishes and disseminates the revised census guidelines with improved census methodology. The WCA 2020 is the tenth decennial census programme. It is an international standard that is expected to drive the implementation of agricultural censuses in all countries in the period between 2016 and 2025. The WCA 2020 is occurring at a time when demand increases for integrated, synergetic and cost-efficient national agriculture statistical systems.

Main features of the new WCA 2020

The WCA 2020 was envisaged in two volumes to clearly separate two distinct aspects of the census:

- Volume 1 “Programme, Definitions and Concepts” deals with the methodological and conceptual aspects of the census of agriculture.
- Volume 2 “Operational Aspects” (to be published in 2016) will include the practical details on the steps involved in actually conducting an agricultural census. It is a revised and updated edition of “Conducting Agricultural Censuses and Surveys” (1995).

Below are some of the main features of Volume 1 of the new WCA 2020.

Synergies: One of the main and new features of the new programme is its close linkage to the [Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics](#) (2011). The census of agriculture is one of the cornerstones of the Global Strategy as a major source for the minimum set of core data and information (first pillar of the Global Strategy) and the integration of agriculture into the national

statistical system through a master sample frame and an integrated survey system (second pillar).

Integration: The WCA 2020 will further emphasize the integration of the agricultural census within the overall framework of the system of integrated agricultural censuses and surveys. The programme further emphasizes the integration of the agricultural census within the overall framework of the system of integrated agricultural censuses and surveys. Countries with an established system of agricultural surveys may use the classic approach as a frame for the system while countries without such system may find the modular approach as a first step in that direction.

Methodologies: It is recognized that countries use a range of census methodological approaches according to their circumstances, development levels and needs. A review of experiences and lessons learned in the 2010 census round showed that the census of agriculture can be conducted in many different ways. This publication features the discussion of four modalities for conducting a census of agriculture: the classical (one-off) approach, which is still widely used; the modular approach, which was introduced in the WCA 2010; the integrated census/survey modality, involving rotating survey modules over the years; and the combined census modality, which uses administrative data. The distinguishing features are in the design of these four modalities and not in whether complete or sample enumeration is used.

Essential items: A new feature of the WCA 2020 will be the reintroduction of the notion of ‘essential’ items, and a clear distinction between ‘essential’ items and ‘frame’ items. It will be recommended that all countries collect the essential items regardless of the approach to their agricultural census, which can be classic or modular. The frame items are intended specifically for inclusion in the core module of a census using the modular approach, to provide data for the frames for the supplementary modules. In addition to the essential and frame items, other items, referred to as ‘additional’ items, will be presented in the census programme. These will be provided for countries wishing to collect more in-depth (supplementary) data on specific themes and are suitable for inclusion irrespective of the approach adopted for the census.

Retained features and new/revised themes: The new WCA 2020 programme maintains key features introduced in the previous programme, namely the close relationship between the population and housing census and the agriculture census, the possibility of collecting community-level data on the infrastructure and services available to agricultural holdings, and the collection of sex-disaggregated data in the agricultural census. For this latter, the WCA 2020 has improved the approach for assessing the distribution of managerial decisions and introduced the identification of ownership within the household. The new programme also provides a revised list of themes and data items to better address emerging data needs, including two new themes: “Fisheries” (capture fisheries activities conducted at household level) and “Environment/Green House Gases (GHG)” (basic agro-environmental data on GHG and ammonia emissions).

Information technology: Another feature of the WCA 2020 guidelines will be an increased emphasis on the use of information technology in data collection, processing and dissemination. The increasing use of technology in census and surveys operations results in significant efficiencies and drastically reduces the time lag between data collection and data analysis. This includes the use of computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), internet-based data collection methods and geo-referencing. Similarly, the use of interactive outputs and web-based data (tables, graphs, maps) as well as access to anonymised micro-data has brought new opportunities for census dissemination. Novel and user-friendly dissemination tools support informed-decision making, unleash the analytical creativity of users, and ensure greater sustainability of agriculture statistics and their integration into the broader national statistical system.

Other key features of the programme

The main features of Volume 1 of the census guidelines highlighted above are the result of a review of countries' experiences under the WCA 2010 round, extensive consultations with countries as well as global and regional experts and the recognition of new and emerging needs. As in the past, it is expected that countries will adapt the guidelines to meet national and international needs.

References

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