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PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

REPORT ON THE SEMINAR ON METHODS OF AGRICULTURAL
DATA COLLECTION

Baghdad, 1-4 December 1984

85-0180

1. The Seminar on Methods of Agricultural Data Collection was held at the headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) in Baghdad from 1 to 4 December 1984. It was organized by the ECWA Agriculture and Statistics Divisions in co-operation with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

2. Attending the Seminar were 32 participants representing some countries in the ECWA region, as well as experts from FAO, consultants in the ECWA region, representatives of Arab and regional organizations and the ECWA secretariat.

A. Objectives of the Seminar

3. The objectives of the Seminar were:

(a) To study and make an assessment of sources and methods of agricultural data collection;

(b) To review and discuss the national experiments of statistical organizations, and to examine the obstacles encountered;

(c) To adopt a general frame for an integrated agricultural data system reflecting the actual conditions in the sectors of agriculture and livestock in the light of national needs for agricultural statistics and the international recommendations in this field;

(d) To present and discuss the Seventh Programme for the 1990 World Census of Agriculture.

B. Discussions

4. Nineteen papers presented to the Seminar constituted the bases for the discussions, outcome and recommendations of the Seminar. Nine papers offered background information, five were case studies, three methodological documents by FAO and two by the International Labour Organization and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development in the Sudan.

5. The papers presented dealt with the following subjects:

(a) Data collection and reproduction of agricultural statistics:

- (i) Holdings surveys;
- (ii) Household surveys;
- (iii) Administrative records;
- (iv) Data processing.

- (b) Analysis and use of agricultural statistics:
 - (i) National accounts;
 - (ii) Agricultural planning.
 - (c) Programme for the 1990 World Census of Agriculture.
6. The discussions focussed on the following points:
- (a) The importance of harmonizing the statistical terminology and standards used in the region;
 - (b) Establishing suitable statistical frames for sample surveys, and co-ordinating population and agriculture censuses in this respect;
 - (c) Developing administrative records so as to be reliable sources of statistical data;
 - (d) Devoting greater attention to the development of livestock, fruit and vegetables statistics as they have a considerable share in agricultural statistics and constitute a major source of income to farmers in the region;
 - (e) Providing the statistical organizations which collect data with adequate equipment and manpower to speed up the issuance of agricultural statistics, which are basically delayed by data processing;
 - (f) Becoming acquainted with the real needs of the agricultural statistics users, taking them into account in the process of planning for data collection, and endeavouring to incorporate them in planning as early as possible;
 - (g) The importance of adopting a national integrated system for agricultural information so as to make maximum use of data collection, avoid duplication of effort and ensure greater co-ordination in this respect.

C. Recommendations

1. Concerning household censuses and surveys, the participants recommend the following:
- (a) Holding comprehensive agricultural censuses once every 10 years to provide frames of holdings for specialised agricultural statistics studies, in co-ordination with population censuses so as to provide frames for agricultural statistics and save effort and expenses;

(b) Inviting FAO, in collaboration with the Arab organizations concerned, to hold a regional seminar to present the Agricultural Census Programme for the Year 1990;

(c) Obtaining manual summaries of some basic data collected in regional agricultural censuses and surveys to be used, until the completion of computer results, as indicators for data coverage and accuracy of computer results;

(d) Using objective methods, including aerial photography and remote sensing, in the collection of agricultural statistics whenever possible, together with sampling, provided due attention is given to sample designing and to the selection and training of staff chosen to carry out the work in order to minimize the scope of bias errors;

(e) Using advanced methods of aerial photography in estimating the number of cattle in deserts and pastures, provided studies are made to determine the ownership of herds moving between neighbouring Arab countries;

(f) Paying due attention to livestock statistics particularly those concerned with cows, sheep, goats ...etc, with due consideration to data on particulars of significance in preparing national accounts in this field. Attention must be also given to vegetable and fruit statistics for their importance in some countries of the region.

2. Concerning administrative records, the participants recommend making use of administrative registers and documents as a source for some agricultural statistical data, and developing these registers and documents for the purpose of supporting and complementing the agricultural statistics drawn from agricultural censuses and surveys.

3. Concerning household surveys, the participants recommend:

(a) Making use of household surveys in obtaining data on socio-economic phenomena in rural communities and households of agricultural holders. The surveys also reflect the consumption patterns of the rural population, taking into account estimations of the products for consumption by these households;

(b) Using household surveys in studying the agricultural labour force, its sources and the impact of migration on agricultural manpower;

(c) Devoting attention to obtaining statistics on women's participation in labour in rural areas whether paid or unpaid;

(d) Making use of the services rendered by the National Household Survey Capability Programme - ECWA in designing, preparing and analysing household surveys for the ECWA countries;

(e) Requesting FAO to extend active support to the National Household Survey Capability Programme especially with reference to the countries of the ECWA region;

4. Concerning the usages of agricultural statistics, the participants recommend:

(a) Drawing up agricultural quantitative commodity balances of the main crops particularly food, making use of all relevant statistical sources such as household surveys, foreign trade statistics, and others. The participants also recommend paying special attention to unavailable statistics which are essential in establishing the commodity balances in the countries of the region;

(b) Inviting FAO, in collaboration with the Arab organizations concerned, to hold a seminar on national accounts for the agricultural sector for the purpose of defining the essential agricultural statistics and methods of collecting them - either by field or office work - and discussing relevant subjects;

(c) Underlining the importance of listing the prices of agricultural products at all levels (farm, wholesale and retail prices), and the prices of the agricultural production requisites in view of their importance in commodity balances and national accounts, as well as in calculating the index numbers for the consumption and production prices and in agricultural planning, in general;

(d) Promoting co-operation and co-ordination between the organizations concerned with planning, national accounts and collection of agricultural data for the purpose of standardizing the definitions and concepts used in agricultural statistics. The participants also recommend periodic collection of these statistics in order to make the best use of them with a high standard of accuracy.

5. Concerning data processing, the participants recommend:

(a) Providing the agricultural statistics organizations with appropriate computers taking into account the suitable size of entry units to avoid delay;

(b) Devoting particular attention to training in agricultural data processing, and making available competent professional cadres;

(c) Making use of suitable programme packages for the processing and analysis of the results of agricultural data;

(d) Specialists in mechanical data processing are to co-operate with statisticians in carrying out comprehensive integrated planning for all the requirements of censuses and surveys, with due consideration to timetables, and programmes for statistical and economic analysis;

(e) Establishing data banks and agricultural statistics information systems;

(f) Inviting FAO, in co-operation with the ECWA Statistics Division and concerned regional organizations, to conduct a case-study in system analysis approach in agricultural statistics in one of the ECWA countries, to be followed by a workshop to present the findings.