Practical Problems in the Estimation of Performance Indicators for the Agricultural Sector in Uganda

Agnes Mary Ssekiboobo
Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics
Kampala, Uganda
Email: agssekiboobo@yahoo.com; agssekiboobo@isae.mak.ac.ug

Abstract: Annual agricultural surveys are implemented as core module of the Uganda National Household Survey program to provide current agricultural data and filling gaps where they exist. The performance indicators on which these surveys collect data include: characteristics of the agricultural households; land ownership and utilisation; planted area; yield and production; amounts of inputs used; use of labour; agricultural prices; livestock and poultry statistics.

The problems that have been identified include:

1. the practices of mixed cropping, shifting cultivation, incompletely harvested crops, continuous planting and/or harvesting still exist to a large extent;
2. fragmented or even transitory holdings;
3. timing of the data collection exercises;
4. changing cultivation and marketing practices and cropping periods;
5. the majority of the respondents are unable to give accurate responses;
6. time taken to complete the survey;
7. comprehensive data on conversion factors missing;
8. using the GPS tool to measure very small areas;
9. under-reporting and use of different reference periods for different livestock types;
10. poor classification of agricultural households;
11. recommendations regarding use of either open or closed segments; and
12. many points of first sale of agricultural products; to mention but a few.

All the above problems have to be seen in the context of agricultural practices that are common in many developing countries including Uganda otherwise most of the published figures will be questioned. Some solutions have been suggested that can help to arrive at the best possible estimates under the circumstances. Reliable estimates are necessary in order to better the implementation of export and import policies of agricultural commodities in case of deficits or surpluses; to formulate price policies; to help in the estimation of the contribution of agriculture to GDP and measuring the level of agricultural productivity; among other things. At the end of the day planners and policy makers will be able to make informed decisions.