

Agricultural Censuses in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) – Recent Country Experiences

A. David Marshall

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Rome, Italy

Email: david.marshall@fao.org

Abstract: Despite their size, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face many of the same challenges as much larger countries when it comes to planning and conducting an agricultural census. This paper looks at the extent of agricultural census taking in SIDS, the capacity constraints, methodological considerations of most concern to SIDS and the implications of the new approach to agricultural census taking as described in the “FAO World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010” (WCA2010).

Of the 38 countries in this grouping, all but three have undertaken an agricultural census at some point in their history but only ten undertook such a census in the last census round (1996-2005). Some countries include specific questions on agriculture in their census of population and housing and the relationship between these two national censuses is considered in the context of the SIDS experience.

SIDS are confronted with many of the methodological challenges faced by larger developing countries such as the estimation of crop area harvested from subsistence farms utilizing mixed cropping and continuous planting/harvesting systems and the associated challenges of land area estimation where farmers have no idea of standardized units of measure related to their land size and crop production. The paper considers these issues and discusses some practical ways of addressing them.

The WCA2010 adopts a new approach to agricultural census taking with emphasis on conducting a ‘core’ module through complete enumeration and ‘supplementary’ modules(s) on a sample basis. Given the small size of many SIDS, sampling may not be an efficient approach where small area data is required. The paper discusses this and other issues related to the implementation of the WCA2010 in the SIDS environment.