

Restructuring the System of Agricultural Statistics in Hungary

Éva Laczka

Head, Department of Agricultural Statistics, Hungarian Central Statistical Office

This paper presents a description of the development and evolution of the Hungarian agricultural statistical system during the last 50 years.

The first agricultural census was implemented in Hungary in 1895. From 1972 agricultural censuses were conducted regularly at ten year intervals in accordance with the standards of FAO and more recently, following the regulations of the European Union.

The annual agricultural surveys conducted in the years between censuses concentrated exclusively on the dominant forms of farming; consequently only the cooperative and state farms were obliged to provide regular statistical reports in the fifties, sixties and seventies. In these years family farms were only respondents to the agricultural censuses, and their key details were only included in the statistical reports submitted by large-scale farms.

Information on livestock was more complete. The livestock of households was included in the statistical surveys starting in 1950. At the beginning data were collected in the framework of the annual comprehensive surveys (censuses), and later, starting from the middle of the fifties when the livestock on small-scale farms became the subject of regular sample-based surveys.

Statistics underwent a radical change in the nineties following the fundamental socio-economic changes. The sample-based surveys of family farms covered initially crop-growing, then land use as well.

The Hungarian Statistics Act of 1993 (the sixth of its kind in Hungary) instituted the legal base for the activities of the statistical service and the annual program of surveys. Nowadays about fifty surveys are conducted yearly by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in accordance with the agreement on the division of responsibilities signed in 1999.

A general feature of the surveys is that all economic organisations, i.e. legal entities are obliged to report, whereas family farms (households) report on the basis of representative samples. Economic organisations submit reports by mail, and census-takers visit the individual farms. The frequency and data content of surveys are consistent with the relevant regulations of the European Union.

From 1999 on new statistics such as the Economic Accounts for Agriculture emerged; the regional version of the latter has been implemented recently.