CONDUCT OF FIFTH ECONOMIC CENSUS IN INDIA

Introduction

Economic Census is the complete count of all entrepreneurial units within geographical boundaries of the country. The main purpose of conducting economic census is to generate an updated frame of enterprises for detailed follow-up surveys. The results of these censuses also provide basic entrepreneurial data on number of enterprises and employment therein relating to different sectors of the economy for the purpose of planning, development and research specially for unorganized sector of the economy.

The first Economic Census was conducted in 1977 covering only non-agricultural enterprises employing at least one hired worker on a fairly regular basis. The second and third economic censuses were conducted in 1980 and 1990 along with House listing operations of 1981 and 1991 Population censuses respectively. These two censuses covered all agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises excepting those engaged in crop production and plantation. The fourth Economic Census was carried out in 1998 with the same coverage. The current Economic Census, the 5th in the series, is being conducted with the same coverage. The paper discusses the salient features of the Fifth Economic Census.

Scope and Coverage

The Fifth Economic Census is conducted in the whole of Indian Union. All economic activities (agricultural and non-agricultural) except those engaged in crop production and plantation are covered in this Census. The field work of the Fifth Economic Census was started during April-June,2005 in a large number of States/ Union Territories(UTs) and for the remaining States/UTs the fieldwork will start in July,2005.

Schedules canvassed and contents

Three schedules namely (i) House list (HL); (ii) Enterprise schedule (ES) and (iii) Address Slip are canvassed in Economic Census. Addresses of enterprises employing 10 workers or more are collected for the first time in the Fifth Economic Census through Address Slip. Separate schedules are used for rural and urban areas.

The fourth schedule, namely the Enterprise Abstract (EA) is completed from the entries contained in the Enterprise Schedule.   Census villages are the primary units in rural areas and in the urban areas, Urban Frame Survey Blocks (UFS) formed by the Field Operations Division (FOD) of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) are the primary units.

The items of information collected in the Economic Census include location of the enterprise, description of the economic activity of the enterprise, nature of operation, type of ownership, social group of the owner, power/fuel used for the activity, total number and the number of non-hired persons usually working the enterprise. The need for essential minimum items, simplicity and experiences gained in the previous four economic Censuses have been taken into account in designing the schedules of the Fifth Economic Census. In the House list, data on housing stock is also collected. The structure occupied by the households (constituting a group of persons usually living together and taking their meals from a common kitchen) has been classified into various categories based on the type of materials used for its construction.

Classification of activities

Economic activities are assigned 4-digit National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2004 codes, which is based on ISIC Revision 3.1. NIC 2004, which has up to five digit level classification, is comparable with ISIC Revision 3.1 till four digits in totality. To meet the requirement of certain users, a few shadow four digited codes have been incorporated in this classification. In total, there are 310 four digited codes.

Legal provision for data collection

There is no legal framework for conducting Economic Census in the country. There are only two laws in India, under which data are collected. These are Census Act, 1948 for carrying out Population Census and another is the Collection of Statistics Act (CSA), 1953. The CSA empowers the Central Government to ask the industrial units which are registered under the Factories Act, 1948 to furnish the statistical data as per the prescribed schedules. A High Powered Commission has recommended that the Census Act might be modified if necessary, for conducting Economic Census along with House Listing operation of the decennial Population Census.

Field Work

Before launching the fieldwork, training is imparted to personnel at various levels viz. All-India level for senior officers of State/UT Governments, State/UT level for District level offic ers, District and lower level training for enumerators and supervisors. Data collection is done in a decentralized manner and the work is entrusted to State/UT Governments. Each enumerator is allotted with the work of one or more enumeration blocks, each block broadly covers 200-230 households in the rural areas and 150-170 households in the urban areas. The workload is reduced in hilly and difficult terrains. Data are collected on voluntary basis by contacting head of the unit/household or responsible person.

Enterprise is the unit of enumeration. Perennial and also seasonal enterprises are covered in the census. The reference period for data collection in respect of perennial enterprises is the last calendar year (2004) and for seasonal enterprises, it is the last working season. For enterprises that have started operations only recently, the information as on the date of census is collected.

The work of enumerators is supervised by higher-level officers and thereby ensuring quality of data gathered. About 400,000 enumerators are deployed to canvass the schedules from slightly over 1 million villages and urban blocks.

Data Processing

For the first time, Intelligence Character Recognition (ICR) technology is being adopted for processing of Economic census data. This process, also known as Automated Forms Processing, demands great care in not only canvassing of schedules but also in handling of the schedules. Automated Forms Processing technology enables the user to process documents from their images or directly from paper and convert them to computer readable data (usually ASCII). Automated forms are forms designed to be scanned to a digital format so that the data on the form can be "extracted" by software rather than keyed by data entry personnel. While Forms Processing packages will give Recognition capabilities, they also manage the complete life cycle of the document from scanning to extract and even include Image Archive and Retrieval.

Compared to conventional keyed data entry, automated forms processing....

- is more accurate
- is less expensive

- produces an exact, compact, digital image of the original form

- generates a complete audit trail of the process

- opens up a range of new ways to evaluate comment information simply and efficiently

- is easier to validate
- can be easily integrated with other computer applications

- provides a far easier way to verity that data from the form was accurately keyed or extracted

- permits permanent storage of a copy of the original form without storing paper

- satisfies many new regulatory requirements relating to certain specific types of surveys

- supports a range of new options for filling out forms, including paper forms, faxed forms, web forms, and emailed forms

Business Register

Availability of a complete and up-to-date list of enterprises is an essential requirement for conducting surveys covering various sectors of the economy. In the absence of such a list, surveys are carried out by adopting a two-stage design with the villages/urban blocks as first stage units and enterprises as the second stage units. This design has certain limitations. It is, therefore, planned to prepare a directory of enterprises engaged in different economic activities from the address slips canvassed in the Economic Census-2005. The list includes complete addresses of enterprises employing 10 workers or more and also telephone number and e-mail address. At present the country does not maintain a Business Register. Efforts are on to prepare the same and the directory of enterprises generated from the Economic Census would be one of the inputs in it.

Post Enumeration Checks

In order to assess the quality of data collected in the Economic Census, Post Enumeration Check (PEC) would be conducted in all the states/UTs after completion of the fieldwork of the Economic Census, 2005. Two villages and two urban blocks would be selected at random from each of about 600 districts throughout the country. PEC would be done by an agency other than the one involved in the fieldwork of the census namely, the Field Operations Division of the National Sample Survey Organization.

Dissemination of results

The results of the census would be disseminated at two stages. Arrangements are made for quick tabulation of important characteristics of enterprises from data contained in the Enterprise Abstract. Important characteristics include, number of agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises and total persons usually working. These results would be released at the first stage. The detailed results would be released once the data preparation through ICR technology is completed.

Anticipated Volume of work in Economic Census 2005

- Total number of households to be enumerated: 211 million
- Total number of enterprises: 40 million
- Total number of enterprises with 10 or more workers: 1.10 million

Summary results of Fourth Economic Census.

As per the Economic Census 1998, there were 30.35 million enterprises in the country engaged in different economic activities other than crop production and plantation. Out of these, 17.71 million enterprises (58.3%) were located in rural areas and the remaining 12.64 million (41.7%) in urban areas. Enterprises have grown at the rate of 2.36% per year during 1990-1998. About 19% of the total enterprises operated without premises. A little more than one fifth (20.4%) of the total enterprises were reported to be using power/fuel for their economic activities. 93% of the total enterprises had perennial activities and 94% of the total enterprises operated under private ownership. This census revealed that enterprises employing less than 6 workers constituted 94% of the total enterprises.

Total number of persons working in all enterprises was of the order of 83 million, about 40 million in rural areas and about 43 million in urban areas. Hired labour was about 43.3 million. Female employment constituted about 17% of the total employment.

Agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises were found to be in the ratio of 1:8. Three non-agricultural activity groups viz. retail trade, community, social & personal services and manufacturing were the most important activity groups, in terms of number of enterprises and employment therein. These three groups together accounted for about 84% of the total number of non-agricultural enterprises and 83% of the total employment in the non-agricultural sector.

Follow-up Surveys

Follow-up surveys are conducted based on the frame thrown up by the economic censuses to study the changes in the unorganized sectors of the economy and also identifying regional disparities among unorganized sectors in respect of different economic activities. First follow-up survey on unorganized manufacturing was carried out during 1978-79 using the first Economic Census data. The latest follow-up survey for which results are available pertains to unorganized services sector enterprises excluding trading and financial enterprises. This survey was carried out during July 2001-June 2002 and information of Economic Census 1998 was used for selection of units. The main aim of this survey was to estimate size in terms of the total number of enterprises, employment, fixed assets, operating expenses, receipts, value added, loans etc. Information on other attributes likes type of ownership, type of operation, number of months of operation, whether carrying out mixed/multiple activity, whether accounts maintained etc. was also collected.

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