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STATISTICAL COMMISSION

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WORLD CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

(Memorandum Prepared by FAO for Consideration under  
Item 3(c) of the Provisional Agenda)

At the Third Session of the Conference of FAO, held in Geneva in 1947, the project for a 1950 World Census of Agriculture was again endorsed and the staff of FAO was called upon to take all necessary steps to assist governments in developing their plans for participation in such a Census.

A regional meeting for statistical officers from the countries of the Americas was held in Washington in September 1947. The meeting to discuss the Census of the Americas, which had been called by the International Statistical Institute, established a Sub-Committee on the Agricultural Census, and this Sub-Committee examined in detail the proposal presented by FAO and made numerous suggestions for adaptation to the special needs and circumstances of the Latin American countries.

Because of the special problems involved in conducting a census of agriculture in non-self-governing areas, a conference of representatives of governments administering such areas was called in London late in 1947. This conference, recognizing that many of the areas in question had not had experience in conducting a census and had not developed strong statistical services, considered methods that would nonetheless provide usable results. The conference recommended, among others, certain adaptations in the preliminary programme proposed by FAO, gave considerable attention to the possibility of using sampling methods in connection with the census, urged that training programmes for census workers be developed, and considered the need for adequate maps, as well as the possibility of using aerial surveys.

In response to a request from representatives of countries in the Near East, a training school for agricultural statistics has been established in Baghdad for a period of ten weeks. An officer of the United States Department of Agriculture was seconded to FAO as the principal instructor in this school. The co-operating governments in the Near East have designated individuals as trainees.

/Negotiations

Negotiations are underway for the establishment of a training centre for agricultural statistics in one of the Latin American countries. It is **proposed** that through co-operation between this Government and FAO, a training programme will be developed, with courses to be conducted in Spanish, and particular emphasis to be given to census methods and problems. The training programme is to deal both with censuses of population and censuses of agriculture. It is anticipated that co-operation in carrying out this project will be secured also from the Statistical Office of the United Nations and from the Inter-American Statistical Institute. Work is continuing on the development of similar training programmes in other parts of the world which will make use of the experience and facilities that are available in a number of countries.

Through the co-operation of a number of government statistical offices, reports on projects, as well as detailed statements of methodology, have been supplied to FAO for distribution to other governments. This has included materials on sampling, on current crop and price reporting, a report on a nation-wide sample survey of agriculture in the United Kingdom, as well as a report on the methods in the 1945 Census of Agriculture in the United States. It is planned to continue the assembly and distribution of such methodological materials.

By the middle of March 1947, thirty-eight countries had indicated that they expect to participate in the 1950 Census of Agriculture and the number continues to grow.

Three technical officers, one for Latin America, one for the Far East, and one for Europe, have consulted with member governments and assisted in furthering the programme for a 1950 Census of Agriculture. In some instances this has meant assistance in developing legislation, budgets, and plans for staff organization to carry out a census, and in all cases it has involved consultation on schedules and tabulation plans in order to assure comparability.

Work has continued on the study of experience of various countries in connection with their censuses of agriculture. A handbook on agricultural census methods is in preparation. The present plan is that this handbook will consist in large part of summaries of the actual experience of countries in different parts of the world with their agricultural censuses.

Arrangements have been worked out for periodic review of census plans and developments with representatives of the Statistical Office and Population Division of the United Nations and the Inter-American Statistical Institute. Co-operation has also been established with those

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offices of the United States Government which are responsible for the programme of training statistical workers in the Latin American countries. Co-operation in the preparation of reports on census problems to be issued by the United Nations has been established; the FAO staff taking the major responsibility for the recently released report on the collation of population and agricultural census data and the report on problems of defining the agricultural population.

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