

# Lessons Learned from the 2002 General Agricultural Census in Romania

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The paper after describing historical background and circumstances as well as objectives under which the 2002 general census of agriculture took place in Romania is particularly focusing on experience gained during census operations and lessons learnt for future development of the overall agricultural statistics. Romanian census had special **features** at least for the following three reasons:

- (1) it was the first after more than 55 years since the last census carried out in 1948;
- (2) Significant economic changes affected the Romanian agriculture after the reform program that started in the 90's. The transition from the centrally planned economy to the market economy, accompanied by the privatization of the land resources that started with the 1991 land reform emerged into an important shift in the structures of the Romanian agriculture. New configuration of property and new approach in running the farms, were the main two factors that affected the agricultural production system. Consequently, from a planned, centralized farming system, practiced on large agricultural areas, the whole system shifted to a shattered one. At present, small-scale farming (almost 5 mill. Holdings) prevails on most of agricultural area, accompanied by a widespread land fragmentation;
- (3) facing to the above circumstances, methodological approach to meet the requirements of both international norms and standards and national ones raised difficult and complex organizational and technical procedures.

The lessons learnt cover both strong and weak points as far as the census conducting is concerned and they are largely exposed in the paper. One is that Romanian institutions and people involved in census operations were making a great effort to successfully accomplish this difficult task. The overall activity was supported by solid organizational links between central and local units, careful planning of activities and continuous evaluation of the obstacles and factors in play, aimed to the individuation of proper organizational and working solutions. Carrying out a General Census of Agriculture was a large and complex project, in particular when several decades have passed since the last experience in this field. The results show that data obtained are consistent and, consequently, it may be considered that the census was a success. In the future INS and MAAP will be in charge for the development of the Romanian agricultural statistical system - a general challenge that impacts the long-term possibility to properly develop the statistical system in this domain.

It may be assessed that the work done for designing the General Census of Agriculture is an important chapter in the field of agricultural statistics, but it represents only the beginning of a new long run way in the development of the Romanian agricultural statistical system on new foundations.