



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

PROVIDING ACCESS TO AGRICULTURE MICRODATA



GUIDELINES

Publication prepared in the framework of the Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

Providing Access to Agriculture Microdata: A Guide

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Preface

The development of these guidelines falls under the framework of the *Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics* and builds on the *International Household Survey Network* methods and practices. The Global Strategy provides the framework essential to meet current and emerging data requirements, and the demands of policy makers and other data users. Its goal is to contribute to greater food security, reduced food price volatility, higher incomes and greater well-being for rural populations, through evidence-based policies. The Global Action Plan of the Global Strategy is centred on 3 pillars: (1) establishing a minimum set of core data; (2) integrating agriculture into the National Statistical System (NSS); and (3) fostering sustainability of the statistical system, through governance and statistical capacity building.

The second pillar mentioned above (integrating agriculture into the NSS) recommends that countries establish a strategy for data dissemination, to ensure that the data is accessible. One important advancement made over the last few decades is the regular creation of user-accessible microdata files for in-depth analysis. The indications provided in this Guide are intended to help producers of agricultural data to navigate the process of providing researchers with access to microdata, while at the same time respecting the statistical and privacy requirements binding them.

This Guide presents a set of operational tools, methods and good practices that are the result of a long process, taking advantage of knowledge from country experiences and existing material developed by the World Bank and PARIS21 on household survey microdata, within the International Household Survey Network. Access to agricultural microdata is still not common, but the few practices available have been included. In designing their microdata policies, countries will be able to refer to existing tools. This Guide will be updated regularly, thanks to countries' feedback and experiences in implementing agricultural microdata dissemination.

Acknowledgments

These Guidelines were developed by Ernie Boyko, former Director of Agriculture, Corporate Planning, Electronic Publishing, and Operations at Statistics Canada, with the help of Nancy Chin and François Fonteneau, Statisticians, FAO.

This work draws heavily upon an earlier guide prepared by Olivier Dupriez from the International Household Survey Network (IHSN) and Ernie Boyko in 2010, which is accessible at <http://www.surveynetwork.org/home/sites/default/files/resources/IHSN-WP005.pdf>.

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Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ABSDL	Australian Bureau of Statistics Data Laboratory
ADP/PARIS21	Accelerated Data Program/Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21 st Century
CDER	Canadian Centre for Data Development and Economic Research
CES	Center for Economic Studies
CSPro	Census and Survey Processing System (Software)
DDI	Data Documentation Initiative
DLI	Data Liberation Initiative
GPS	Global Positioning System
IHSN	International Household Survey Network
NADA	Microdata Cataloguing Tool
NESSTAR	Networked Social Science Tools and Resources (Software)
NBS	Nigerian Bureau of Statistics
NISR	Rwandan National Institute of Statistics
NSO	National Statistics Office
PUF	Public Use File
RAF	Remote Access Facility
RADL	Remote Access Data Laboratory
RDC	Research Data Centre
RTRA	Real Time Remote Access
SAS	Statistical Analysis System (Software)
SDC	Statistical Disclosure Control
SDCMicro	Statistical Disclosure Control for Microdata files (Software)
SO	Statistical Organization
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Software)
STATA	Data Analysis and Statistical Software (Software)
XML	Extensible Markup Language

Introduction

The nature and role of information in society

Information plays a vital role in the agricultural sector. It provides us with a picture of the status and contributions of the sector, in terms of the production of food, clothing, shelter, income, and employment. Decisions concerning agriculture and the sector's major players are often based on data collected from agricultural operators. A single survey or census can support decision making in a number of ways, after the basic data have been collected. Figure 1 below depicts the different stages involved in the interrelated processes of using measures in the real world to make decisions, which may in turn result in changes to the real world itself.

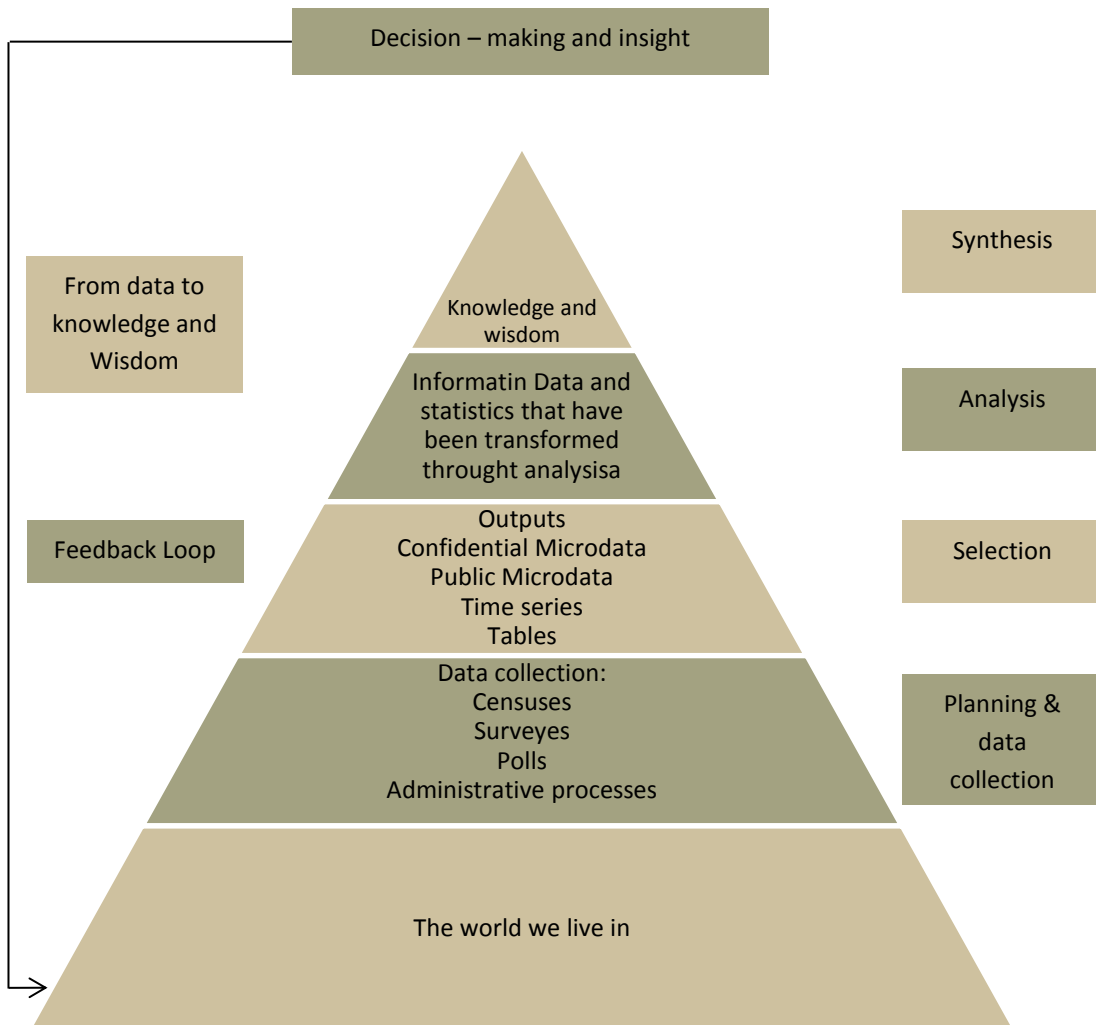


FIGURE 1. Evidence-Based Decision Making
(Public Microdata: Microdata)

There are several sources for such data, including censuses, surveys, administrative data and even remotely sensed data from satellites. The Outputs section of Figure 1 above refers to confidential microdata, public microdata, time series and tables. Users of agricultural data are accustomed to accessing aggregate statistics, such as time series and tables, to paint a picture of the sector. While these aggregate statistics may have been prepared after consultation with the user community, they represent but a small fraction of the possible tabulations that can be produced from a given source. Users who require additional tabulations are left with two choices:

- Return to the data producers (the holders of the microdata files) and request additional outputs, or
- Obtain access to a (public) version of the microdata files and perform their own data manipulations.

The purpose of this Guide is to explore the options available to data producers for providing researchers and other users with better access to census and survey data. More specifically, the Guide will explore the creation of publicly accessible microdata.

This document is structured in the following Sections:

1. What are microdata?
2. Data producers' rationales for providing access to microdata
3. Alternative models for providing access to microdata
4. Preparing data files for user access
5. Providing access to agricultural microdata
6. Legal and policy frameworks for providing access to agricultural microdata
7. Technical infrastructure and institutional requirements for providing access to microdata
8. Promoting the use of microdata
9. The Open Data Agenda
10. Concluding observations
11. Bibliography
12. Appendices

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