

**IWG.AGRI TASK FORCE  
ON  
STATISTICS ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND  
AGRICULTURE HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Background**

In recent years agriculture policies have increasingly refocused towards sustainability (see for instance the Johannesburg Summit) and the new and expanding role of the agri-food sector for rural development. Consequently, national and international agriculture statistical systems are also refocusing with a view to developing a new range of statistics to answer to the new challenges.

IWG.AGRI, both in their joint meetings and seminars and in each organization's internal work, has increasingly stepped up work on sustainability and rural development recognizing that in many respects these areas need to be built up from scratch and that there is an urgent need for international definitions and coordination. The 2001 and 2003 IWG.AGRI Meetings in Geneva and the 2002 IWG.AGRI Seminar in Paris, which recommended the setting up of the present Task Force, have given priorities to these issues with the aim of obtaining international standards for better international comparability.

To be able to answer the new policy needs, significant re-evaluation and refocusing of the statistical work done by both national statistical offices and international organizations are called for. Among the wide range of issues to be addressed are in particular:

- ◆ Farm businesses and how these are changing.
- ◆ Social issues connected to farming and the food sectors.
- ◆ Animal health and welfare.
- ◆ Environmental impacts of the food and farming industry,

and in particular in the present context

- ◆ How agriculture and the food industry are connected to the rural economy and which impact they have.

**Policy objectives**

On the basis of an agreed definition of rural areas, the Task Force will develop and document best practice guidelines on concepts and methods in the setting up a

statistical system for rural development, which can be used for international benchmarking. The objective of this work is to provide statistics in order to respond to policy issues such as.

1. Standard of living and welfare of the agriculture and rural population versus the urban from economic, social and cultural perspectives
2. Monitoring various support systems for agri-food and the economic viability of rural areas
3. Agriculture household income versus other rural household and urban household income
4. Quantity, quality and safety of sustainable agriculture and food production
5. The sustainability of the rural economy and the role of agriculture
6. The impact of agriculture for environmental protection
7. Providing a “living” rural space for tourism and recreation for the population at large
8. Maintaining biodiversity and the cultural landscape

In its work the Task Force will recognize the importance of non-agriculture activities of rural development.

While agriculture is a major landuser and thus has a crucial influence on landscape, natural environment, recreation and culture, other activities, forestry in particular, should not be forgotten.

The Task Force will document the current status of rural development statistics in selected member countries with respect to, among other things:

- ◆ Coverage (The Task Force may define coverage from an ideal point of view including not only basic variables such as income, employment, population, educational levels etc. but a whole range variables related to environmental and social sustainability. It may also want to propose a more limited coverage, looking at what is actually possible to measure given the present statistical systems. These issues of coverage should be addressed by the Task Force)
- ◆ Choice of basic unit(s) for data observation and associated definitional issues, including the definition of the Agriculture Household Unit
- ◆ Agriculture household demographics and classification
- ◆ Measurements of income and wealth of agriculture households, compared with other types of households, and their economic viability
- ◆ How farms are changing in response to sustainable agriculture, which types of farms are changing and to what extent

- ◆ Improved information is needed on diversifications and non-farming income, including data on type, scale and income sources
- ◆ How to define and classify rural and non-rural zones. To this end the Task Force will probably assume that there is no single definition, but rather look at a coherent set of definitions.
- ◆ Quality of data, such as availability of data, sources of data, their coherence, their collection and management
- ◆ Identification of the new data needs and how these can be met without additional unnecessary burdens and within existing resources
- ◆ Identification of key indicators for national and international benchmarking

The Task Force will then propose a set of international guidelines for how to measure rural development and to identify key indicators within the framework of existing national statistical systems.

### **Methods of work**

IWG.AGRI agreed that the agriculture household unit and their demography play a central role in setting up statistical systems for rural development. To this end IWG.AGRI agreed that this issue would get special attention in the work of the Task Force. The OECD agreed to co-ordinate this work while the UNECE will co-ordinate other aspects of rural development statistics.

The Task Force will mainly work through electronic discussion groups and electronic mail. Only occasionally will the Task Force meet face-to-face, for instance when it is possible to organize a Task Force meeting back-to-back with another related event which the Task Force members would attend anyway. The use of virtual meetings through video- or audioconferences may also be used. This means that most of the work will be carried out by the individual Task Force members at their desks in their home offices.

Members of the Task Force are expected to meet their own direct expenses themselves. On a voluntary basis IWG.AGRI organizations might finance consultants to participate in the Task Force as experts.

It is expected that the Task Force will establish contacts with the Paris21 rural and agriculture team.

### **Composition**

The Task Force will be composed of some 12-15 working experts from national statistical offices, ministries of agriculture, universities and research institutes and international organizations. The experts are nominated in their personal capacity as recognized experts. Annex 1 lists suggested experts.

### **Final output**

The Task Force is expected to start with preparing a work plan to be adopted by IWG.AGRI and based thereon prepare a first draft of a "Reader" or "Roadmap" on Statistics for Rural Development for international use.

The Reader should contain an introduction to rural development, including its definition, and address both conceptual and operational issues such as sampling, collection methodology, compilation, organisation and computation, and dissemination of the data; be targeted for use both by advanced countries in the area of rural development and by those countries which have barely started work in this area.

It should, in particular, contain recommendations on the

- ◆ definition of the agriculture household unit, its demography and its role as a basic unit measuring rural development.
- ◆ measurements of income and wealth of agriculture households, compared with other types of households, and their economic viability.

### **Time frame**

The Task Force will start its work as from Autumn 2003. It should start by preparing a work plan for the approval of IWG.AGRI. A first draft of the reader should be completed by Autumn 2004 and the final draft by spring 2005 for reporting to the UNECE/Eurostat/FAO/OECD Meeting on Food and Agriculture Statistics (June/July 2005).

Annex 1

Mr. Ulrich Eidmann, Eurostat, Luxembourg  
Ms. Sylvie Ribaille, Eurostat, Luxembourg  
Mr. Andreas Lindner, OECD, Paris  
Mr. Nama Keita, FAO Regional Office, Accra , Ghana  
Mr. Robert May, FAO, Rome  
Mr. Jan Karlsson, UNECE, Geneva  
Mr. Phil Fulton, ERS, Washington D.C.  
Mr. Chris Gibbins, Defra, United Kingdom  
Mr. Berkeley Hill, University of London, United Kingdom  
Mr. Ray Bollman, Statistics Canada  
Mr. Edoardo Pizzoli, ISTAT, Rome  
Mr. Federico Perali, University of Verona, Italy  
Mr. Hans Jönrup, Swedish Board of Agriculture  
Mr. Péter Szabó, Hungarian Central Statistical Office

A list of the contact details of the Task Force members are attached separately.

Experts from Netherlands and Greece might also join the Task Force.

The Task Force is open-ended in the sense that other experts who show interest in the work may join, provided they are willing and have time to carry out work. The only restriction is the size of the Task Force, which for practical reason might limit the number of interested persons to join.

The work of the Task Force should be transparent and as far as possible be made public on suitable web pages, e.g. the UNECE web page. In this way people who are interested in the work but who have no formal place in the Task Force may follow the work and also make contributions.