

AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS FOR PLANNING AND POLICY FORMULATION

by

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In a dialogue between producers and users of agricultural statistics, it would be useful to talk of past experience and future activities in terms of data requirements. As a user of agriculture statistics, we from the Policy and Planning Office of the National Economic and Development Authority would like to relate the difficulties we encountered in the recent preparation of the Philippine Five-Ten-and Long-Term Development Plans (1978-82, 1978-87 and 1978-2000). In addition, we will present our data requirements for development indicators essential in the periodic review and appraisal of the Plans as provided for in PD 1200.

Agricultural Goals

In the preparation of the Five-Year Philippine Development Plan, the planners from different government agencies involved in agriculture came up with two major objectives for the agriculture sector. The improvement of farm household income and rural productive employment was considered the ultimate goals, while production for basic food and raw material requirements was adopted as the immediate objective. These comprise the equity and the efficiency or production goals respectively, of the sector. It may be worthwhile to stress that equity constituted the over riding concern not only of the sector but also of the whole development Plan.

Strategies were formulated to direct the implementation of these objectives. Furthermore, these objectives were translated into quantifiable measures or targets.

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Equity Targets

In the target-setting process, several problems were encountered. First of all, no regular data are available to measure farm income and rural productive employment. Information are available only from benchmark studies. No time series data are available to establish trends for targeting purposes. As an alternative, the planners assumed that developments in equity-oriented agricultural programs would result in better income and improved standards of living for the farmers. Thus, targets were set for the agrarian reform and cooperatives development program. Even these alternatives, however, were not without their data problems. Difficulties were also encountered in the estimation of the program scope or the number of farmers covered by each program.

Production and Demand Targets

In general, we have noticed a relative bias in favor of production data as against farm income data. This availability of production data however is confined to rice and corn and to major export crops such as sugar and coconut. Other agricultural crops, livestock and fishery continue to suffer from inadequate reliable data.

Crops

In targeting for crop production, two major variables were used: namely, effective land area utilization and yield. The increasing effective land area utilization implies an increasing cropping intensity for which no hard data are available. For physical land area utilization, the planners relied heavily on 1971 census figures for lack of updated statistics. Yield was targeted using information on what is achievable based on experimental studies.

Livestock

The lack of continuous data in livestock due to a recent change in sample design made it difficult to establish trends. Furthermore, these data are more strongly based on commercial establishments whereas backyard livestock and poultry constitute the bulk of supply.

Fishery

For fishery, the lack of reliable basic data was most evident. The planners' lack of confidence in existing fisheries data led to attempts to use unofficial fisheries statistics e.g., NORCONSULT data. However, since it was a government Plan, reliance on official data was upheld.

Forestry

With regards to forestry, it was observed that there was a concentrated treatment of logging statistics leaving out the minor forestry product subsector which is becoming increasingly significant.

Technical Coefficients

In translating these production targets into more final figures technical coefficients were needed such as milling rates and other conversion rates. However, different studies give varying technical coefficients. For instance, in hog production, the Development Bank of the Philippines' (DBP) project studies indicate a farrowing rate of 1.6 while the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) survey shows that every female hog gives birth twice a year. These rates may give two entirely different conclusions implying different demand-supply situations. The same is true for the milling rate of rice which ranges from 62 to 64 per cent.

Demand Targets

On the demand side, the estimation of future demand for agricultural products was hampered by the lack of reliable and updated national consumption figures. The planners had to rely on the data produced by the Special Studies Division of the Department of Agriculture.

By and large, existing agriculture data are not sufficient to meet the requirements for projection and target purposes. This situation has contributed to some extent to the proliferation of agencies undertaking their own survey for their respective needs and purposes. For example, coconut production data are generated by three agencies, viz., Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), United Coconut Association of the Philippines (UCAP), and Bureau of Agricultural Extension (BAEcon). Although

the integration of these surveys may take time, we believe it is a worthwhile exercise. Furthermore, the relative concentration of agricultural data on the major crops may have to change in the light of the Plan's strategy to diversify agricultural production.

Plan Evaluation and Monitoring

The monitoring and evaluation stages of the planning process will also exert demand on the statistical system. As mentioned earlier, more statistics are needed on the equity aspect of the agricultural plan, more specifically, farm income and employment. These data should not come only from benchmark studies but should be generated on a continuing and regular basis to enable comparisons over time. Information will be needed on small farmers/producers, marginal farmers, marginal lands and landless agricultural workers.

Timely and reliable production data for crops, livestock and fishery will also be needed to monitor and assess the accomplishment of the production targets in the Plan. Data on program accomplishments will be essential in indicating the extent of implementation of the different agricultural programs set in the Plan. Likewise, location-specific agricultural production, income and program data will be needed to monitor the agriculture aspects of the Integrated Area Development (IAD) strategy of the Plan.

On the whole, the present agricultural data will have to be further reviewed for their reliability, comprehensiveness and timeliness, among others. It is important that planners develop confidence on these data in order that they may be able to set more defined directions and targets for the future.