

THE NEED FOR STATISTICS IN AGRICULTURAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT *

by

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I shall discuss very briefly the need for statistics in agricultural planning and development.

Agriculture is our most important industry, employing the largest number of workers. In our barrios where three fourths of our population live, most of the people who are gainfully employed are engaged in agriculture. The progressive development of farming and farm life must necessarily be a prerequisite to the economic and social progress of the entire country. In this development, good planning is necessary, which in turn is dependent upon the availability of accurate statistics. I may enumerate some of the types of agricultural statistics that are needed in this planning, as well as in the solution of specific problems affecting the agricultural industry.

First, we need accurate statistics on acreage and production of each of the various crops grown in this country. To cite a specific example, lack of accurate statistics on rice production in the past had resulted either in inadequate or in excessive importation of this cereal. In years of inadequate importation, the price of rice rose to high levels, to the detriment of consumers. In periods of excessive importation, losses had been suffered by the importing agency due to deterioration of the cereal when kept too long in storage.

Second, we need accurate statistics on poultry and livestock population and on the production of poultry, livestock and daily products. For example, we can accurately determine how long the carabao should be protected from the butcher's knife if we have reliable statistics on the number, sexes, and ages of the

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present carabao population, rate of reproduction and mortality, annual rate of increase, and number required for work on existing farms and on new areas placed under cultivation.

Third, we need accurate statistics on farm prices, wholesale prices and retail prices of agricultural products that are sold by farmers as well as prices of articles that are bought by farmers.

Fourth, we need accurate statistics on the utilization of agricultural products, such as percentage consumed by the people, percentage fed to animals, and percentage for industrial uses. Accurate statistics on the consumption by the population of crop and animal products are needed in determining the plan of nutrition of our people.

Fifth, we need accurate statistics on processing and marketing facilities, such as number and distribution of rice mills, warehouses, storage plants and markets.

Sixth, we need accurate statistics on importation and exportation of agricultural products in the raw and in the processed form.

Seventh, we need accurate statistics on the utilization of land resources, size of farms, ownership of farms, farm land values, land taxes and land rent.

Eighth, we need accurate statistics on credit needs, extent of use of various types of credit by farmers, and interest rates.

Ninth, we need accurate statistics on farm population, on the number of farmers and farm workers, their wages, and extent of unemployment or underemployment of farm workers.

Tenth, we also need accurate statistics on farm costs and income.

Agricultural statistics are of value not only to policy makers and economic planners. Farmers need them in planning their production and marketing programs. Processors of agricultural products, distributors, merchants, dealers in farm equipment and farm supplies, importers and exporters, credit institutions, investors, transportation companies and consumers make use of agricultural statistics.

STATISTICS IN AGRICULTURAL PLANNING

Engaged for many years in the collection of agricultural and other types of statistics is the Bureau of the Census and Statistics, a central statistical agency established in 1940 for the purpose of consolidating statistical units of various offices into one office. In 1953, the Division of Agricultural Economics of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources was created. One of the important functions of this Division is the collection of reliable agricultural statistics. There are other government agencies collecting statistics related to certain aspects of the agricultural industry. In order that these agencies may be able to provide the economic and agricultural planners of the country with adequate and reliable data, more financial support should be given to them by our government.

It is gratifying to note that our government and our people are beginning to appreciate the importance of adequate and accurate statistics. The recent creation of the Division of Agricultural Economics, the recent establishment of the Statistical Training Center, and the promulgation by the President beginning last year of a National Statistics Week are unmistakable manifestations of this interest.

In closing, I wish to make mention of the Philippine Statistical Association, a professional organization which has been instrumental in arousing public consciousness to the importance of adequate and reliable statistics, in contributing to the improvement of statistical organization and procedures, and in promoting statistical science and education in this country.

