



GCP/RAS/171/JPN  
Field Document No. 2/VNM/1

IMPROVEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS  
IN ASIA AND PACIFIC COUNTRIES  
(GCP/RAS/171/JPN)

**General Status of the System  
of Food and Agriculture Statistics  
in Viet Nam**

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
BANGKOK, 2002

This publication is produced by

**The FAO Regional Project  
For the Improvement of Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries  
GCP/RAS/171/JPN**

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# **GENERAL STATUS OF THE SYSTEM OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE STATISTICS IN VIET NAM**

## **1. Organizations concerned with agriculture and agricultural statistics**

Viet Nam is basically an agricultural country, though remarkable progress in economy and industry has been achieved recently. Economic growth in Viet Nam is still centred on the agricultural sector, which accounts for more than 25 percent of GDP. More than 45 percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings come from agricultural exports. Moreover, in the rural areas, which are home to close to 70 percent of the population, farming and fishing are the only forms of livelihood known to most. Agricultural statistics, therefore, play an important role for the agricultural sector of Viet Nam.

Small-scale or self-sufficient production is the mainstay of agriculture in Viet Nam. Households are usually scattered. Concentrated and large-scale production has not been much developed, especially in the North and along the Central Coast of the country. Agricultural households practise mixed culture in general, including combination management of agriculture, forestry and fishery at household level. Other than agricultural households, state enterprises and cooperatives play an important role in agricultural production in Viet Nam.

The statistical system in Viet Nam is centralized. The General Statistics Office (GSO) is responsible for all of the national statistical services. Although statistical activities of line ministries, which are the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and the Ministry of Fisheries (MOF), are regarded as data/information collection for their own purposes, they also contribute strongly to national food security.

## **2. Agricultural statistics at the General Statistics Office**

### **2.1 Organization of GSO**

The system of state statistics is organized along administrative lines, from central to provincial and district levels. At central level, food and agriculture statistics are handled by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Statistics of the General Statistics Office. The department was set up in 1956 when the office was established under the supervision of the Ministry of Planning and Investment. Since then, its name and scope of activity have changed but its functions have remained the same, namely the collection, processing and issue of quantitative information to meet the management needs of central and local governments. The information collected is used to formulate and monitor the yearly and five-yearly development plans of the agricultural sector.

GSO consists of a head office and local offices. At the central level there are 15 departments with 350 employees; at the provincial level 61 Provincial Statistical Offices (PSOs) employ 20-30 persons each; and at the district level there are 611 District Statistical Offices (DSBs) with 3-5 employees each.

The Department of Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Statistics (DAFF) is in charge of food and agriculture statistics at GSO. The central office of DAFF has four technical sections, namely the Agricultural Section including the Cultivation Group and the Livestock Group, the Forestry Section, the Fishery Section and the Methodology Section. Currently, DAFF employs 22 persons. The department has one director and two or three deputy-directors.

DAFF cooperates closely with the statistical departments of the agriculture and fishery ministries. It is responsible for collecting, processing and releasing the orthodox statistical data. Other operative statistical data are collected and released by the two ministries.

At provincial level, the main functions of the section handling agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics in the provincial statistics offices are to conduct surveys and report to DAFF. The section has 5-7 employees. It collects and processes the data in close cooperation with the related sections of the provincial offices of the agriculture and fishery ministries.

At district level, each district office has a group of agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics including 1-2 persons out of the 5-7 employees of a district statistics office. It cooperates with the economic section of the district office, which is under the guidance of the agriculture ministry.

At commune level, which is the lowest administrative organization in Viet Nam, as per government regulation, one member of the economic board of the commune is responsible for statistical and secretarial work. The people's committee of the commune helps that person carry out surveys and data collection, as do the members of the economic or agricultural board of the commune. Cooperation at this level is even tighter than at higher levels.

## **2.2 Activities on agricultural statistics at GSO**

DAFF is responsible for statistical surveys to collect data/information in the field of agriculture and provide them to governors and policymakers. It is remarkable that DAFF introduced the sample survey method for crop, livestock and fishery as early as 1996.

Responsibilities on conducting surveys at each level are as follows:

**General Statistics Office (GSO)**

- Plan and design the survey; there is a working group to design and plan each survey
- Organize the training course for statisticians of PSOs
- Carry on fieldwork supervision and conduct post-enumeration surveys when necessary
- Review the data from PSOs
- Data processing and dissemination

**Provincial Statistics Offices (PSO)**

- Refine survey planning
- Survey cost estimation and the printing of survey forms and questionnaires
- Organize the training course for statisticians of DSBs
- Guide and supervise the survey activities of DSBs including sample selection and data review
- Conduct post-enumeration surveys when necessary
- Make tabulation and report to GSO after data checking

**District Statistics Bureaus (DSB)**

- Make sample allocation (sample selection of communes and villages) then forward the selection plan to PSO for approval
- Conduct the actual fieldwork using commune enumerators
- Calculate survey results at district level

The surveys conducted by DAFF of GSO are as follows:

**2.2.1 Crop survey**

The objective of the crop survey is to release basic information to meet the requirements of the government at various levels on the commodities, especially food crops. Survey results are used for agricultural promotion planning, food demand-and-supply policy, and export planning.

The survey commodities of the crop survey are paddy, maize, cassava, sweet potato, soybean, jute, rush, cotton, sugarcane, peanut, tobacco, coffee, tea, rubber, coconut, cashew, orange, banana, pineapple and mango. The survey items of the crop survey consist of area, yield and production by crop and by season. The crop survey is conducted in winter-spring and in summer for the

whole country, in winter for the North and in summer-autumn for the South and Central Coast regions. Every year, four to six surveys are carried out, i.e. two or three surveys for planted or harvested area and two or three surveys for yield.

With the area variable, the complete survey is used for data collection, while the sampling method is used for yield and production.

**a. Area survey**

The main items of this survey are planted area of crops, and productive and non-productive areas. The area survey is conducted twice a year (spring and winter).

The survey method is based on the reporting system. The primary data is collected by the enumerator at the commune level from village heads, commune farmers' associations, commune extension teams and land officers, and state farms.

The report on crop-planted area is sent to GSO through DSBs and PSOs. GSO collates the reports from the province level according to the hierarchy of its organization.

At each level, data quality control is considered. Especially, at commune level, an interagency mission (including the officer in charge of statistics, finance, agriculture and land, and the farmers' association) is formed after the data is collected for assessment and verification of the result.

**b. Survey on crop production and yield**

This survey aims to obtain statistical data on production and yield per hectare by district. It is conducted every crop season for paddy and annually for other crops, such as maize, coffee, etc, through the sampling survey method and through interviewing farmers.

The survey on paddy is the most important regular activity of DAFF and its local branches. Accordingly, they make effort for forecasting using the field observation method.

## **Paddy**

### **Early forecasting**

Early forecasting of paddy yield is conducted by all communes twice a season, at the completed planting stage and dough ripe stage.

The data is forwarded to DSB by the commune enumerators through field observation. A district inter-office delegation (including statistics, finance, agriculture and planning) goes to leading communes to validate and review the forecasts of the commune, leading to a recalculation of the yield forecast for the whole district. The yield forecast contributes not only to the timely requirements of the district leaders' economic management and planning but also as reference when the actual survey is carried out.

### **Actual survey**

The method of the actual survey applied by all districts was developed by GSO. The planning unit (domain) of the survey is a district, which means that the estimation from the survey result is based on the district. As for the sample selection, the three-stage sampling method is applied. The primary sampling unit (psu) is the commune, the secondary sampling unit (ssu) is the village and the third sampling unit (tsu) is the farming household. The total sample size at the national level is of about 100 000 farming households.

### **Other crops**

The survey on yield and production of crops other than paddy is conducted only in three leading communes where most of the surveyed crop is planted. GSO applies the stratified three-stage sampling method. Stratification is made according to the crop yield as follows: high, middle and low. The sample selection procedure is the same as that of the paddy survey. Ninety sample households are selected per district.

## **2.2.2 Livestock survey**

This survey aims to collect data and information on both populations of main animal and other animal husbandry products. It is conducted twice a year on 1 April and 1 October. The results are used to assess the progress of livestock and poultry production in each province and to calculate indicators such as gross output, structure of agriculture, and growth of livestock and poultry. The sampling method has been applied since 1996.

The survey on 1 April is conducted to collect the data on the population of pigs and sows in 14 provinces representative of the seven regions of the country. The planning unit (domain) is the district, and the stratified two-stage sampling method is applied as the sample selection. Communes are stratified using as indicator the number of pigs per household. Each district is stratified into three to five strata. One commune is selected from each stratum, and one village from each commune. Then, in the sample village, all households are investigated. The sample unit is fixed for several years, through calculation of the rate of growth.

The survey on 1 October is conducted to ascertain the population of livestock (buffaloes, cattle, dairy cows and pigs), poultry, and production (live weight of buffalo, cattle, pig and poultry). This survey is conducted in all districts. The same sample and method of survey as on 1 April are used. Secondary data on other animals, such as horses, bees, dairy cows, etc, are collected from the annual reports of other institutions.

### **2.2.3 Fishery survey**

The objective of the fishery survey is to gather quantitative data on the production of fishery over one year. The survey is conducted on 1 October.

Data on fishery are collected for state and non-state sectors separately. The data of the state sector are gathered through the regular reporting system. All fishery establishments under the state forward their data to the district and provincial offices of GSO annually. For collecting the data of the non-state sector, an annual survey is conducted by GSO.

The annual survey for the non-state sector collects the data on

- the basic structure of fishery such as number and capacity of fishing boats, fishing gear, number of fishermen, area of aquaculture, and other main fishery facilities (fishing port, landing place, service system, etc) and
- fishery production, including fish, shrimp and others by type of fishery (i.e. culture, capture) and by type of water (i.e. fresh water, brackish water, salt water).

GSO combines the methods of complete enumeration and sample survey. Complete enumeration is applied for the basic structure of fishery, and the sample survey is applied for collecting data on production.

Data from complete enumeration are collected through the administrative units or local authorities. They are directly collected and processed by DSBs and the result is sent to the relevant PSO.

The sample survey follows the method of stratified two-stage sampling. The district is the planning unit (domain of the survey), meaning that estimates from the survey are calculated on a district basis. All communes and towns of a district are classified into two or three strata (culture, capture, other) according to natural conditions, level of fishery development, type of fishery and data of the 1994 rural and agricultural census.

The primary sampling unit (psu) is the commune or town and the secondary sampling unit (ssu) is the fishery establishments or households. The sample size countrywide is 9 000 households.

The enumerator interviews the heads of the households and establishments about their actual activities during the previous year.

#### **2.2.4 Forestry survey**

There are two ways of collecting forestry information. The forestry information of the state sector is collected through the regular reporting system, and sample surveys are conducted for the non-state sector.

##### **a. State sector**

In 1995, GSO promulgated the Statistical Reporting Regulations to be applied by various economic entities such as the boards of management projects, state farms and state enterprises, partnership companies, corporations, protective forest offices, and others, in cooperation with MARD.

Several items and indicators are included in the reports prepared by the state units to satisfy the requirements of state macroscopic management needs, such as data items for economic accounts, environment issues, deforestation and afforestation, etc. One or more staff member in each state unit is assigned to complete and send reports to the provincial statistics offices according to the forms and items required.

## **b. Non-state sector**

The objective of the forestry survey for the non-state sector, which accounts for 70 percent of the gross output of Vietnamese forestry, is to collect information on i) the number of scattered trees planted in the previous 12 months, ii) production of forestry harvested from artificial forest, natural forest and scattered trees planted, and iii) afforestation, by the households and cooperatives.

The survey has been conducted every two or three years on 1 October since 1986 (since 1995, every two years). The survey of non-state forestry covers the whole country and the district is the domain of the survey (design unit); the result is estimated on a district basis. The stratified three-stage sampling method is applied. The first-stage sampling unit is the commune, the second-stage sampling unit is the village and the third-stage sampling unit is the forest household.

All communes and towns of the district are classified into three or four strata according to the natural condition or situation of forest production.

There is close cooperation between GSO and the agriculture ministry in the conduct of the survey at each level, especially for the release of information at central and provincial levels. Therefore, no difference appears in the forestry data released and used among the agencies at the various levels.

### **2.2.5. Structural survey**

The structural survey aims to collect information on the structure of Vietnamese agriculture as follow:

- number of agricultural households and labour force including transfer of agricultural labour to other industries;
- machinery and equipment used in agriculture;
- development of agricultural cooperatives; and
- number of cooperatives.

During data collection, the General Statistics Office cooperates with the relevant line offices in the organization and conduct of the survey at local level. The degree of cooperation varies depending on each survey item, and is considered highest over the number-of-cooperatives item.

The survey is implemented using relevant line offices in the organization on 1 July every other year.

### **2.2.6 Other surveys**

Ad-hoc surveys such as the income and expenditure survey of farm households and the survey of the irrigation system are conducted every three to five years.

## **3. Statistical data collection on food and agriculture at MARD**

### **3.1. Organizational system**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) was established in November 1995 by merging the previous ministries of Agriculture and Food Industry, Forestry, and Irrigation. The ministry is responsible for managing and controlling production activities related to agriculture, forestry and irrigation as well as some aspects of rural development.

At the provincial level, there are a department of Agricultural and Rural Development and a bureau of Forest Guard in each district (there are 61 districts in the country). They are under the jurisdiction of MARD regarding economic and technical management, although they are administrated by provincial (or city) people's committees. At the district level, there are an agriculture division and a rural development division in each district. The organizational structures of these province- and district-level offices are subsets of the central office of MARD.

The statistical activities at MARD are carried out by the Statistics Division under the Department of Planning and Projection. The division has eight employees.

### **3.2 Activities of data collection on agriculture at MARD**

MARD collects and processes the information not only for production on agriculture, livestock and forestry but also for the economic activities and for rural development – industry, construction, trade, education, health services, etc.

The Statistics Division carries out the following data and information collection;

- crop
- animal husbandry
- forestry
- agricultural industry
- natural calamities such as floods and droughts
- irrigation

- import and export
- investment capital of agriculture
- production indicators of enterprises under the ministry
- agricultural input of enterprises under the ministry

Primary data collection is carried out by the agriculture and rural development divisions at district level. The divisions arrange their personnel for monitoring statistical data in their fields. The statistical information is sent to the relevant technical departments of MARD through province-level organizations – the departments of Agriculture and Rural Development and/or the bureaus of Forest Guard.

The Statistics Division receives the information from the relevant technical departments in general; livestock data is from the livestock department, forestry data from the forestry department, etc. The division has been in charge of the compilation and dissemination of statistical data in MARD, but recently it has taken the lead in maintaining the National Food Security Information System, which is described later. The provincial level organizations of MARD also produce statistical reports for their domain.

The Statistics Division of MARD and GSO have a close working relationship. The division uses the results of the annual crop production surveys conducted by GSO for the activities of MARD. Reversely, the division supplies data on the production situation of agricultural commodities, industry, trade, population, labour and others related to agriculture to the relevant departments of GSO.

### **3.3 Periodical reports on statistical indicators**

The collected data are transmitted to the Statistics Division of MARD by three types of reports, which are 1) progression reports (every 10 days), 2) monthly reports and 3) quarterly, biyearly, nine-monthly and annual reports.

#### **a. Progression report**

In order to monitor the situation on agricultural production for food security, MARD has been implementing a national food security programme. For this purpose, FAO has cooperated with MARD through the execution of a pilot project for the development of the National Food Security Programme, using the financial resources of the government of Italy. The project began in 1994 and ended in 1997. The second phase of the project, “Strengthening the national food security information system”, began in 2000.

Currently, the programme for crop monitoring covers all 61 provinces, with 152 sample districts countrywide. Every province makes one report every ten days or so on the fifth, fifteenth and twenty-fifth of every month, referring to the monthly reports from sample districts. The report is usually sent to the Statistics Division by fax.

MARD holds a meeting with related agencies every ten days to review the situation of agricultural production over the last ten days and make a forecast for the next ten days.

### **Survey items**

- market price of rice by quality (good, average and bad) at three different sites
- information on agricultural production

#### *Paddy*

- acreage at each growing stage and harvested acreage
- estimation and official data of yield and production
- natural calamity and insects by acreage

#### *Other crops* (other cereals and potatoes, industry crops, food crops)

- cultivation and harvesting acreage

#### *Livestock*

- number of head and quantity of animal products

(These data are from the result of the annual livestock survey conducted by GSO on 1 April and 1 October)

The ongoing project includes the subjects of crop forecasting and production of the food balance sheet.

### **b. Monthly report**

From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of every month, local units, and enterprises managed by MARD send reports on current implementation of value indicator, production by industry, i.e. agriculture, construction, etc. The value indicator is figured at constant price and current price.

### **c. Quarterly, biyearly, nine-monthly and annual reports**

Every quarter indicators of production by value and kind are reported by local units and enterprises for review of production and the service activities of the nation. The Statistics Division processes the data by level, economic area and value indicators.

#### **4. Statistical data collection on fishery at the Ministry of Fisheries**

For the implementation of the fishery survey organized by GSO, the Ministry of Fisheries (MOF) organizes data collection in 16 coastal provinces which have their own fishery office.

MOF also collects the data on export of fish and fishery products. These data are reported from private and state establishments everyday, and gathered in a database system which was established at the Fisheries Information Centre in the Statistics Division of MOF.

Beside these activities, the Statistics Division of the Department of Planning and Investment of MOF compiles the statistical data from the research institutes of MOF that were assigned to carry out some ad-hoc statistical surveys.

#### **5. Conclusion and expectations**

##### ***Introduction of the Doi Moi policies and development of agriculture***

Since the introduction of the Doi Moi policies in 1986, Viet Nam has registered remarkable economic growth. It has managed to keep pace with other fast-growing economies in Southeast Asia. Except during the Asian economic crisis of 1997-98, Viet Nam's GDP has grown at approximately 8 percent per year during the 1990s. Central planning has given way to market economics.

Agricultural production has also progressed steadily, primarily due to the revolutionary land-use policy introduced with Doi Moi. Allowing farmers to freely manage their farm and market their own produce has provided the single most important incentive for them to increase agricultural production, improve agricultural productivity and sustain the new liberalization policy of the government.

Improvement of agricultural and rural communities is a major challenge in Viet Nam. A steady development of the agricultural sector can greatly contribute to social and economic development and improvement in the next ten years. The government of Viet Nam has continued to keep agricultural and rural development as its centrepiece.

##### ***Difficulties on agricultural statistics for transition countries and their development***

Many countries in transition from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy still rely on administrative reporting systems for most of their agricultural statistics. Governments have found that existing agricultural statistics systems, which had been established to meet

the requirements of the central planners, no longer met the emerging data needs of the new market economy. The quality of the statistics also suffered, as existing sources of statistical information were no longer available because of the freeing-up of markets and the change to private ownership of land and livestock leading to an increasing number of farms, joint ventures and companies in agricultural production and services. Statistical organizations have found it increasingly difficult to accurately report the required information.

Among transition countries in this region, Viet Nam has made remarkable efforts to improve the statistics over the last few years, especially through the use of censuses and sample surveys. However, this has proved difficult because of the lack of funds and technical expertise. Organizations related to food and agriculture statistics and information in Viet Nam are still expected to meet the needs of market-related statistical information required by policymakers and planners.

### *Issues on development of agricultural statistics and information*

In 1994, GSO conducted the first census of agriculture, without receiving external assistance. The results made clear the agricultural structure of Viet Nam, and they have been used for various areas for the promotion of the food and agriculture sector and of rural development. However, the results could not be used as frames for the following sample surveys, even though this was planned for the census implementation.

GSO is organizing a second census for agriculture in 2001. If planning and implementation of the census go well, it may offer a complete and up-to-date list of agricultural households and enterprises, which will contribute to improve the accuracy of sample surveys.

The sample surveys of GSO were designed through the method of provability sampling. However, there is scope for improvement of the sample designs. For example, current designs tend to distribute the sample number according to the manpower of data collection in the field or the size of the district or commune. It is thinkable to make stratification by agricultural area or size of household for each target commodity. From the point of view of stratification, utilization of the census result is also important.

The second census is expected to succeed and to lead to an improvement of sample surveys by taking into account the results of the census.

Furthermore, the following improvements of sample surveys can be suggested:

Crop survey: to introduce the actual measurement method as crop cutting for the main crops in addition to the interview method, in order to keep objectivity.

Fishery survey: to increase the frequency of the survey from once a year to at least four or more times a year to avoid the forgetfulness of fishery households, and to increase the kinds of fish to be surveyed for the convenience of users.

### ***Relations between central and local organizations***

In Viet Nam, the government plans food production every year. The planned figure is broken down and allocated from the central level to provincial, district and commune levels.

Local government officers try to achieve the plan allocated by the central government. Furthermore, they tend to produce statistics to satisfy the needs of authorities at different levels: it can be noted, for instance, that the local offices of GSO (PSOs and DSBs) are employed by the local governments, even though their statistical work is controlled by GSO. This kind of situation may be found also in other ministries, such as MARD and MOF, and sometimes lead to the production of biased statistics.

To avoid this difficult situation, the functions of central organizations should be better enforced. In the case of GSO, tabulation is made at the provincial level, and the result of the tabulation, is send to GSO. It would be better if GSO obtained the data of individual questionnaires to check when doubt is raised.

It is also important to convince officers in local organizations/governments of the importance of neutrality in statistics and information.

### ***Coordination among the relevant organizations dealing in food and agriculture statistics***

There is the issue of coordination between the state statistics of GSO and the statistical information of line ministries. Sometimes, the figures made available to the public by GSO and other line ministries are different. This may be due to different or inadequate methodologies of data collection among the organizations. In any case, it can lead to confusion for data users.

For the convenience of data users and the efficient use of limited national resources, strong cooperation and coordination between GSO and line ministries is indispensable. For this purpose, a third-party organization, such as the planning ministry, should take the initiative on coordination to avoid duplication of work. In fact, GSO and line ministries collaborate with one another for data collection at the local level. Organizational collaboration at the central level should be enforced better.

Furthermore, to evaluate accuracy of the statistics and information, production of food balance sheet or input/output table should be considered.

# Organization of the General Statistics Office (GSO)

