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SUB-COMMISSION ON STATISTICAL SAMPLING

SAMPLING ASPECTS OF 1950 WORLD
CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Note prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization

Plans for the 1950 World Census of Agriculture are going forward in many countries. The report of the first session of the Sub-Commission and also the special report on the uses of sampling in censuses released by the Commission have been made available to national officers responsible for planning the census work. There is considerable interest in the application of sampling methods to enumerations. There is also an urgent need for the handbook on sampling methods which the Commission discussed at its first meeting.

A training school for agricultural statisticians of the Middle East, which was held in Baghdad in the spring of 1948, gave particular emphasis to the use of sampling in current crop statistics. A training centre for census workers in Latin America, which is to be established in Mexico City in the fall of 1948, will include training in sampling methods as a major element in the curriculum. Plans for other training centres likewise will include sampling as a major part of the work.

At a meeting of government officials concerned with the production, distribution and utilization of rice held in Baguio in March 1948, FAO was requested to give particular attention to questions of coverage and comparability of rice statistics. The conference laid special emphasis on the preparation of unbiased estimates of acreage and production. It desired that in this connection an effort be made to encourage the use of crop cutting and sample surveys throughout the rice production area. A staff member is now collecting information on the methods used and is giving particular attention to the methods used in rice statistics with particular attention to sampling methods. A major section of that study will deal with the methods used in crop cutting work and the ways in which results of crop cutting are related to the yield estimates currently being produced. It is known that in some cases the

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results of crop cutting are used directly to secure objective estimates of yields, that in some cases the crop cutting work is used chiefly to provide objective tests of the accuracy of observers' judgments; and that in some cases results of crop cutting experiments are used from time to time to establish revised norms. The purpose of this study is to provide information on methods actually in use to assist governments in developing procedures appropriate to their own needs.

It has become apparent that there is need for literature describing in detail procedures which have been used in sampling work, along with a critical evaluation of such procedures and the results secured. The small amount of literature of that type which has become available for distribution to statistical offices has been welcomed by those offices.

The Sub-Commission may wish to give attention to questions of the application of sampling procedures to tabulations in those cases in which, for one reason or another, complete enumeration has already been done or is likely to be carried through. It would not be difficult to find cases in which the value of the results actually secured would be considerably enhanced if sample tabulations were to be used, nor would it be difficult to find cases in which an overloaded tabulation unit could produce far more usable materials if attention were given to the possibilities of tabulating some of the items for only a sample of the population for which they were secured.
