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Cochran Program
Agricultural Statistics

Since 1984, the Congress of the United States has made funds available for training agriculturists from middle income and emerging countries. Training opportunities are for specialists and administrators, from the public and private sectors, concerned with agricultural trade, agribusiness development, management and agricultural policy and marketing. All training occurs in the United States. The Cochran[1] Program is an effort of the U.S. Department of Agriculture[2], Foreign Agricultural Service, International Cooperation and Development, Food Industries Division (USDA/FAS/ICD/FID). Since its inception in 1984 over 12,200 professionals from 103 have participated in the program.

The Program objectives are:

1) Assist eligible countries to develop agricultural systems necessary to identify the food and fiber needs of their domestic populations and
2) Strengthen and enhance trade linkages between eligible countries and agricultural interests in the United States.

The Program is especially designed to meet the training aims discussed during interviews with the candidates and the recommendations from the USDA/FAS's[3] officer. It offers a mixture of technical instruction, practical field observations and hands-on experience.

The International Programs Office of the National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS)[4], of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)[5], has sponsored through the Cochran Program[6] a Brazilian mission to the US to study scientific methodology for estimating crops and forecasting crops and objectivity in agricultural data collection, from July 7-20, 2007.

Researchers in the area of São Paulo state's harvest forecast and estimates from the Institute of Agricultural Economics (IEA)[7], a body of São Paulo State's Secretariat of Agriculture and Supply (SAA)[8] participated in this mission, together with researchers from the National

Supply Company (CONAB)[9], the Rio Grande do Sul Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Association (EMATER)[10], and the Rural Economy Department (DERAL)[11], from Parana State's Secretariat of Agriculture.

Designed in conjunction with NASS/USDA[12], the training provided the opportunity for contacting sampling methodologies and all the theoretical foundations and operational procedures for obtaining statistics at the state level, as well as the methodology and process for finalizing and disseminating national estimates. Thus, by and large, the overall steps concerning the process of obtaining estimates for the North-American crops, mainly focused on corn and soybean, were presented so that participants could bring them to the Brazilian reality and discuss strategies to enhance the Brazilian techniques to produce agricultural statistics.

The NASS[13] is the only agency whose specific mandate is to obtain North-American agricultural statistics. It runs a federal program carried out in the 45 North-American State Offices. Thus, the entire system obtaining statistics - including data collection methods and modes, training, data consistency methodology and determination of final figures - is standardized, i.e., it is the same across the country and under the responsibility of this body.

Its efforts toward quality and agility arise from the fact that knowledge reduces risks - once the market becomes unstable in the absence of adequate knowledge, it harms society as a whole. Another important fact to be added is its commitment with credibility, expressed through the feedback from the information provided to farmers in the shape of condensed fortnightly reports and, mainly, the extremely thorough and confidential determination of the final estimates for dissemination.

Brazil's Federal Constitution stipulates that the Union shall have power to "organize and maintain the official services of statistics, geography, geology and cartography of national scope" (Art. 21, XV). Among the official statistical services are the agricultural ones, which the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)[14], created in the 1930's, is entitled to obtain, by delegation. Nevertheless, others institutions have been obtaining agricultural statistics, such as federal bodies and agencies belonging to the states' Agricultural Secretariats among others.

CONAB[15], a state-owned company within the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA)[16], created in 1990, is responsible for managing agricultural and supply policies to ensure compliance with society's basic needs, preserving and fostering market mechanisms. It currently makes available estimates of domestic agricultural crops through its agricultural information center.

In the state of São Paulo, the Institute of Agricultural Economics (IEA)[17] officially dis-

seminates the state's agricultural statistics, obtained in a joint work with the Technical Assistance Coordinating Unit (CATI)[18].

Within the scope of Conab, SAA and IBGE, recent discussions have centered on the existence of single, official Brazilian information, starting with the coffee crop estimates.

As for the process of obtaining statistics for the state of São Paulo, if compared to those used by NASS, São Paulo state's researchers have a good part of the background necessary to apply most methodologies seen[19] even though there is a need for investing more in the knowledge of remote sensoring methodologies[20].

[1] www.fas.usda.gov/icd/food-industries/cfp/index.html
[2] http://www.usda.gov
[3] http://www.fas.usda.gov/
[4] http://www.nass.usda.gov
[5] Op. cit. 2
[6] Op. cit. 1
[7] www.iea.sp.gov.br
[8] www.agricultura.sp.gov.br
[9] www.conab.gov.br
[10] www.emater.tche.br
[11] www.seab.pr.gov.br
[12] Op. cit. 4
[13] Op. cit. 4
[14] www.ibge.gov.br
[15] Op. cit. 9
[16] www.agricultura.gov.br
[17] Op. cit. 7
[18] www.cati.sp.gov.br
[19] A number of papers have been published by researchers of the institution on this topic, such as those by: PINO, F. A.; CAMARGO, M. de L. B.; VIANI, D. N. **Changes in ownership and size of agricultural properties in the state of São Paulo over 1972-77**. São Paulo state: IEA, 1979. 15 p. Relatório de Pesquisa [*Research Report, in Portuguese*] N. 16/79; PINO, F. A.; CASER, D. V. **Lack of response in sampling surveys**: a study case. São Paulo state, IEA, 1984. 25 p. Relatório de Pesquisa [*Research Report, in Portuguese*] N. 8/84; FRANCISCO, V. L. F. dos S. et al. Quality control in statistical data: census survey of agricultural production units. **Agricultura em São Paulo** [*Journal of Agriculture Economics, in Portuguese*], v. 45, n. 1, p. 33-58, 1998; PINO, F. A.; FRANCISCO, V. L. F. dos S. Quality Control in Agricultural Survey Sampling in São Paulo, **Informações Econômicas** [*Economic Information, in Portuguese*], SP, v.31, n.6, 2001.
[20] Due to São Paulo's extremely diversified agriculture and regions whose topography will demand specific methodologies the application of remote sensoring is much more complex. However, a remote sensoring Project being negotiated is aimed at applying this method to obtain area estimates for São Paulo state's main agricultural crops: sugar cane, orange and coffee.

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