The Main Methodological Aspects Concerning the GAC

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Abstract
The methodological and organising principles concerning the GAC carrying out have been issued in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations Organization for Foods and Foodstuff, submitted in the frame of the 2010 World Agricultural Census Programme and with the Regulation (EC) no. 1166/2008 of the European Parliament and the EU Council, taking into account the international experience in the field and the particularities of the agriculture in the Republic of Moldova. Meantime, the expertise accumulated in the frame of the CMPA carrying on has been considered, as well as the outcomes of the trial exercises of agricultural censuses performed in 2008 and 2009.

Key words: census, agriculture, exploitation, reference, information

The observing units and the covering sphere of GAC. Taking into account the heterogeneous character of the units in which the agricultural activity is carried on, in the frame of GAC, two types of agricultural units have been defined.

The basic observing unit in the frame of GAC is given by the agricultural exploitation. Its definition, applied in the frame of the RGS of the country, is corresponding to the recommendations of FAO and EU, namely: the agricultural exploitation is an independent technical-economical unit, with an unique administration, which carries on agricultural activities (by utilizing agricultural surfaces, animals breeding and/or running activities in respects of maintaining the agricultural terrains in proper conditions from agricultural and environmental point of view), either as main activity or as secondary activity.

Taking into consideration the relevance of the information from territorial point of view (administrative-territorial units of second level,
UAT), the agricultural exploitations have been limited at the boundary of a single district/municipality or UTA Găgăuzia (in the case of agricultural unit carrying on activities in more UAT). Thus, if the production unit is running activities in several districts, it is considered as being composed by several exploitations, depending on the number of districts where the cultivated lands are located. Meantime, the agricultural exploitation is not limited to the number of mayoralties where the utilized lads are located within an UAT.

Since the GAC was the first census of a general character being achieved in the country, so that there was no informational basis in order to set up the typology and the minimum physical or value wise “limits” of the agricultural exploitations, RGS 2011 had an extended cover. Having in mind the diversity and the heterogeneous character of the units carrying on agricultural activity, in the frame of GAC there have been two types of observing units for the census defined, depending on the dimensions and the location of the agricultural exploitations:

1. Agricultural exploitations (AE), included in GAC by complete enumeration (referred to further on as “agricultural exploitations”), based on an unfolded programme (questionnaire), comprising:
   a) all the agricultural exploitations of the rural environment (agricultural enterprises and other units with secondary agricultural activity and juridical personality; farmers’ households and auxiliary households of the population);
   b) other agricultural exploitations (auxiliary households of the population of the urban environment, the members of the fruit and vegetable growing associations, the holders of fruit and vegetable growing lots) which are exceeding the exhaustiveness thresholds;

2. Agricultural units of smaller dimensions (UDM), included in GAC by sampling, using as succinct questionnaire, represented by the other units placed below the exhaustiveness thresholds.

Thus, the General Agricultural Census covered the entire territory of the country, both rural and urban environment, excepting the left bank of Nistru and the Bender municipality.

Taking into consideration the Regulation (EC) no. 1166/2008 of the European Parliament and the EU Council concerning the cover by census, set up at the level of 98% of the utilized agricultural surface (SAU) and conventional units for cattle (121), having in mind the structure of our

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country agriculture as well as the basis of studying the relevant international experience, the following exhaustiveness thresholds (minimum physical limits) have been proposed and set up for GAC 2011: i) the surface of the lands being held - of 10 are, or/and ii) surface of greenhouses or covered terrains – of 1 are (100 m²), or/and iii) holding an animal of the species bovines, porcine, ovine, goats or/and iv) holding 20 fowls.

For setting up the threshold for complete enumeration, in the frame of GAC both the European good practices and the specificity of our country have been taken into consideration. In the EU countries, with agricultural activity concentrated in agricultural units of large dimensions, the minimum threshold for exploitations is set up at a relatively high level, for instance: in the Czech Republic, Germany and the United Kingdom – the low limit of the exploitation, depending on the agricultural surface utilized for the RGS, 2010 round, has been fixed at the level 5 ha (195).

Meantime, the EU states for which the agricultural activity by small lots (near the house/in orchards) was a traditional one, mainly the new member states of the EU – Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Hungary, the Baltic countries etc., as well as some of the “older” members, such as Italy and Spain, are including in the GAC the terrains of the nominalized lots, which are exceeding the limit established at national level (as a rule, 10-15 are).

Considering the actual “minimum” threshold established in the EU states (10 are), as well as the need to include the cattle which, in the denationalization of the agrarian sector have “migrated” from the small households, along with reasons of efficiency as to the census activities, multiple criteria have been set up as to the above mentioned exhaustiveness threshold.

The actual level of the threshold meant to mark the limits of the agricultural exploitation depending on its dimensions, with the purpose of using it for drawing up agricultural policies and/or organizing the statistical researches, will be set up on the basis of the census outcomes only, as the sole basis offering doubtless and pertinent data concerning the potential and typology of the agricultural producers.

The available ex-ante information did not allow to define the agricultural exploitation and producer as utilizor not as owner of the agricultural potential, on one side, and it is only the complete picture offered by GAC, with compilation of the data by classes of sizes, according to the tabulation plan, which would allow the demarcation of the agricultural exploitation from the unit/agricultural household of subsistence or as a “hobby”, for instance.
The programme of the general agricultural census has been issued in accordance with the FAO recommendations and taking into account the Regulation (EC) no. 1166/2008 of the European Parliament and the EU Council. The Programme GAC is including indicators referring to: the dimension and structure of the agricultural terrains; the sown surfaces; multi-annual plantations; the livestock of animals and poultry; the human resources and their demographic features; the agricultural constructions, technical means and agricultural equipment; phyto- sanitary products, fertilizers and irrigations, non-agricultural activities run by the agricultural producers etc.

The period and the reference moment in the frame of GAC. The collecting of data for The General Agricultural Census in the Republic of Moldova has been carried out during the period March 15th – April 15th 2011. The period of reference for most of the indicators (those of flow: concerning the utilization of lands, labour force, fertilizers, phyto-sanitary products etc.) is the agricultural year 2010: from November 1st till October 30th 2010. To underline that the notion of “agricultural year” has been used in GAC for the first time as, traditionally, we used to refer to “calendar year”. The reference date for the stock characteristics (livestock, machines and equipment, existing constructions etc.) has been established for March 1st, 2011.

The period 2008-2010 (last three years) is representing the period of reference for the information concerning the steps taken as to the rural development, of which the agricultural unit benefited.

The elaboration of the basic methodological and organizing principles concerning the carrying out the GAC in our country taking into consideration the relevant provisions of the EU in this respect, allowed the harmonization with the EU requirements of:

- the census programme/the studied characteristics, in general terms (apart some exceptions, mainly as regards the labour force and the total volume of working days of full working norm during the agricultural year, carried on by the non-employed persons in the frame of the agricultural exploitation etc.) ;
- the notions and definitions applied in GAC 2011;
- the reference period of GAC (the agricultural year 2010);

Thus, the achievement of the first GAC of the Republic of Moldova allowed not only to obtain the traditional comprehensive data concerning the situation of the agrarian sector but also information in premiere, very relevant, comparable at the European level, as regards:

- the number and main characteristics of the agricultural exploitations:
• the mode of holding the lands by categories of terrains;
• the agricultural surface utilized, not-utilized, abandoned;
• the ecological agriculture;
• the destination of the agricultural production;
• the livestock, according to classification applying in the EU states (mainly in the case of porcine – by categories of weight (piglets of under 20 kos. weight of the alive animal; reproduction sows of 50 kos. and over etc.);
• Machines and equipment utilized and held over their exploitation periods (up to and over 10 years);
• the labour force, including also the agricultural activity of the household members and employed persons, inclusive as gender;
• the support granted to the exploitation for the rural development;
• methods for the soil cultivation and conservation;
• animal shelters;
• the stocking of the manure, its processing and application;
• irrigations;
• non-agricultural activities, bringing in incomes of the exploitation

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