

## PRESS RELEASE

# In Italy, the 7th General Agricultural Census kicks off

*Last decennial appointment for Italy with the General Agricultural Census, a data collection that will become permanent from 2022. With this edition, the hard copy questionnaire is replaced by a digitalized one. For the occasion, the information gathered will determine the impact that the Covid-19 epidemic has had on the farms.*

On January 7<sup>th</sup>, the 7th General Agricultural Census will commence, a survey involving over 1,700,000 farms, and its aim is to provide an in-depth statistical framework of the Italian agricultural and livestock system at national, regional, and local levels.

The entire operation will be carried out according to the provisions of the 2018/1091 (EU) Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018 on integrated farm statistics, which govern its implementation in all the states of the European Union.

The census survey will provide a detailed reading of the structure of the Italian agricultural and livestock system, both from a thematic point of view (characteristics of the holder, land use, size of livestock holdings, farm management methods and their possible multifunctionality, the type of employed labour, commercialization), and that of the geographical location of the different production activities, key element to understanding the dynamics of possible future developments.

A specific part of the questionnaire is designed to evaluate the economic impact of the Covid-19 epidemic on the farms, in terms of changes in production volume, lost workdays, and the possible decline in sales on the national and international market.

This study, the planning of which was aided by the main sector entities and the largest professional organizations in the sector – Mipaaf, the Regions, the autonomous Provinces, the Agea – will end on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Information regarding the outcome of the survey will be delivered in autumn, whereas for the final dissemination of the data we shall have to wait for spring of 2022.

*“This Census – the President of Istat, Gian Carlo Blangiardo, points out – will allow us to get a deeper understanding of an increasingly important sector of the Italian economy, which is experiencing a new momentum and displays a great capacity to attract the younger generation. The informative picture of the sector which we will gather from such an extensive and in-depth survey – the President continues – will succeed in providing very detailed information for Italian agriculture, ensuring increased awareness of the future choices that will affect it, both on a national and European level”.*

As regards the agricultural and livestock sector, the census to be launched on January 7<sup>th</sup> represents the last decennial data collection: from 2022 onwards, the analysis will be conducted on an ongoing basis, through a complex system which integrates simplified, direct sample surveys and administrative data, so as to reflect the evolution of Italian rural reality.

The innovations introduced will also help to significantly reduce the response burdens for citizens as well as the general costs, and will also provide an up-to-date picture - an essential aspect to take into account when assessing and planning national and regional industry policies, in order to compare Italy's data with those of the other EU countries, and thereby increase the competitiveness of our farms.

Another novelty is represented by the data collection process, now completely digitalized: it will be possible to choose among three different response modes (CAWI - Computer-Aided Web Interviewing, CATI – Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing and CAPI - Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing).

The questionnaire will only be available in digital format – on a dedicated platform – so that the individual user can fill it out on the Web, using their credentials to log into the Istat web portal. As an alternative, you can opt to be assisted in the digital filling-out, or to be interviewed by telephone by specifically appointed staff (a confidential, free of charge number is available).

Another opportunity to participate in the Census, is to physically go to a CAA (Centre for Agricultural Assistance) affiliated with Istat, to provide the farm's data, or to request a face-to-face interview at the farm, with a census-interviewer from a CAA. Regarding this last option, should the epidemic emergency cause more stringent health protocols, alternative survey techniques will be implemented to avoid the physical presence of the interviewee.

The involvement of the CAA offices represents an important organisational innovation for this Agricultural Census, a choice that is able to enhance the capillarity of a permanent network, already a valid point of reference for the Italian agricultural world.

The information provided by the data subjects will be processed respecting professional and statistical confidentiality, and will be reported by Istat in compliance with current Italian and European legislation, so that it will be impossible to trace it back to the farm or the data subject.

Responding to the Census is useful for citizens and agricultural farms, in so far as it is a basic requirement to ensure informed decisions for interventions in the sector. Participating in the General Agricultural Census is extremely important for Italy, for its agricultural and livestock sector, for the farms themselves, and for those entrepreneurs who guarantee vitality to the agricultural sector, and who care about its development.