



ACPC Monitor

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Small Farmers and Fisherfolk: How many are they?

Trends and changes which take place in the agriculture and fisheries sectors are gauged by various indicators, but the more popular measures used are contributions to gross domestic product (GDP) and gross value added (GVA), value of production, commodity yields, export capacity, share in employment, or share in total loan portfolios.

Similarly, measuring the impact of various agri and fisheries programs on their intended clients necessarily places focus on, the beneficiary, borrower, or recipient of program benefits.

As planner and policy maker, one needs to determine what areas should benefit from their programs, and how much of the budget pie should be allocated to the priority sector(s). Hence, in the case of the Department of Agriculture's (DA) programs, what arises as an inevitable question is: "How many are the farmers and fisherfolk?" Or more particularly, "how many are the small farmers and fisherfolk?"

Being the ultimate target sector of the DA programs, this piece of information is a vital input to planning, policy-making and research in the agriculture and fisheries sectors. Perhaps unknown to some, it has been—year-in-and-out—a favorite item of inquiry in the budget hearings, primarily at the legislative branch. One major setback, however, exists: no single agency has been pro-actively delivering this important and basic statistic.

This paper therefore intends to present ACPC's best estimate on the number of small farmers and fisherfolk based on available data from various government institutions.

Who are the small farmers and fisherfolk?

One reason why the number of small farmers remains to be a rare vital statistic is perhaps because of its multi-faceted definition. Due to the vastness in scope of the agriculture and fisheries sectors and the complexities in Philippine farming systems, various government institutions have contributed to this definition, as this paper will further discuss later.

The Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) or RA 8435 of 1997 and the Magna Carta of Small Farmers (RA 7607) of 1993, broadly defines small farmers and fisherfolk as "natural persons dependent on small-scale subsistence farming and fisheries activities as their primary source of income."

Based largely on the prescribed limit for agrarian reform farmlands, the Land Bank (LBP) presents a more detailed definition of the small farmer, i.e., actual tillers of lands not over 5 hectares. Meanwhile, small hog and/or poultry raisers adopt the criteria given by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) which defines a maximum inventory of the following at any one time: poultry: 1,000 layers or 5,000 broilers; swine: 10 sows or 20 fatteners; cattle: 10 fatteners or 5 breeders; dairy: 10 milking cows; and goat: 50 head.

Finally, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) defines the small fisherfolk as one who operates fishing vessels of 3 gross tons or less. In aquaculture, these are operators of fishponds or seaweeds, oyster or mussel farms with less than 5 hectares; or fish cages of less than 400 square meters in size. These include fish workers or helpers in fishing boats, fishponds, hatcheries or fish processing establishments.

How many are the small farmers and fisherfolk?

The Philippine Agricultural Statistics System: What have we?

Based on the foregoing definitions of the *small farmer and fisherfolk*, let us first find out what available information are candidates for providing a close estimate of this vital statistic.

The 1991 Census of Agriculture and Fisheries (CAF) provides the number of crop, livestock and poultry farms by hectareage. In order to have a closer estimate of the number of farmers using the number of farms, the number of farms counted on the basis of residence of operator, was obtained. Meanwhile, the 1995 Census of Population (POPCEN) provides the population 15 years and over in agriculture, fishery, forestry, and hunting, who have worked in the past year. Conducted every quarter is the Labor Force Survey (LFS) which gives the number of employed persons by major industry group (e.g. agriculture, fishery, and forestry) and major occupation group (e.g. farmers, forestry workers, and fishermen, as differentiated from professionals, technicians, service workers, laborers and skilled workers, etc.). Other classifications available from the LFS is the number of employed persons by class of worker (e.g. wage and salary workers, own-account workers, and unpaid family workers). Meanwhile, the Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) conducted every three years, provides the number of families by main source of income (e.g. agricultural: wages and salaries, and agricultural: entrepreneurial activities, versus similar non-agricultural classifications) and income class. All of these surveys are conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO).

In the meantime, the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) has data from the 1991 CAF on the number of farm households (having at least 1,000 square meters of farmland) in all sample barangays nationwide. The BAS has more recent data^{*} from a household screening survey (HSS) done in year 2000 in all provinces, indicating the number of farm- and fish-farm-based households according to hectareage. This information, however, is limited to a sample of municipalities and barangays which contribute 85-90% of total palay and corn production in each province.

Finally, in the absence of more indicative figures on the proportion of small farmers to the total number of farmers, the cumulative number of agrarian reform beneficiaries given land by the Department of Agrarian Reform may also serve as fallback data. This figure, however does not include those engaged in livestock and poultry, and the fisheries sector. To date, DAR's total accomplishment from 1972-December 2001* may also serve as source of data. Alternatively, one may also use DAR's Land Distribution Projections (which gives farm area and number of beneficiaries) from 1987-1999, as published in the Philippine Statistical Yearbook of the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB).

Thus, bearing in mind the foregoing information in the Philippine Agricultural Statistics system, the following subsection presents an estimate for the number of farmers and small farmers.

Finding the best estimate

In search of the nearest estimate of small farmers and fisherfolk, the approach was to initially establish the base population from available data, and later validate this against widely used indicators in the sector. For purposes of comparison, two data sources were explored: 1) Labor Force Survey (LFS); and 2) Census of Agriculture and Fisheries (CAF). Using the Labor Force Survey, the total workforce across all industry groups was identified, keeping in mind that the contribution of agriculture and fisheries in the total labor force is around 40%. The average figures (from 4 quarters) each for 2001 and 2002 show that this proportion is 37%. Further research, however, shows that this share actually covers *not only* farmers and fisherfolk *but also* professionals, government officials, technicians, clerks, service workers, trade-related workers, skilled workers, etc. in the agriculture and fisheries sectors. To arrive at a *leaner* and closer figure for the number of farmers and fisherfolk, we looked at the number of employed persons by major occupation under the classification "farmers, fishermen, and forestry workers" and estimated around 6.24 million in 2002, or about 21% of the country's total labor force.

On the other hand, we explored data on number of farms from the 1991 CAF, applying appropriate growth rates.

Based on the results, the figure computed from the Labor Force Survey, which was used to represent

* made available upon request of ACPC

the number of farmers and fisherfolk, was chosen primarily because less assumptions were applied.¹ In order to come up with a further breakdown into a) farmers and b) fisherfolk, the proportion of crops, livestock and poultry farmers (fishing operators) to the total number of farmers and fisherfolk were derived. From the computations summarized in the following table, this is a proportion close to 85% for farmers, and some 15% for fisherfolk. After estimating the total number of farmers and fisherfolk, getting the number of small farmers and fisherfolk were based on figures from the 1991 CAF, BAS, and BFAR which were used to derive the necessary proportions, i.e., the proportion of small farmers (fisherfolk) to the total number of farmers (fisherfolk). Table 1 which follows summarizes these and the previously discussed proportions:

Table 1
Indicative proportions relevant for estimating the breakdown of farmers and fisherfolk

Indicator	(in Percent)
Proportion of farms ^a to total no. of farms ^{b1}	84.74
Proportion of fishing households to total no. of farms ^{b2}	15.26
Proportion of small farms ^a to the total no. of farms ^{a 3}	91
Proportion of small fishery operators to the total no. of fishing households ⁴	94

- a/ include farm areas for crops, and backyard livestock and poultry
b/ refers to both crop, backyard livestock & poultry farms + fishing households
1/ 2/ based on figures from the 1991 CAF
3/ based on 1991 CAF; assigning small farms to constitute those with <5 has. of farmlands
4/ based on the ratio of employment from municipal fishing +aquaculture in areas with at most 5 has., to total employment in fisheries (BFAR data)
Note (for 1/ & 2/): As per 1991 CAF definition, these farms were counted on the basis of farm operator residence, thus qualifying the number of farms to estimate the number of farmers (operators).

¹ This was based on actual results of a recent (2002) LFS, as differentiated from the figure estimated from the 1991 CAF data, which is derived and therefore introduces an assumption in the use of a 10-year growth rate.

2003, side-by-side with its base figures—the number of farmers and fisherfolk. As an example, out of the 6.24 million farmers and fisherfolk, around 5.70 million of them are classified as small.

Table 2
Estimated Number of Small Farmers and Fisherfolk,*
Philippines, 2001-2003
(In Million Persons)

Indicator	2001	2002	2003
Number of farmers & fisherfolk	6.35 ^a	6.24 ^a	6.23 ^a
a. Farmers	5.38 ^b	5.29 ^b	5.28 ^b
b. Fisherfolk	0.97 ^b	0.95 ^b	0.95 ^b
Number of small farmers & fisherfolk	5.80	5.70	5.69
a. Farmers	4.90 ^c	4.81 ^c	4.80 ^c
b. Fisherfolk	0.90 ^d	0.89 ^d	0.89 ^d

- * Prepared by the Policy Research & Planning Staff (PRPS) of the Agricultural Credit Policy Council
a/ Based on the LFS: No. of employed persons by major occupation (farmers, fishermen, & forestry workers). Figures for 2001 & 2002 are averages of 4 quarters; figure for 2003 is based only on the January round.
b/ Breakdown computed using proportions from the 1991 CAF: number of farms^e (all sizes), covering crop, livestock & poultry farms (84.74%); and number of fishing households, relative to the total (15.26%)
c/ Equivalent to 91% of the "number of farmers;" the proportion based on the ratio: number of farms with < 5 has./number of farms, all sizes, 1991 CAF
d/ Equivalent to 94% of the "number of fisherfolk;" the proportion based on the ratio: employment in municipal fishing + aquaculture operators with at most 5 has./ total employment in fisheries, BFAR
e/ As per 1991 CAF definition, farms are counted on the basis of residence of farm operator, thus making the number of farms equivalent to the number of operators
Source of basic data:
1991 Census of Agriculture, Vol. 1, Philippines, National Statistics Office
2000 Household Screening Survey (HSS), Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS), Labor Force Survey (LFS), quarterly reports (Jan., April, July, Oct), Integrated Survey of Households Bulletin Series 106, NSO
1997 Philippine Fisheries Profile, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

Conclusion

Based on the numbers that have been presented, *small farmers and fisherfolk* constitute a substantial majority (over 90%) of all farmers and fisherfolk. As earlier cited, this is around 21% of the total labor force in 2002. Thus, if government is serious in uplifting the lives of a significant segment of the population, it needs to be able to quantify the benefits relative to the investments generally targeted towards this important sector of Philippine society.

Table 2 presents the estimated figures for the *number of small farmers and fisherfolk for 2001-*

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