

Data use in the policy making process from a research institute viewpoint

Topic 1 – Bringing in information from where we can get it

Keywords: policy assessment, integrated data system, administrative data sources

Introduction

The objective of this paper is to provide a practical illustration of the key issues that are important in assembling and integrating statistical, research and administrative records for use in an integrated data system (IDS). From a research use point of view, the role of qualitative data is just as important as theory and methodology. Parallel to science based policy making where modelling work is still predominant in case of the agriculture sector, another branch has emerged in the recent years. This requires fast, up-to-date information, which often times based on a combination of different data sources. Moreover, there is an increasing need of holistic research approach that also demands integrated data. In the past, most of the data used by researcher were either statistical data or data collected for a particular research purpose. Nowadays, due to the widespread presence of digital administrative processes, there is a growing importance of administrative data related to agriculture: subsidy payments (Agricultural and Rural Development Agency, ARDA), electronic livestock registration (National Food Chain Safety Office).

Methods / Problem statement

Administrative data can be generally described as data which are derived from the operation of administrative systems (e.g. data collected by government agencies for the purposes of registration, transaction and record keeping) (Elias, 2014). There are multiple desirable properties of administrative data: generally provide much larger sample sizes than social surveys (Card et al., 2010), often covers “nonresponse” respondents, easier linkage of different data sources. While statistical data are regulated by established and standardized rules the development and maintenance of an integrated data system which hosts both statistical and administrative data is challenged by many issues: confidentiality, data integration, data quality (relevance, interpretability, accuracy/coherence, timeliness). Often time, administrative data may change over time due to the fact, that it is recorded in relation to a process where circumstances may change. This requires careful consideration which moment or stage is most desirable to acquire or extract data from a given system. Comparability can be very problematic, since methodological stability throughout time is often challenged by the fact of changing administrative processes.

Results / Proposed solution

Based on the experience of recent years there is still a rather long way to go to systematically and reliably combine administrative data with statistical sources. Host of administrative data are interested to different quality measures compared to data collected for statistical purposes. Therefore, reaching equal quality is challenging many due to the fact, that data revision is not a common process and often impossible to institutionalize the process. Another challenge researchers face when wish to combine statistical and administrative data is the lack of universal, inter-usable identification could be used to link different data sources. It would be desirable that research for policy making purposes are supported to create integrated data systems in a transparent manner meeting necessary standards in terms of quality and confidentiality.

Accessibility to administrative data sources for policy research should be fostered both from legislation and IT, which can increase the efficiency of data use and lessen the administrative burden of data providers.

Conclusions

Administrative datasets have the potential to contribute to the development of high-quality and impactful social science research (Connelly et al., 2016). There is a pressing need to utilize more and more data that is available as a result of digitalized administrative process, which requires established legal framework, transparent and well developed data management procedures.