



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

>> FAO Statistics Division

# The impact of the pandemic on censuses of agriculture: global overview

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*Strand: Official Statistics and Covid-19: key takeaways*

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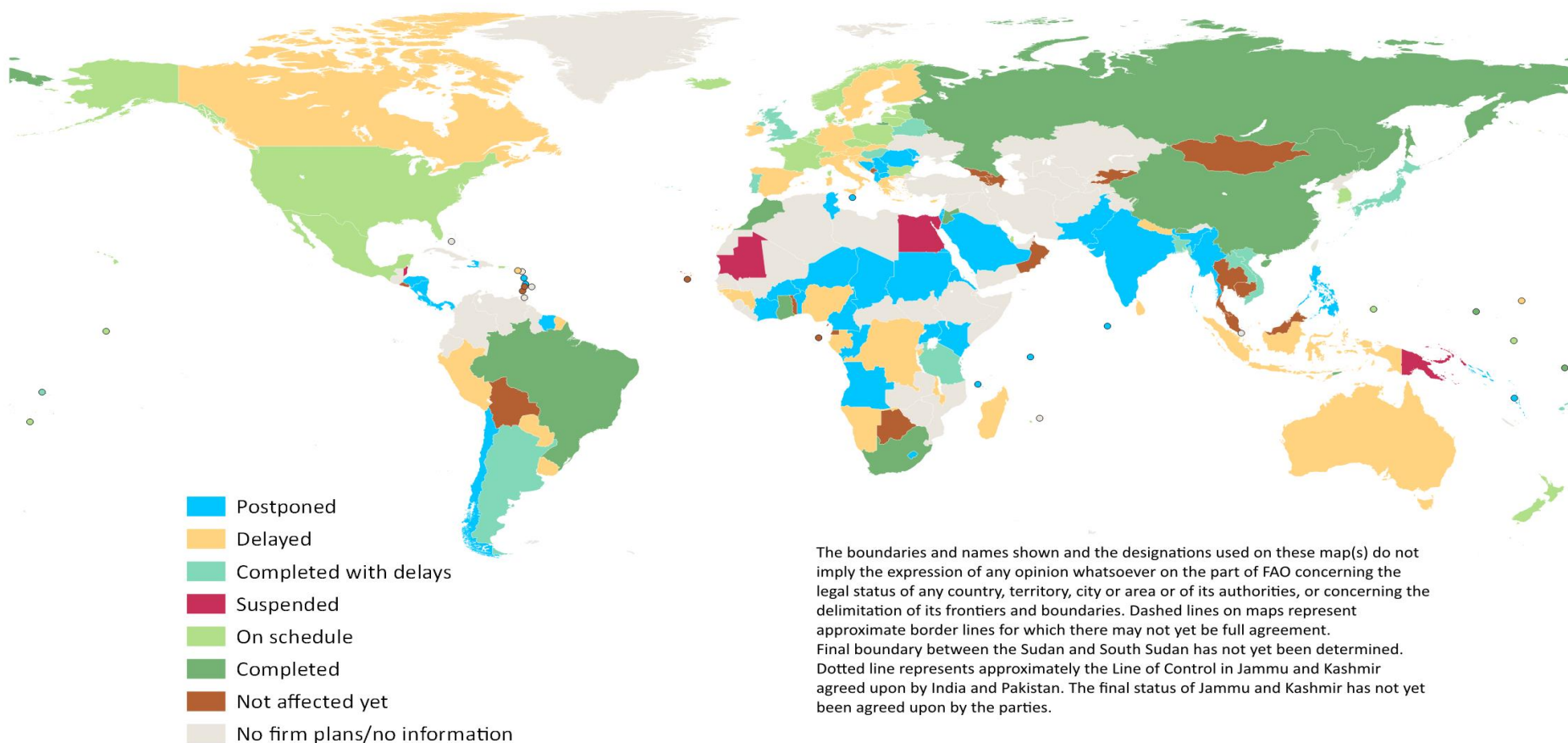
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# 1. Introduction

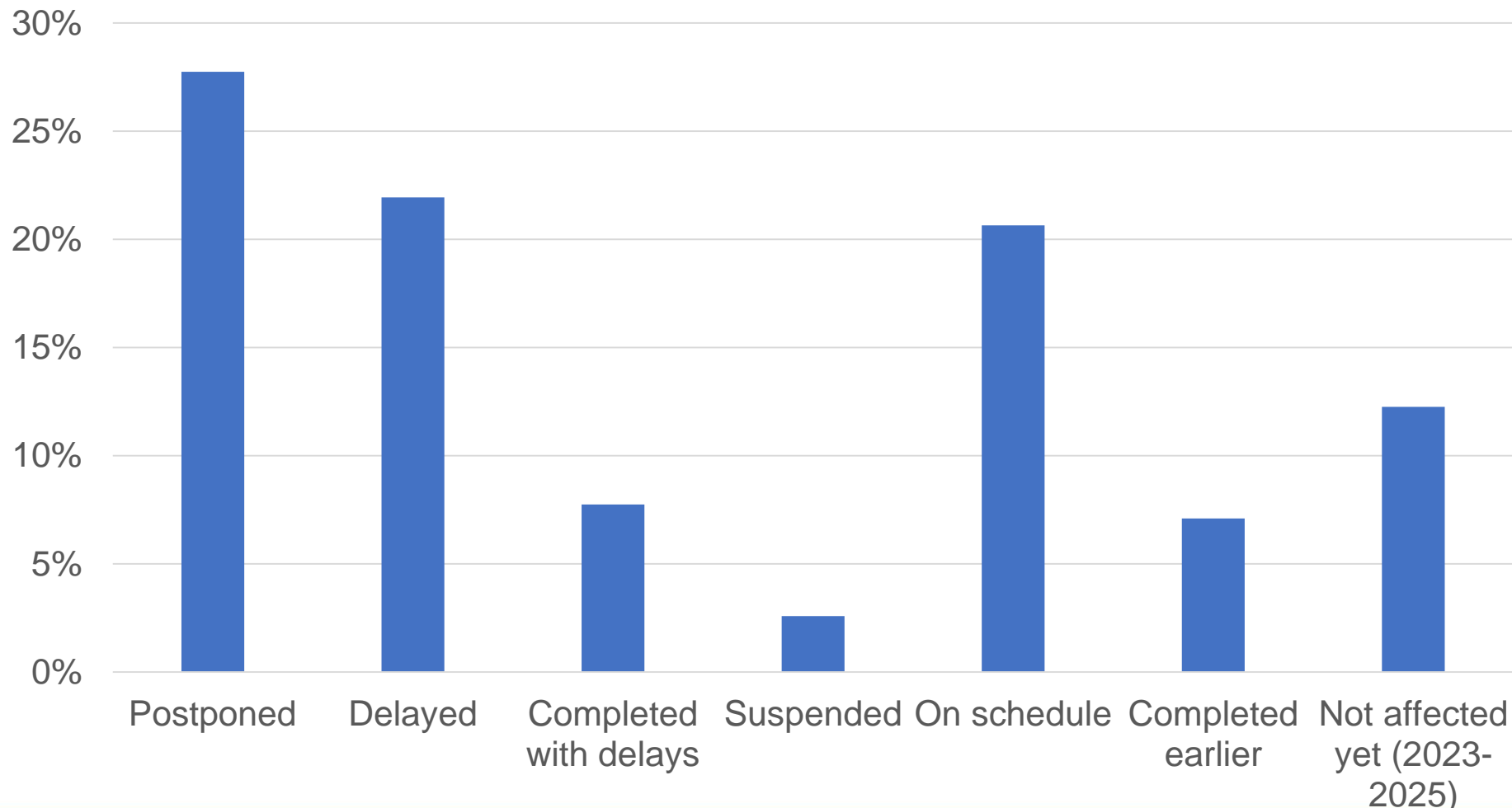
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) coordinates the *World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020* (WCA 2020).
- It supports national censuses of agriculture conducted during the 2016–2025 round.
- FAO has conducted several assessments of the impact of Covid-19 on censuses. This is the fifth assessment.

## 2. Global overview of the status of censuses of agriculture (WCA 2020 round)

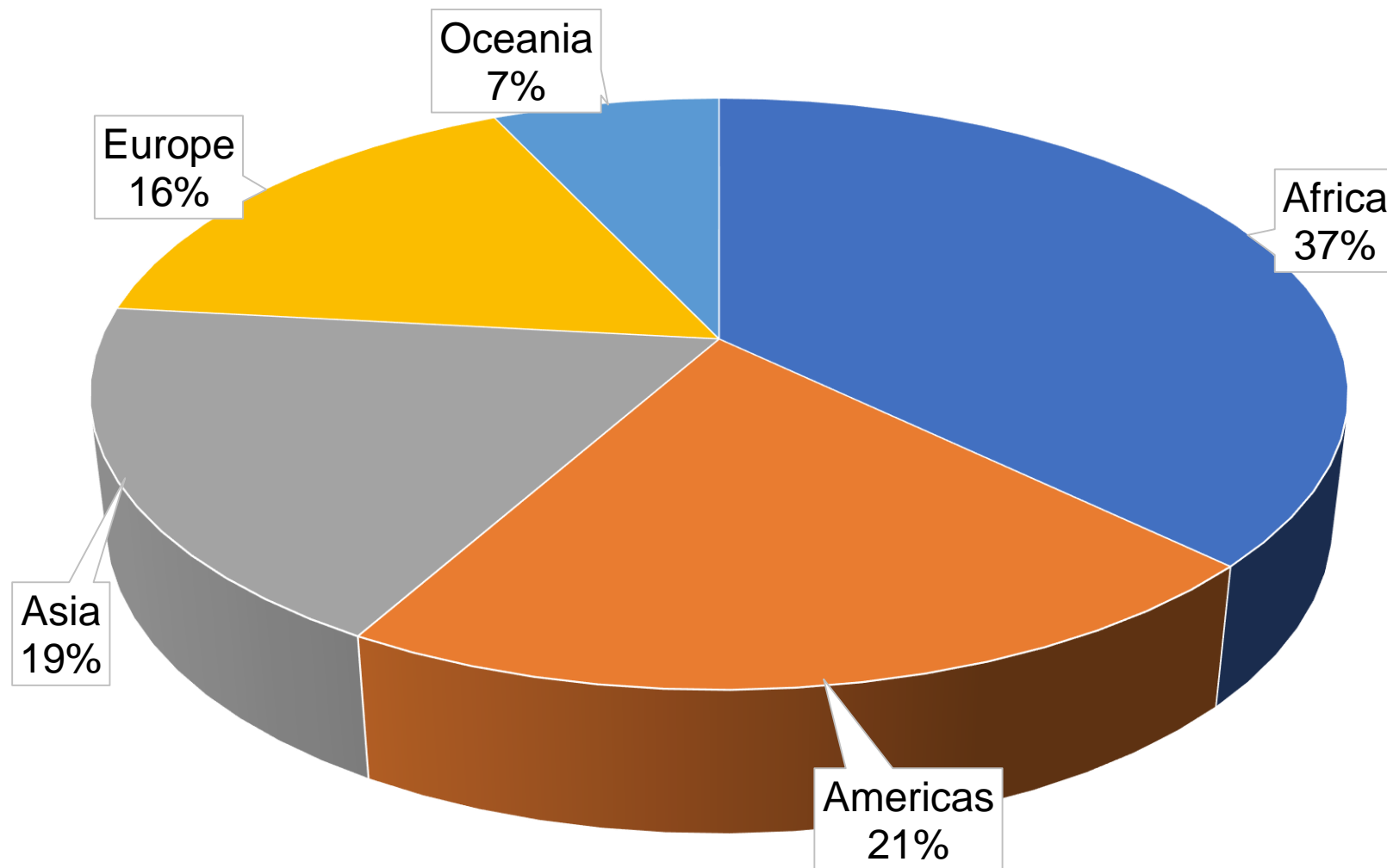


The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these map(s) do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries. Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement. Final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

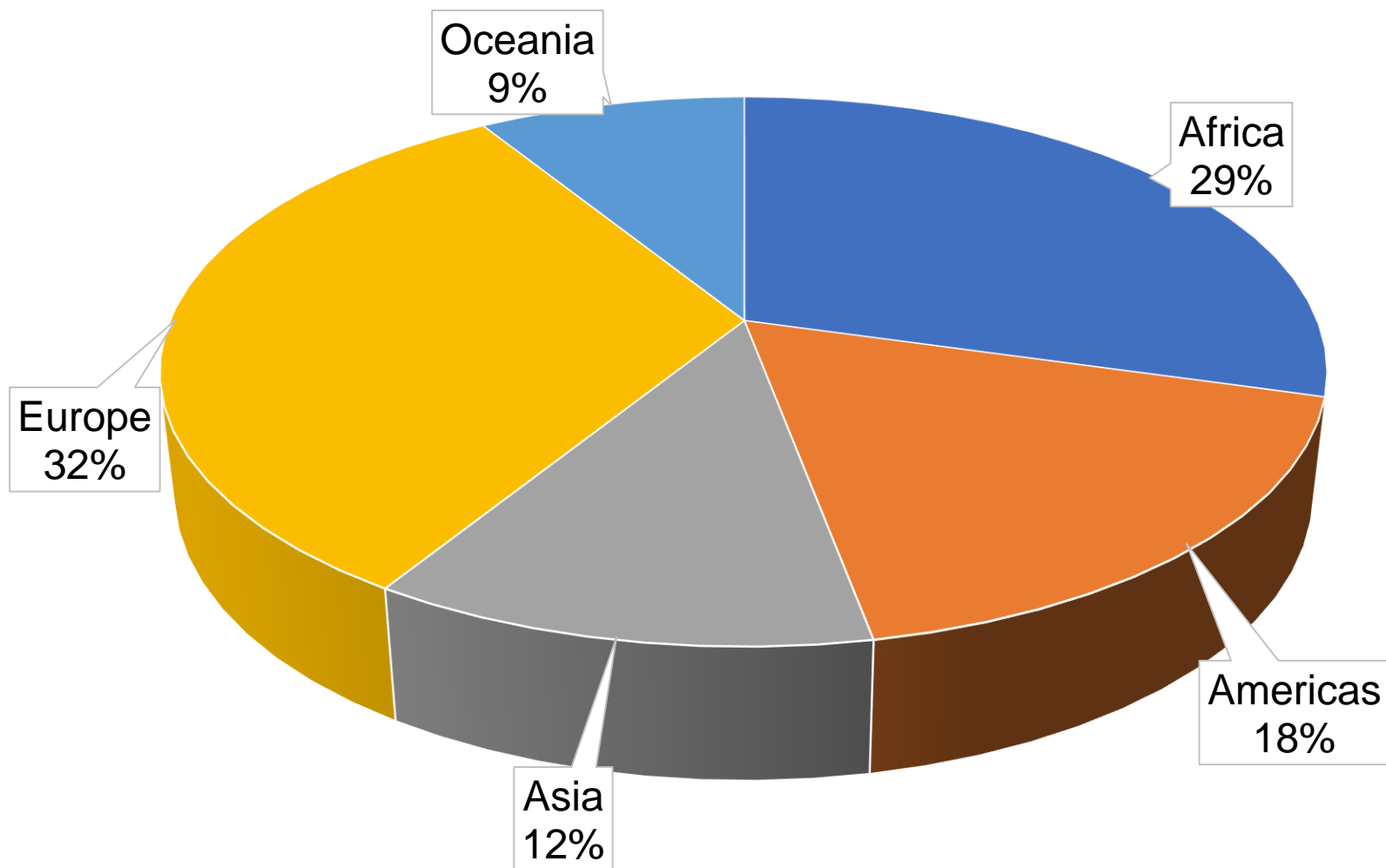
### 3. Impact of COVID-19 on censuses (155 countries)



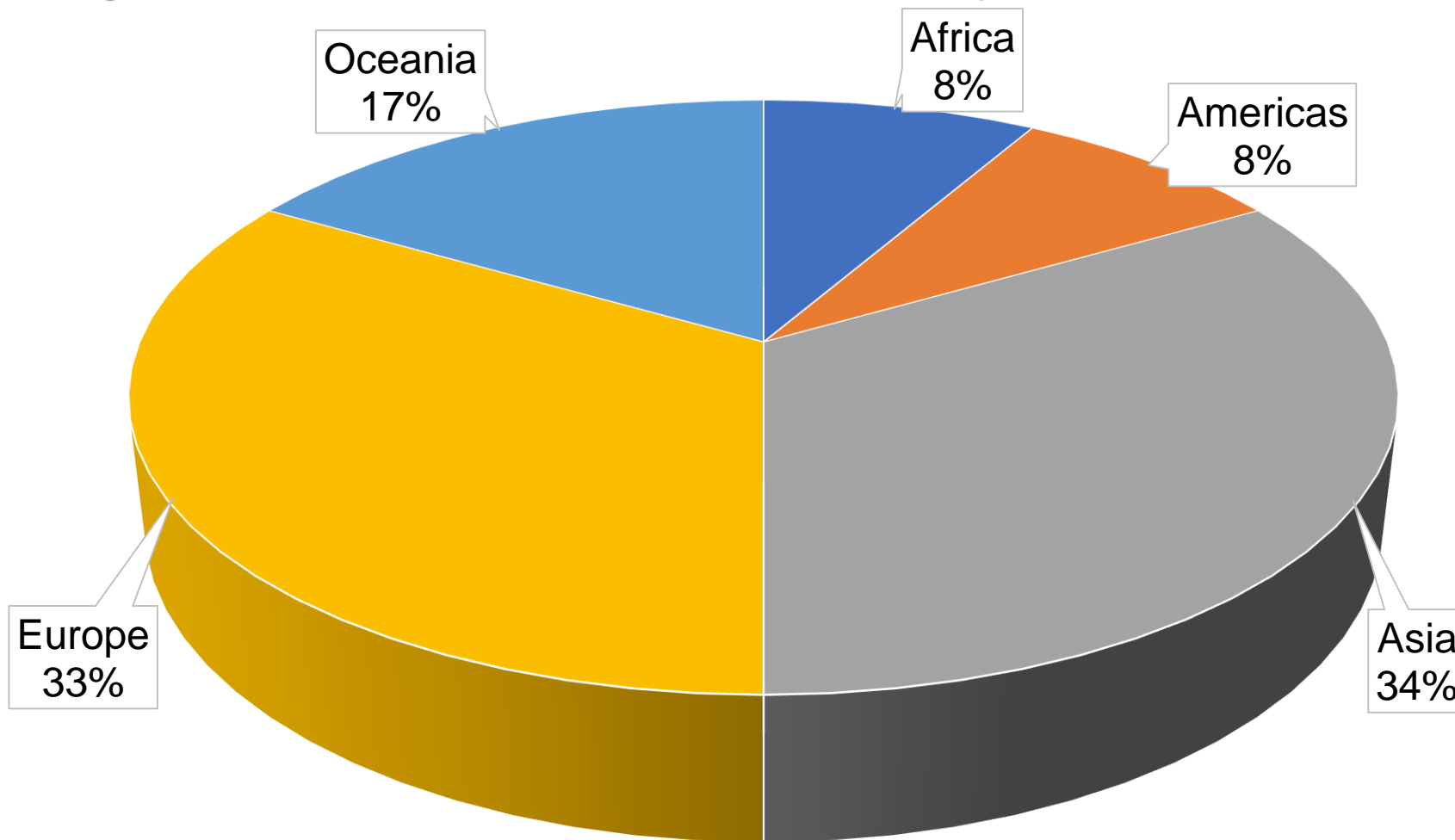
### 3a. Censuses of agriculture postponed (43 countries)



### 3b. Censuses of agriculture delayed (34 countries)

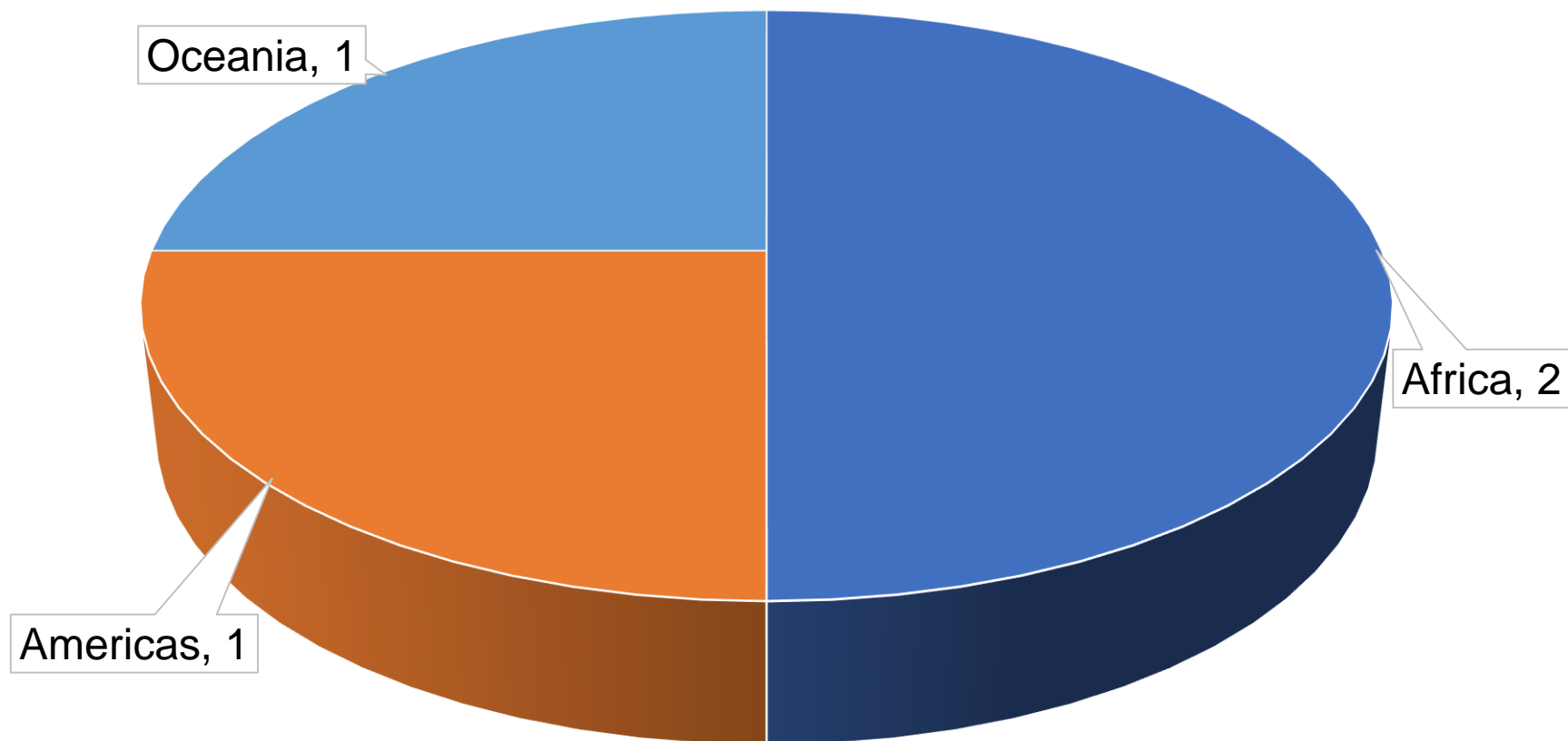


### 3c. Agri-censuses completed with delays (12 countries)

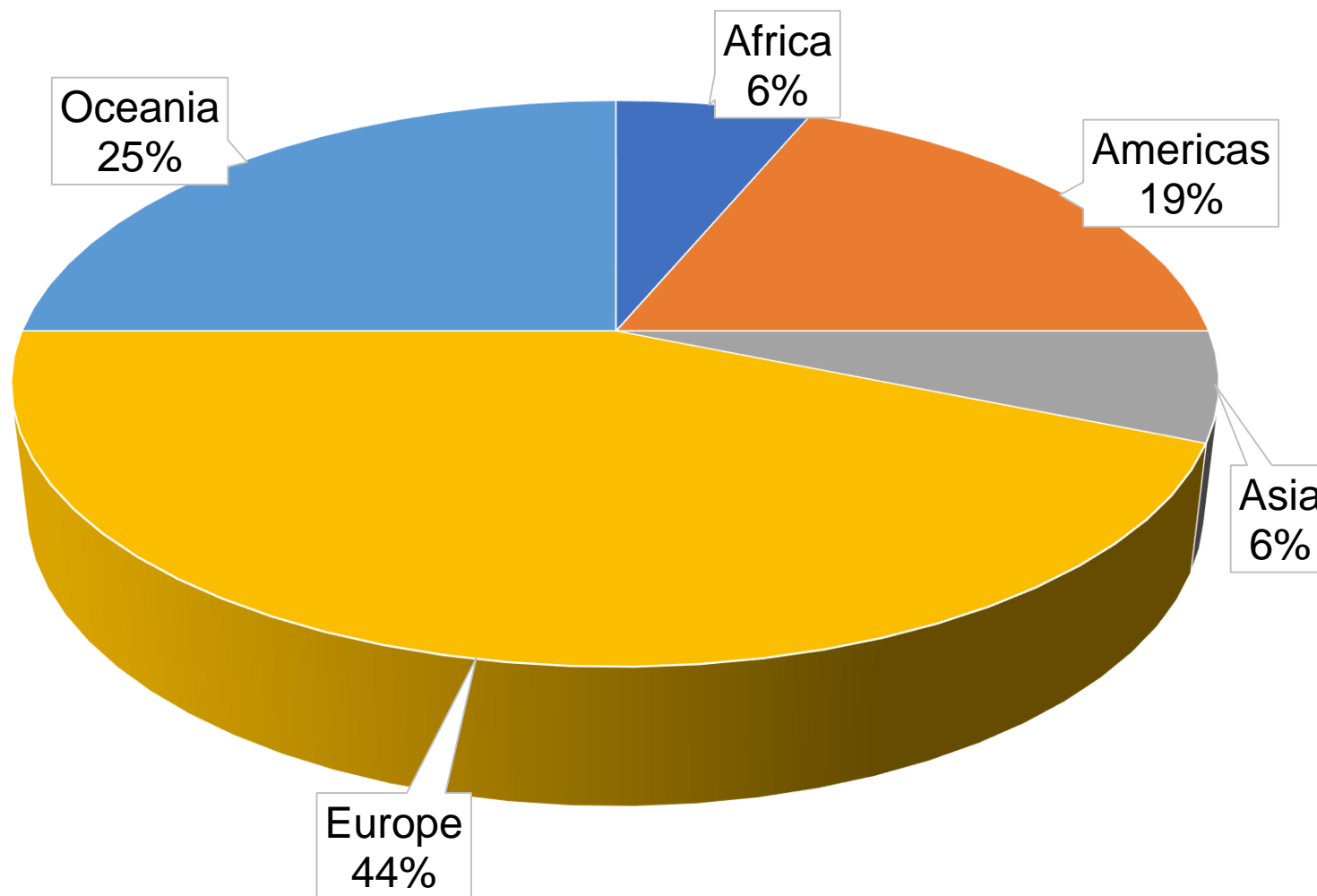




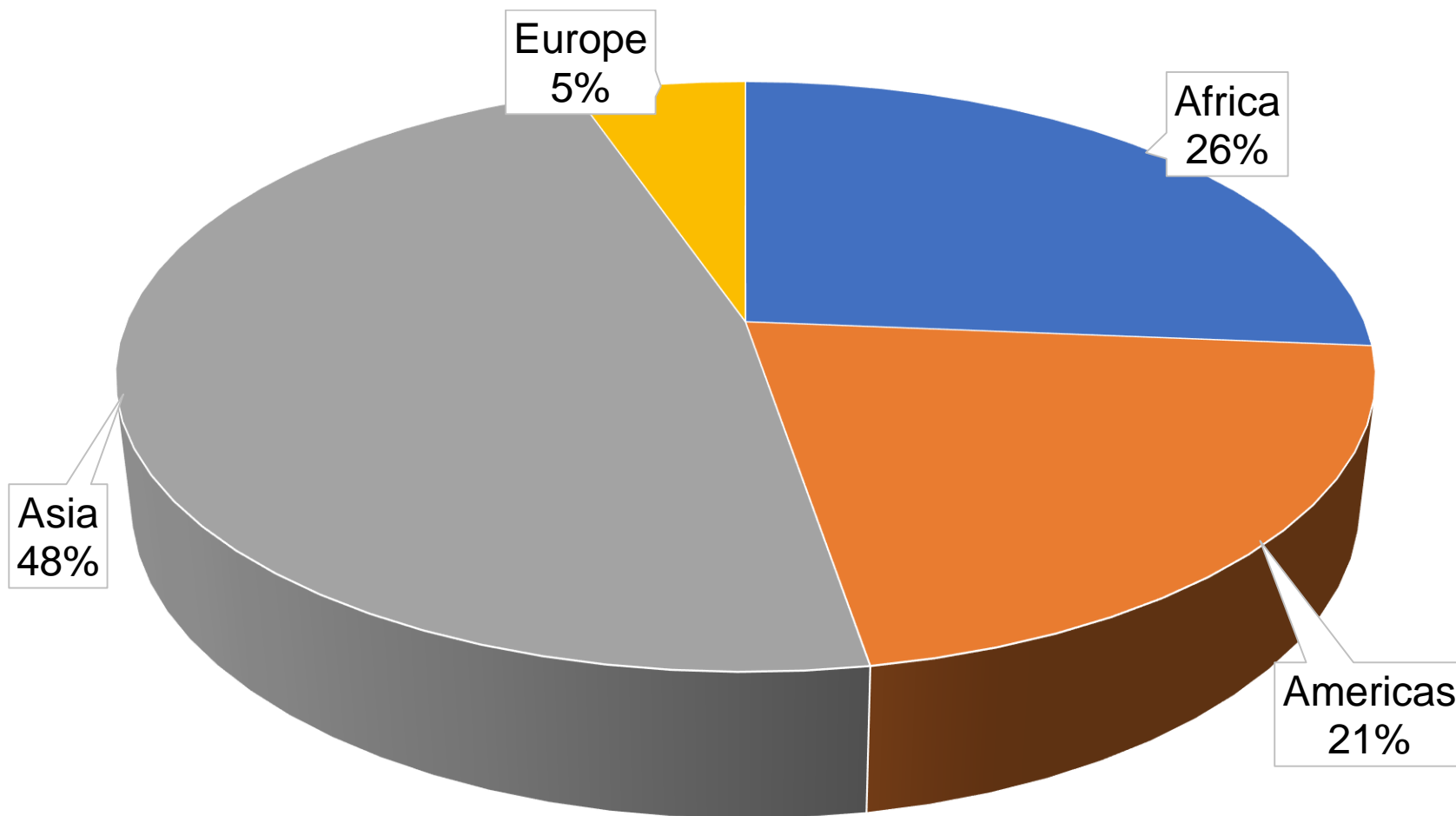
### 3d. Censuses of agriculture suspended (4 countries)



### 3e. Agri-censuses on schedule (32 countries, of which 5 completed)



### 3f. Censuses of agriculture not affected yet (19 countries): at early planning stages with enumerations in 2023-2025



## Implications of delays, postponements and suspensions in censuses

- Higher cost than planned (fixed costs continue despite suspensions) and unforeseen expenses such as personal health protection equipment, revision of questionnaires/manuals, relaunch of training and publicity campaigns, etc.
- Unwanted changes in the census reference periods or problems with producers recalling answers accurately.
- Risks to continue financing the agricultural census once it resumed, as governments faced other post-COVID-19 priorities.
- Possible data quality issues as census data may not reflect the new reality of the post-COVID-19 agricultural sector.
- Delayed population censuses force, in turn, the postponement of agricultural censuses in countries that depend on the former to establish the list of agricultural households, or that can only organize one census at a time.

## Why some censuses of agriculture were not affected?

- 33 countries and territories (inc. 14 European countries, four French territories, USA and five US territories, and Korea) carried on with their census in 2020-2022 without major disruptions.
- These countries have integrated statistical systems, robust information and communications technology (ICT), and use administrative records to cover part of their census needs.
  1. Census preparation activities continued through teleworking and stable internet connections;
  2. Training was online;
  3. Various remote data collection methods (initially planned): online self-interviews (CAWI), telephone interviews (CATI), and postal questionnaires. Personal interviews with CAPI were replaced where possible by remote methods;
  4. Intensive use of administrative records.

## Lessons (1)

- The role of virtual learning and online courses in training trainers, supervisors and enumerators.
- The importance of stable remote access to systems for uninterrupted development of the census ICT infrastructure.
- The need to reduce dependence on face-to-face interviews and to introduce alternative modalities of remote data collection.
- The usefulness of administrative records to meet part of the census needs, avoiding unnecessary duplication of data collection.
- COVID-19 has been a wake-up call for countries to modernize their training and census data collection methods in future rounds.

## Lessons (2)

- The use of CAWI, CATI and mail methods requires access to well-developed and reliable national telecom infrastructures. Some remote rural areas may not have high speed internet access.
- Using snail mail can be difficult in areas where mailboxes are widely scattered.
- Producers with IT limitations may be reluctant or unable to use CAWI. However, CAWI, CATI and post can begin with large farms and entities (corporations, cooperatives).
- Some countries will be slow to adopt modern technologies due to poor infrastructure, high cost of access, and lack of necessary skills.
- Other countries may make the leap, but will require adequate testing of ICT solutions for online training and remote data collection methods.

# Thank you