



# 3.1

## Rural population and land use

	Rural population			Land area thousand sq. km 2007	Land use							
	% of total		average annual % growth 1990–2007		% of land area				Arable land		Arable land hectares per 100 people	
	1990	2007			1990	2005	1990	2005	1990	2005	1990–92	2003–05
Afghanistan	..	..	..	652.1	2.0	1.3	0.2	0.2	12.1	12.1	..	..
Albania	64	54	-1.2	27.4	28.8	29.0	4.6	4.5	21.1	21.1	18.7	18.4
Algeria	48	35	-0.1	2,381.7	0.8	1.0	0.2	0.4	3.0	3.1	24.5	23.1
Angola	63	44	0.7	1,246.7	48.9	47.4	0.4	0.2	2.3	2.6	21.2	21.1
Argentina	13	8	-1.6	2,736.7	12.9	12.1	0.4	0.4	9.6	10.4	75.2	74.0
Armenia	33	36	-0.4	28.2	12.0	10.0	2.7	2.1	17.7	17.6	16.1 <sup>a</sup>	16.4
Australia	15	11	-0.2	7,682.3	21.9	21.3	0.0	0.0	6.2	6.4	248.9	240.6
Austria	34	33	0.2	82.5	45.8	46.8	1.0	0.8	17.3	16.8	17.3	17.0
Azerbaijan	46	48	1.3	82.7	11.2	11.3	3.7	2.7	20.5	22.3	22.6 <sup>a</sup>	22.2
Bangladesh	80	73	1.5	130.2	6.8	6.7	2.3	3.5	70.2	61.1	5.7	5.3
Belarus	34	27	-1.7	207.5	36.0	38.0	0.9	0.6	29.3	26.3	58.4 <sup>a</sup>	56.2
Belgium	4	3	-1.4	30.2	23.2 <sup>b</sup>	22.1	0.5 <sup>b</sup>	0.8	23.9 <sup>b</sup>	27.9	8.2	8.1
Benin	66	59	2.7	110.6	30.0	21.3	0.9	2.4	14.6	24.9	33.0	33.0
Bolivia	44	35	0.7	1,084.4	57.9	54.2	0.1	0.2	1.9	2.8	34.9	33.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	61	53	-1.6	51.2	43.1	42.7	2.9	1.9	16.6	19.5	27.0 <sup>a</sup>	26.9
Botswana	58	41	-0.1	566.7	24.2	21.1	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.7	21.5	20.8
Brazil	25	15	-1.6	8,459.4	61.5	56.5	0.8	0.9	6.0	7.0	33.1	32.0
Bulgaria	34	29	-1.6	108.6	30.1	33.4	2.7	1.9	34.9	29.2	43.4	42.0
Burkina Faso	86	81	2.6	273.6	26.1	24.8	0.2	0.2	12.9	17.7	35.9	35.9
Burundi	94	90	2.1	25.7	11.3	5.9	14.0	14.2	36.2	37.8	14.2	13.0
Cambodia	87	79	1.8	176.5	73.3	59.2	0.6	0.9	20.9	21.0	28.4	27.0
Cameroon	59	44	0.7	465.4	52.7	45.6	2.6	2.6	12.8	12.8	36.7	34.2
Canada	23	20	0.0	9,093.5	34.1	34.1	0.7	0.7	5.0	5.0	147.4	142.7
Central African Republic	63	62	2.0	623.0	37.2	36.5	0.1	0.1	3.1	3.1	49.1	46.8
Chad	79	74	2.9	1,259.2	10.4	9.5	0.0	0.0	2.6	3.3	40.7	40.1
Chile	17	12	-0.7	748.8	20.4	21.5	0.3	0.5	3.7	2.6	12.7	12.2
China	73	58	-0.5	9,327.5	16.8	21.2	0.8	1.4	13.3	15.4	11.1	11.0
Hong Kong, China	1	0	..	1.0	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Colombia	32	26	0.5	1,109.5	55.4	54.7	1.5	1.5	3.0	1.8	6.2	5.1
Congo, Dem. Rep.	72	67	2.5	2,267.1	62.0	58.9	0.5	0.5	2.9	3.0	12.9	11.8
Congo, Rep.	46	39	1.7	341.5	66.5	65.8	0.1	0.1	1.4	1.4	15.0	14.0
Costa Rica	49	37	0.5	51.1	50.2	46.8	4.9	6.5	5.1	4.4	5.6	5.3
Côte d'Ivoire	60	52	1.5	318.0	32.1	32.7	11.0	11.3	7.6	11.0	18.2	18.8
Croatia	46	43	-0.8	55.9	37.9	38.2	2.0	2.1	21.7	19.8	32.9 <sup>a</sup>	27.6
Cuba	27	24	-0.2	109.8	18.7	24.7	7.4	6.1	27.6	33.4	32.8	32.7
Czech Republic	25	27	0.4	77.3	34.1	34.3	3.1	3.1	41.1	39.4	30.1	29.9
Denmark	15	14	-0.3	42.4	10.5	11.8	0.2	0.2	60.4	52.7	42.6	41.8
Dominican Republic	45	32	-0.3	48.4	28.4	28.4	9.3	10.3	18.6	16.9	9.2	8.8
Ecuador	45	35	0.1	276.8	49.9	39.2	4.8	4.4	5.8	4.9	12.0	10.1
Egypt, Arab Rep.	57	57	1.9	995.5	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.5	2.3	3.0	4.2	4.1
El Salvador	51	40	0.3	20.7	18.1	14.4	12.5	12.1	26.5	31.9	10.4	10.0
Eritrea	84	80	2.2	101.0	15.9	15.4	0.0	0.0	4.9	6.3	14.6	14.0
Estonia	29	31	-0.6	42.4	51.4	53.9	0.3	0.3	26.3	13.9	52.1 <sup>a</sup>	40.9
Ethiopia	87	83	2.7	1,000.0	14.7	13.0	0.6	0.8	10.0	13.1	15.1	16.7
Finland	39	37	0.1	304.6	72.9	73.9	0.0	0.0	7.4	7.3	42.2	42.5
France	26	23	-0.2	550.1	26.4	28.3	2.2	2.1	32.7	33.6	31.1	30.5
Gabon	31	15	-1.9	257.7	85.1	84.5	0.6	0.7	1.1	1.3	27.0	25.6
Gambia, The	62	44	1.4	10.0	44.2	47.1	0.5	0.5	18.2	35.0	21.3	21.9
Georgia	45	47	-1.0	69.5	39.7	39.7	4.8	3.8	11.4	11.5	17.1 <sup>a</sup>	17.8
Germany	27	26	0.1	348.8	30.8	31.8	1.3	0.6	34.3	34.1	14.3	14.4
Ghana	64	51	1.1	227.5	32.7	24.2	6.6	9.7	11.9	18.4	19.7	19.0
Greece	41	39	0.3	128.9	25.6	29.1	8.3	8.8	22.5	20.4	24.9	24.1
Guatemala	59	52	1.6	108.4	43.8	36.3	4.5	5.6	12.0	13.3	12.2	11.6
Guinea	72	66	2.1	245.7	30.1	27.4	2.0	2.7	3.0	4.9	12.1	13.2
Guinea-Bissau	72	70	2.9	28.1	78.8	73.7	4.2	8.9	10.7	10.7	21.2	19.4
Haiti	72	55	0.2	27.6	4.2	3.8	11.6	11.6	28.3	28.3	8.9	8.5

# Rural population and land use

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ENVIRONMENT

	Rural population			Land area thousand sq. km 2007	Land use							
	% of total		average annual % growth 1990–2007		% of land area				Arable land hectares per 100 people			
	1990	2007			1990	2005	1990	2005	1990–92	2003–05		
Honduras	60	53	1.4	111.9	66.0	41.5	3.2	3.2	13.1	9.5	16.9	15.9
Hungary	34	33	-0.4	89.6	20.0	22.1	2.6	2.3	56.2	51.3	45.2	45.5
India	75	71	1.3	2,973.2	21.5	22.8	2.2	3.4	54.8	53.7	15.5	14.8
Indonesia	69	50	-0.6	1,811.6	64.3	48.8	6.5	7.5	11.2	12.7	10.3	10.6
Iran, Islamic Rep.	44	32	-0.3	1,628.6	6.8	6.8	0.8	1.0	9.3	10.2	24.0	24.0
Iraq	30	..	..	437.4	1.8	1.9	0.7	0.6	12.1	13.1	22.0	..
Ireland	43	39	0.7	68.9	6.4	9.7	0.0	0.0	15.1	17.6	29.7	29.5
Israel	10	8	1.7	21.6	7.1	7.9	4.1	3.5	15.9	14.6	5.3	4.8
Italy	33	32	0.0	294.1	28.5	33.9	10.1	8.6	30.6	26.3	14.7	13.6
Jamaica	51	47	0.2	10.8	31.9	31.3	9.2	10.2	11.0	16.1	6.7	6.6
Japan	37	34	-0.3	364.5	68.4	68.2	1.3	0.9	13.1	12.0	3.5	3.4
Jordan	28	22	2.0	88.2	0.9	0.9	0.8	1.0	2.0	2.1	3.9	3.6
Kazakhstan	44	42	-0.5	2,699.7	1.3	1.2	0.1	0.1	13.0	8.3	148.7 <sup>a</sup>	149.3
Kenya	82	79	2.5	569.1	6.5	6.2	0.8	0.8	8.8	9.2	15.7	15.1
Korea, Dem. Rep.	42	38	0.4	120.4	68.1	51.4	1.5	1.7	19.0	23.3	11.4	11.7
Korea, Rep.	26	19	-1.2	98.7	64.5	63.5	1.6	2.0	19.8	16.4	3.6	3.4
Kuwait	2	2	0.2	17.8	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.8	0.6	0.6
Kyrgyz Republic	62	64	1.1	191.8	4.4	4.5	0.4	0.4	6.9	6.7	27.2 <sup>a</sup>	25.9
Lao PDR	85	70	1.0	230.8	75.0	69.9	0.3	0.4	3.5	4.3	17.0	17.8
Latvia	31	32	-0.7	62.3	45.1	47.2	0.4	0.2	27.2	17.5	41.0 <sup>a</sup>	44.1
Lebanon	17	13	0.4	10.2	11.8	13.3	11.9	13.9	17.9	18.2	4.7	4.7
Lesotho	86	75	0.5	30.4	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1	10.4	10.9	17.3	16.8
Liberia	55	41	1.6	96.3	42.1	32.7	2.2	2.3	4.2	4.0	12.0	11.4
Libya	24	23	1.6	1,759.5	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	1.0	1.0	33.3	30.6
Lithuania	32	33	-0.4	62.7	31.3	33.5	0.7	0.6	46.0	30.4	58.8 <sup>a</sup>	49.0
Macedonia, FYR	42	34	-1.0	25.4	35.6	35.6	2.2	1.8	23.8	22.3	27.9 <sup>a</sup>	27.9
Madagascar	76	71	2.4	581.5	23.5	22.1	1.0	1.0	4.7	5.1	17.6	16.3
Malawi	88	82	1.8	94.1	41.4	36.2	1.2	1.5	19.3	27.6	18.4	19.8
Malaysia	50	31	-0.7	328.6	68.1	63.6	16.0	17.6	5.2	5.5	7.6	7.1
Mali	77	68	2.1	1,220.2	11.5	10.3	0.0	0.0	1.7	3.9	45.3	42.6
Mauritania	60	59	2.7	1,030.7	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.5	18.5	17.1
Mauritius	56	58	1.2	2.0	19.2	18.2	3.0	3.0	49.3	49.3	8.3	8.1
Mexico	29	23	0.1	1,944.0	35.5	33.0	1.0	1.3	12.5	12.9	25.4	24.6
Moldova	53	58	-0.4	32.9	9.7	10.0	14.2	9.1	52.8	56.2	45.1 <sup>a</sup>	47.1
Mongolia	43	43	1.3	1,566.5	7.3	6.5	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.7	49.1	46.7
Morocco	52	44	0.5	446.3	9.6	9.8	1.6	2.1	19.5	19.0	29.7	28.4
Mozambique	79	64	1.4	786.4	25.4	24.5	0.3	0.3	4.4	5.6	21.6	21.8
Myanmar	75	68	0.6	657.6	59.6	49.0	0.8	1.4	14.5	15.3	21.4	21.1
Namibia	72	64	1.5	823.3	10.6	9.3	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.0	42.7	40.9
Nepal	91	83	1.7	143.0	33.7	25.4	0.5	0.9	16.0	16.5	9.4	8.9
Netherlands	31	19	-2.5	33.9	10.2	10.8	0.9	1.0	25.9	26.8	5.7	5.6
New Zealand	15	14	0.5	267.7	28.8	31.0	5.1	7.1	9.9	5.6	38.5	36.7
Nicaragua	48	44	1.2	121.4	53.9	42.7	1.6	1.9	10.7	15.9	37.1	35.7
Niger	85	84	3.4	1,266.7	1.5	1.0	0.0	0.0	8.7	11.4	125.7	113.1
Nigeria	65	52	1.4	910.8	18.9	12.2	2.8	3.3	32.4	35.1	22.6	22.6
Norway	28	23	-0.7	304.3	30.0	30.8	..	..	2.8	2.8	19.6	19.0
Oman	34	28	1.0	309.5	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	1.6	2.2
Pakistan	69	64	1.9	770.9	3.3	2.5	0.6	1.0	26.6	27.6	15.2	14.1
Panama	46	28	-1.1	74.4	58.8	57.7	2.1	2.0	6.7	7.4	18.1	17.3
Papua New Guinea	85	87	2.7	452.9	69.6	65.0	1.3	1.4	0.4	0.5	3.8	3.9
Paraguay	51	40	0.8	397.3	53.3	46.5	0.2	0.2	5.3	10.6	61.2	70.2
Peru	31	29	1.0	1,280.0	54.8	53.7	0.3	0.5	2.7	2.9	14.2	13.7
Philippines	51	36	0.0	298.2	35.5	24.0	14.8	16.8	18.4	19.1	7.3	6.9
Poland	39	39	0.0	306.3	29.2	30.0	1.1	1.2	47.3	39.6	35.3	32.6
Portugal	52	41	-1.0	91.5	33.9	41.3	8.5	7.1	25.6	13.8	15.4	13.3
Puerto Rico	28	2	-15.1	8.9	45.5	46.0	5.6	4.7	7.3	8.0	1.7	1.8



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	1990	2007			1990	2005	1990	2005	1990	2005	1990–92	2003–05
Romania	47	46	-0.5	230.0	27.8	27.7	2.6	2.3	41.2	40.4	42.4	43.2
Russian Federation	27	27	-0.1	16,381.4	49.4	49.4	0.1	0.1	8.1	7.4	84.9 <sup>a</sup>	84.9
Rwanda	95	82	0.9	24.7	12.9	19.5	12.4	11.1	35.7	48.6	11.8	13.2
Saudi Arabia	23	17	0.5	2,000.0 <sup>c</sup>	1.4	1.4	0.0	0.1	1.6	1.6	17.0	15.7
Senegal	61	58	2.4	192.5	48.6	45.0	0.1	0.2	12.1	13.2	22.9	21.8
Serbia	50	48	-0.3	91.0	..	26.3 <sup>d</sup>	..	3.2 <sup>d</sup>	..	33.6 <sup>d</sup>	..	42.4 <sup>d</sup>
Sierra Leone	67	63	1.7	71.6	42.5	38.5	0.8	1.1	6.8	8.4	10.8	11.0
Singapore	0	0	..	0.7	3.4	3.3	1.5	0.3	1.5	0.9	0.0	0.0
Slovak Republic	44	44	0.1	48.1	40.0	40.1	1.0	0.5	32.5	28.9	27.1	26.0
Slovenia	50	51	0.2	20.1	59.5	62.8	1.8	1.3	9.9	8.7	8.6 <sup>a</sup>	8.7
Somalia	70	64	1.0	627.3	13.2	11.4	0.0	0.0	1.6	2.2	15.1	16.5
South Africa	48	40	0.7	1,214.5	7.6	7.6	0.7	0.8	11.1	12.1	33.0	31.8
Spain	25	23	0.5	499.2	27.0	35.9	9.7	9.9	30.7	27.4	32.2	32.0
Sri Lanka	83	85	1.1	64.6	36.4	29.9	15.9	15.5	13.5	14.2	4.8	4.7
Sudan	73	57	0.9	2,376.0	32.1	28.4	0.0	0.1	5.4	8.2	48.1	51.2
Swaziland	77	75	2.2	17.2	27.4	31.5	0.7	0.8	10.5	10.3	16.7	15.9
Sweden	17	16	-0.1	410.3	66.7	67.1	0.0	0.0	6.9	6.6	30.3	29.8
Switzerland	27	27	0.6	40.0	28.9	30.5	0.5	0.6	9.8	10.3	5.7	5.5
Syrian Arab Republic	51	46	2.0	183.8	2.0	2.5	4.0	4.7	26.6	26.5	27.1	25.9
Tajikistan	68	74	1.8	140.0	2.9	2.9	0.9	0.9	6.1	6.6	14.9 <sup>a</sup>	14.4
Tanzania	81	75	2.2	885.8	46.8	39.8	1.1	1.3	10.2	10.4	25.9	24.5
Thailand	71	67	0.6	510.9	31.2	28.4	6.1	7.0	34.2	27.8	25.9	22.7
Timor-Leste	79	73	1.7	14.9	65.0	53.7	3.9	4.6	7.4	8.2	15.2	13.2
Togo	70	59	2.0	54.4	12.6	7.1	1.7	2.6	38.6	45.8	45.1	41.2
Trinidad and Tobago	92	87	0.2	5.1	45.8	44.1	9.0	9.2	14.4	14.6	5.7	5.7
Tunisia	42	34	0.1	155.4	4.1	6.8	12.5	13.9	18.7	17.6	29.0	27.9
Turkey	41	32	0.1	769.6	12.6	13.2	3.9	3.6	32.0	31.0	34.8	33.2
Turkmenistan	55	52	1.4	469.9	8.8	8.8	0.1	0.1	2.9	4.9	40.5 <sup>a</sup>	46.9
Uganda	89	87	3.1	197.1	25.0	18.4	9.4	11.2	25.4	27.4	20.0	18.9
Ukraine	33	32	-0.8	579.4	16.1	16.5	1.9	1.6	57.6	56.0	66.9 <sup>a</sup>	68.4
United Arab Emirates	21	22	5.3	83.6	2.9	3.7	0.2	2.3	0.4	0.8	2.0	1.6
United Kingdom	11	10	-0.3	241.9	10.8	11.8	0.3	0.2	27.4	23.7	9.8	9.6
United States	25	19	-0.6	9,161.9	32.6	33.1	0.2	0.3	20.3	19.0	61.6	59.7
Uruguay	11	8	-1.6	175.0	5.2	8.6	0.3	0.2	7.2	7.8	41.5	41.5
Uzbekistan	60	63	1.9	425.4	7.2	7.7	0.9	0.8	10.5	11.0	18.0 <sup>a</sup>	18.2
Venezuela, RB	16	7	-2.8	882.1	59.0	54.1	0.9	0.9	3.2	3.0	10.5	10.1
Vietnam	80	73	0.9	310.1	28.8	41.7	3.2	7.6	16.4	21.3	8.2	8.0
West Bank and Gaza	32	28	3.0	6.0	..	1.5	19.1	19.1	18.4	17.8	3.5	3.2
Yemen, Rep.	79	70	2.8	528.0	1.0	1.0	0.2	0.3	2.9	2.9	8.1	7.4
Zambia	61	65	2.6	743.4	66.1	57.1	0.0	0.0	7.1	7.1	49.3	46.7
Zimbabwe	71	63	0.8	386.9	57.5	45.3	0.3	0.3	7.5	8.3	25.2	24.7
<b>World</b>	<b>57 w</b>	<b>51 w</b>	<b>0.6 w</b>	<b>129,644.6 s</b>	<b>31.2 w</b>	<b>30.4 w</b>	<b>0.9 w</b>	<b>1.1 w</b>	<b>10.8 w</b>	<b>11.0 w</b>	<b>23.0 w</b>	<b>22.3 w</b>
<b>Low income</b>	75	68	1.8	21,216.9	26.8	24.7	1.0	1.2	9.0	10.2	18.1	17.6
<b>Middle income</b>	61	52	0.3	74,923.2	33.7	32.7	1.0	1.2	11.1	11.2	20.8	20.2
Lower middle income	68	58	0.4	34,404.7	25.6	25.0	1.5	1.8	13.5	14.3	15.0	14.7
Upper middle income	31	25	-0.4	40,518.4	40.6	39.3	0.6	0.7	9.1	8.6	44.7	43.3
<b>Low &amp; middle income</b>	63	56	0.7	96,140.1	32.2	31.0	1.0	1.2	10.6	11.0	20.2	19.6
East Asia & Pacific	71	57	-0.3	15,870.6	28.8	28.4	2.2	2.9	12.1	13.5	11.6	11.4
Europe & Central Asia	37	36	0.0	23,109.9	38.2	38.3	0.4	0.4	12.4	11.0	58.4	57.7
Latin America & Carib.	29	22	-0.2	20,156.5	48.8	45.4	0.9	1.0	6.5	7.2	27.6	26.8
Middle East & N. Africa	48	43	1.3	8,643.7	2.3	2.4	0.8	0.9	5.8	6.1	18.3	17.6
South Asia	75	71	1.5	4,781.3	16.5	16.8	1.8	2.6	42.6	41.9	14.5	13.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	72	64	1.9	23,578.1	28.5	26.5	0.8	0.9	6.6	8.0	25.5	25.0
<b>High income</b>	27	23	-0.3	33,504.5	28.4	28.8	0.7	0.7	11.4	11.0	37.3	36.4
Euro area	29	27	-0.1	2,513.0	32.5	37.2	4.7	4.3	26.9	25.5	20.6	20.2

a. Data are not available for all three years. b. Includes Luxembourg. c. Provisional estimate. d. Includes Montenegro.

**About the data**

With 3 billion people, including 70 percent of the world's poor people, living in rural areas, adequate indicators to monitor progress in rural areas are essential. However, few indicators are disaggregated between rural and urban areas (for some that are, see tables 2.7, 3.5, and 3.11). The table shows indicators of rural population and land use. Rural population is approximated as the midyear nonurban population. While a practical means of identifying the rural population, it is not precise (see box 3.1a for further discussion).

The data in the table show that land use patterns are changing. They also indicate major differences in resource endowments and uses among countries. True comparability of the data is limited, however, by variations in definitions, statistical methods, and quality of data. Countries use different definitions of rural and urban population and land use. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the primary compiler of the data, occasionally adjusts its definitions of land use categories and revises earlier data. Because the data reflect changes in reporting procedures as well as actual changes in land use, apparent trends should be interpreted cautiously.

Satellite images show land use that differs from that of ground-based measures in area under cultivation and type of land use. Moreover, land use data in some countries (India is an example) are based on reporting systems designed for collecting tax revenue. With land taxes no longer a major source of government revenue, the quality and coverage of land use data have declined. Data on forest area may be particularly unreliable because of irregular surveys and differences in definitions (see *About the data* for table 3.4). FAO's *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005* aims to address this limitation. The FAO has been coordinating global forest resources assessments every 5–10 years since 1946. *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005*, conducted during 2003–05, covers 229 countries and territories at three points: 1990, 2000, and 2005. The most comprehensive assessment of forests, forestry, and the benefits of forest resources in both scope and number of countries and people involved, it examines status and trends for about 40 variables on the extent, condition, uses, and values of forests and other wooded land.

**Definitions**

- **Rural population** is calculated as the difference between the total population and the urban population (see *Definitions* for tables 2.1 and 3.11).
- **Land area** is a country's total area, excluding area under inland water bodies and national claims to the continental shelf and to exclusive economic zones. In most cases definitions of inland water bodies includes major rivers and lakes. (See table 1.1 for the total surface area of countries.)
- **Land use** can be broken into several categories, three of which are presented in the table (not shown are land used as permanent pasture and land under urban developments).
- **Forest area** is land under natural or planted stands of trees, whether productive or not.
- **Permanent cropland** is land cultivated with crops that occupy the land for long periods and need not be replanted after each harvest, such as cocoa, coffee, and rubber. Land under flowering shrubs, fruit trees, nut trees, and vines is included, but land under trees grown for wood or timber is not.
- **Arable land** is land defined by the FAO as under temporary crops (double-cropped areas are counted once), temporary meadows for mowing or for pasture, land under market or kitchen gardens, and land temporarily fallow. Land abandoned as a result of shifting cultivation is excluded.

**What is rural? Urban?****3.1a**

The rural population identified in table 3.1 is approximated as the difference between total population and urban population, calculated using the urban share reported by the United Nations Population Division. There is no universal standard for distinguishing rural from urban areas, and any urban-rural dichotomy is an oversimplification (see *About the data* for table 3.11). The two distinct images—isolated farm, thriving metropolis—represent poles on a continuum. Life changes along a variety of dimensions, moving from the most remote forest outpost through fields and pastures, past tiny hamlets, through small towns with weekly farm markets, into intensively cultivated areas near large towns and small cities, eventually reaching the center of a megacity. Along the way access to infrastructure, social services, and nonfarm employment increase, and with them population density and income. Because rurality has many dimensions, for policy purposes the rural-urban dichotomy presented in tables 3.1, 3.5, and 3.11 is inadequate.

A 2005 World Bank Policy Research Paper proposes an operational definition of rurality based on population density and distance to large cities (Chomitz, Buys, and Thomas 2005). The report argues that these criteria are important gradients along which economic behavior and appropriate development interventions vary substantially. Where population densities are low, markets of all kinds are thin, and the unit cost of delivering most social services and many types of infrastructure is high. Where large urban areas are distant, farm-gate or factory-gate prices of outputs will be low and input prices will be high, and it will be difficult to recruit skilled people to public service or private enterprises. Thus, low population density and remoteness together define a set of rural areas that face special development challenges.

Using these criteria and the Gridded Population of the World (CIESIN 2005), the authors' estimates of the rural population for Latin America and the Caribbean differ substantially from those in table 3.1. Their estimates range from 13 percent of the population, based on a population density of less than 20 people per square kilometer, to 64 percent, based on a population density of more than 500 people per square kilometer. Taking remoteness into account, the estimated rural population would be 13–52 percent. The estimate for Latin America and the Caribbean in table 3.1 is 22 percent.

**Data sources**

Data on urban population shares used to estimate rural population come from the United Nations Population Division's *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision*. Data on land area and land use are from the FAO's electronic files. The FAO gathers these data from national agencies through annual questionnaires and country official publications and websites and by analyzing the results of national agricultural censuses.