Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR THE SDGs: DATA

Measuring the SDGs

Improving country data for monitoring SDG achievements and informing policy decisions

The issue

Three years into the 2030 Agenda, significant data and capacity gaps remain when it comes to the indicators for measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As of December 2018, only 62 percent of SDG indicator data had been published on the SDG global database (just 144 indicators out of 232). While internationally established methodologies were available for 185 indicators, 84 of them were still only partially reported worldwide. At national level, only a few countries had completed a full mapping of data sources and flagged data deficits. There is a growing risk that without SDG data capacity support, countries will continue to use non-standard indicators, compromising international comparability, hampering the production of regional and global aggregates, and undermining the evidence base on which national and global sustainable development policy decisions are made.

There is enormous need for capacity development at national level to ensure countries can produce and report on most SDG indicators within the next few years. A recent SDG Gap Assessment conducted by FAO revealed that 72 percent of countries require external assistance for producing SDG indicators, such as the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), land area under sustainable agriculture, food losses, fish stock levels, and forest area. More also needs to be done to promote and facilitate the use of statistics to achieve global and national SDG targets. This requires support for countries to provide open access to the wealth of data produced by national statistical systems and to undertake in-depth analysis of the underlying causes of the obstacles to achieving the SDGs.

The action

The objective of this programme is to enable partner countries to produce and use more comprehensive data on SDG indicators, allowing them to design effective evidence-based national strategies to ensure that relevant SDG targets are met. The direct beneficiaries will be the national institutions responsible for collecting, computing and disseminating the SDG data and indicators, as well as policymakers, whose decisions will be better informed as a result.

Decision-makers will benefit not only from higher-quality and more granular data, but also from improved analytical progress reports, which will help to identify the key determinants of SDG achievement. In this way, by addressing all the steps of the data cycle and by establishing a strong link to the policy work of FAO, the programme will ultimately help countries reach the SDG targets.

The issue in numbers

38%
of SDG indicator data had not been collected as of end 2018

84 out of **185**
available SDG indicators remain unreported by more than 50% of countries

USD **100–200** million
in additional investment in statistics is needed to measure SDG progress

Programme targets

21
SDG indicators under FAO custodianship will be monitored in partner countries

66%
rise in countries reporting SDG indicators under FAO custodianship

12
countries will use earth observation data to produce relevant SDG indicators

The budget

USD **21** million

4 years   Global

Expected results

- Data disaggregation techniques are established for all SDG indicators under FAO custodianship;

- SDG data gaps and statistical capacities of partner countries assessed and strategic plans developed that align national monitoring frameworks with the Global Indicator Framework;

- Innovative and cost-effective methods, such as the use of earth observation data, adopted in partner countries for producing relevant SDG indicators in a sustainable way;

- SDG indicators under the 11 FAO-relevant thematic domains (such as food security, investments in agriculture, equal access to land and markets, and sustainable use of natural resources), regularly monitored in partner countries;

- SDG data made openly accessible and SDG progress reports produced and widely disseminated in partner countries.

Geographic focus

The programme is global in scope, and responds to repeated calls by the international statistical community for international organizations to step up their capacity development activities for SDG monitoring. The programme is also fully aligned with the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, which provides the framework for planning and implementing statistical capacity-building pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In partnership with

The Programme will be implemented in a participatory way, as SDG monitoring needs are far beyond each individual UN agency's capacity. FAO has already established a number of partnerships with international agencies with a view to helping countries to produce and report SDG indicators, such as with the World Bank on SDG indicator 2.1.2 on FIES indicator 5.a.1 on women's access to land, or with UN Environment on indicator 12.3.1 pertaining to food losses and waste. Moreover, FAO is coordinating with the UN Development Programme and UN Resident Coordinators to provide synergic support to countries under the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) framework. FAO will also seek the collaboration of countries with a more developed statistical system for providing partner countries with experts in delivering technical assistance, as well as staff resources and facilities for organizing training workshops, through South-South or triangular cooperation.

SDG contribution

Côte D'Ivoire on track for the 2019 HLPF

Côte D'Ivoire aspires to be an outstanding performer in terms of the SDGs. A national committee has been mandated with implementing the SDGs under the leadership of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, while the five strategic axes of the national development plan (2016-2020) have been meticulously aligned with the SDGs. In 2017, the country requested FAO's assistance in SDG monitoring and FAO responded by deploying a team of experts to assess data gaps and sources, identify the national focal points for SDG indicators under FAO custodianship and deliver in-depth training on food-security indicators. This first phase of support is being followed up with targeted technical assistance missions for multiple SDG indicators, to ensure that Côte D'Ivoire is able to report on a maximum number of SDG indicators in the Voluntary National Review it plans to submit to the 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF).

Why invest?

External support for strengthening national statistical systems has been fairly limited to date. The share of Official Development Aid (ODA) for statistics is estimated at just 0.33 percent (2016). The extra investment needed in statistics to monitor the SDGs is estimated at USD 100–200 million a year. Building on FAO's statistical expertise and country-level experience, this programme will offer a comprehensive menu of specific capacity-development activities, organized into five main modules along the key stages of the statistical process. The programme will ultimately help countries achieve the SDG targets related to hunger and food security, sustainable agriculture and the sustainable use and management of natural resources.

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