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Alignment of Regional monitoring frameworks and the global SDG indicator framework and inter-agency coordination

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SUMMARY

African countries today are confronted with an array of reporting frameworks that are not always consistent with each other. Such non-alignment imposes costs on countries, principally in terms of reporting burden, but also presents missed opportunities for streamlining data collection and reducing capacity development needs. In Africa, there are two regional monitoring frameworks which overlap with some SDG indicators related to food and agriculture: the Malabo Declaration set of indicators and the Integrated Regional Indicators Framework of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. Regarding the Malabo Declaration indicators, this paper shows that there are a number of Malabo Declaration performance indicators that are - or appear to be equivalent - to SDG indicators. However, an in-depth analysis conducted by the FAO Office of the Chief Statistician reveals that there are still important points of divergence, not only in terms of definitions and methodologies but also in terms of data availability. Although FAO has intensified its discussions with regional partners to resolve these discrepancies before the conclusion of the ongoing 2nd Biennial Review, a lot remains to be done. With regard to the Integrated Regional Indicators Framework of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063, only ten of the 21 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship are included in this integrated regional framework, though it is not clear what the criteria for the selection of these 10 indicators were, as all 21 indicators have an established methodology by now; most have at least some data for African countries, and all are in line with the main priorities of Agenda 2063. FAO will intensify its collaboration with regional partners to avoid

overlaps and catalyze synergies in data collection, as well as in support the preparation of the 2020 edition of the Africa Sustainable Development Report.

I. INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of national and regional monitoring frameworks alongside the global SDG indicator framework has, from one perspective, highlighted national and regional particularities, but from another perspective, caused increased bewilderment and confusion in countries, whose invariably already overburdened National Statistical Systems have been confronted with an escalating volume of reporting requirements. To overcome this challenge, FAO has systematically advocated the alignment of national and regional monitoring frameworks to the global SDG indicator framework, effectively calling on countries to prioritize the adoption of SDG indicators, and only supplement these with national and regional indicators if truly necessary, and following an in-depth, case-by-case analysis and consultations with respective custodian agencies. In Africa, there are two regional monitoring frameworks which overlap with some SDG indicators related to food and agriculture: the Malabo Declaration set of indicators and the Agenda 2063.

While progress has been made to harmonize these frameworks, this paper will show that there is still an important scope for further alignment between these two regional monitoring frameworks and the global SDG indicators, but this will require renewed and concerted efforts between the main stakeholder organizations. Such an alignment is important because it may significantly reduce the reporting burden on African countries and therefore, their data requirements and capacity development needs while freeing up resources to improve data quality, coverage and timeliness. At the same time, it opens the possibility of receiving enhanced technical assistance by custodian agencies such as FAO and will allow African countries to be more visible in global and regional progress reports, where African countries' performance may be more easily benchmarked against that of other countries. Prospectively, for some indicators, it could even be possible to organize joint data collection activities such as to eliminate duplication of efforts.

II. THE MALABO DECLARATION

In June 2014, AU Heads of State and Government adopted seven (7) Commitments in the Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation in Malabo (Equatorial Guinea) that should allow Africa to achieve Agricultural Transformation by 2025. These Commitments include: Recommitment to Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Principles and Values, Enhancing Investment Finance in Agriculture, Ending Hunger by 2025, Reducing poverty by half, by 2025, through Inclusive Agricultural Growth and Transformation, Boosting Intra-Africa Trade in Agricultural Commodities and Services, Enhancing Resilience of Livelihoods and production Systems to Climate Variability and other related Risks, and Mutual Accountability to Actions and Results.

Specific to the Malabo Declaration Commitment 7 to Mutual Accountability to Actions and Results, Heads of State and Government committed to:

- (i) Conduct a biennial Agricultural Review Process that involves tracking, monitoring and reporting on implementation progress;
- (ii) Foster alignment, harmonization and coordination among multi-sectorial efforts and multi-institutional platforms for peer review, mutual learning and mutual accountability; and
- (iii) Strengthen national and regional institutional capacities for knowledge and data generation and management that support evidence based planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

As part of this Biennial Reporting Mechanism, 23 performance categories and initially 43 performance indicators (later expanded to 47) were defined, for the seven thematic areas of performance aligned to the commitments to evaluate country performance in achieving agricultural growth and transformation goals in Africa. This has been done through a continent-wide consultation process, with the indicators chosen defined based on the strategic objectives that are derived from the Malabo Declaration. These indicators are thus adapted from existing modes of application taking into consideration the unique situation of the opportunities and challenges in Africa's agricultural sector and its multi-sectorial implications, especially concerning data acquisition and analysis.

The first Biennial Report (BR) titled "Inaugural Biennial Report on the Implementation of the Malabo Declaration" was prepared in 2017 (process led by AUC's Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA)) and adopted by the AU Assembly in January 2018. The preparation of the Second Biennial Review Report is underway, and the report should be presented for endorsement by the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of State and Government of the African Union (AU Summit), scheduled for February 2020 at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Between the two reports, efforts were made to refine the monitoring framework, improve the metadata on each indicator and align definitions and methods with other monitoring frameworks (e.g. the Global SDG indicator framework, Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy, African Water Vision 2025...). In particular, there are a number of Malabo performance indicators that are - or appear to be equivalent - to SDG indicators. Many of these equivalent or related indicators are under the custodianship of FAO, bearing in mind Malabo's focus on Agricultural Transformation. Nonetheless, despite some progress in alignment between Malabo indicators and comparable SDG indicators in the context of the 2nd Biennial Review, an in-depth analysis conducted by the FAO Office of the Chief Statistician in May 2019 revealed that there are still important points of divergence, not only in terms of definitions and methods but also in terms of data availability. A cross-cutting issue with the 1st Biennial Review is that the timestamp for data points is not provided, and as a result, it is not possible to cross-check country data against other international databases. Table 1 below summarizes the main findings of the analysis conducted by the FAO Office of the Chief Statistician.

In the light of this analysis, FAO proposed to the BR team a series of potential steps for further harmonizing the methodologies and data sources of Malabo indicators and official SDG indicators. A number of "immediate opportunities" were identified, particularly where the methodologies of the Malabo and respective SDG indicator are aligned. In such cases, FAO proposed the formation of tripartite working groups consisting of AUC, FAO and respective country experts, to conduct a joint data validation exercise once country data are collected for the 2nd Biennial Review. This working group would be tasked with identifying any discrepancies, investigating the reasons for them, and proposing solutions to overcome them. Several "medium-term opportunities" for a further alignment that require greater analysis of methods, classifications and existing data sources were also identified. Other opportunities would consist, for instance, in the development of harmonized data collection modules and joint data collection activities for equivalent indicators (e.g. SDG indicators 2.1.2, 2.a.1, 5.a.1).

FAO and the AUC have held a number of discussions over the past several months on ways to advance the alignment of the two monitoring frameworks, culminating in a tripartite teleconference between FAO, AUC and UNECA on 20 May 2019. On this occasion, the AUC outlined the timetable for the 2nd Biennial Review process, whose very tight schedule did not leave enough room for any additional joint data validation procedure as suggested by FAO. However, AUC and FAO agreed to collaborate in order to facilitate the data collection and validation of BR2 data. FAO shared some

relevant information to be used in the BR2 process such as the list of FAO national SDG focal points to be included in the BR2 country team, additional methodological resources to inform equivalent indicators, as well as FAO data for equivalent indicators. The AUC also agreed to examine further FAO’s comparative analysis and proposals with respect with “medium-term” opportunities after the current BR process has concluded and also highlighted capacity development support as a priority area for stronger collaboration. This work will be underpinned by one seconded FAO staff to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DREA) of the African Union Commission.

Table 1 – Summary of comparative analysis between the Malabo Declaration and SDG indicators

Malabo Declaration performance indicators	SDG indicators	Main issues
2.1i – Government agriculture expenditure	2.a.1 Agricultural Orientation index (numerator Government Expenditures in Agriculture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In the 1st BR, 44 countries reported indicator 2.1i. However, FAO only has data for 20 African countries ▪ For some countries, the data reported to FAO and AUC show considerable discrepancies ▪ 2.a.1 includes only central governments, but 2.1i also includes states and local government expenditures, for which data quality and coverage are dubious. ▪ A dedicated AUC guidance note on tracking government expenditures in agriculture recognizes that only a few countries use the International Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG) classification system, used by FAO
3.5iv Prevalence of Undernourished	2.1.1: Prevalence of undernourishment	According to the Technical Guidelines, the two indicators are identical. However, in the 1 st BR, there were essential discrepancies in the values reported under the Malabo Scorecard and the SDG indicator framework for most African countries.
3.5vii Reduction in the prevalence (%) of adult individuals (15 years or older) found to be food insecure	2.1.2: Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)	3.5vii is a newly introduced indicator for the 2 nd BR. According to the Technical Guidelines, it is identical to SDG indicator 2.1.2.
3.1vi Proportion of adult agricultural population with ownership or secure land rights over agricultural land	5.a.1: Proportion of agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In the 1st BR, a majority of countries seem to have reported on indicator 3.1vi, whereas FAO has data on 5.a.1 for only one country (Malawi). ▪ Values for 3.1vi range from as little as 0.1% (Congo, South Africa) to 100% (Egypt, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe). ▪ There is no sex disaggregation available in the Malabo indicator values, which makes the usefulness of this indicator quite different from the purpose of SDG indicator 5.a.1.
3.3. Reduction rate of Post-Harvest Losses for (at least) the 5 national	12.3.1.a: Food Loss Index (GFLI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The focus on the “5 national priority commodities” is smaller than the SDG indicator approach, which requires measurement of the 10 key commodities, two in each of the five major food groups

priority commodities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The two indicators diverge in two out of five aggregation steps as included in the Malabo Technical Guidelines, and differ in their interpretation.
5.2ii: Domestic Food Price Volatility Index (CV)	2.c.1: Indicator of food price anomalies (IFPA)	The “Domestic Food Price Volatility Index” was an indicator calculated by FAO in the past as part of a broader “Suite of Food Security Indicators”. However, it has now been discontinued and replaced by SDG indicator 2.c.1.
6.1iii: Share of agriculture land under sustainable land and water management	2.4.1: Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the 1st BR, the majority of African countries reported a value for 6.1ii, but none are able to report on 2.4.1. Values ranged from 0.04% (Ghana) to 100% (Egypt). The methodologies of the two indicators are manifestly different

III. INTEGRATED REGIONAL INDICATORS FRAMEWORK OF AGENDA 2030 AND AGENDA 2063

The Agenda 2063 is a framework formulated to guide Africa’s development in the next fifty years. It was adopted by the African Union Summit in January 2015, with its First Ten Year Implementation Plan (FTYIP) launched in June 2015. Agenda 2063 is a concrete and implementable framework with a clear vision, 7 aspirations, 20 goals, 37 priority areas and 173 targets. To monitor the Agenda and its FTYIP, the AUC initially adopted 124 indicators, 63 core indicators explicitly established for the FTYIP of Agenda 2063 and a complementary list of 61 indicators added for the global SDG indicator framework. The process for collecting and reporting on the implementation of the Agenda 2063 lies under the responsibility of the AUC. At the moment, however, this process lacks clarity with regards to the precise division of responsibilities between the AUC and relevant custodian agencies.

In June 2017, it was agreed at the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to use all the indicators selected by the African Union Commission to monitor and report on Agenda 2063 as the basis for an integrated regional indicator framework for both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. In addition, it was agreed to add a number of key tier I SDG indicators to the African Union Commission list. Accordingly, a further 14 complementary indicators from the global list of SDG indicators were added to the former list by the Special Initiatives Division and by the African Centre for Statistics, resulting in a total of 138 indicators that can be used to monitor implementation of the two Agendas in Africa.

Table 2 – SDG indicators under FAO custodianship in Integrated Regional Framework

Indicator	Included in Integrated Regional Indicators Framework?	Data Available for African Countries?	Tier
2.1.1	YES	YES	I
2.1.2	YES	YES	II
2.3.1	YES	YES	II
2.3.2	NO	YES	II
2.4.1	YES	NO	II
2.5.1	NO	YES	I
2.5.2	NO	YES	I
2.a.1	YES	YES	I
2.c.1	NO	YES	II

5.a.1	YES	YES	II
5.a.2	NO	NO	II
6.4.1	NO	YES	II
6.4.2	YES	YES	I
12.3.1.a	NO	NO	II
14.4.1	YES	NO	I
14.6.1	NO	YES	II
14.7.1	YES	YES	II
14.b.1	NO	YES	II
15.1.1	YES	YES	I
15.2.1	NO	YES	I
15.4.2	NO	YES	I

An examination of the list of 138 indicators reveals that only ten (10) of the 21 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship are included in this integrated regional framework. Table 2 below summarizes the inclusion status of the 21 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship in the integrated regional framework, with reference to their official Tier classification and the availability of data for African countries. These two parameters suggest that neither the Tier classification nor the availability of data have been taken into account in the selection of indicators for the integrated regional monitoring framework. For instance, there are indicators without data that have been included, whereas others with data that have been excluded.

Indeed, the exact criteria that were used in the selection of the indicators are not revealed in any AUC/UNECA document, nor can they easily be surmised with reference to the Goals and priority areas of Agenda 2063. For instance, although hunger is a priority area, the Indicator on Food Price Anomalies (2.c.1) is excluded, even though food price volatility is recurrent in many African countries, contributing significantly to the prevalence of food insecurity (stability dimension). Similarly, food losses are a pervasive phenomenon across the continent, and yet the relevant SDG indicator (12.3.1.a) is kept out of the framework. In addition, although achieving a blue ocean economy for accelerated economic growth is one of the 20 overarching Goals of Agenda 2063, two key SDG indicators for measuring progress on the implementation of international instruments combatting IUU fishing (14.6.1) and promoting small-scale fisheries (14.b.1) are similarly excluded.

The other surprising feature in the selection of these indicators is their relationship with the Malabo Scorecard indicators. A number of the selected SDG indicators within the integrated regional framework are ones that have equivalent or similar indicators under the Malabo framework, yet with discrepancies in methodology or data, as described in the previous section. This raises an issue of alignment between the two regional monitoring frameworks themselves, i.e. the Malabo framework and the Integrated Regional Indicators Framework for Agendas 2030 and 2063. For instance, will African countries be reporting SDG indicator 5.a.1 with sex disaggregation as the SDG and Integrated Framework foresee, or without sex disaggregation as was the case in the Malabo framework? In addition, will country reporting on 2.a.1 follow the relevant international classifications and standards are foreseen in the SDG and Integrated Framework, or will different national standards be used by different countries to the detriment of international comparability, as was the case in the Malabo framework? Conversely, there are indicators included in the Malabo framework that have remained outside the Integrated Framework, such as food losses, again raising an issue of alignment between the two frameworks themselves.

FAO has engaged with all key regional organizations to foster greater alignment between the SDG indicator framework and the Integrated Regional Indicators Framework of Agenda 2030 and Agenda

2063, principally with the AUC and UNECA. UNECA, for instance, has expressed interest in developing an MoU with FAO to conduct joint data collection and capacity development activities on specific topics such as women's access to land ownership and secure rights. Furthermore, UNECA has committed to providing the list of relevant stakeholders, based on which FAO would organize a follow-up virtual meeting on the Integrated Regional Indicators Framework of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063, to further clarify roles, responsibilities and activities, and hence agree on areas of synergies and collaboration. FAO is particularly keen in and will work towards avoiding overlaps and catalyzing synergies in data collection, thus reducing the confusion and reporting burden on countries that are confronted with multiple, sometimes incongruous reporting frameworks. Moreover, FAO will make a renewed effort to support the preparation of the 2020 edition of the Africa Sustainable Development Report by providing additional data and analysis on the food and agriculture-related SDG indicators with a regional perspective.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

AFCAS members are invited to express their views and recommendations to FAO on the following:

- FAO's efforts to foster alignment between the Malabo indicators, Integrated Regional Indicators Framework of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063, and the global SDG Indicator Framework;
- Suggestions for improved coordination with AUC, UNECA and other key regional, sub-regional and national stakeholders.