



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Informal Seminar “Challenges and Opportunities for reporting on SDG indicators”

(11 May 2020)

[Questions and answers](#)

1. QUESTION FROM ZAMBIA (Ms. Etambuyu Lukonga, Officer at the Zambian Statistics Agency):

*“Regarding the **50x2030 Initiative**, you said the initiative is going to support the low-income countries and the middle-income countries, both technically and financially, and that the initiative aims to build strong and national agriculture data systems. **Are there going to be new surveys or are there already existing surveys that we can use as a country and that will be funded?**”*

ANSWER: The 50x2030 initiative is based on the implementation of two survey models that will be adapted and integrated into the existing national survey programme.

- The first model, the Agricultural Survey Program covers a country’s full agricultural sector, whether in rural or urban areas, sampling both household and non-household farms. It has a modular approach built around an annual core module (CORE), collecting data on production (crop, livestock, aquaculture, fishery, and forestry production) and on other key agricultural variables needed on an annual basis. A set of rotating modules covers vital socio-economic and environmental variables, containing topics such as production costs; agricultural income; labour and productivity; gender decision-making in agriculture; production practices and environmental aspects of farming. These specialised tools are administered at lower frequencies.
- The second model, the Integrated Agricultural and Rural Survey Program expands the scope of the Agricultural Survey Program, integrating a household-based survey with the farm-based agricultural survey. The Integrated Agricultural and Rural Survey Program follows the same logic as the Agricultural program but incorporates a household survey tool and broadens the target population with a sample of rural non-agricultural households. The household survey tool covers socio-economic topics like off-farm income, employment, education, and welfare, offering a full picture of rural livelihoods. It allows understanding, on the one hand, the drivers and dynamics of rural development, structural transformation, and its linkages with agriculture; and on the other hand, the linkages between agricultural productivity and income with aspects of welfare and livelihoods, such as educational outcomes, non-agricultural income, and shocks and coping.

Both programs supported by the 50x2030 Initiative will be designed such that they enable the production of required indicators (SDG’s, CAADP, national indicators) according to their recommended time frame. The programs will be tailored to countries’ contexts, existing regularly administered agricultural survey program and existing statistical infrastructure. Countries will shape their specific work plans for their survey system, including frequencies of modules, depending on their priorities, data needs, existing statistical infrastructure, and available resources.

National partners will be the owners of the implementation process from the beginning. The support of 50x2030 Implementing Partners will be, therefore, tailored to meet the needs of each individual country’s data and capacity development needs, data user demands, and existing survey programs. All existing surveys at country level will be therefore embedded into an integrated system of agricultural surveys producing richer, more timely and reliable data for policy purposes, increasing data interoperability and generating additional cost-efficiencies.

2. QUESTION FROM FAO CHINA:

*“Thank you Chair for organizing this useful meeting, it allows Member States to learn the recent news in relation to this issue and it makes us aware of the importance of FAO’s statistics. China has question on data collection. In this exercise, as the colleagues already said, in China we also have some difficulties, we have various departments and ministries and they need to coordinate amongst themselves when it comes to provide data. We need cooperation; we also had training, events and capacity building events. I would like to highlight one point: **not every Member State is in the same situation, we don’t have the same capacity when it comes to data collection, we don’t have the same data sources and channels for distribution.** I would like to know **how FAO, as an agency responsible for the data, can resolve these problems to make sure that data and reports published by FAO reflect reliably the situation of all the countries when it comes to the implementation of the SDGs?**”*

ANSWER: The problems faced by China are common to many countries with a decentralized statistical system. For this reason, many countries have already developed a coordination mechanism for SDG monitoring and reporting, with the responsibility to coordinate the production of SDG data, the validation of the estimates and their reporting to custodian agencies. Normally, the responsibility to coordinate all data producers in the context of the SDG monitoring is given to the National Statistical Office. This is in line with the recommendations of the UN Statistical Commission and the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data.

On the other hand, custodian agencies have the responsibility to support national statistical systems in compiling, reporting and using the indicators. In designing its capacity development activities, FAO makes sure to take into account the institutional arrangements of the national statistical systems and assess the potential data sources that could be used to produce the SDG indicators at national level. This information is collected through FAO’s Statistical Capacity Assessment survey for SDG Indicators or initial fact-finding missions. Based on this assessment, a national statistical master plan is developed, which mainstreams SDG data production and is tailored to the specific capacity and data requirements of the national statistical system.

3. QUESTION FROM FAO ETHIOPIA:

*“There are **many challenges with governments not adopting SGD indicators like FIES.** Most of the surveys are conducted jointly with RBAs especially WFP. **Has the Statistics Directors through of some indicators like FIES can be one of the indicators for other analysis process like IPC in member states then this could make it easier to collect and get government buy in. Is there any consideration in this regard?**”*

ANSWER: The FIES indicator is already included in the IPC protocol for chronic food insecurity and FAO is working towards the inclusion of this indicator in the IPC protocol for acute food insecurity. In any case, FIES indicators can (and should) be used in any analysis related to food security. As FAO we partner not only with the RBAs, but also with regional and sub regional institutions involved in food security and nutrition monitoring. Our main objective is the inclusion of the FIES survey module in nationally representative surveys, implemented by Governments and/or international organizations, in order to derive estimates of the prevalence of food insecurity representative of the total population of the country.

4. COMMENTS FROM FAO MOROCCO (M. Said Zarouali, Haut Commissariat au Plan):

« Je crois le problème se pose dans la **coordination entre les différents intervenants et les efforts se font par plusieurs intervenants**. L'exemple des recensements agricoles et recensements de la population. En plus il y a vraiment des problèmes dans le calcul de quelque indicateur comme vous avez déclaré. Je crois l'accompagnement dans le calcul et non seulement de faire des cours classiques. Pour clarifier cette situation l'exemple de l'ODD 6 est exactement 6.4.2 et 6.4.1. De même pour les autres indicateurs ODD 2, 5, 6, 12, 14, 15. »

ANSWER: Effectivement, il est important d'avoir de bons mécanismes de coordination au niveau national afin de faciliter la collaboration et l'échange d'expertise entre les différents intervenants, de même que les communications avec les agences responsables des indicateurs de suivi au niveau mondial. Dans le cadre du suivi des ODDs, il est recommandé de donner un mandat clair de coordination aux instituts nationaux de la statistique. Pour ce qui est du renforcement des capacités, la stratégie est effectivement d'accélérer l'assistance technique au niveau national et de fournir cet appui par thème autant que possible. Par exemple, les activités de renforcement des capacités généralement combinent les indicateurs suivants : 2.3.1 et 2.3.2, 6.4.1 et 6.4.2, 2.1.1 et 2.1.2, 14.7.1, 14.b.1 et 14.6.1, 15.1.1 et 15.2.1.

Comme indiqué dans le chapitre 2 du volume 2 du Programme du recensement mondial de l'agriculture 2020, bien que le recensement de l'agriculture ne soit pas la principale source de données pour surveiller et rendre compte des indicateurs des ODD en raison de sa fréquence de 5 ou 10 ans, de nombreux pays l'utilisent pour faire des rapports sur la sécurité alimentaire, l'agriculture durable, le régime foncier, le rôle des femmes dans les activités agricoles et le travail. Plus précisément, le recensement peut en effet fournir des données à l'appui du calcul des indicateurs ODD 2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.4.1, 5.4.1 et 5.a.1.

En outre, le recensement de l'agriculture soutient le système statistique qui surveille les ODD et fournit la base de sondage pour le programme d'enquêtes agricoles dont certaines collectent des données pertinentes pour les ODD.

Selon un atelier régional sur les indicateurs des ODD organisé par la FAO en Asie l'année dernière, de nombreux pays utilisent ou prévoient d'utiliser le recensement de l'agriculture comme l'une des sources de données pour certains ODD (voir ci-dessous). Une tendance similaire est observée dans d'autres régions.

SDG indicator	Asian Countries	
2.3.1 & 2.3.2	Nepal Oman Samoa	
2.4.1	Bhutan Cambodia China Fiji Indonesia Japan	Lao People's Democratic Republic Nepal Malaysia Mongolia Philippines Samoa
5.a.1	Bhutan Cambodia China Fiji Indonesia Lao People's Democratic Republic Malaysia Mongolia Nepal Pakistan Philippines	Samoa Sri Lanka Thailand Viet Nam

« Au Maroc, le Haut Commissariat au Plan a lancé une enquête sur les comportements des ménages vis à vis les effets du COVID19. Elle est en cours, au niveau national. Elle traite les comportements socioéconomiques des ménages. Je crois elle est unique dans le monde à mon avis. »

ANSWER: Merci pour vos informations sur l'effort en cours au Maroc pour étudier les effets de l'épidémie de COVID19. En fait, le bureau de pays de la FAO organise un projet TCP qui vise à soutenir une telle étude. L'FAO est au courant du projet et participera activement à ses activités qui soutiendront le Haut Commissariat au Plan dans la conduite de l'enquête. De plus, FAO étudie actuellement plus en profondeur avec HCP l'utilisation de la *FIES_COVID19_Module* pour évaluer l'impact du COVID19 sur la sécurité alimentaire. Nous apprécions grandement votre participation et nous nous réjouissons de poursuivre votre collaboration.

5. QUESTIONS FROM HUNGARY (M. Zoltan Kalman, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Rome-based food and agriculture agencies of the UN):

"Thank you for this very important seminar and for the excellent presentations. We note with serious concerns that the World is not on track to meeting 37 out of 38 SDG targets.

Question 1: Which is the only SDG target where the World is on track? Perhaps I missed the relevant information due to my weak internet line."

ANSWER: The only SDG target deemed "on track" at global level (out of the 38 that were assessed last year in the first UN Progress Chart (see attached)) is "sustain per capita economic growth". Even this target has now been put into question by the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, there are numerous studies (see for instance Lakner et al) that have shown that per capita economic growth does not directly lead to reducing poverty and hunger, as well as other socio-economic inequalities between population groups.

Question 2: How can we tell and be sure if a target is reached or not, if we do not have sufficient data?"

ANSWER: This is one of the main points I tried to convey in the Information Seminar: for most of the SDG targets, we still don't have enough data to assess whether we are moving in the right direction, let alone whether we are "on track" to achieve the target by 2030. In fact the 2019 SDG Progress Report only assess 38 out of the 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda. This effectively blindfolds the international community and thwarts its ability to take effective measures, as Dorian and I have argued in this blog post.

Question 3: Acknowledging the huge importance of the availability of reliable statistical data, I wish to remind that statistics should not be considered as an objective itself. It serves as an essential tool to measure the advancement in reaching the goals. Better reporting does not automatically mean real improvement in achieving targets, and the other way round."

ANSWER: We completely agree, and have further elaborated this idea in the same blog post. Data is a necessary prerequisite, but not a sufficient ingredient, in achieving the SDGs, and it should not be considered an end in itself. Nonetheless, we should also recognize that data and statistics have a catalytic effect in not only informing countries, but also prompting them to take the necessary policy measures, as reflected in the common saying "what gets measured gets done".

“Question 4: should we be more happy for a well functioning statistical reporting system and weak actual development, or an excellent performance with weak reporting? Of course I consider both are important.”

ANSWER: This is a somewhat false dilemma, as one cannot happen without the other and both are indispensable. This is what I meant when I emphasized yesterday that data to inform the SDGs and efforts to achieve them should not be regarded as being in competition, but rather that they are synergetic and ensure that scarce resources are put to good use and achieve the desired targets. We should also recall that investment in statistics has been perennially low, still attracting only a mere 0.3% of global ODA, and that the estimated funding gap to properly measure the SDGs (approximately USD 200 million a year) although sizeable, is not at all comparable to the amount allocated to the implementation efforts. These ideas are further explored in the OECD’s Data for Development report.

6. COMMENT FROM FAO INDONESIA:

“Indonesia would like to support the FAO proposal on in-depth face-to-face seminar to discuss further regarding the proposal contained in the FAO’s new strategy for modernisation of Statistics.”

7. COMMENT FROM MALI (Mme Halimatou Kone Traoré. Deuxième Conseillère. Représentante permanente adjointe auprès de la FAO. Rome) :

« Je remercie la FAO pour cette bonne initiative. J’abonde dans le même sens que l’Indonésie. Les différentes présentations montrent un certain **retard dans la collecte de données** de la part de mon Pays Mali. L’idée de la représentante du Royaume-Uni de voir les Représentants Permanents s’investir plus auprès de nos gouvernements est une bonne idée. **Je souhaiterai avoir le contact d’un membre du bureau des statistiques de la FAO pour mieux exploiter les propositions qui s’offrent dans ce sens.** Merci. »

ANSWER: Toute requête en matière de statistiques peut être acheminée à l’adresse suivante : chief-statistician@fao.org. En précisant la nature de votre requête dans votre correspondance, il sera plus facile pour le Bureau du Statisticien en chef d’identifier le meilleur expert qui pourra prendre contact avec vous.

8. QUESTION FROM M. DOUGLAS MAGUNDA (FAO Emergency Coordination Unit (ECU), Zimbabwe):

“Why are countries not validating the FIES data given that this is an agreed upon SDG indicator, What mechanisms are in place to domesticate these global agreements on SDG Indicators?”

ANSWER: Over the past few years, we have seen a significant increase in the number of countries validating the FIES estimates. Having said that, the main concerns for the remaining countries in validating the FIES estimates may be twofold:

1. Some countries are hesitant to endorse estimates obtained through the Gallup World Poll instead of using national representative surveys implemented by National Statistical Authorities. This second approach is of course FAO end goal, and to date more and more countries have included the FIES Survey Module in their own National surveys.
2. Some other countries are hesitant to endorse the FIES estimates whenever the results are not consistent with those obtained from different survey tools used at country level. In these cases,

a reconciliation exercise is needed to understand, in collaboration with the involved institutions, what could be the reasons of these inconsistencies. This also implies an in-depth training of Government Officers on the methodology, analysis and interpretation of the results..

3. We need to expand our country coverage, as our training efforts have trickled down from regional workshops to sub regional workshops to country workshops, but there are a few more countries that have not been trained yet. Different factors contribute to the pace at which we respond to country requests including availability of funding, human resources and data at country level.

9. Question from participant:

“How do your stated initiatives leverage/align with the work of Hand in Hand initiative that also aims to close the data & information gap to improve policy & investment decisions at country level to accelerate SDG2 & 1 achievements?”

ANSWER: Our main capacity development initiatives have the objective to produce the necessary data that will then be used by initiatives like the Hand in Hand to identify the target populations and geographic areas in need of support to achieve the targets under goals 1 & 2. The objective of the Hand in Hand initiative is not to produce new data, but to use the available data more efficiently to inform and design effective evidence-based policy measures.

10. COMMENT FROM FAO CHILE:

« Nos parece fundamental que **FAO mantenga en copia a las Representaciones Permanentes cada vez que realicen un requerimiento de datos a nuestros países.** Ese simple hecho sería de gran ayuda para mejorar la coordinación. »

ANSWER: Your suggestion is duly noted. OCS have advised all the technical units to always copy the PERM REPS in their communications with the national statistical authorities.

11. QUESTION FROM FAO-US: (Ms Silvia Giovanazzi, Political Economic Specialist, U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome)

“I'd just have a quick question on funding/resources - is your division planning to use/ask for voluntary contributions for the new data/statistics initiatives or are you going to implement these data collection/analysis from FAO regular budget?”

ANSWER: The Initiatives presented during the session (i.e. the Umbrella programme on measuring the SDGs, the 50by2030 Initiatives, the Voices of the Hungry and the Second Phase of the Global Strategy) are mainly based on voluntary contributions. The resources necessary to fund these projects, involving also national data collections, cannot possibly be covered only by the FAO regular budget, which anyway has already funded a lot of activities over the last 2 biennia, in terms both of methodological work and technical assistance to countries. However, for two initiatives (the Umbrella programme and the 50by2030 Initiative), sources of funding are not strictly voluntary:

- 1) The Umbrella Programme is designed according to a modular approach, meaning that it can be delineated in several projects targeting specific countries or/and activities. In some cases, country-level and regional activities planned under this Programme have been implemented through TCPs (FAO regular budget) and contributed to the overall objectives.
- 2) The 50by2030 Initiative - which aims to support, both technically and financially, the implementation of Integrated Agricultural Surveys in 50 low-income and lower middle-

income countries over the 10 years leading to 2030 - is an extrabudgetary programme. Its overall implementation (estimated to 500-700 Millions USD) however foresees an in-kind contribution from its 3 implementing partners (16% of the total) and a progressively increasing commitment from the national government of project countries, in order to ensure the sustainability of the programme.