

Bridging the Data Divide: Reaching Zero Hunger Requires Better Agricultural Statistics

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El Iza Mohamedou
Program Manager
50x2030 Initiative

The FAO estimates that in the 2015-17 period 264 billion US\$ per year were invested in agriculture in low-income and lower middle-income countries (L/LMICs). That is more than the equivalent of the nominal GDP of Portugal or Romania in 2018. Yet that investment is often done without the benefit of recent, comparable, or accurate agricultural statistics. Regular agricultural surveys are implemented in only a few countries and data are scarce or missing.

To meet the agricultural data gap, the 50x2030 Initiative Data-Smart Agriculture, was established in late 2018 with the aim to empower and support 50 low and lower-middle income countries by 2030 to build strong and sustainable national data systems to produce and use high-quality and timely agricultural data through survey programs.

The Initiative is a partnership of many donors, like USAID, the Governments of Australia, Germany and Italy, and the BMGF, among other interested parties, and three leading implementing agencies in the field, the FAO, the World Bank and IFAD.

It aims to support the implementation of multiple rounds of integrated agricultural surveys, to make survey datasets publicly available and open, and to apply data in key decision processes. It will combine a farm-based agricultural survey with a household-based rural socio-economic survey programme.

The Initiative is organized into three Implementation Components: (1) Methods and Tools Development; (2) Data Production; and (3) Data Use.

The Initiative intends to contribute to increased knowledge on food security and nutrition. Within its overall aim to monitor SDG2 with a specific focus on agricultural and rural statistics, it is actively engaged in improving the measurement and understanding of *agricultural productivity* and *rural income generation*.

Roger mentioned the need for common metrics, but we also want to increase those metrics and with the component of methodologies, ensure that we cover new metrics and if possible using cost-effective earth observation and improved administrative data within the 10 years of the initiative. The Methods & Tools Development Component will develop and test an integrated sampling approach and a harmonized set of questionnaires, modules and data collection instruments for the different survey approaches to be implemented (under the Data Production Component). In particular, surveys will adopt fine-tuned and updated definitions and variables for core priority topics, such as labor inputs, land area and tenure, soil fertility, crop variety identification, etc. in order to provide quality and comparable data on these vital issues needed to tackle food security and nutrition issues

Needless to say, specific focus and work will also be dedicated to specific topics, and particularly to women and women's empowerment in agriculture.

Similarly as the CFS which is hailed as a functioning coalition of relevant actors, beyond the members vs. observers, and its multi-agency Secretariat with 2 of our own implementing partners namely FAO and IFAD, the 50x2030 Initiative calls for synergies among likeminded organization and actors, sharing similar aims – which are also those present here today.

In this context, the next important steps of the Initiative concern the involvement of the partner countries. Each country's involvement will be based on the country's initial conditions, needs and capacities and support will be tailored made to ensure over time technical and financial take-over.

We can all contribute, each within our own constituencies, to bridge data gaps, and specifically agricultural data gaps, and pave the way for a data-smart agriculture

We will build on all existing efforts to support domestic funding for the Initiative, including leaning on the IDA 19 Data for Policy Pillar for supplementary funding.

I look forward to working with you on this, with partner countries but also with your Private Sector Mechanism (PSM) as established by the CFS in the years to come to make this Initiative a success for all.