

TRAINING ON THE NEW COUNTRYSTAT SYSTEM

Dear Participants from the Republic of Congo and the Republic of Haiti, dear Colleagues from FAO;

- I am pleased to have the opportunity of opening this training and of introducing some basic ideas that have led to this event. Some may accompany us for the years to come. As Co-Chair of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) and Chief Statistician of FAO, I have the benefit of having daily and hands-on exposure to key challenges many countries are currently facing in area of statistics.
- Using this special vantage point, I will try to organize my brief opening statement around 3 areas of particular importance for you as new members to the CountrySTAT family. They are general challenges the statistics community needs to live up to in the coming year and include: (i) mastering data dissemination, (ii) promoting statistical institution building and (iii) providing IT empowerment at country level.

1. Data dissemination

- Let me start with data dissemination. As you all know, we just have finished the first global round of universal development efforts, known as the Millennium Development Goals. Overall, the MDG Round had 8 major goals.
- We are now preparing for a new round, known as the Sustainable Development Round, organized around 17 goals, the so-called SDGs. Underneath these 17 goals, there is an array of 169 different targets, which in turn will be monitored by a probably even broader range of indicators. The monitoring process will be guided by the international community, but ultimately, countries will be responsible for collecting the data/indicators and for disseminating them.
- With CountrySTAT as a platform, you are well prepared to live up to this challenge. CountrySTAT offers all possible options necessary for data dissemination in the SDG round, and beyond. It offers metadata standards, allows you to share your data easily with others, and offers all sorts of different options to visualize data.
- Given its broad functionality, CountrySTAT also offers a solution as the data dissemination tool of National Censuses (as for the case of Congo)
- We are keenly aware of the fact that CountrySTAT is not the only option for data dissemination, but we think it is the best option. The reasons why bring me to my next point, i.e. IT empowerment.

2. IT Empowerment

- No doubt, there is no shortage of data dissemination platforms. No even in any given individual country. Some countries have been offered as many as 7 different platforms and some even implemented all 7 different alternatives. None works. Why?
- The answer is relatively straightforward: countries only use something that they understand, can handle and eventually consider as theirs, i.e. they need to own a tool.
- We therefore try to produce a dissemination platform *with* you, and not *for* you. More precisely, we only want to offer you a tool box and empower you to use it to build your own platform. We also want to empower you to modify and tailor the platform to your needs. If your Ministry doesn't have the capacity -- we will create it. If that is not possible, we will look for a private company that can do this for you. In so doing, we will create further business opportunities outside the original and narrow realm of data dissemination in agriculture.
- This is not a theoretical concept, but increasingly a practical solution. Other UN organizations such as UNESCAP and UNECA are rolling out CountrySTAT variants for all statistical data and do so on their own. We have created capacities in these organizations to build their own platforms. Individual countries will follow soon.
- Ideally, such a process is accompanied by a broader process of capacity development, including also institution building. This is my third and last point in this address.

3. Institution building

- From its very beginning, an important pillar of CountrySTAT has been the efforts to build the necessary institutions for data collection, handling and dissemination.
- This was a very hard process initially and we would not claim that it is finished. But with the closer links to the GS, also institution building in the context of CountrySTAT will become easier and more efficient.
- Our ultimate goal is to create the institutional structure that makes our CD efforts sustainable.
- Over the past 7 years, FAO has acquired through CountrySTAT, a deep knowledge of the institutional and technical assets and capacity of its member countries. The Technical Working Groups of CountrySTAT are the main pillar of these efforts.

Closing

While our ultimate goal remains to be mainly a facilitator and enabler, we cannot work without support from others.

- In this context, I have the pleasure to mention the partners that have financially contributed to the development of the system. In particular, the BMGF has provided continuous support from the beginning of the project until now; the Italian Cooperation has funded activities for the EAC region; the Flanders International Cooperation Agency (FICA) has funded activities for SADC country members. through the FAO Multi-Partner Programme Support Mechanism (FMM) - Voluntary contributions.

- Their support has been crucial for launching, improving and rolling out the system and for making it an effective tool for improving the agricultural sector and food security at global level.
- Of course, the Republic of Congo, financed its own first national Census through an FAO Unilateral Trust Fund Programme of almost US\$ 8 million, including CountrySTAT as platform for the dissemination of the results.
- We hope that other donors find our efforts and our new business model an interesting idea that they want to support.

Thank you for your attention.