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PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL STRATEGY TO IMPROVE AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL STATISTICS

The present report, submitted to the Statistical Commission, provides an update on the status of the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics at global, regional and country levels. The report reiterates the scope and outcome of the Global Strategy and the main features of its global action plan, and describes the results obtained to date in preparing regional action plans, in mobilizing financial and technical support, and in implementing research and capacity development activities. Due to the regional focus of this conference, the progress of the regional activities in Africa is reported separately.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope and Outcome of the Global Strategy

To address the weakness in basic data and availability of information, including emerging data needs in developing countries, a **Global Strategy for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics** was developed through a long and extensive consultative process with national and international organisations, and endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in February 2010.

The **outcome of the Global Strategy** is to enable target developing countries (90 target countries in 2012-2016) to build sustainable statistical systems that will produce accurate and reliable agricultural and rural data to inform and guide policy analysis and decision-making. The Global Strategy covers a **broad scope** including aspects of forestry, fisheries, land and water use in order to address the merging and closely related economic, social and environmental issues faced by policy makers.

Its **three main pillars** are the following:

1. Produce a minimum set of core data and determine national priorities
2. Integrate agricultural statistics into national statistical systems
3. Foster the sustainability of agricultural statistics through governance and statistical capacity development

In order to achieve the outcome of the Global strategy **four global outputs** were identified:

1. Effective governing bodies set up and functioning at global and regional levels.
2. Coordinating bodies of the national statistical system, legal frameworks and strategic plans established in the target countries, to enable the integration of agriculture into the national statistical systems.
3. New cost effective methods for data collection, analysis and dissemination developed and disseminated.
4. Increased capacity of agricultural statistics staff in regional training centres and target countries.

A Global Action Plan for implementation was endorsed in February 2012 by the UNSC.

1.2 Main features of the Global Action Plan

The Global Action Plan provides a global framework and a governance structure, including a specific coherent results framework. It leads to the establishment of improved national statistics systems supported by global and regional coordinated statistical capacity development efforts through technical assistance, training and research. It aims to introduce a three level governance structure: global, regional and national. Well established responsibilities for each level in conducting the various activities include country assessments, development of sector plans, technical assistance, and training and research components.

- The first efforts include an assessment phase in two stages. During the first stage, countries provide a light assessment of their statistical capabilities. During the second one, they provide a more in-depth assessment of national capabilities to produce the minimum set of core data on a sustainable basis and, in a longer term, the capacity to produce analyses across economic, social and environmental dimensions. On the basis of the assessment, countries develop country proposals which may be integrated into a sector plan (SSPARS) as a component of the NSDS (National Strategies for the Development of Statistics), facilitating the integration of agricultural statistics into the NSS and guiding the implementation determining the requirements for technical assistance and training.
- The research component contributes to a significant improvement in the quality, reliability, availability and cost-effectiveness of agricultural statistics in developing countries. The most important methodological issues will be addressed and gaps will be progressively filled on a large series of topics, which have been discussed and prioritised during the preparation process. Results of the research component coordinated at the Global level will be used for developing guidelines and training material.

- Coordinated technical assistance at global and regional levels will be available in key areas, including support and guidance for establishing the governance structures to integrate agriculture into the NSS, determining the methodology to be used and undertaking the overall implementation.
- The training component will address the different levels of core skills needed to produce official statistics. Needs will be defined and translated into theoretical and practical knowledge requirements, specific curricula will be developed, training centres upgraded and scholarships provided.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL STRATEGY: PROGRESS TO DATE

2.1 Governance and action plans

At **global level**, the Global Steering Committee (GSC) met seven times since the establishment of the Programme Governance in December 2011. The 7th GSC meeting was held in October 2013, during which the following documents were endorsed: (i) the revised integrated budget; *and* (ii) the monitoring and evaluation framework of the programme. The fourth meeting of the GEB was organized in April 2013 to endorse the Regional workplans for 2013. The Global Office organized the first meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee on 18-19 July 2013. Progress in the establishment of the Global Office was also been made. Selection procedures for the Technical Assistant, Training specialist and Programme Officer were completed and it is expected that the recruitment of a research assistant will be completed by the end of 2013.

At **regional level** significant progress was made in Africa (see specific report) and in other regions:

- The Regional Steering Committee for Asia and the Pacific was constituted in April 2013. A total of two RSC meetings in 2013 were held to date. The currently selected priority countries are: Georgia, Bhutan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Samoa and Fiji. The Regional Action plan for Asia and the Pacific was approved during the 5th Global Steering Committee in February 2013. The implementation of the regional activities in Asia and the Pacific is shared between FAO regional representation, which host the regional office and is in charge of the technical assistance component. UNESCAP/SIAP in charge of the training component.
- In Latin America and Caribbean and in CIS countries, a mandate was given by the respective regional statistical intergovernmental bodies to prepare a Regional Action Plan. Regional working groups were formed for steering the process. The regional action plans for both Latin America and the Caribbean, and CIS have been drafted and are to be validated by their respective steering committees.
- In the Near East region the plan is under preparation.

2.2 Mobilisation and management of resources

Following intensive advocacy efforts, two important grant agreements covering the period of 2012-2016 were signed in 2012. The first was with the UK Department for International

Development (DFID), for a total amount of 16 million pounds, and the second with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), for an amount exceeding 15 million USD. In addition, a contribution from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was made in 2012.

The total value of resources mobilized to date amount to about USD 41 million (50% of the total budget). This leaves a funding gap of about USD 42 million compared to the approved budget of the Action Plan, and consultations are underway with a number of important multilateral and bilateral donors to meet the funding requirements. A 10 million dollar proposal was submitted to the European Commission to cover the funding gap of activities planned under the Global Action Plan in Africa. It is expected that the EC will confirm the funding before the end of 2013. So far only the Global Office and the Africa and Asia-Pacific regions have received funds for implementing the strategy, and further efforts will be made towards mobilizing resources for the other regions.

Significant in kind and financial resources were also provided by the FAO, the World Bank and the African Development Bank. The Asian Development Bank funded research activities of the Asia-Pacific Action Plan. Japan provided in kind contribution by seconding an expert to support the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The Italian Statistical Office seconded an expert to support the research Programme of the Global Office.

The Global Trust Fund has been established and is managed by the Fund Administrator, an entity separate from the FAO Statistics Division, which is contributing to its implementation. A specific mechanism for disbursing the funds to Participant partners was developed including all the related administrative, financial and legal procedures and instruments.

2.3 Global Office activities – Research, Guidelines and Training material

Research

In 2013 the Global Office has initiated or continued work on several methodological areas identified as priorities for the Global Strategy. The prioritization of research topics was discussed during a High Level Meeting in December 2012.

The following research topics have commenced in 2013: (i) conceptual framework for SEEA-AGRI; (ii) integrated survey framework (ii) improved methodologies for master sampling frames; (iii) cost of agricultural production; (iv) improving methods for crops estimates; (v) developing more efficient and accurate methods for using remote sensing; (vi) improving methodology of food balance sheets; (vii) adoption of new technology for field data capture, compilation, transfer and dissemination; (viii) improving methodology for small scale fishery; *and* (ix) better integration of geographic information and statistics. The literature review and the gaps analysis for most of these research topics have been completed, and the field tests will begin in 2014. Results from the research topics will be used for developing guidelines and training material, and will help regional implementing partners in providing technical assistance to countries for implementing cost-effective methods.

Guidelines and training material

As some topics do not require important resources to produce technical guidelines or training material, the Global Office has started to prepare the following guidelines: (i) Guidelines on Agricultural classifications; (ii) Guidelines on best practices on nomadic livestock; (iii) Guidelines on better dissemination of agricultural micro-data; (iv) Guidelines on integrated Survey framework; (v) Guidelines on country assessment and in depth country assessment; (vi)

Handbook on the use of handheld GPS for crop area measurement; *and* (vii) Guidelines on Sectoral Plans for Agricultural Statistics (SSPARS). A first roll-out of the guidelines, in collaboration with AfDB, is planned in the margins of the AFCAS meeting in December 2013 in Rabat. This will be continued with tests in two pilot countries in Africa and Asia in 2014. Work on the following training materials has also commenced: (i) linking Population census with Agricultural census and (ii) greenhouse gas emissions. A workshop for the greenhouse emissions training is being organized in the margins of AFCAS.

2.4 Regional activities- country assessments, training

Significant progress was made on the **African continent** in terms of country assessments and preparation of training activities (see specific reports).

In the **Asia and the Pacific region**, the standard questionnaire for country assessment was piloted in 59 countries. These questionnaires were processed and analyzed during the first half of 2012, and used to test the capacity development indicators and to identify the first countries to take part to the regional activities in 2013. In-depth country assessments are planned in 4 countries before the end of 2013. They will be followed by 4 other countries in 2014. Regional workshops have been organized in the region by SIAP - a first one in Korea on the minimum set of core data, and another one in Iran on sampling methods for agricultural statistics. An additional one on the use of administrative data is planned in India.

In the **three other regions** (LAC, CIS and Near East), country assessment questionnaires were sent to the countries. Results have been analysed for the CIS region and are on-going for LAC and Near East.

Way forward and priorities for 2014

Now that the necessary operational framework has been developed, the Global and Regional Offices need to finalize their recruitment in order to fully carry out the activities planned for 2014. Additional advocacy activities for resource mobilization also need to be conducted.

Focus areas in 2014 at the **global level** include:

- Providing support to the preparation of regional Action Plans (with focus on Latin America and the Caribbean, Near East and CIS).
- Rolling out of an intensive advocacy and communication campaign and on-going resource mobilization activities.
- Undertaking or continuing research activities on a number of priority topics agreed during the 7th GSC meeting.
- Strengthening the development of corresponding guidelines/handbooks and training material and translating them into UN languages.

In Asia:

- The pace of implementation of activities under the Regional Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific is expected to increase substantially for the rest of 2013 when work on in-depth country assessments is planned to begin.

- Reports on the in-depth assessments are expected to attract greater government attention and donor funding with the objective of improving the current situation in the short run, as well as building the sustainable capacity to produce agricultural statistics in the long run.

Priorities for **Near East, CIS and LAC**:

- Finalizing their regional action plans.
- Mobilizing resources.