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Implementation Plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

1. Strategy of statistical capacity development and the three pillars of the Global Strategy

It is important to strengthen the statistical capacity in order to produce the required statistics. In this regard three components of statistical capacity building are essential: technical assistance program, training program in agricultural statistics, and research agenda. Each of these components will take into account the three pillars of the Global strategy, i.e. minimum set of core data for international reporting, integration of agricultural statistics into the National Statistical System, and coordination of the National Statistical System or governance mechanism.

Minimum set of core data for international reporting

It is necessary to reduce the response burden by defining a minimum set of internationally comparable core data that countries should produce and report on a regular basis. For this purpose the following guidelines will be applied: selection of key economic, social and environmental variables; selection of core data items for each variable; and minimum frequency at which core data items should be reported.

Integrating agricultural statistics into the National Statistical System

It is important to provide methodological tools for the integration of agricultural statistics into the National Statistical System. An essential element of this integration is the adoption of a master sample frame for agricultural surveys. The purpose is to provide a linkage between the agricultural holdings, their respective households, and their use of land. Geo-referencing the statistical units will facilitate the integration process. Such integrated data collection and survey framework will facilitate the analysis and comparison of data from different sources. The approach should remain flexible to allow the use of administrative data and other data sources taking into account national capacity.

Another important aspect of the integration of agricultural statistics into the National Statistical System is to create an integrated data base. The data base should be user-driven. Conditions may be created to facilitate the establishment of a data warehouse of official macro statistics, through harmonized definitions and classifications and avoiding the dissemination of conflicting statistics. In the long term, micro data from surveys may be stored for further processing and analysis over time.

2. Governance of the Implementation Plan

For the implementation of the Global Strategy, a governance mechanism is needed at national, regional and global levels. At national level, the National Strategy for Development of Statistics should fully cover the agricultural and rural statistics. At present only about 10% of NSDSs have adequately or partially incorporated aspects of agriculture. Most existing NSDSs need thus to be updated mainstreaming agricultural statistics.

At regional and global level, it is necessary to build a donor coalition and establish a Trust Fund for raising resources to ensure the feasibility and sustainability of the implementation of the Global Strategy. It is intended to create a global governance structure to allocate the resources and ensure that coordination, monitoring and reporting follow agreed upon procedures.

It is also intended to adopt a regional approach in the development of the implementation plan to take into account the diversified stages of development of the agricultural statistics systems. For this to be effective, regional development partners will have to be drivers of the implementation in their regions. Each region might have its own governance structure, but it is necessary to develop a linkage between the regional and the global governance structures.

This regional approach has effectively started in Africa where a Conference on Implementing the Global Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Statistics for Africa was held in February 2010. The Conference created three task teams which are assigned to develop proposals for capacity building in three areas, and designated the leading agency for each of them: Technical assistance program (lead: African Development

Bank); Training Program in agricultural statistics (lead: UNECA); and Research Agenda (lead: FAO).

3. Process to develop the implementation plan

Three major steps are envisaged in the development process of the Implementation Plan:

- The FAO Secretariat in cooperation with the UN Statistical Commission's (UNSC) Friends of the Chair Group on Agricultural Statistics will develop the Implementation Plan during 2010.
- A full draft of this Implementation Plan will be reviewed at the Fifth International Conference on Agricultural Statistics, which will be held in Uganda in October 2011.
- The Implementation Plan will be submitted to the UNSC for final endorsement in February 2011.