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ADB/FAO WORKSHOP ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS AND AGRICULTURE CENSUS

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations jointly organized a Workshop on Agricultural Statistics and Agriculture Census in Bangkok, Thailand from 2 to 5 November 2009. Twenty-one delegates from the Ministry of Agriculture, National Statistics Office, and the Planning Agency representing data users and producers from each of seven ADB developing member countries (DMCs), namely, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, and Timor-Leste, participated in the Workshop.

Workshop presentations and discussions were steered by officers from ADB, FAO and two invited resource persons. The workshop was divided into the following technical sessions:

- Session 1. System of Food and Agricultural Statistics in the Participating Countries
- Session 2. The Role of Agricultural Statistics in Planning for Agriculture and Food Security
- Session 3. Food Security Statistics
- Session 4. Agricultural Surveys and Census Methods

Each session had one or two presentations from the resource persons on the concepts, methods, and international recommendations on the subject followed by country presentations and open discussions.

The Workshop noted that:

- a. Governments in developing member countries (DMCs) were according low priority and limited resources to statistical activities.
- b. Few properly trained personnel were manning statistical cells resulting in weak capacity for data collection, processing, analysis and interpretation of data including inability to properly address data needs of users.
- c. Food and agricultural statistics in DMCs remained to be dependent on reporting systems and a few survey-based data gathering that were initiated and which were done on ad-hoc, pilot basis, and mostly donor-driven.
- d. Among institutional issues, lack of proper legislation, weak coordination mechanism and security concerns (particularly in Afghanistan) hampered efficient data collection and needed improvements in the agricultural statistical service in most DMCs.
- e. Few DMCs were collecting food and agricultural statistics based on a well-formulated National Statistics Development Strategy (NSDS) or Statistical Master Plan (SMP). A few countries were now in the process of formulating their respective NSDS or SMP. The need for integrating agricultural statistics in the NSDS/SMP was emphasized.
- f. Food and agricultural statistics were needed for planning and food security in order to encourage growth in agricultural production, generate export revenue (reduce import dependency), promote efficient use of natural resources (safeguard the environment), provide employment, stabilize prices by ensuring efficient markets, ensure food security, eliminate malnutrition, and reduce the risk of famine and starvation. It was noted that the need for timely and reliable food and agriculture statistics had been highlighted by the world food crisis.
- g. Crop forecasting, monitoring and vulnerability analysis tools, including the regular preparation of Food Balance Sheets, were needed to be set in place in DMCs because most of these DMCs were food-deficit countries and highly vulnerable to food insecurity requiring timely early warning systems to mitigate adverse effects of the phenomenon.
- h. While crop cutting experiment was an accepted objective approach for estimating crop yield, the same, however, was an expensive way of collecting yield information and might not be appropriate for extensive use in many DMCs beset by limited human and financial resources.
- i. The DMCs agreed on the importance and use of the national household expenditures and income surveys (NHEIS) and socio-economic surveys for their country-specific food insecurity and vulnerability assessment. The Workshop thus recommended that NHEIS be conducted in countries on a periodic basis to facilitate food security and vulnerability assessment.
- j. The World Programme for Census of Agriculture (WCA 2010) was promoting to implement the modular approach of data collection including its integration with the Population Census to reduce costs. The DMCs were interested in organizing their first agricultural census following the WCA 2010 programme but were being

constrained by lack of financial resources and expertise and were looking forward for donor support.

- k. An important use of the census of agriculture was to help countries develop a master sampling frame for agriculture. This should be the basis for the preparation of a master sample for a national agricultural survey programme, which could serve many data collection requirements of a robust national agricultural statistical service. The community level data, as proposed in WCA 2010, would also provide useful inputs in the preparation of an establishment-based sampling frame.
- l. The integration of the population and agricultural census operations would be the more efficient approach to collect agricultural structural data in a few DMCs with institutional and data collection constraints such as high transportation costs in Maldives, or where security concerns limited regular data collection as in Afghanistan.
- m. The new global strategy to improve agricultural statistics aimed to provide the vision for national and international statistical systems to produce the data and information to guide the decision making required for the 21st century. The workshop noted further that the vision included (a) the agreement among countries to provide a minimum set of core data that meets the emerging demands; (b) integration of agricultural and rural statistics into the national statistical system to meet expectations among users for comparable spatial (inter-country) and temporal data; and (c) use of master sample frame for agriculture, integrated survey framework and integrated data base among the means for integration.