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Agenda Item 5

ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

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Report on the Situation Based on Responses to Country Reports

Each delegation to the Commission was asked to submit a country report with particular attention on the following areas:

- (i) Recent and proposed ***changes*** in the statistical organizations relating to food and agriculture;
- (ii) **Main characteristics** of the agricultural statistical system. In this regard, countries were asked to review the table attached and verify that the information that FAO has about the country is up to date.
- (iii) Agricultural and related ***surveys undertaken*** and plans for the future, including those on the census of agriculture;
- (iv) Recent ***innovative*** activities and measures undertaken since the last Commission Session;
- (v) Outstanding **problems**.

In addition, countries were asked to report on:

- (vi) the **role** of agriculture in the Statistical Master Plan (SMP) and in the National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS) (Agenda Item VI)
- (vii) Needs for **capacity building** (Agenda Item VII)

Responses

Responses from the following countries were received and have been incorporated in this report – Australia, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam.

The information in this report therefore only relates to those countries. This paper attempts to summarise the responses received and to draw out some of the common themes addressed in the country reports.

Afghanistan, Indonesia and Sri Lanka also submitted country reports, but they were received too late to be included in this paper.

The following member countries did not submit a country report – Bangladesh, Bhutan, Fiji, France, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, United Kingdom and United States of America.

(i) Recent and proposed changes in the statistical organizations relating to food and agriculture

A number of countries reported changes to structures within their organization, generally with a view to improving efficiencies or to combining activities with similar interests.

In Australia, an organisational restructure has brought together several areas responsible for the Population Census, agricultural and environment statistics and the Geography section. This should encourage closer links between the Population and Agricultural Censuses and also reflects the move to disseminate data from these censuses for a wide range of geographic regions.

In Japan, structural reform will involve the abolition of District Agricultural Offices while the number of field-survey level organizations will be reduced.

In the Philippines, a special committee has recommended reorganization of the Philippine Statistical System to improve its efficiency and effectiveness in meeting demands for statistics by way of consolidating primary data collection activities under a single agency. This change requires legislation and has not yet been put into place.

In the Republic of Korea, Statistics Korea rearranged the Agriculture & Fishery statistics into the division where strongly relevant areas are focused. For efficiency, the Census of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries transferred to the census division, and farm & fishery household survey to household income and expenditure survey.

In Thailand, the NSO recently reorganized the office for internal administration. In terms of agriculture, the main impact is the establishment of the Social Statistics Bureau which is

responsible for conducting Agricultural Census, Population Census, Intercensal survey of agriculture, Household socio-economic survey and surveys on social issues.

India has recently strengthened its ability to collect statistics. The Collection of Statistics Act 2008 has been passed by Indian Parliament on 7th January 2009 to facilitate the collection of economic, demographic, social, scientific and environmental aspects and for matters connected therewith. The act provides for power to the Governments to collect data of national importance.

(ii) Main characteristics of the agricultural statistical system

The main characteristics of each country are shown as a table in the attachment. The table includes the latest information available from each country.

The table shows that statistical systems in APCAS member countries consist of three variants – centralized (about 30% of countries), decentralized with an institutionalized mechanism for coordination (almost half the countries) and decentralized without any institutionalized coordinating mechanism (about 20% of countries).

In more than half of the countries, the Ministry of Agriculture (or equivalent) is the main agency responsible for agriculture statistics. In five countries there is an arrangement where the National Statistics Office conducts the agriculture census but the Ministry of Agriculture (or equivalent) conducts current agriculture surveys.

More than half of the member countries reported to be operating under a comprehensive statistics law which governed the development, direction and delineation of responsibilities and activities of the national statistical system. Some member countries reported that while they did not have such a comprehensive law, they operated under *ad hoc* orders from either the head of the state or the parliament, mandating specific statistical activities that should be undertaken by line ministries.

Over two thirds of member countries reported that there is some form of statistics advisory body which oversees the statistical program.

(iii) Agricultural and related surveys undertaken and plans for the future, including those on the census of agriculture.

A huge range of different surveys was reported by countries and members should refer to individual country reports for details. This section attempts to cover the key areas only.

Most countries reported that they have conducted an agricultural census within the last 10 years, while all countries reported planning for an Agricultural Census. A number of countries (Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand and Vietnam) conduct an Agricultural Census every five years, while Timor Leste is planning its first Agricultural Census for 2011 and Cambodia is planning its first Agricultural Census for 2012. Some countries reported to have

conducted subject matter specific censuses like livestock censuses, censuses of agricultural machinery, fisheries censuses and village censuses. It was noted that the country updates generally did not mention if their planned censuses of agriculture would include thematic modules as suggested in the WCA 2010 Programme.

Most countries reported surveys to measure agricultural Production and Stocks. These ranged from an annual survey to collect production data for all commodities, through to a number of quarterly surveys for specific crops or livestock. Collection arrangements in each country most likely reflect the historical development of the statistics program as well as local conditions and priorities. Some countries plan to review existing collection arrangements to see if they are the most cost efficient approach, particularly given budget constraints.

A number of countries reported surveys to measure Costs of Production, including Vietnam which will conduct the survey for the first time in 2010. Some surveys cover only the main commodities while others vary the commodities from year to year based on the need for data.

A number of countries reported Prices collections. A wide range of types of prices and collection methods were represented. The Philippines seems to have reported the broadest range of prices collections, including Farm Prices, Wholesale Prices, Retail Prices, Prices paid for Pesticides and Dealer's Prices for Fertilisers.

Thailand reported that Crop Forecasting is done on a quarterly basis for 25 commodities, with 69 commodities included in the mid-year forecast.

The Philippines and Malaysia both reported the production of Supply Utilisation Accounts.

Several countries reported collection activity in Fisheries and Forestry. In some cases the Agricultural Census was run in conjunction with a Fisheries or Forestry Census.

A few countries reported the use (or testing) of remote sensing and GIS technologies to collect information.

A number of low-income countries reported that major statistical activities were possible only with donor support. This raised concerns on the sustainability of these activities given the countries' limited resources.

(iv) Recent innovative activities and measures undertaken since the last Commission Session.

A wide range of innovative activities and measures were reported by countries and these can be broadly categorized as Infrastructure, Data collection, Data dissemination and Other.

In terms of innovative activities related to infrastructure, both Australia and Malaysia reported re-engineering of their processing systems, with both countries moving to the use of integrated statistical processing systems. The Republic of Korea reported the introduction of CATI surveys into their systems. Malaysia also reported the updating of the classification

systems for industries and products. Thailand advised that the OAE has set up a network system for information exchanges among its various office sites and connection to public.

The Thailand NSO has outsourced an adviser to study issues of consistency and quality of data across agencies and to provide frameworks and guidelines for statistical agencies to use in data gathering and dissemination. The Philippines is revisiting the Palay/Rice and Corn Stocks Data System. The review would focus on the sampling design, data collection approach and data processing and analysis, including the reporting and dissemination systems.

In terms of data collection, innovative activities reported included integration of surveys to improve efficiency, use of administrative data to supplement survey data, and more use of internet and mail collection instead of enumerator based collection.

Vietnam is developing a comprehensive set of statistical indicators to enhance its data dissemination activities. Philippines is planning an enhancement of the Palay and Corn Information System. The general objective of this project is to develop and maintain a more responsive information system that can meet the growing needs for more detailed and timely information on palay and corn production.

Japan has been improving the website and has established a “Database of Food and Rural area” as the comprehensive database that includes not only statistics but also related information and lots of charts and graphs that the public feels easy to use. Australia is also investigating ways to improve access to data for its users.

A number of countries (Australia, Republic of Korea and Philippines) have introduced environmental issues into their data collection activities or are currently developing these issues. Australia is currently developing a suite of Environmental Accounts.

New Zealand has recently developed a ‘domain plan’ on agriculture, horticulture and forestry statistics which covers the next five to ten years. The plan involved a stock-take of information currently available; the identification of gaps; and the development of initiatives to close these information gaps. It is intended that these initiatives be progressed to improve the information available, especially on new and emerging topics. Other countries have also reviewed their current work programs to ensure that the work programs meet the needs of key users.

Phillipines have developed a Food Security Information System (Phil-FSIS) which is patterned after the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS).

Phillipines are also developing an Agricultural Profiling Survey, which has been designed to collect information on the basic structure of agriculture and fishery for small geographic areas. They are also developing a Provincial Agricultural Profile. The intent of the profile is to present a comprehensive set of agricultural statistics that will serve as benchmark information about the province. Data from the Agricultural Profiling Survey will be used in the Provincial Agricultural Profile.

Australia has introduced “Quality Gates” for all its agricultural surveys. These “gates” and the associated review mechanisms are aimed at ensuring that collections consistently deliver quality outputs within agreed time frames. Quality Gates are a tool designed to improve the early detection of errors or flaws in statistical processes, which then enables the implementation of effective solutions or mitigation strategies well before problems either occur or escalate. The focus with Quality Gates is very much on being pro-active rather than reactive.

Australia has successfully completed a feasibility study of ‘Mapping Agricultural Profitability across Australia’. This study explored the feasibility of producing experimental measures of profitability for the agricultural sector from an extended dataset integrating the commodity production, water and land use data sourced from the 2005-06 Agricultural Census with financial data sourced from various taxation records. Whilst the feasibility study has achieved a number of positive outcomes, including demonstrating that in this case data linking appears to be useful for filling information gaps in agricultural financial statistics by making direct use of administrative data, further work is still to be undertaken to ensure the validity of the statistical outputs from the linked dataset.

Australia has also conducted a Land Management Practices Survey (LMPS) of agricultural landholders located in Australia's Great Barrier Reef (GBR) catchment region. The primary purpose of the survey was to provide baseline land management practice information at the water catchment level for holdings undertaking agricultural activities identified as impacting on the GBR water quality. Instead of a business-based frame as utilised by other ABS agricultural surveys, the LMPS used a land parcel-based frame.

(v) Outstanding Problems

Countries reported a wide range of outstanding problems which can be broadly categorised as User needs, Infrastructure, Data issues, Data collection or Dissemination.

Vietnam reported that users require data at the commune level. The problem of being able to provide data for small areas is common to most countries. Some countries have made progress in this area, as reported by the Philippines and Australia in the previous section.

Myanmar reported that statistical data officially published in that country is limited in terms of their scope and quantity. Myanmar also reported that data analyses for forecasting and other purposes to serve policies are not sufficient.

Cambodia reported that there is a lack of comprehensive and reliable statistical data on the structure of the agriculture sector. Similarly, Timor Leste reported that there is a lack of comprehensive and reliable data to support monitoring and planning on the agricultural sector which affects all the sectoral statistical system. The available data from ad-hoc surveys is incomplete and not consistent.

Japan reported that statistics are needed for important new administrative measures, such as introducing income support program for farmers, collaboration between agriculture and the food industry etc. Japan also noted that Environmental issues are also a concern.

A number of countries reported problems related to Infrastructure. Lao PDR reported a lack of staff with competent knowledge and skills in agricultural statistics as well as an inadequacy of tools and equipment for measuring, calculating, recording and analysing the data, especially at the grassroots level. Similarly, Myanmar reported that basic infrastructure is poor in terms of transportation, communication, extent of computerisation and basic staff skills. Timor Leste also reported a lack of HR capacity.

Malaysia reported problems with integration of disparate data bases, while Timor Leste reported a poor data base management system. Malaysia also reported a lack of good manuals relating to concepts, methodologies, questionnaire design and best practices on data collection for agricultural statistics.

Republic of Korea reported that relationships with previously related institutions have been weakened due to the integration of Agriculture and Fishery statistics into Statistics Korea and that Statistics Korea is strengthening cooperation with relevant institutions to ensure effective production of agriculture statistics.

In terms of data issues, Cambodia reported that current agricultural statistics cover mainly crop production, livestock, fishery and forestry, but that this information is generally out of date, not reliable and incomplete. Similarly, Lao PDR reported that availability of agricultural statistics is mostly production related, but that accuracy, reliability and timeliness need to be improved and that there is insufficient data analysis and dissemination.

Vietnam reported that there are significant differences in the data between local level and central level, especially on gross output & value added. Myanmar noted that crop forecasting procedures are inadequate, while Malaysia reported that there are problems with integration between data from establishments/enterprises and households involved in agricultural activities.

New Zealand reported that there is an unknown gap associated with hobby and other small lifestyle farms that may not be identified via the tax system. Although recognized, it is well known that little agricultural activity is carried out on these farms.

Many countries reported problems with data collection issues. Timor Leste noted that they have yet to develop a system of data collection. Myanmar reported that the present mechanism and procedure of data collection does not assure a high degree of data accuracy, reliability and timeliness, and that most information is obtained from administrative records.

Myanmar also noted that data collection is a very large operation and control over field work is difficult to maintain. In a similar vein, Malaysia and Vietnam both reported difficulties with collection of data about small scale producers.

Malaysia and Cambodia both reported that a good agriculture frame is needed.

Japan and Australia both made similar comments about a requirement to continually review and refine survey practices and processes. The main reasons for this are to realise efficiencies and reduce survey costs, and to improve both data quality and the timeliness of data releases.

A few comments were made about Dissemination issues. Myanmar reported that data are not widely disseminated and few statistical publications are issued, while Vietnam noted a need to improve coordination in the fields of exchanging data and data dissemination.

(vi) the role of agriculture in the Statistical Master Plan (SMP) and in the National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS)

Timor Leste noted that agriculture statistics is a subject with high consideration in the Statistical Master Plan (SMP) recognizing the need to support reliable and accurate data and information.

In Thailand, the SMP is in draft form. It currently comprises 16 sectors, of which Agriculture is one, reflecting its importance to the country. Each Sector SMP (SSMP) is jointly developed by the NSO and the line ministries that are the counterparts in each of the sectors. The Agriculture SSMP will include the list of agriculture official statistics that would be produced in the sector, and the agencies responsible for the data production. Once the statistics are under production, a Quality Assurance Team of the NSO will conduct audits and quality inspections. Subsequently the statistics that are satisfactorily audited and inspected are endorsed or certified by the NSO as Thailand's "Official Statistics". The standard criteria for the certification of Official Statistics will be applicable to all statistics produced by the line ministries and by the NSO. Users of the Official Statistics can be guaranteed that the information from the Official Statistics will be accurate, impartial, and representative of the country situation. The NSDS is currently being developed. An advisor has recommended the following strategy:

- Expanding the coverage of NSS
- Incorporate line ministries
- Use of administrative data
- Combine use of administrative data with surveys content and operations
- Improve dissemination and promotion of statistics usage

For the Republic of Korea, the role of agriculture in the Statistical Master Plan (SMP) and in the National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS) is to lead advancement of statistical methods by introduction of innovative technologies such as remote sensing, and to develop statistics through the cooperation with relevant institutions in response to demands.

The Philippines SDP is designed to guide the PSS agencies in the formulation and implementation of statistical activities for a given period of time (medium term). The preparation of the PSDP considers the guidelines in the design of a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). The concerns of food and agriculture statistics can be

found in all parts and in most chapters of the Philippines SDP. But, importantly, in Part 3, there is a chapter on agriculture and agrarian reform. Here the statistical development programs, specific to agriculture and agrarian reform are articulated.

In Cambodia, the Statistical Master Plan (SMP) states that the Agriculture Census is required to be conducted immediately in 2009 after the Population Census 2008 but this has not happened. Agriculture is a major area of economic activity in Cambodia, but surprisingly no benchmark census of agriculture has ever been conducted, despite the fact that, under the Statistics Law, an agricultural census is required to be undertaken at least once every ten years.

Other countries did not specifically mention a SMP or NSDS. Nevertheless, in all of the statistical systems reported, agriculture was recognised as a significant sector requiring a broad range of accurate and timely statistics.

(vii) Needs for capacity building

Staff training was mentioned by almost all countries as an area requiring attention in order to assist capacity building. Training needs covered a broad range of issues:

- basic training for field staff involved in data collection
- improved general knowledge of agriculture statistics
- better qualified professional statisticians
- improved understanding of statistical methods
- data analysis and interpretation
- report writing
- quality assessment
- management
- ICT, including data base design, data management and data analysis software (EXCEL, ACCESS, SPSS etc.), web design and development

On a related issue, the development of training materials was seen as an important capacity building tool.

Vietnam reported that their PC equipment is very old and there is not enough equipment for all staff.

Two countries noted that capacity building in the areas of GIS, RS and GPS should be undertaken so that the initial activities can be sustained and improved.

Myanmar noted that agricultural statistics in that country are still in the early stage of development. Significant capacity building is required in the areas of data collection, analysis and dissemination of agricultural statistics. In particular, assistance is required to move from administrative data to sample survey collections.

Malaysia reported the need for capacity building in frame construction, questionnaire design, methodologies and concepts for conducting a good agriculture survey/census at minimum cost or even how to avoid census taking by having alternative measures. Malaysia also noted that new techniques in data processing are also needed.

Cambodia reported the need to improve coordination between donors, the NIS, National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) and line ministries. Effective communication among these various agencies in the process of designing and implementing surveys are also important.

While there are some different areas of need among the countries, there are also a number of areas where the need is common across the countries, particularly in terms of training. There seems to be scope for the development of some training courses and materials which would benefit a number of countries.