

FRAMEWORK FOR MAINSTREAMING AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS INTO THE NSDS PROCESS.

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The National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS) design process requires that sectoral statistical systems, including the agricultural statistical system, sub-national statistical systems and the overall National Statistical System (NSS) are uniformly developed so as to empower the various systems with capacity to produce reliable, comprehensive, timely and integrated statistics. Under the NSDS process, a National Statistics Office (NSO), therefore brings together key stakeholders and institutions involved in producing, supplying and using quality official statistics. Especially, mainstreaming sectoral statistical systems into the NSS responds to data needs by policy makers. Development policies require comprehensive data from variety of sectors to be effective, and data collected by sectors and NSOs to be more widely available to meet the results-based development agenda.

In most developing countries, the inter-relationships between sectors in the one hand and the sectors with the NSO's on the other are inconsistent, informal and generally weak. Therefore mainstreaming of sectoral statistical systems demands that stakeholders involved in producing, supplying and using sectoral statistics: (i) play active roles in the functioning of the NSS; (ii) work with one another and with the NSO to develop shared goals and cross-cutting strategies; and (iii) streamline the institutional and coordination arrangements. Also this helps to remove the inherent problem of most NSS not being well coordinated – where NSOs operate autonomously independent of sector units, while sectoral statistical systems operate vertically.

The overview of the NSDS process emphasizes that statistical development must adopt an approach that is strategic in the production of statistics and therefore medium-to long-term strategic development plans for statistics are prepared recognizing some basic principles such as being nationally owned, demand-driven and aligned with the national development policy processes, budget processes, etc. Therefore, these plans should address both the improvement of the statistical systems and the statistical products.

In 2007, the African Development Bank (AfDB) in collaboration with PARIS21 and Intersect prepared a guide to help countries mainstream sectors in the NSDS. This general framework describes the objectives and strategies that may be employed to mainstream sectoral statistical systems into the NSS: (i) Making more efficient use of resources; (ii) Improving the provision of indicators; (iii) Increasing the productivity of data collection and management; and (iv) Raising the public profile of statistics.

The framework includes twelve (12) cross-cutting strategies to meet these objectives. The intended result is a coordinated NSS capable of efficiently and effectively monitoring development progress. The framework also proposes to develop specific guidelines for preparing statistical strategies for the development of statistics for each sector. This paper highlights basic principles to better mainstream agricultural statistics into the NSDS process.

In developing countries, especially in Africa, the state of development of agricultural statistics that is integrated into the NSS is appalling due to a number of constraints and obstacles that are encountered when attempting to mainstream agricultural statistical system into the NSS and some of these are (i) Level of statistical capacity with respect to the agricultural statistical system; (ii) Weak NSO's in the countries and inability to coordinate all sectors; (iii) Lack of coordination (within and across) for agricultural statistical system; (iv) Failure to adopt international standards; (v) Lack of funding for production by the agricultural statistical systems; (vi) Overbearing influence and presence of international agencies in the development of agricultural statistical system making national statistical coordination of agricultural statistics near impossible; (vii) Lack of integration of sources of agricultural statistics, namely, censuses, surveys and through administrative records; (viii) Collaboration and cooperation issues; (ix) Poor of communication between sectors also between all the sectors and the NSO; and (x) Weak appreciation of the statistical legislation of the NSO which empowers it to coordinate the sector statistical systems.

The effects of these constraints could be ameliorated through the five phases of the NSDS design process by: (i) Integration of data sources; (ii) Coordinated NSSs under strengthened NSOs plus clear specification of responsibilities between the agricultural statistical sector, the NSO and other relevant sectors; (iii) Design of the NSDSs for the countries and of the SSDSs at the sectoral levels; (iv) Building factors for collaboration and cooperation among agriculture sector, other relevant sectors and the NSO's; and (v) Helpful roles by the international agencies within the context of the NSDS and the SSDSs.

The paper finally draws conclusion and makes key recommendations.