

FAO STRATEGY FOR MANAGING AND SHARING STATISTICAL DATA

The FAO Statistics Division is committed to providing much broader access to agriculture and food security data worldwide, in response to the increasingly important role that reliable and timely data plays in the decision-making process at all levels (e.g. political, technical, etc.).

Accordingly, in the last 2 years a thorough revision of the Divisional data dissemination systems (e.g. FAOSTAT and CountrySTAT) has occurred. The main objective of this restructuring was to reach a larger number and broader type of users, and to build a more efficient data sharing mechanism.

With the renovated systems, the Division is now better positioned to contribute to the global network of agriculture-related data producers and users and to provide support to national and international stakeholders within the agricultural sector.

This strategy is in line with the emerging “open data” approach, which provides the conceptual framework for broader collaboration on systems and data integration at the global level. Open Data is expected to establish a more efficient flow of agricultural-related data across countries and regions.

Accordingly, FAO’s overall objectives in this area include:

- a) Increasing accessibility to quality and timely information
- b) Strengthening capacity to develop and carry out multi-sector data analysis
- c) Improving data exchange, i.e. efficiently link FAO internal and external databases
- d) Playing an active role in the establishment and consolidation of a global information network and community

FAOSTAT and CountrySTAT contribute to the improvement of collection, exchange and effective utilization of statistical data and information to meet the needs and expectations of FAO internal users, member states and partner organizations. Data are provided in the form of tables or other products always on a free-of-charge basis and as public good.

FAOSTAT is a global database to monitor the global food supply and demand dynamics. As the world’s largest database of food and agricultural information, it contains a variety of data on land use, fishing, forestry, food aid, nutrition, and population growth. With more than a million statistics, FAOSTAT covers five decades and 245 countries and territories.

In 2012, a new FAOSTAT data dissemination system (FAOSTAT3) was launched. This innovative system is based on an open-source software platform called “FENIX” (also used by CountrySTAT) and offers easy access to data. Features include browsing and analysis of data, advanced interactive data download, cross-domain data search by using free-text, and data exchange through web services. FAOSTAT3 reaches a larger range of users such as government officers, scientists, journalists, staff of the int’l organizations, students, and anybody interested in data related to food and agriculture.

CountrySTAT is a web-based information system for food and agriculture statistics at national and subnational levels. It supports multiple-sourced data integration and harmonization according to international standards and ensures data quality and reliability. It facilitates the analysis of data for supply utilization accounts and food balance sheets in order to obtain derived indicators relevant to nutrition, food and agriculture.

Through national and regional CountrySTAT projects, FAO forms partnerships with statistical offices and the ministries of agriculture, fisheries and forestry among others to introduce the system and build the national capacity to use it. In each country, the national focal points collaborate with FAO to

ensure the correct deployment of the application, deliver training to national staff and guarantee proper system maintenance. CountrySTAT has created Technical Working Groups (TWGs) in each country consisting of representatives of the key agencies collecting agriculture and food security data. The TWG meets regularly to review data quality before uploading new data to the system, harmonize data across national agencies and make the data coherent and consistent with FAOSTAT.

The new CountrySTAT architecture allows for easily customizing the user interface and enables users to add new tools and upgrade existing ones according to the users' needs. The application is distributed on a free-of-charge basis to all CountrySTAT members and partners.