

Improving Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture, and Rural Development

Global Action Plan

16 November 2011

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL STRATEGY?

The Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (hereafter the Strategy) has been developed by the World Bank and FAO in close consultation with a large number of national and international stakeholders. At its 41st session, the United Nations Statistical Commission endorsed the technical content and strategic directions provided by the Strategy. It also urged the development of an implementation plan with a comprehensive technical assistance, training and research programme and a proper governance mechanism.

The Strategy provides a comprehensive framework to improve and ensure the sustainability of agricultural and rural statistics, where agriculture includes livestock, aquaculture, forestry production and small scale fisheries, in addition to crops. The Strategy also addresses emerging data needs such as those caused by the recent spikes in food prices, pushing more people into poverty and the growing concerns about the impact of agriculture on the environment and climate change. The Strategy is based on three pillars:

- Establishing a minimum set of core data that countries will disseminate on a regular basis to meet current and emerging demands;
- Integrating agriculture into national statistical systems in order to link statistical information across the economic, social and environmental domains;
- Fostering the sustainability of the agricultural statistical systems through

governance and statistical capacity development.

The implementation of the Strategy is country driven and takes into account other statistical capacity development activities underway in many countries.

The Implementation Plan has a long term perspective (10 to 15 years), but follows a phased approach with the first phase covering the five-year period starting in 2011.

IMPACT/GOAL OF THE PLAN

The goal is to contribute to greater food security, reduced food price volatility and improved income and well being of rural populations through evidence-based policies in line with the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger." In addition, improved policies will contribute to the sustainable use of land and water resources and the adaptation of agricultural activities to climate change to meet the challenges of MDG 7 "Ensure environmental sustainability".

OUTCOME

The outcome is to enable countries to develop sustainable statistical systems, which will produce accurate and reliable agricultural and rural data, comparable over time and across countries, which will be used by decision makers. Particularly, the outcome will be:

- Substantial increase in the number of countries with the capability to produce a minimum set of core data, provide analysis and disseminate the results to meet the



- current and emerging statistical demands of national and international stakeholders;
- Substantial increase in the number of countries able to develop a sustainable agricultural statistics system through the coordination and integration of agriculture in the national statistical systems;
- Increased number of people working on agricultural statistics that have appropriate skills resulting from training and technical assistance.

MAIN OUTPUTS

- Advocacy materials and technical tools promoting the need for and use of statistics for effective decision and policy purposes developed and applied in countries
- Systems in place in countries for easy access and dissemination of national and subnational statistics such as CountrySTAT
- Methodological guidelines, norms and statistical standards, handbooks and documentation of good practices for data collection, analysis and dissemination and technical assistance provided to countries to apply the methodologies
- New cost-effective methodologies in data collection, elaboration, analysis and presentation developed by leading research institutes, with a synergic approach, avoiding duplication of efforts and technical assistance provided to countries
- A living data base which includes relevant research projects and best practices for sharing knowledge and a roster of experts
- Technical assistance procedures developed and harmonized for improving institutional, organizational and technical capacity of agricultural statistical systems and applied at regional and country level
- A network of agricultural statistics offices to exchange experiences and practices
- Training material produced, including e-learning and used at regional and country level.



GOVERNANCE

The Global Strategy Steering Committee that includes National Statistical Offices, Ministries of Agriculture, representatives of international and regional coordinating organizations and of donors will be the decision making body for the implementation. It will provide strategic leadership and oversight of the Global Office which will be created at the FAO Statistics Division and guided by the Global Coordinator. Main responsibilities of the Global Office are to establish and provide statistical standards and guidelines to support technical assistance and training and to develop advanced and cost-effective methodologies and tools.

Regional coordinating bodies will provide direct training and technical assistance to the integrated national statistical systems and will liaise with other offices within their region to coordinate the respective efforts and avoid duplication. Governance at the national level involves the organization of a national statistical system that brings together the national statistics office, sector ministries and other agencies that provide data in the scope of the Strategy. The national coordinating body will also be responsible for within country advocacy for resource mobilization and establishing and maintaining communications with stakeholders for the content and scope of the national statistical system. The national coordinators will determine the methodology and work plan they will adopt to implement the Strategy.

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT

The country assessment will allow categorizing countries by their capacity to produce the minimum set of core data and will serve as the basis to determine where training, technical assistance and research are needed for each country to prepare a national action plan to determine the choice of methodology and technology it will implement. A general assessment questionnaire is being used to obtain



basic information from each country to determine which items in the minimum set of core are being provided, by whom, their frequency, and indications of quality. A more detailed country assessment will be carried out after the categorization of the countries.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING PLANS

The capacity building programme will start by providing technical assistance and training for basic statistical methods. Then the technical assistance and training will be extended to include the use of the new methodologies and technologies being implemented by the research plan.

Technical Assistance

Statistical standards and technical guidelines will be developed by the Global Office for all aspects of the agricultural statistics system, including the following:

- Develop and strengthen institutional and organizational capacities to integrate agriculture into the national statistical system;
- Design and implementation of a master sampling frame;
- Design and implementation of an integrated survey programme;
- Harmonization of data across different sources, including administrative data;
- Integration of data across the economic, social, environmental domains for policy making;
- Adoption of new technologies for data collection, processing and dissemination.

At the Regional Level, technical assistance will be provided to the countries using the guidelines and documentation provided by the Global Office through a combination of knowledge transfer and direct country assistance. Technical assistance will be provided to guide each country in the preparation of a specific national action plan to implement the global strategy under the auspices of the National Strategy to Develop Statistics (NSDS). The national action plan will consider



other capacity developmental initiatives already underway to avoid duplication of efforts and coordinate the activities. These standards will be supported by the training of trainers in each of the regions in the use of these guidelines.

Training

Main responsibilities of the Global Office will be to design training curricula and prepare training materials, including for e-learning, as well as to define the theoretical and practical knowledge requirements for different levels of core skills needed to produce basic official statistics.

At the regional level, the main activities will be to assess countries' training needs, train the trainers and support the use of e-learning for on-the-job training. Direct training on specific topics will be provided in-country and in regional seminars. The regional coordinator will provide support to strengthen the capabilities of selected training centres and will promote the access to training by national agricultural statisticians. Countries will contribute to the identification of their training needs, organize in-service training, ensure access to e-learning materials, and select the staff for the different training opportunities.

RESEARCH PLAN

The purpose of the Research Plan is to develop and disseminate advanced and cost effective methodologies, tools and standards which will be adopted by national statistical agencies for efficient production of reliable agricultural statistics. The Global Office and the Statistics Division of FAO will undertake research in the fields in which they have comparative advantage. The Global Office will also promote and coordinate research activities on relevant topics conducted by the most qualified regional and international institutions, facilitating contacts, building synergies and avoiding duplication of efforts.

The research will focus on a set of priority areas which include:

- Creating an appropriate framework for development of an integrated agricultural

- statistics programme;
- Improving data collection methods for crop area, yield, production, livestock and water use;
- Improving the methodology for food security and food market statistics, reconciliation of census data with survey data, use of administrative data and remote sensing, crop forecasting and early warning;
- Identifying appropriate indicators and collection methods for gender related data, small scale fisheries and agri-environmental data.

PROGRESS MADE AND WAY FORWARD

The Action Plan was presented at the 37th Session of FAO Conference 25 June-2 July 2011 and received strong support from FAO member countries and institutions. The meeting of Agricultural Ministries of the G20 in Paris 22-23 June 2011 adopted an Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture (AMIS) in which it is stated that the Ministers of the G20 “support the Global Strategy and invite international organizations to create synergies between this Global Strategy and AMIS”.

Development of Regional Programmes

The programme for the implementation of the Strategy in the Africa Region has already been developed in partnership with the African Development Bank, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission. The Regional Steering Committee that will guide the Africa Plan has already been established. The first meeting took place in Tunis, 12-13 July and the Regional Board was established.

In Asia and the Pacific, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Asian Development Bank and FAO are involved and the Steering Group for the preparation of the Regional Plan has been established. The first meeting will be held on 21-23 November. Communications with United Nations Regional Commissions and other

stakeholders are underway in the Latin America and Western Asia Regions to create regional partnerships. Similar efforts are underway with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and European countries not members of the European Union.

Immediate actions and steps

A Standard Country Assessment Questionnaire has been developed has been tested in Africa and is being adopted in Africa and Asia. Shortly some publications will be finalized on linking Agriculture and Population Censuses, on the use of GPS for agricultural statistics and on the guidelines for enumerating livestock and for estimating production from livestock. The Implementation Plan of the Strategy is being finalized and the Global Office will be established as soon as funds are available to start the following activities:

- Organizing the country assessment;
- Developing standards and technical guidelines on priority research topics;
- Developing curricula and materials for face to face and e-learning training;
- Identifying good practices in priority areas in agricultural statistics and assessing if and how they can be adapted to other Regions;
- Collaborating with the lead partners for developing new cost-effective methodologies and tools.

Mobilisation of resources

A Global Trust Fund is being established. Communication, advocacy and resource mobilization are crucial activities. A meeting of resource partners in support of the implementation of the Global Strategy was held on 28 October 2011 at FAO Headquarters for this purpose. More than 50 participants including several potential donors and technical partners attended the meeting. DfID and Gates Foundation confirmed their commitment to contribute to the Global Fund and other partners promised to join.

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