

## Executive Summary

FAO and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (B&MGF) signed a project agreement in 2007 (Phase I) to support the development and implementation of the CountrySTAT System in 17 Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries in order to better organize, harmonize and standardize statistical data from multiple sources and integrate them into a common platform, or (One Stop Center), to be easily accessible on-line. CountrySTAT was to be established in 17 partner countries (Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia).

Despite the different levels of development of statistical systems in the production of basic data requirements at national and sub national levels during the first phase, the project has made considerable efforts to reach its objectives.

The phase 1 of the project has achieved the following important results:

- 1) Important normative work to **develop the standard CountrySTAT framework** and adapt to countries using FAO standards, norms and advanced IT technology. . These are public goods that are relevant to many countries beyond the 17 SSA countries and will strengthen FAO core technical capacity to assist countries in implementing CountrySTAT. The maintenance and regular up-grading of this frame work and tools is mainstreamed in FAO Statistics Division workplan and activities.
- 2) More than 174 **national staff have been trained** through global, regional and national training sessions using the training material developed.
- 3) Assistance to country teams to **develop their national CountrySTAT systems** with technical support available on call on daily basis and frequent interaction and very close monitoring of countries progress.
- 4) By end of February 2011, thirteen countries (Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.) **have developed and launched a functional CountrySTAT** (see: [www.CountrySTAT.org](http://www.CountrySTAT.org)) and it is expected that by end of March 2011 the remaining four countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda), will have operationalized their system. At the end of this phase 1, existing national and sub-national agricultural data in the 17 SSA countries will be available on-line for easy access by users. CountrySTAT activities have been mainstreamed into the Government work plans and budget for the following countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Zambia. Ethiopia has included CountrySTAT into its National Strategy for Development of Statistics This is significant progress towards the institutionalization of CountrySTAT and its sustainability.

The results achieved from Phase I have led other donors to join in expanding the CountrySTAT framework to other countries (East African Community/Italian Cooperation 1,000,000 \$ US, UEMOA 1,000,000 \$ US).

However despite these significant results, it appears that the systems established in the 17 SSA countries are still fragile and need to be consolidated for sustainable maintenance and functioning after the end of the assistance of FAO and BMGF. The main constraints and opportunities identified through this lessons learned process are: (i) **Duration of the project:** As a capacity building initiative a long term perspective is needed to allow for countries with different capacities to technically own the system and be less dependent on the project; (ii) **Need for renewed Government commitment for sustainability;** (iii) **Need for strengthening Institutional Framework for national CountrySTAT systems:** There is a

need to strengthen the institutional framework (technical and coordination bodies of CountrySTAT), particularly the Secretariat and the Technical Working Group which involves all major data producers. The experience from the first phase indicates that the best solution is to strengthen existing structures (not to create new ones); (iv) **Need for promoting and strengthening the use of CountrySTAT data by users** While the focus of the first phase was on establishing the basic systems, with national and sub-national data, it appears that an important element for sustainability of CountrySTAT system is an increase use of data by policy makers and other users. Therefore phase 2 of the project will promote the use of available data by working more closely with users. There is a clear demand from Regional Organisations (UEMOA and EAC) for harmonised and integrated country data to support the regional integration and common agriculture and rural development policies. In several countries the need for a platform that can enable decision makers at all levels has been expressed and the establishment of CountrySTAT was seen as an effective response to such demand (see in box 1 an example of farmers association in Zambia). Partners such as MAFAP have also strongly requested closer collaboration with CountrySTAT both for accessing data and for disseminating policy relevant indicators. More proactive action will be taken during phase 2 to respond to the users' demand ; (v) **Building regional capacity as a key element of an exit strategy** by strengthening the capacity both at national level and at regional level. Building a national and regional pool of CountrySTAT experts (in countries and in regional institutions) as **knowledge champions** will ensure continued technical support after the end of the project.

The new phase will have a longer term perspective (43 months) and focus on strengthening of the systems established in view of their sustainable functioning after the end of the project. The following key objectives are defined:

- **Strengthening the CountrySTAT systems established in the 17 Sub-Saharan countries and promoting the use of data:** updating and strengthening the technical capacity of national staff, promoting high level Government commitment, strengthening technical and coordination institutions; improving data quality and improving the relevance and use of data through partnership with key data users.
- **Development of new IT tools and functions for CountrySTAT** for easy maintenance and updating by CountrySTAT technical staff and for user friendly access by users: developing new standards tools, including distance learning tools, improving the functionalities of existing systems
- **Strengthening the partnerships with relevant Regional Organizations** in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the systems by building capacity of a pool of regional and national experts and competent trainers able to provide technical support on continuous basis through regional institutions (UEMOA and EAC) or as South-South cooperation.

The project will have the following results:

**Global level:** The normative work on Standards, Tools and Methods to develop a standardized CountrySTAT Framework (Statistics, IT, Communication) will be a public good relevant to many countries beyond the 17 SSA countries. The knowledge, technology and processes and learning developed to support the platform will strengthen FAO core technical capacity to assist many more countries. An important outcome is the regular availability of country data to feed into FAOSTAT. The collection of country data has been a recurrent issue for several decades since this was done using questionnaires with a response rate usually around 30%. FAOSTAT is being widely used by the community of policy makers, researchers, private sector etc.

***Regional level:*** The development of RegionSTAT at UEMOA and EAC and training of a pool of skilled staff in these organizations will not only provide a solid regional basis for responding to their needs for an integrated and harmonized database with aggregated data from Member countries easily accessible, but also a critical mass of regional CountrySTAT experts for sustained technical support and expansion of CountrySTAT to all their members. Thirteen Member countries of these two organisations.

***Country level:*** The project will result in availability national staff with adequate skills and knowledge and national policy makers accessing on-line to all national and sub-national data available on agriculture sector validated by experts. Easy access to this improved data should contribute to improved policies and outcomes.

The partnership with the two regional institutions offers a key element for the exit strategy since building strong capacity within these institutions will allow them to continue providing technical support to 13 of their member countries which include 6 of the 17 SSA countries.

## Project Description

The overall goal of the project is to contribute to better policies and investments that will lead to improved agricultural productivity growth and better livelihood for small farmers in 17 SSA countries through improved and sustainable access to better quality agricultural data and statistics through CountrySTAT system by researchers, policy makers, development organizations and the private sector.

During this second phase of the project, CountrySTAT systems successfully developed and established in the 17 SSA countries during the first phase, will be strengthened and countries will become self-reliant for sustainable functioning after the end of the project.

Also with complementary funding provided by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (“UEMOA”) and East African Community (EAC)/Italian Cooperation the CountrySTAT system will be extended to 4 additional countries and two Regional Systems will be established, including:

- 3 countries (Guinea-Bissau, Niger, Togo) and one regional CountrySTAT for West African Countries funded by UEMOA;
- 1 country (Burundi) and one regional CountrySTAT for Eastern African Community (EAC and Italian Cooperation);

Therefore at the end of this second phase, it is expected that 21 SSA countries and 2 Regional Institutions will have established CountrySTAT with 17 countries having a self-reliant and sustainable system.

The first phase of the project resulted in successful implementation of CountrySTAT system in the 17 SSA countries. Through an in-depth and inclusive consultative process, lessons were drawn from the first phase of the project and constraints were identified for further strengthening and sustainability of CountrySTAT systems in the 17 SSA countries. The following fora were used to obtain countries and other key stakeholders’ perspectives regarding the focus of the phase 2 project, in order to effectively address the needs:

- **CountrySTAT Consultative Meeting held 26-27 October 2009** in Accra (Ghana) and organized back-to-back to the 21st Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS), held in Accra (Ghana) from 28 to 31 October 2009. Participants to CountrySTAT consultative meeting were CountrySTAT focal points in

the 17 SSA countries and key stakeholders. Members of AFCAS are Directors of National Agricultural Statistics Services of all African countries who meet every two years. AFCAS is the apex body for Agricultural Statistics in Africa. FAO provides the Secretariat and several International and Regional Organizations participate to the Sessions (World Bank, UNECA, AfDB, IFPRI, etc.). Participants to CountrySTAT consultative meeting discussed the lessons learned from the implementation of the project (achievements and weaknesses), shared good practices and agreed on the main components for the second phase of the project. The recommendations from the consultative meeting were endorsed by AFCAS.

- **Two regional training workshops on the CountrySTAT system** organized respectively in September 2010 at the headquarters of the UEMOA in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), and in November 2010 at the headquarters of the EAC in Arusha (Tanzania). Participants were national staff in CountrySTAT teams from the 17 SSA countries and also partners such as staff from MAFAP project, WFP, etc. Participants made recommendations for improving the quality of data in the CountrySTAT system (improved consistency and harmonization of country data using international standards and methodologies), use of new tools developed by the CountrySTAT team sharing of best practices for national communication and media towards better visibility and awareness of CountrySTAT, and strengthening the partnership between FAO and regional/international institutions.

Lessons learned from this phase indicate that there are remaining issues that need to be addressed for sustainability of the systems established in the countries. The specific needs to be addressed include:

- (i) The need for more time, given the nature of this project which focuses on capacity building and national ownership and improving the systems established.
- (ii) The need for renewed Government commitment: at highest level for sustained national support to the systems established after the end of the project.
- (iii) The need for strengthening Institutional Framework for National CountrySTAT Systems (technical and coordination bodies).
- (iv) The need for strengthening the linkage with data users for increased relevance and use of CountrySTAT.
- (v) The need for building regional capacity for long term sustainability by building a national and regional pool of CountrySTAT experts (in countries and in regional institutions) as **knowledge champions** to ensure continued technical support after the end of the project.

## CountrySTAT News

### **Agriculture organisations appeal to government for platform to share statistics - by Talent Ng'andwe**

Agriculture organisations have appealed to the government to avail them a platform for sharing statistics on agriculture commodities to enable them contribute positively to the new UN-based information system, CountrySTAT which is to be launched soon.

Some farmer organisations have complained that their views are not addressed, accusing the government of delaying the process.

Felix Chizyuka, Executive Director of Agri-business Forum, an association that represents interest of private sector companies and farmers linked to outgrowing schemes states that government alone cannot sustain meaningful and well-coordinated information system like CountrySTAT but needs the support of the private sector.

Chizyuka said in the CountrySTAT publication that an integrated information system is very expensive and recommends it would be cheaper for government to get the support of existing small information systems in different private sector led organisations.

He adds that the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives should tap into existing information provision from the private sector to reduce on weak planning because of unreliable data.

Agribusiness Forum has an information systems programme based on production of various commodities, imports and exports and regulations.

Grain Association of Zambia Executive Director, Jacob Mwale says there are so many organisations and individuals with information about the sector an integrated system needs to be put in place to lessen costs and give guidance.

November 11, 2010 Article from CountrySTAT Zambia

### ***Effectiveness of the proposal to address the needs***

In order to address the above needs, the priorities of the new phase of the CountrySTAT project for Sub-Saharan African countries were defined and agreed with all countries. The new phase will have a longer term perspective (43 months) and focus on strengthening the systems established in view of their sustainable functioning after the end of the project. The following key objectives are defined:

- **Strengthening the CountrySTAT systems established in the 17 Sub-Saharan countries and promoting the use of data**, including updating and enhancing the technical capacity of national staff, strengthening technical and coordination institutions; improving data quality and promoting the use of CountrySTAT by data users.
- **Development of new IT tools and functions for CountrySTAT** for easy maintenance and updating by CountrySTAT technical staff and for user friendly

access by users: developing new standard tools, including distance learning tools, improving the functionalities of existing systems.

- **Strengthening the partnerships with relevant Regional Organizations** in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the systems by building capacity of a pool of regional and national experts and competent trainers able to provide technical support on continuous basis through regional institutions (UEMOA and EAC) or as South-South cooperation.

At the end of this second phase of BMGF funded project, it is expected that the 17 SSA countries will be self-reliant with appropriate institutional framework and a critical mass of national staff with skills and knowledge needed to maintain and up-date their CountrySTAT systems. It is also expected that a critical mass of expertise will be available at regional level to provide sustained technical support as required.

In addition, the funding from UEMOA and EAC/Italian Cooperation will be aimed at the following additional objectives.

1. Extend the implementation of CountrySTAT to 4 additional African countries: Burundi, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Togo;
2. Establish RegionSTAT at UEMOA and EAC Headquarters

Beyond the fundings from BMGF, UEMOA and EAC/Italian Cooperation, FAO has prepared a broader concept note for this expansion to an additional 10 SSA countries which would bring the coverage to 31 SSA countries in the next 5 years (60% of SSA countries).

The funding for these additional 10 countries is foreseen through the Implementation Plan for Africa of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. The Plan has been developed by FAO, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank with the financial support of BMGF, AfDB and in close collaboration with all key institutions concerned (the World Bank, EUROSTAT, African Union, etc..). A Donor Meeting is planned for June 2011 at FAO HQs in Rome for mobilisation of required funding for the Plan.

#### ***Direct and ultimate beneficiaries***

The direct and ultimate beneficiaries of the project are:

- The Statistical Institutions of 17 SSA countries which will benefit from increased technical capacity of national staff to run and maintain cost effective, timely, and reliable methods and technologies for producing and disseminating better quality food agricultural statistics.
- The policy makers, researchers, private sector and other user who will be able to access easily to available country data.
- The Governments in SSA countries who will be better able to attract development investment with improvements in access to wide and improved quality data on countries' agriculture sector.
- The private sector, Donors, NGOs that can make evidence based and improved investments decisions.
- The smallholder farmers of the 17 SSA countries who will be benefit from improved policies and investments in agriculture for productivity growth.
- The people of the 17 SSA countries who will have increased food security due to increased food availability from productivity growth.

### ***Geographic areas served***

The geographic area directly served is composed of the 17 SSA countries: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ethiopia. Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

In addition to the 17 SSA countries, the methodological tools, standards and systems to be developed will have a broader relevance as global goods since they will strengthen the core capacity of FAO to respond to growing requests for CountrySTAT system in many other countries in Africa and in other regions.

### ***Critical role of this foundation project***

Without funding from the Foundation, none of the above stated objectives of the project will be sustained. In addition, the momentum created during the phase 1 project and the investment made will be lost in most countries. The phase 2 of the project is aimed at strengthening the systems established and creating technical and institutional framework for self-reliance and sustainability.

### ***Key partner organizations***

The main partners for this project are the FAO Statistics Division (the proposed grantee) and the 17 SSA countries.

As for the first phase, at country level, National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Agriculture are recommended as key partners as they are the organizations officially charged with producing the national and sub-national agricultural statistics and therefore they host the Secretariat and National coordination of CountrySTAT. In addition several other agricultural data providers are associated with the development of CountrySTAT System and participate in Technical Working Groups for data quality review, data harmonization and validation.

FAO is proposed as the grantee because of the technical expertise and long experience of the Organization in Agricultural Statistics in Africa and because FAO has been the primary operational and technical assistance partner with the countries during the first phase of CountrySTAT project.