

Workshop on Strategic Planning for Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Bangladesh 15 November 2015

Mr Islam, Additional Secretary, Statistics and Information Division, Mr Howlader, Additional Secretary (Development), Statistics and Information Division, Ms Salima Sultana, Director (Joint Secretary), Agriculture Wing, BBS, Mr Rajiv Mehta, International Consultant, distinguished participants from Government Departments and agencies.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the participants of the Workshop on Strategic Planning for Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Bangladesh. I am thankful for your interest in supporting the Global Strategy activities in the country.

The Global Strategy is a ground-breaking effort. It has been developed through an extensive consultation process with national and international organizations. One of its key recommendations is that agriculture be integrated into national statistical systems to improve the availability and quality of agricultural and rural statistics. The development of Strategic Plans is designed to assist this integration.

The implementation of the Global Strategy in Asia and the Pacific is part of the long-term plan to improve agricultural and rural statistics in the region. In its first phase during 2013-2017, the Global Strategy will be implemented in 20 countries in this region. Bangladesh was identified as one of the anchor countries for implementation of the Global Strategy.

I am happy to acknowledge the support and cooperation of the Government of Bangladesh to the implementation of the Global Strategy in the country as reflected in the wide participation of representatives of the agricultural data producers and user agencies in this workshop. I note also that Bangladesh has successfully completed the in-depth capacity assessment (IdCA) of institutions in the country to produce core data on agricultural and rural sector. This was accomplished by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, in participative collaboration with various line departments of the Govt. of Bangladesh, and with technical support of FAO.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This workshop is of particular importance as it brings together agricultural and rural statistics stakeholders under one platform to discuss and identify critical issues which need to be tackled to ensure development of a sustainable agricultural statistical system in the country and, in particular, a long term national Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SPARS).

A Roadmap for preparation of SPARS is already approved and SPARS development will take into consideration the Government commitment to improve statistics in general in the country, as demonstrated by establishment of a National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS) and enactment of its Statistics Act in 2013.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

FAO's main mandate is to combat hunger and malnutrition, and monitor the progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially

MDG one, which aims to reduce hunger by half by 2015. Despite the rapid transformation of economies, in 2012-2014 the Asia-Pacific region was still home to more than 500 million people who faced chronic hunger, which accounts for almost two-thirds of the world total hungry population.

I would also like to share with you the constitutional mandate of FAO on agricultural information. The FAO constitution provides that “The Organization shall collect, analyse, interpret and disseminate information relating to nutrition, food and agriculture. In the Constitution, the term "agriculture" and its derivatives include fisheries, marine products, forestry and primary forestry products.”

As you will all agree, monitoring progress towards these objectives places new demands on the data systems, besides many existing unmet data gaps. Some of the weaknesses in national agricultural statistics are underlined by the data requirements to deal with issues relating to food security in the wake of price volatility, the diversion of agricultural land to the production of biofuels, global warming and environmental threats.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Global Strategy provides an opportunity to enable countries to develop sustainable statistical systems that can produce accurate and reliable agricultural and rural data – comparable over time and across countries for use by decision-makers. As part of the Global Strategy, FAO has the responsibility to provide technical assistance to countries by making available comprehensive documentation of agricultural statistical system in the country, preparing strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics and promoting partnerships for implementation of the Plan.

In recent years Bangladesh has been a focus country for FAO which has been, and still is, involved in a number of projects, including the Harmonisation of Yield Statistics for Rice, AMIS and others. The Global Strategy process can play a catalytic role and help build complementarities across these projects.

I am convinced that with our strong partnership with the Government and other Development Partners, we will work together to improve the quality and quantity of agricultural information needed to support evidence based policy making in the country.

This workshop is designed to increase our understanding of strategic planning, of the process of developing a SPARS and of effective methods of collaboration needed for that development. Armed with that understanding I am sure that the SPARS process will be a success in Bangladesh.

Thank you.