



***19 September 2013***

## **International Advisory Group on FAO Statistics (IAGFS)**

### **Opening Statement**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for being here. And welcome to the first meeting of the International Advisory Group on FAO Statistics.

It marks the beginning of a new dialogue and partnership to improve food security and agricultural statistics at the national, regional and global levels.

It will also help ensure that FAO provides high-quality and reliable data.

FAO is moving towards a more effective and streamlined statistics system. In this process, we are strengthening our internal governance.

I have recently created the role of FAO Chief Statistician, who will be supported by the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Statistics.

They will be responsible for leading FAO's work in statistics and improving the quality of the data that we produce, collect and distribute.

They will also guarantee better coordination of activities within the international statistical community.

Ladies and gentlemen,

FAO is committed to offering better and more reliable data. We want to be recognized by the quality of the data we provide and not for being the only source of many kinds of agricultural information.

We are committed to strengthening the capacity of governments to collect and analyze data.

And we are committed to working with a wide range of partners.

That includes listening to them, even when we disagree. Different views force us to rethink what we are doing. And, in many cases, that can lead to positive changes.



So this is a very important meeting for FAO. It is an opportunity to receive input and advice on our statistical programme of work from our stakeholders.

Why do we need all this? Let me point out two reasons that stand out for FAO.

First, we want statistics to be an international public good. It is in our interest to have quality food security and agricultural data available.

On this front, FAO is responsible for providing products such as food security indicators, statistics for food, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, land and water, and the Food Price Index.

We also contribute to many other products and services, such as the World Census of Agriculture and the Agricultural Market Information System.

And, second, statistics help us assess and monitor results. This is important for governments and for FAO.

Our Members have just approved FAO's reviewed strategic framework and a new program of work for the next two years.

We are focusing our efforts around five strategic objectives: ending hunger, increasing sustainability, reducing rural poverty, improving food systems and building resilience.

And we are changing the way we work. Putting emphasis on a crosscutting approach, working with partners and delivering measurable and concrete results.

Improved statistics will help us monitor and understand the impact of our work, at the global and country levels.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are aware that there are shortcomings with the statistics that are available, inside and outside FAO.

We hope that by working in partnership we can overcome them. All of us will benefit.

Working together we can learn from each other and develop our capacities.

Working together we can transform the current gaps and shortcomings into opportunities for improved coordination, data collection and analysis and harmonization.

Working together we can transform overlapping work into complementary work.

And working together we can identify areas in which there is a potential for joint ventures, outsourcing and specialization.

In short, working together will translate into better statistics.



In this spirit, in the coming days you will discuss the changes being made to improve FAO statistics. They include: first, the implementation of a corporate quality assurance framework; second, the Statistical Programme of Work 2014-15; and, third, the new Statistical Data Warehouse.

We hope that these discussions will also help promote country engagement in statistical discussions at the strategic level.

This Advisory Group represents FAO's commitment to produce accurate, timely and high quality statistics. I would like to thank you for your support, and wish you a successful meeting.

Thank you.