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Alimentación**AFRICAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS****Twenty-eighth Session****Pretoria, South Africa: 4 – 8 December 2023****AGENDA ITEM 33****RESPONSE RATE TO FAO QUESTIONNAIRES AND DATA COLLECTION
PLANS FOR 2024****NAME OF AUTHORS****Ngarsaim Espoir Beram****FAO Office of the Chief Statistician****SUMMARY**

The institutional mandate of FAO for the collection, processing and dissemination of food and agriculture-related data stems from the Article I of its Constitution, which requires the Organization to collect, analyse, interpret, and disseminate information relating to nutrition, food, and agriculture. As an international organization, FAO statistics are mainly based on data supplied by national statistical authorities or by other international organizations. For these statistics to be useful for evidence-based policymaking, the availability and quality of the data are essential aspects to consider.

This paper focuses on the data availability issue in Africa based on a detailed analysis of response rates to annual FAO questionnaires dispatched to countries and territories. It first presents the status of responses rates to FAO questionnaires by domain in Africa as a whole, then across sub-domains and the sub-regions of Africa. Second, it provides information on FAO's data collection plans for 2024. Third, recommendations are formulated based on the results of the analysis, and, finally, the main issues for discussion with the distinguished AFCAS delegates are identified.

1. STATUS OF RESPONSE RATES TO FAO QUESTIONNAIRES

This section describes response rates to FAO questionnaires, starting with overall patterns in the agriculture sector as well as the other domains or systems, including commodity market developments, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry, AQUASTAT, DAD-IS and plant genetic resources. The response rate is defined as the ratio of between the number of filled questionnaires for a given territory and the number of questionnaires (domains) that were dispatched to that territory. Overall response rates by questionnaire is followed by a detailed analysis of response rates by sub-domains and across Africa sub-regions.

1.1. Overall patterns and data availability issue

The global status of response rates to FAO questionnaires in Africa is described in the following paragraphs, regardless of potential disparities between sub-regions and sub-domains.

1.1.1. Agriculture domains

The overall pattern of agriculture-related questionnaires in Africa and the world is provided in Figure 1 below.

Agriculture production is one of the most important datasets of FAO and used to compile the Supply Utilization Accounts and the Food Balance Sheets. The annual questionnaires request national institutions to report on production, area harvested, yields, livestock primary production quantity and selected information for some key processed commodities.

Response rates on Production questionnaire increased from 43 percent in 2018 to 50 percent in 2023 for Africa, with the highest rate reached in 2019 (56 percent). These figures are much higher for the World: 64 percent and 62 percent in 2018 and 2023 respectively.

Data on land use, pesticides and fertilizers are also collected from countries by FAO through annual questionnaires. The 2023 questionnaire campaign is ongoing and the figures for 2022 are the revised figures based on final information. While response rate to the land use questionnaire is around 45 percent worldwide, in Africa it remains below 20 percent. Likewise, more than 80 percent of African countries did not fill pesticide and fertilizer questionnaires.

The response rate on Agriculture Producer Prices questionnaires increased by 10 percentage points between 2018 and 2023 for Africa but remains below the response rate for the World (43 percent vs. 66 percent in 2023).

The response rate on Government Expenditure on Agriculture (GEA) questionnaire in Africa returns to its 2018 level of 30 percent in 2023, after reaching higher levels while the world average rate is beyond 50 percent.

Figure 1: Response rates to Agriculture-related questionnaires in Africa and the world (2018-2022/2023)



1.1.2. Other domains or systems

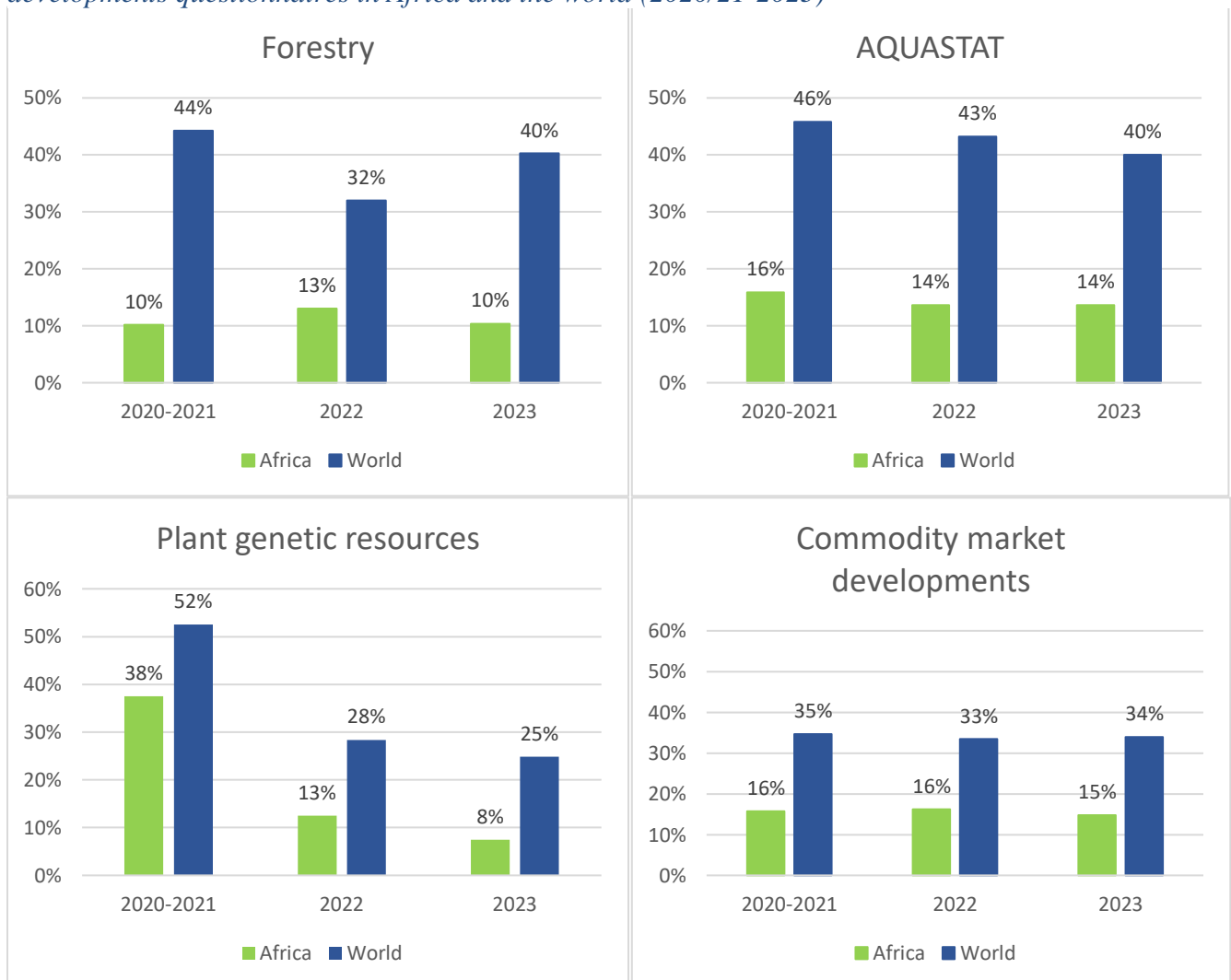
Data availability issues are less acute in the agriculture sector than the other domains, especially on forestry data, AQUASTAT, Plant generic resources and information on commodity market developments.

In the forestry sector, less than 15 percent of African countries which received the questionnaire did not return it to FAO. The situation is similar with AQUASTAT where the response rate to the questionnaire for Africa was 15 percent in 2020-21, and 14 percent in 2022 and 2023.

In addition, Africa shows a downward trend in the response rate to Plant genetic resources questionnaire, like that of the world but below its levels. In 2022 and 2023, the response rate for Africa was below 15 percent.

The response rate on Commodity market developments questionnaires remains constant around 15 percent in Africa, representing about half of the world average.

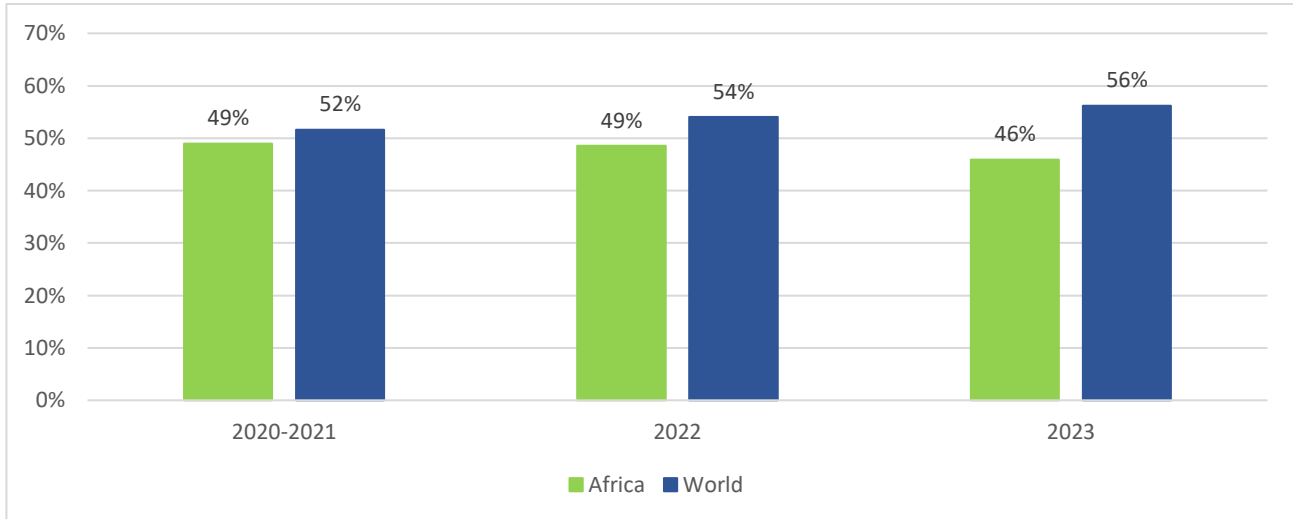
Figure 2: Response rate on Forestry, AQUASTAT, Plant genetic resources and commodity market developments questionnaires in Africa and the world (2020/21-2023)



The status data availability on Fisheries and aquaculture and DAD-IS is much better, even if efforts are needed to improve the response rates, especially for the latter.

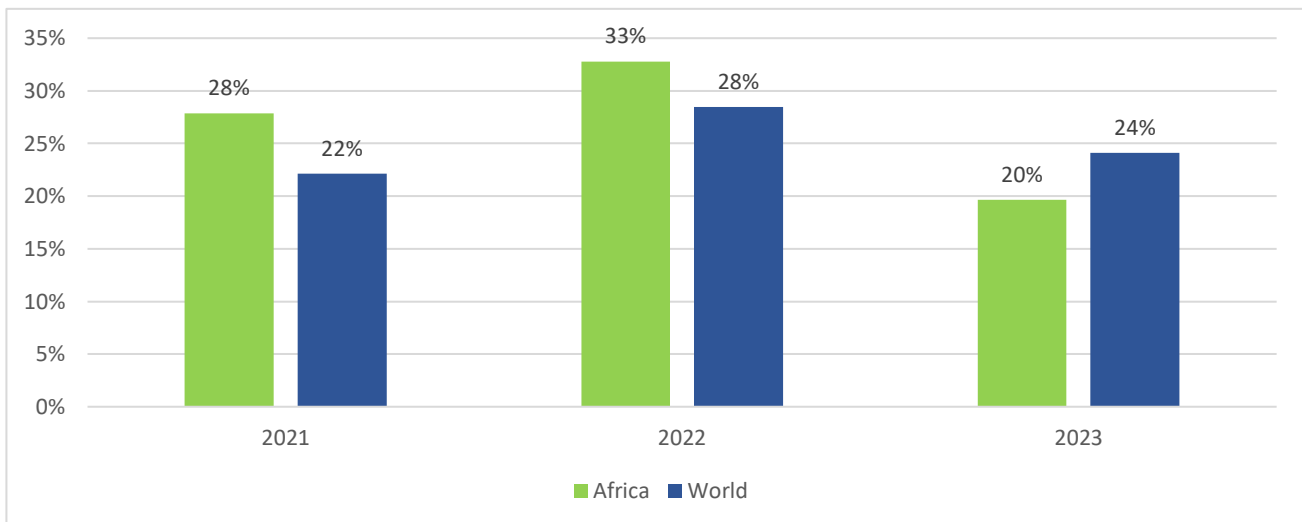
The average response rate on Fisheries and aquaculture questionnaires for Africa decreased from 49 percent in 2020/21 to 46 percent in 2023, thus widening the gap with the world average, which is on an upward trend and above 50 percent.

Figure 3: Response rate on Fisheries and aquaculture questionnaires in Africa and the world (2020/21-2023)



Response rate to DAD-IS questionnaire for Africa was above the world average rate in 2021 and 2022 before decreasing from 35 percent to 20 percent in one year.

Figure 4: Response rate on DAD-IS questionnaires in Africa and the world (2020/21-2023)



1.2. Detailed analysis of response rates by sub-sector and across the sub-regions of Africa

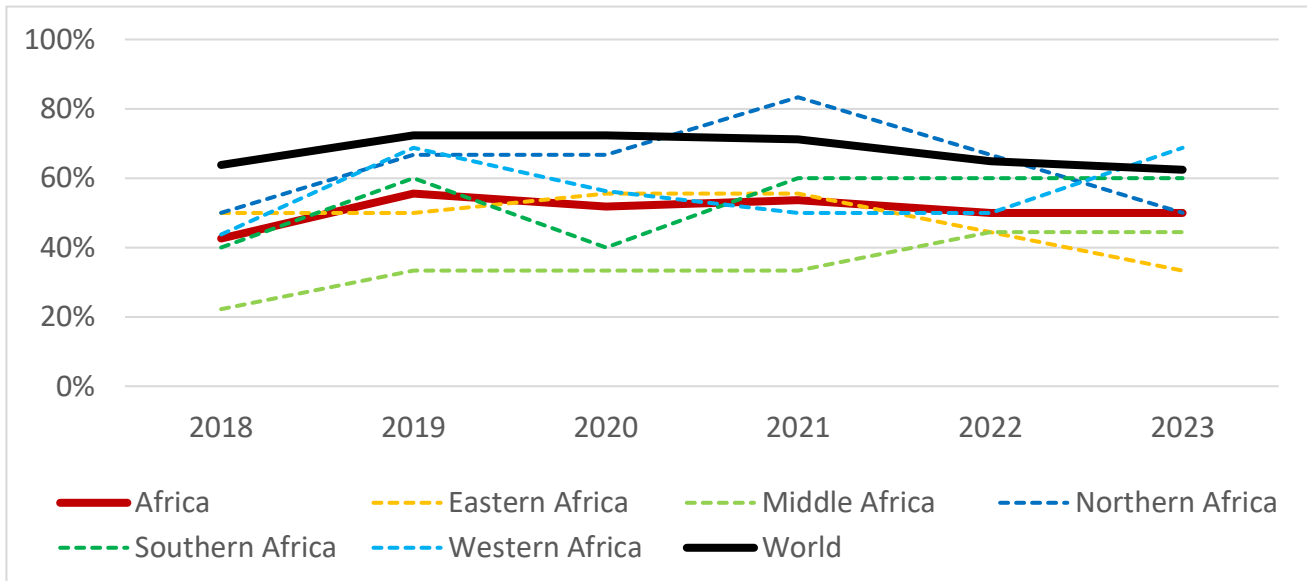
The overall pattern of response rates may hide disparities by sub-sector and/or across sub-regions. Therefore, this analysis aims to highlight such disparities in order to guide discussions towards improvement recommendations and solutions.

1.2.1. Agriculture sector

a) Agricultural Production questionnaire

Despite some improvements over the years, Middle Africa remains the region with the lowest response rates to production questionnaire, except in 2023 (44 percent) at the expense of the Eastern Africa region (33 percent). The other regions show peaks and troughs in their respective response rates (for example, the response rate for the Northern Africa region drastically decreased from 83 percent in 2021 to 50 percent in 2023).

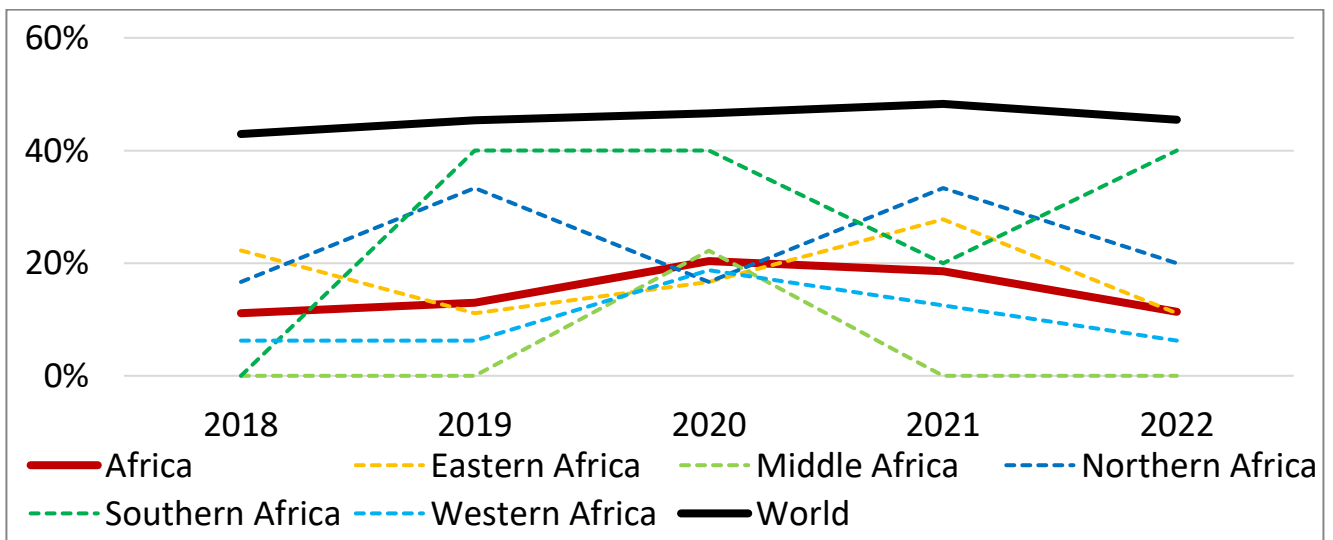
Figure 5: Response rate on Production questionnaire across sub-regions (2018-2023)



b) Agricultural Inputs questionnaires (land use, pesticides and fertiliser)

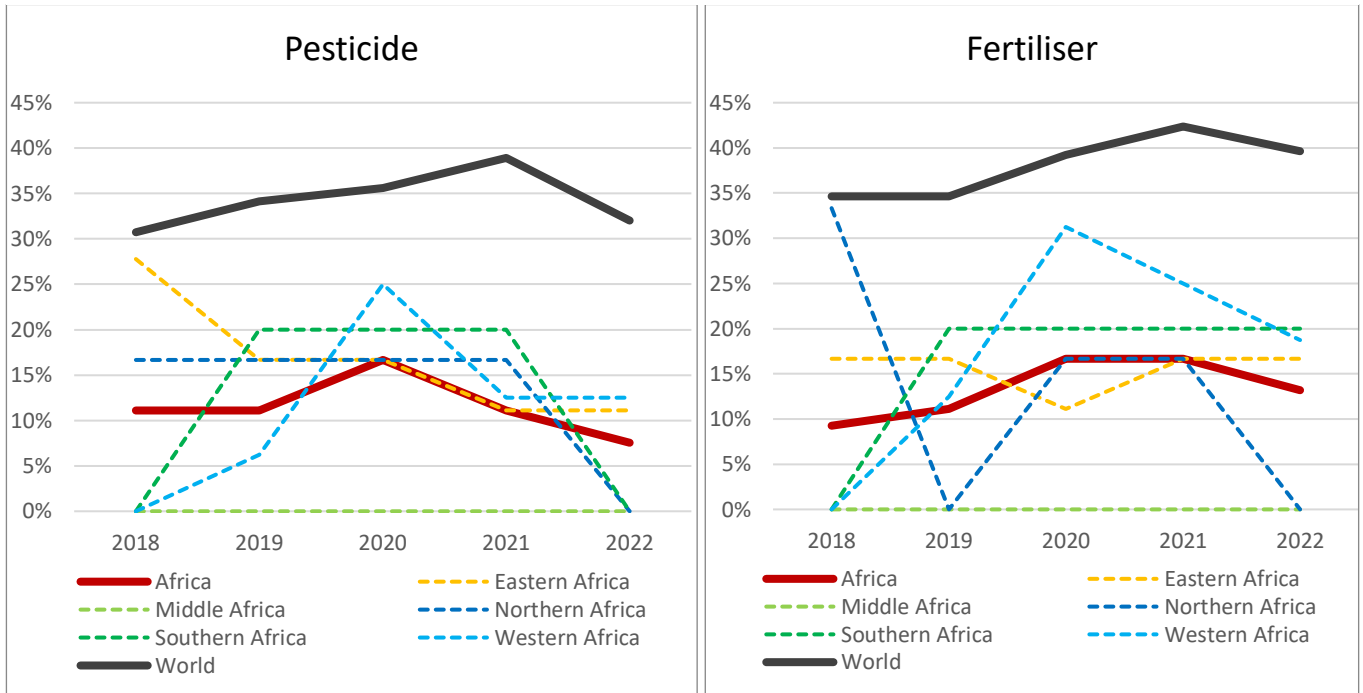
In the Southern Africa region, 40 percent of countries replied to the land use questionnaire in 2019, 2020 and 2022. This is by far higher than the average rate in Africa. Although questionnaires were dispatched in the Middle and Southern regions in 2018 and in the Middle Africa region in 2019, 2021 and 2022, no country responded.

Figure 6: Response rate on Land use questionnaire across the sub-regions (2018-2022)



Regarding Pesticide and Fertilizer questionnaires, no country in the Middle Africa filled them throughout the considered period (Figure 7). On the contrary, in Western and Southern Africa, where the situation was similar to that in Middle Africa in 2018, the response rate gradually increased to levels above the average rate for Africa as a whole.

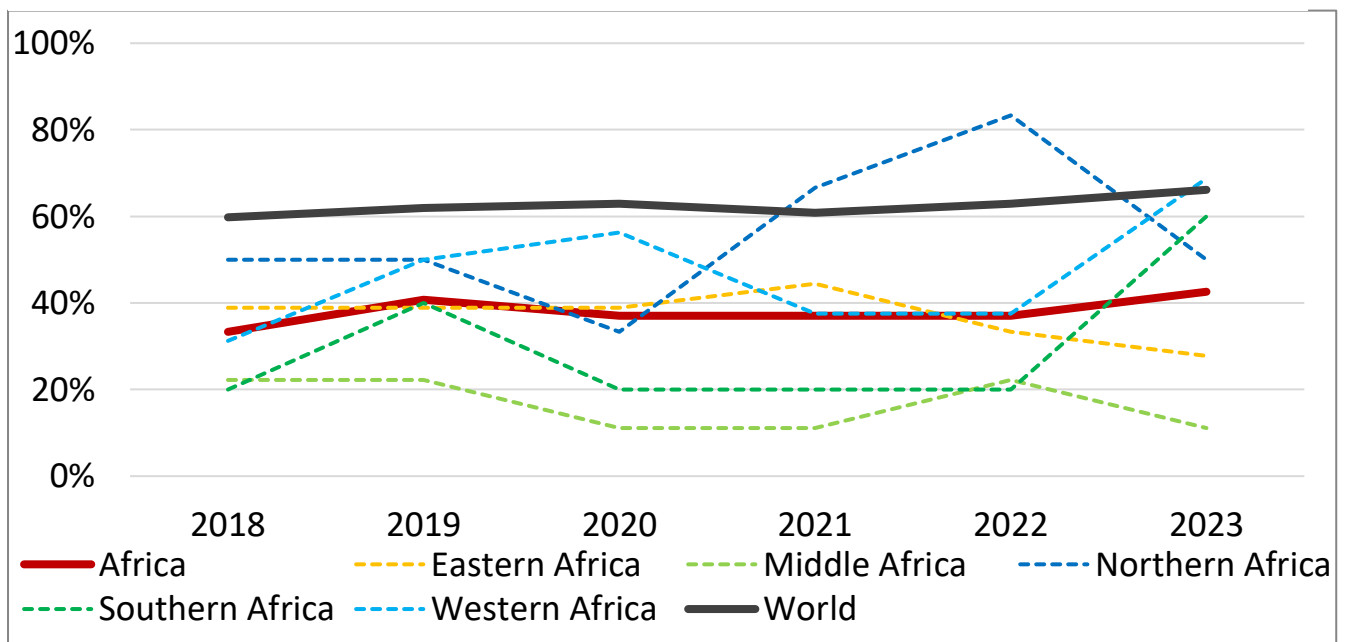
Figure 7: Response rates on Pesticide and Fertilizer questionnaires across sub-regions (2018-2022)



c) Agricultural Producer Prices questionnaire

In contrast to Africa's position in relation to the world, the North African region has higher response rates to the questionnaire on agricultural producer prices than the world average in 2021 (67 percent) and 2022 (83 percent). However, response rates in the Middle Africa region are the lowest.

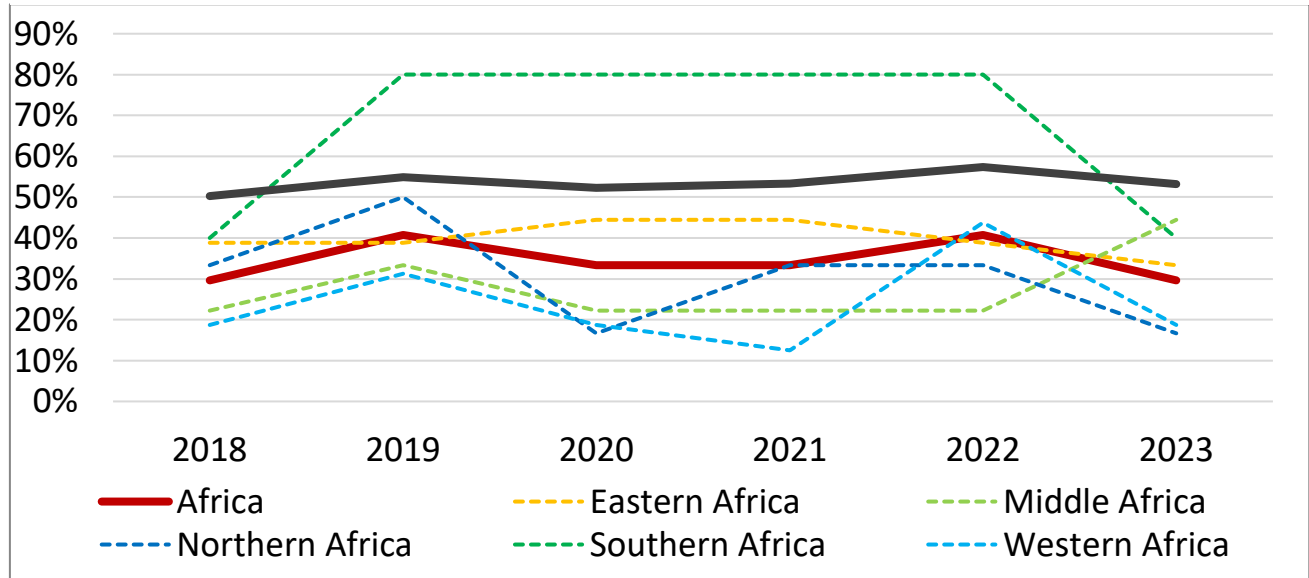
Figure 8: Response rate on Producer Prices questionnaires across sub-regions (2018-2023)



d) GEA questionnaire

On the GEA questionnaire, the Southern Africa region shows the highest response rates, particularly from 2019 to 2022, where they stood around 80 percent, while the Western Africa region presents lowest response rates.

Figure 9: Response rate on the GEA questionnaires across sub-regions (2018-2023)

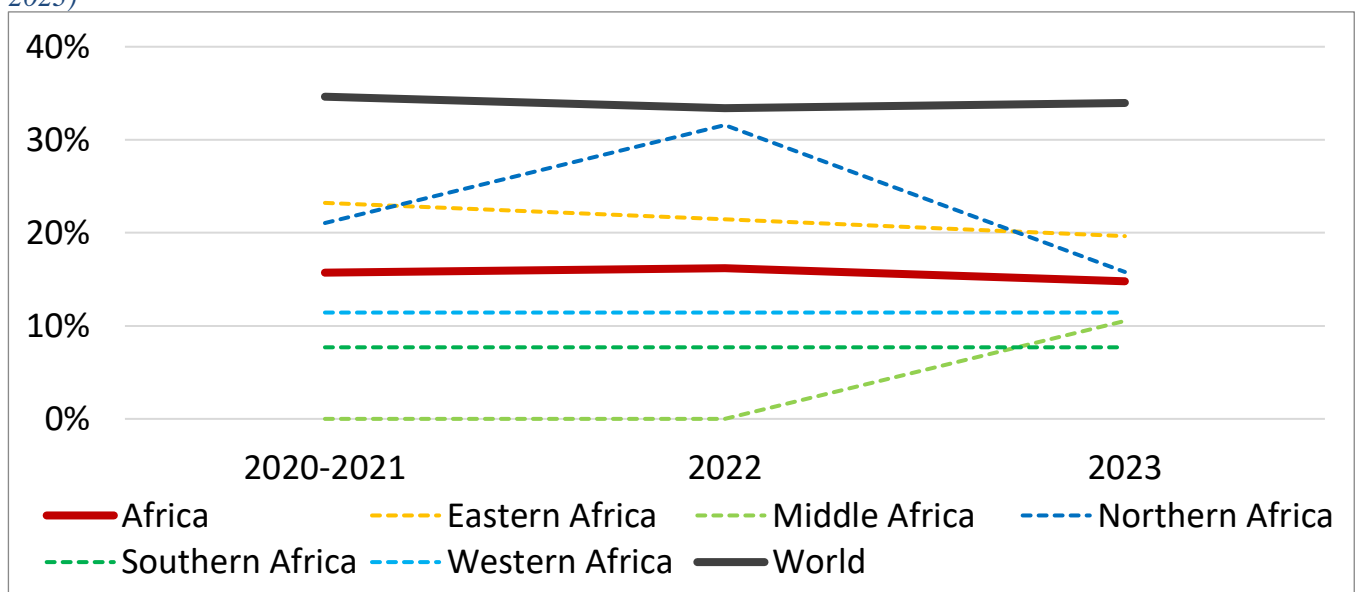


1.2.2. Other domains or systems

a) Commodity market developments questionnaires

Western and Southern Africa regions show a similar trend to that of Africa with slightly low response rates on commodity market developments questionnaires: 11 percent and 8 percent of response rate respectively. No country in Middle Africa region responded in 2020-2021 and 2022, and the Eastern and Northern Africa regions show the highest response rates.

Figure 10: Response rate on the Commodity market developments questionnaire across sub-regions (2020/21-2023)

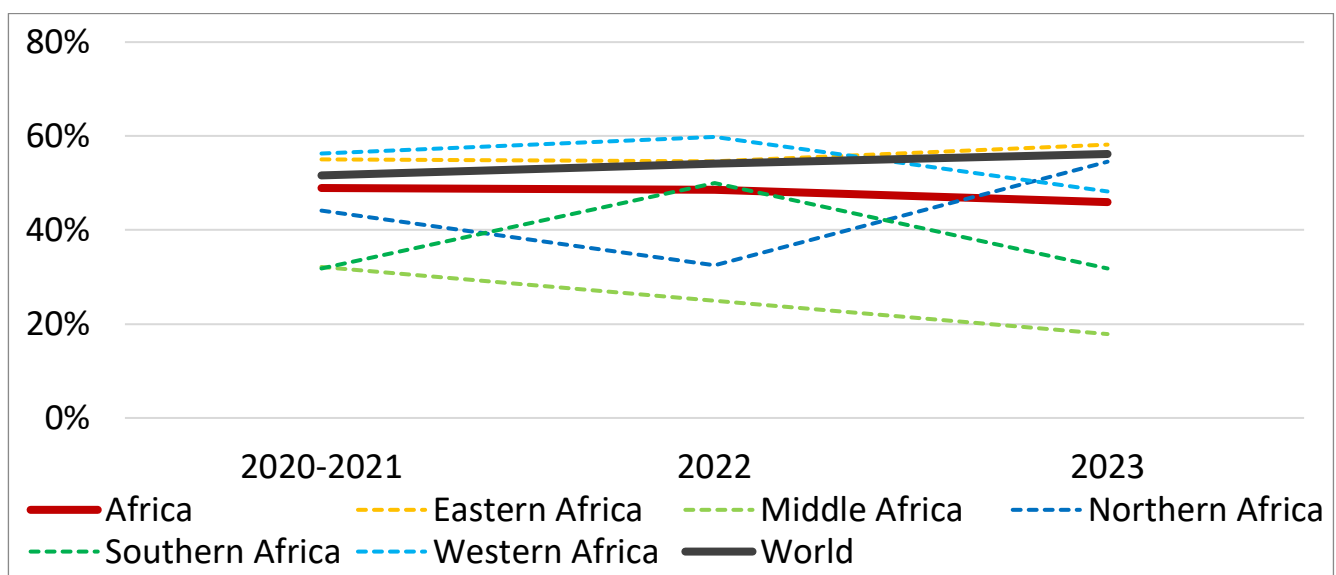


A detailed analysis of the response rates by commodity (Figure 16 in the Annex) shows that the lowest response rates are registered for *Banana* and *Tropical fruits*, with variations across sub-regions, while highest response rates are achieved for *Hard Fibres (Abaca, Sisal and Coir)* but only Eastern Africa countries responded (60 percent), as no questionnaire was dispatched in regions like Middle and Southern Africa. For *Jute, Kenaf and Allied Fibres*, no African county filled the questionnaire noting that it was not dispatched to Middle Africa countries.

b) Fisheries and aquaculture questionnaires

Among the Africa sub-regions, Middle Africa is not only lagging behind, but also showing a downward trend in response rates on Fisheries and aquaculture questionnaires over the three-year period. The highest response rates are in the Eastern and Western Africa regions.

Figure 11: Response rate on the Fisheries and aquaculture questionnaires across sub-regions (2020/21-2023)

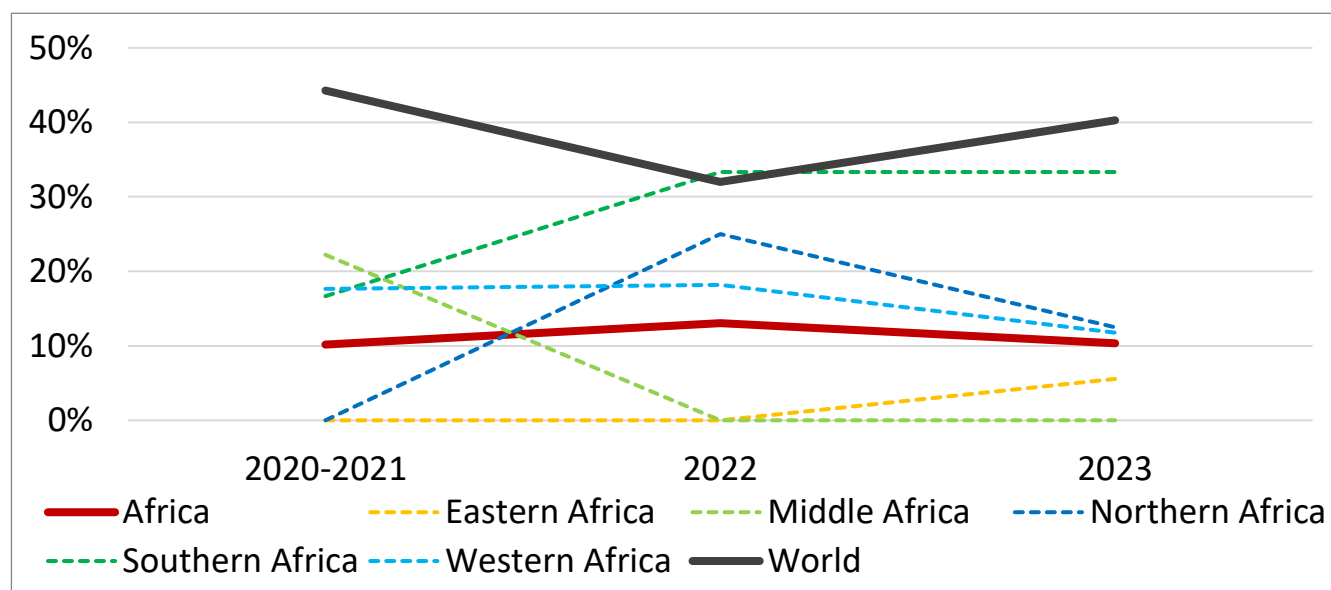


Response rates for Africa are much better for *Global capture production* and *Production of preserved and processed fishery and aquaculture commodities*, mainly driven by higher rates in Eastern and Western Africa (Figure 17 in the Annex). The drastic decrease in the response rate on *Production of preserved and processed fishery and aquaculture commodities*, from 100 percent in 2020/21 and 2022 to 0 percent in 2023 for Southern Africa, can be explained by the fact that only one of the five countries was covered by the questionnaire. On the other hand, low response rates in Africa are observed in *Regional Capture Production, Fishery Fleet, Fishers and fish farmers* and characterized by some sub-regions (Southern, Middle, Eastern Africa) showing 100 percent of non-responses and being not covered (Eastern Africa for Regional Capture Production).

c) Forestry questionnaires

Western and Southern Africa regions constantly show response rates above the Africa's average rate while Middle and Eastern Africa present the lowest rates, except in 2020/21 where the response rate for Middle Africa was the highest in Africa (22 percent).

Figure 12: Response rate on Forestry questionnaires across sub-regions (2020/21-2023)

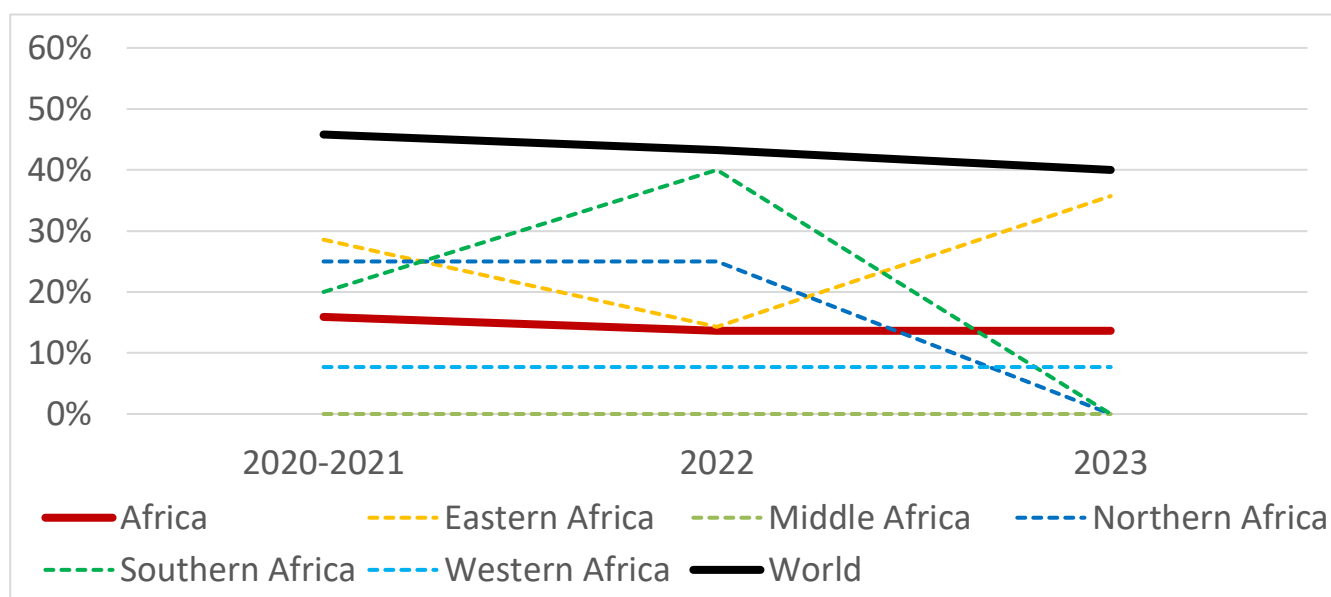


The response rate on Forestry hides significant differences between *Joint Forestry Sector* and *Pulp and Paper Production* (Figure 18 in the Annex). Not only less African countries (5 out of 54) were covered by the questionnaire on *Pulp and Paper Production* questionnaire over the 3-year period but none of them filled it. Regarding *Joint Forestry Sector* questionnaire, the response rate for Africa reached 15 percent in 2022 thanks to exceptional response rates in Western Africa (20 percent), Northern Africa (33 percent) and Southern Africa (40 percent) that even exceeded the world average rate.

d) AQUASTAT

In 2020/21 and 2022, 3 of the 5 African sub-regions (Eastern, Northern and Southern Africa) showed response rates above the Africa's average. However, in the 2023, none of the countries of Southern, Northern and Middle Africa replied to FAO's request.

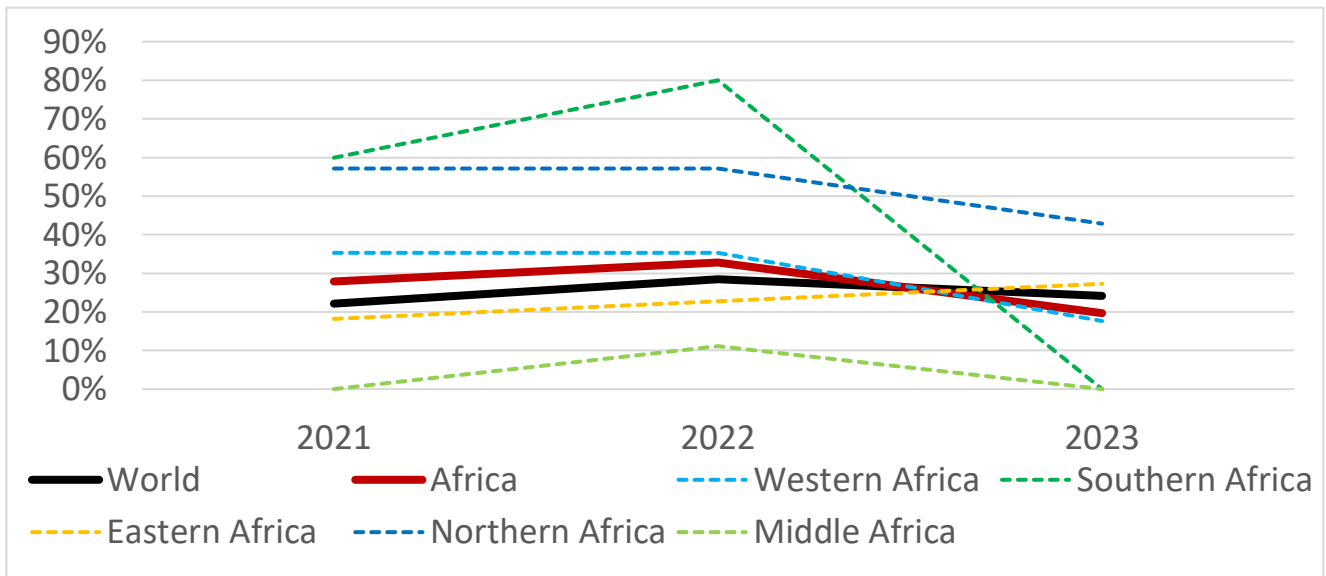
Figure 13: Response rate on AQUASTAT questionnaire across sub-regions (2020/21-2023)



e) DAD-IS questionnaire

Southern, Northern and Western Africa regions are among the regions with the highest response rates in the world on average, even if no country in the Southern Africa region filled the FAO questionnaire in 2023. Their response rates exceed both the world and Africa average rate. In Middle Africa, response rates are low compared to the other sub-regions and no questionnaire was filled in 2021 and 2023.

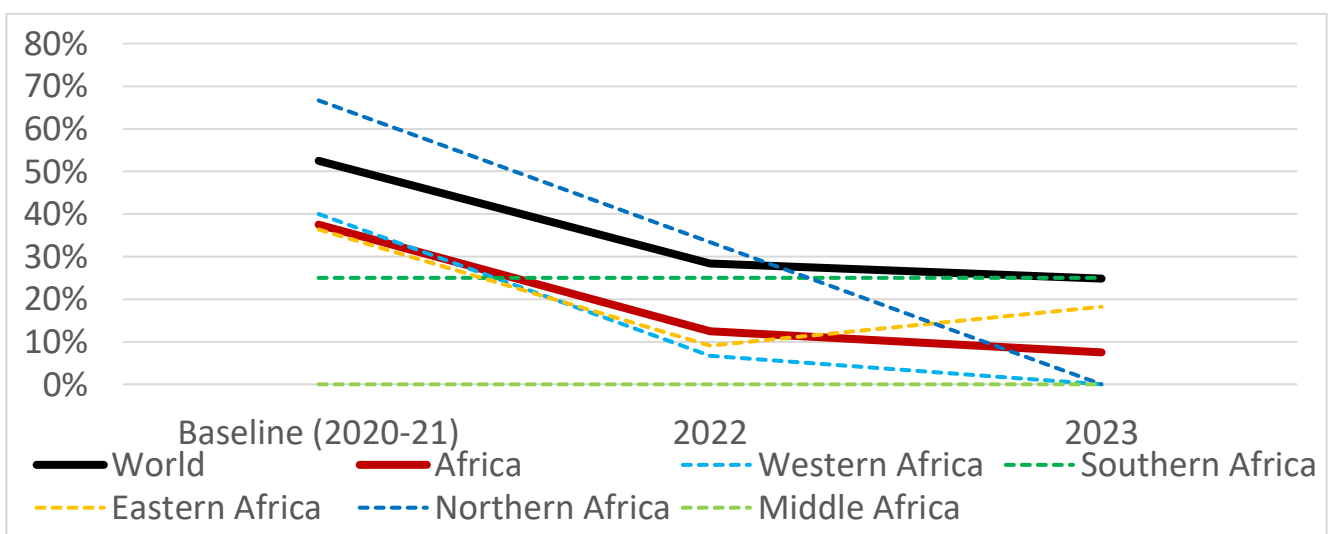
Figure 14: Response rate on DAD-IS questionnaire across sub-regions (2021-2023)



f) Plant genetic resources (Second GPA) questionnaire

Low response rates on Plant genetic resources questionnaires are in Western Africa and Middle Africa regions where no country replied in 2023. Also, the response rate in Northern Africa continuously decreased from 67 percent in 2020/21 to 0 percent in 2023. In Southern Africa, the response rate remains constant at 25 percent.

Figure 15: Response rate on Plant genetic resources questionnaire across sub-regions (2020/21-2023)



2. DATA COLLECTION PLANS FOR 2024

Data collection plans for 2024 include the following new questionnaires, in line with the specified timeline:

- Country report supporting the preparation of the Third Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture – Ongoing until End of June 2024
- Questionnaire on genetic resources for food and agriculture and climate change – Starting in Jan/Feb 2024
- Questionnaire on Land cover (on behalf of UN Committee of Experts on Economic-Environmental Accounting) – a pilot test of the questionnaire will be conducted in the first quarter of 2024. Data collection dates will be confirmed following the results of the pilot test.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the average response rate in Africa for FAO annual questionnaires lies below the world average, with uneven distribution by domain and/or across the five sub-regions. Some domains such as Forestry, AQUASTAT, Plant generic resources and Commodity market developments show very low response rates while the difference gap with the world is being closed in others (DAD-IS, Fisheries and aquaculture).

The response rate on agricultural production questionnaire has improved over time and is around 50 percent in 2023. However, response rates to agricultural inputs (land use, pesticide and fertilizer) questionnaires remain low, between 10 and 20 percent.

The detailed analysis of the response rate to Fisheries and aquaculture questionnaires reveals important disparities across sub-domains that undermine the improvements achieved in some sub-domains. Efforts should be made to sustain such improvements not only on the Fisheries and aquaculture questionnaires but also on any other domains where they are observed.

The distribution of response rates across the sub-regions of Africa highlights significant progress that needs to be sustained. These include the improvement of the response rate on production questionnaire for Middle Africa, which used to lag behind the other sub-regions. However, for most of the other domains, the Middle Africa region continues to present lowest response rates, joined in recent years by Southern and Northern Africa (DAD-IS questionnaire), Western Africa (Plant genetic resources). It is worth noting that the questionnaire dispatch is also an issue to be addressed as several countries are not covered at all, especially for some commodities (*Hard Fibres, Jute, Kenaf and Allied Fibres*).

4. QUESTIONS AND INVITATIONS TO AFCAS MEMBER COUNTRIES

AFCAS member countries are invited to:

- express their views and recommendations to FAO on the following points:
 - ✓ FAO's efforts to liaise with institutions/national focal points responsible for the questionnaire and to follow-up actions;
 - ✓ The underlying causes of the low and/or deteriorating response rates on Land use, Pesticide, Fertilizer, Forestry, Commodity market developments, Plant genetic resources and AQUASTAT questionnaires in Africa;
 - ✓ Ways to sustain improvements in response rates on some questionnaires and experience sharing to scale-up in-country/intra-regional good practices;

- take note of the new data collections foreseen by FAO in 2024 and encourage national focal points to return filled questionnaires in due time;
- take note of the report and provide any additional guidance as deemed appropriate.

ANNEX

Figure 16: Breakdown of response rates to Commodity market developments questionnaires by commodity and across sub-regions (2020/21-2023)

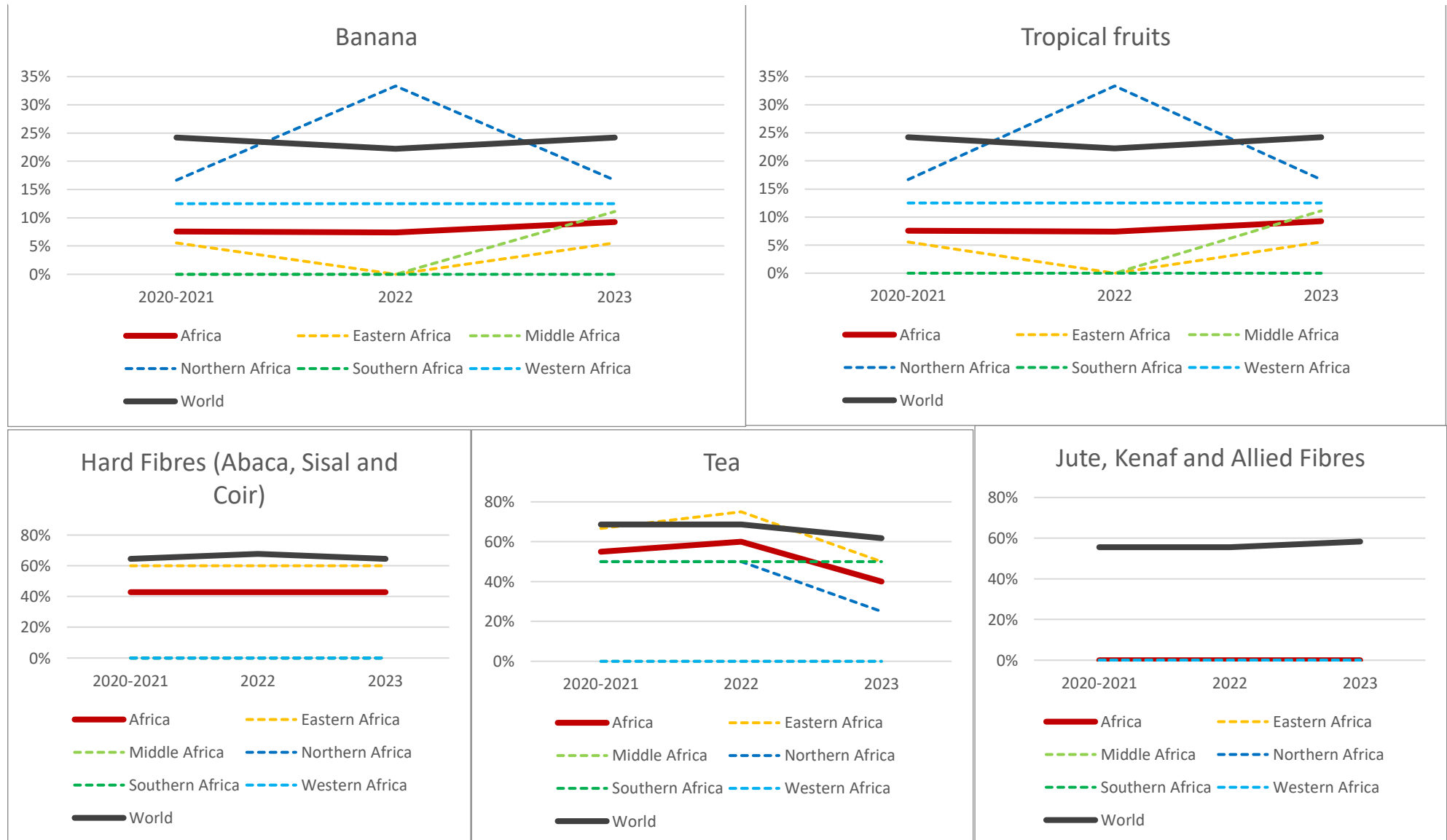


Figure 17: Breakdown of response rates on Fisheries and aquaculture questionnaires by sub-domain and across sub-regions (2020/21-2023)

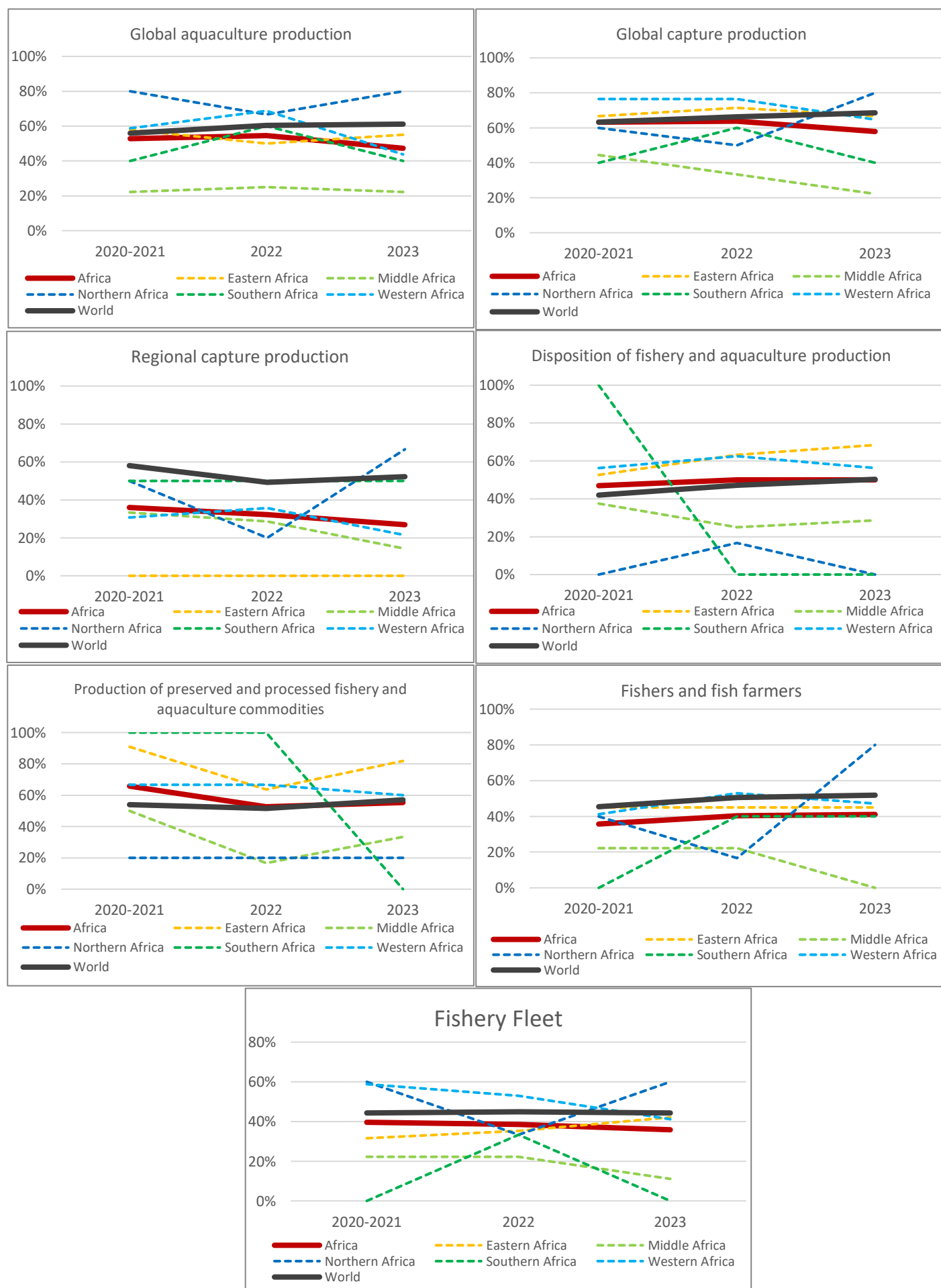


Figure 18: Breakdown of response rates on Forestry questionnaires by sub-domain and across sub-regions (2020/21-2023)

