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AGENDA ITEM 5

Introduction to the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (Phase II)

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INTRODUCTION

The Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (GSARS) was developed in 2009 as a blueprint for a coordinated and long-term initiative to address the decline in the agricultural statistical systems of many developing countries, endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) during its 41st session in 2010. It was designed as a long-term process to be implemented in 3 phases over 15 years to provide a framework for national and international statistical systems that would enable developing countries to produce the necessary data in the 21st century.

The implementation of Phase 1 of GSARS (2012-2018) significantly impacted the agricultural statistical systems of many developing countries and demonstrated its ability to respond to the needs of the evolving international and regional agendas.

The second global action plan endorsed by the Global Steering Committee in December 2018, builds upon the successful achievements of and lessons learned from Phase 1. The goal: the investment made in creating the methodologies, starting technical assistance, and initiating a generation of new agricultural statisticians must be transformed into more concrete capacity and increased data production and dissemination activities at country level.

GSARS Second Phase

The second phase of the GSARS (Action Plan for Africa 2021-2024) is being implemented by three partners (FAO, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and PARIS21) coordinated by a Global Office hosted by FAO Statistics Division in Rome. The focus for Phase 2 has been put on training and technical assistance at country level to drive practical use of data for both accountability reporting and national policy needs. To meet this goal, GSARS has considered lessons from Phase 1.

Main objectives and components of the 2nd Phase (2021-2023)

The **overarching objective** of the Phase 2 of the Global Strategy is to build stronger capacities in national agricultural statistical systems for accountability reporting and policy making, building on the foundations established during Phase 1. In this context, **four main components** have been identified:

Component 1: Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SPARS)

Through the development of appropriate mechanisms for guaranteeing long term national statistical development.

Component 2: Training

Through an improvement in existing HR and management policies, strengthening of the technical capacities of statistical staff, improved graduate programs on agricultural statistics and facilitated access to scholarships.

Component 3: Cost-effective methods

Through the provision of technical assistance on cost-effective methodologies, most of which have been developed during Phase 1.

Component 4: Data analysis, dissemination

Through the increase in data analysis and dissemination capacities that will enable countries to compute indicators relevant for accountability reporting and policymaking.
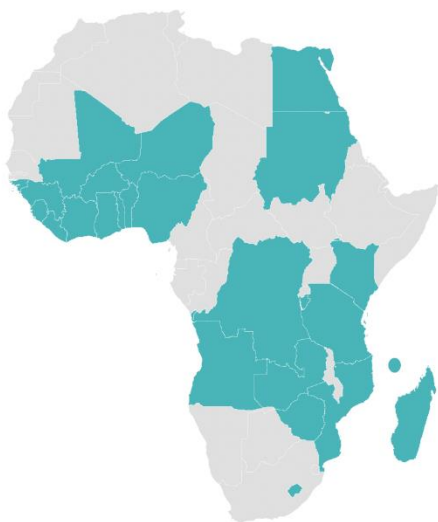
Overview of proposed support

The table below shows the 15 packages distributed according to the four main components of GSARS2.

COMPONENTS	PACKAGES	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY
Component 1 SPARS	SPARS	Designing or updating SPARS at country level	FAO
	ADAPT	Integrating the use of ADAPT in the SPARS assessment phase	P21
Component 2 Training	HR POLICIES	Providing agricultural statistical institutions and their staff with adequate HR policies and related training	P21
	LEADERSHIP, COMMUNICATION	Strengthening leadership and communications of agricultural statistical agencies for better agricultural policies	P21
	SCHOLARSHIPS	Strengthening the capacities in agricultural statistics by providing 60 scholarships for 25 countries in Africa at master's level in the network of African Statistical Schools	UNECA
	BASIC TRAINING	Improving the skills in agricultural statistics of statistical officers through the provision of an extended training (3 weeks) covering data editing, cleaning and imputation, data management and preservation, tabulation, and gender-relevant statistics	FAO and UNECA
Component 3 Cost-effective methods	AGPROD	Providing countries with the appropriate data collection and analytical tools to produce timely and reliable statistics on agricultural production	FAO
	FARMECO	Providing countries with the appropriate data collection and analytical tools to measure key economic aggregates, both at the farm and commodity-level.	FAO
	LOSSES	Providing countries with the appropriate data collection and analytical tools to measure harvest and post-harvest losses of agricultural commodities on the farm	FAO
	MSF	Providing support to countries in developing, using and maintaining master sampling frames for agricultural surveys	FAO
Component 4 Data analysis, dissemination	TOOLS	Training and support on the use of tools for data processing and analysis such as STATA, SPSS or R	FAO
	CAPI	Training and support on the use of Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) systems	FAO
	DISSEMINATION	Training and support on the dissemination of official statistics, including well-documented microdata	FAO
	INDICATORS and FARM TYPOLOGIES	Training and support on the computation of indicators (national, SDG, CAADP) and -for more advanced countries- on the development of farm typologies	FAO
	FBS	Training and support on the compilation of food balance sheets	FAO

Target countries and regions

Twenty-five African countries are targeted. It has been estimated that countries **could receive a maximum of 5-6 packages** to account for the time and capacity required to absorb new techniques and methodologies in a limited time frame. The packages have been conceived as separate - but interconnected - modules addressing various levels of technical expertise and capacities.

An in-depth analysis of needs was conducted at the beginning of the implementation of the grant, based on information gathered during the 1st phase of GSARS and information collected at the national level. Countries with low capacities were proposed basic packages (AGPROD, TOOLS, INDICATORS) in priority whereas more advanced countries or countries having benefitted from TA in the first phase of GSARS would have access to more advanced packages (FARMECO, LOSSES, DISSEMINATION).

The 25 targeted African countries cover three regional economic communities - ECOWAS[1], COMESA[2] and SADC[3] - which will directly benefit from certain TA activities and contribute to the implementation of some activities in the countries.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these map(s) do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries. Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement. Final boundary between Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined.

Source: author's own elaboration, FAO.

Since the beginning of the project, implementing partners have achieved significant outputs in collaboration with partner countries:

- The Economic Commission for Africa has granted 50 scholarships to young statisticians and organized two training courses for trainers on agricultural statistics methodologies.

- PARIS21 organized successful trainings to top and middle – level managers on HR policies and on strengthening leadership and communication skills in statistical agencies; and contributed identifying data gaps to facilitate data assessing and planning in the SPARS process using ADAPT

- FAO provided trainings and TA for preparation of SPARS in 6 countries, i on the use of cost-effective survey methods, on data processing and analysis, data dissemination, compilation of national, SDG and CAADP indicators and Food Balance Sheets to all 25 African beneficiary countries, according to their priority needs.

In 2024, GSARS 2 aims to expand the trainings and information sharing at regional and Continental levels, respectively with the RECs and STATAFRIC. It also plans to strengthen partnerships with existing donors and reach out to new donors for enhanced resource mobilization for the next phase.

Conclusions

Since the beginning of its implementation, the well-established collaboration between the implementing partners and the beneficiary countries enabled for the smooth execution of the GSARS-II programme of activities in many countries, with an accelerated pace of implementation in 2023.

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[1] Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
[2] Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
[3] Southern African Development Community (SADC)

Statistical capacity development is still needed in most countries of the Africa region. Looking ahead to next years, the GSARS implementation partners have gained experience and drawn lessons that will be considered for the next Action Plan.

QUESTIONS AND INVITATIONS TO AFCAS MEMBER COUNTRIES

The AFCAS delegates are invited to share lessons learnt from their experience with the GSARS II capacity development activities and recommendations for the future Action plan.

REFERENCES

GSARS II website
https://www.fao.org/in-action/global-strategy-agricultural-statistics/en