AFRICAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Final Report of the
Twenty-eighth Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics

Johannesburg, South Africa
4–8 December 2023
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1. Origin, goals, previous sessions of African Commission on Agricultural Statistics and its member countries

1.1. Origin of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics

The 11th Session of the FAO Conference of 1961 approved the creation of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS), and the Director-General subsequently established the Commission in October 1962.

1.2. Goals of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics

The main goals of the AFCAS are to:

- Review the status of food and agricultural statistics in the region.
- Advise member countries on the development and harmonization of agricultural statistics in the general context of FAO’s statistical framework and activities.
- Organize meetings of expert groups, including subsidiary bodies made up of national, regional and international experts to discuss ways of improving agricultural statistical systems of member countries.

1.3. Previous sessions of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics

Since 1962, FAO has conducted 27 sessions of the AFCAS in different African countries as listed below, with the 28th Session conducted in Johannesburg from 4–8 December 2023:

- Twenty-seventh Session – Virtual Host – Dakar, Senegal, 15–18 November 2021
- Twenty-sixth Session – Libreville, Gabon, 4–8 November 2019
- Twenty-fifth Session – Entebbe, Uganda, 13–17 November 2017
- Twenty-fourth Session – Kigali, Rwanda, 1–4 December 2015
- Twenty-third Session – Rabat, Morocco, 4–7 December 2013 (immediately after the Consultative Meeting on CountrySTAT, 1–3 December 2013)
- Twenty-first Session – Accra, Ghana, 28–31 October 2009 (immediately after the Consultative Meeting on CountrySTAT, 26–27 October 2009)
- Twentieth Session – Algiers, Algeria, 10–13 December 2007 (immediately after the Technical Workshop, 8–9 December 2007)
- Sixteenth Session – Conakry, Guinea, 28 July–1 August 1999 (immediately after the Technical Workshop, 23–28 July 1999)
- Fifteenth Session – Accra, Ghana, 28–31 October 1997
2. **Member countries of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics**

Fifty-four African countries are members of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics as described below: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

3. **Focus of the twenty-eighth Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides the new global objectives that succeeded the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) since 1 January 2016. The 28th Session of the AFCAS focused on the status of SDG indicators’ monitoring to help senior officials of National Statistics Offices (NSOs), Ministries of Agriculture (MoA) and other Government representatives to understand their role in improving data collection for the availability of timely, reliable, comparable and accurate agricultural statistics to be used for measuring progress towards achieving national, regional and global targets and indicators.

The SDGs, with their overall objective to leave no one behind, consist of 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 SDG indicators. FAO is the custodian agency for 21 indicators across seven SDGs. As a custodian agency and by respecting the national ownership of statistics of member countries and the SDG indicators, the 28th Session of the AFCAS focused on these 21 indicators, including related methodology and data required to compile them.

In order to reflect major agricultural statistics activities in the region, the 28th Session of the AFCAS also included sessions on new statistical activities that have been implemented in the region since the previous AFCAS, reviewed the progress in global and regional agricultural statistics capacity development initiatives in Africa, and the progress made towards conducting censuses of agriculture.
under the 2020 round of the World Programme of the Census of Agriculture (WCA 2020) and vision of the WCA 2030. The Session also discussed the agricultural science and technology indicators, reviewed new developments in the use of alternative data sources for agricultural statistics, and in measuring food security and nutrition statistics. The 28th Session of the AFCAS also reviewed the progress and new developments on measuring SDG indicators and discussed the overview of progress made and activities to improve fishery and aquaculture data with focus on SDG 14: life under water.

The sessions provided an opportunity for countries to share their experiences in implementing the 50x2030 Initiative that aims at supporting countries to design and implement integrated agriculture surveys, and the Global Strategy for improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics phase II (GSARS-II) that aims at developing the statistical capacity of member countries to collect, process, analyse, disseminate and use agricultural statistics to support food security and nutrition policies. The member countries also discussed the challenges faced during the implementation and shared innovations that have been introduced. Each session included discussions on technical assistance needs, and the way collaboration and partnerships could advance food and agricultural statistics in the region.

4. List of main recommendations of the twenty-eighth Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics

Agenda item 3: FAO’s activities in food and agricultural statistics relevant to the Africa region since the twenty-seventh Session of the Commission

The Commission:

1. Commends FAO’s efforts to address and implement the recommendations of the 27th Session of the African Commission for agricultural statistics.
2. Acknowledges that response rates to FAO annual questionnaires in Africa are systematically below world response rates, and that in the cases of pesticide use, fertilizer use, AQUASTAT, forestry and commodity market development questionnaires, they are very low (less than 20 percent).
3. Takes note of the new data collections foreseen by FAO in 2024 and encourages national focal points to return filled questionnaires in due time.
4. Encourages countries to better coordinate the compilation of FAO questionnaires at the institutional level, including by identifying the right focal points and institutions to be involved, communicating their contact information to FAO, and establishing good collaboration between these relevant institutions.
5. Encourages members and FAO to consider the adoption of an interoperable system for questionnaire compilation (such as SharePoint).
6. Encourages FAO to consider the development of online questionnaires for collecting data with member countries.
7. Recommends FAO to organize online trainings or consultations targeting questionnaire focal points to explain concepts and definitions, to discuss how to fill the FAO questionnaires properly, to improve collaboration between FAO and data providers, to facilitate the update of focal point or contact information, and to discuss and address any other reporting issues.

Agenda item 4: Implementation of the 50x2030 initiative in Africa region
The Commission:

8. **Commends** the work of FAO on the 50x2030 initiative, which currently has engaged 27 African countries and **calls upon** FAO to continue with the implementation of the Initiative offering technical support on the design and implementation of agriculture surveys that meet the specific needs of countries.

9. **Urges** member countries that are part of the Initiative to publicly disseminate anonymized microdata collected through the 50x2030 Initiative.

10. **Recommends** FAO to maintain flexibility in the survey programme to facilitate better integration with existing survey programmes in the country and to integrate additional thematic questionnaires.

11. **Recommends** FAO and the Programme Management Team of the 50x2030 Initiative to clarify the funding mechanism of the Initiative’s surveys programme, provides clear guidance to countries that are interested to be part of the Initiative on the mechanism they need to follow for inclusion, and consider the expansion of the programme to additional countries.

**Agenda item 5: Global Strategy for improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics (phase II) and statistical capacity development.**

The Commission:

12. **Commends** FAO and partner institutions including UNECA, PARIS 21, the three statistical training centres and the 25 member states for the successful implementation of the Global Strategy for improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics, phase II (GSARS-II) and **acknowledges** that the GSARS-II has effectively delivered and met the expected outcomes.

13. **Recognizes** the importance of the scholarship programme on Masters of Statistics in Agriculture for the region and that the partnership with statistical training centres would continue to be critical in the successful implementation of the current and future phase of the GSARS.

14. **Recommends** the harmonization of Master programmes in Agricultural Statistics (MAS) across statistical training centres to the extent possible, and the extension of the duration of the current MAS programme.

15. **Urges** member countries to introduce mechanism(s) that will ensure that scholars/trainees will utilize the skills and knowledge gained to further the work of their institutions.

16. **Requests** FAO to ensure the continuity of capacity development activities on agricultural and rural statistics through a third phase of the GSARS, and recommends FAO to expand GSARS-III to more countries.

17. **Recommends** FAO, in the context of a potential extension of the GSARS, to maintain the existing packages of GSARS-II and to consider its expansion to include the use of earth observation (EO) data and methods for statistics, the application of forecasting methods, the conduct of impact assessment, the use of free statistical software (e.g. R, Python), and the development of new training modalities (e.g. e-learnings).

18. **Encourages** FAO and/or its development partners to communicate with member countries through official channels, when launching calls for expression of interest related to initiatives, strategies or programmes aiming at strengthening the capacity of national agricultural statistical systems.
Agenda item 6: Progress in global and regional agricultural statistics capacity development initiatives in Africa

The Commission:

19. **Commends** the work of the AfDB, AFRISTAT, UNECA, IFAD and AUC in the areas of statistical capacity building development, modernization and transformation of national African statistical systems, and strengthening of agricultural data use and the monitoring of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) implementation.

20. **Encourages** FAO and various institutions mentioned above to strengthen their collaboration in order to identify and build on synergies, and improve coordination in the implementation of their technical assistance activities and programmes, including the evaluation of statistical capacity development and technical assistance priority needs in the region, the development of capacity for the production and use of agricultural statistics, the improved integration of agricultural statistics in National Strategies for the Development of Statistics, and the modernization and digitalization of national agricultural statistical systems.

21. **Recommends** member countries to establish good national coordination mechanisms between CAADP focal points and relevant institutions in charge of producing agricultural statistics with the objective to facilitate the monitoring of the CAADP implementation, improve the coherence and quality of the data reported in biennial reviews (BR), and further disseminate and reflect on national BR results and lessons learned from the reporting process at the national level.

22. **Recommends** member countries to harmonize the mechanism for the nomination of focal points at the national level to avoid duplication of efforts and the reporting of conflicting or low-quality information.

23. **Recommends** FAO, the African Union Commission (AUC) and other organizations collecting data from national institutions in the area of agricultural statistics to share information on their channels of communication with national counterparts.

Agenda item 7: Agricultural science and technology indicators

The Commission:

24. **Recognizes** the importance of data on science, technology and innovation for guiding policies that aim to enhance agricultural productivity and, therefore, poverty reduction and hunger eradication. However, it also recognizes the scarcity of these data and the need to improve their collection and to systematize the dissemination of quality, official and country-owned indicators.

25. **Acknowledges** the ongoing transition towards a more institutionalized and sustainable Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators (ASTI) programme in FAO and takes note that FAO will be seeking opportunities to pilot new data collection approaches in selected countries in the region.

26. **Commends** member countries to support ASTI activities in the region and encourages FAO to conduct specialized capacity building activities with the national institutions that produce agricultural statistics.
27. **Recommends** the integration of the National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs) into the national statistical systems and to undertake data quality assessments, or where applicable statistical quality certifications for ASTI data.

28. **Encourages** member countries to initiate national dialogues to establish fit-for-purpose data collection models for ASTI data.

**Agenda item 8: Progress in the World programme of the Census of Agriculture (WCA) 2020 and vision on the WCA 2030**

The Commission:

29. **Commends** the progress made in the implementation by countries of the WCA 2020 and highlights the record participation of African countries in this round of the WCA.

30. **Commends** the effort made by FAO to accompany technically and financially the census operations across African countries and recommends FAO to continue its support to member countries through technical cooperation projects and to advocate with financial partners the mobilization of funds for the implementation of censuses of agriculture.

31. **Takes note** on the assessment made by FAO on the implementation of the WCA 2020, which provides information of technical aspects of the implementation of censuses around the world.

32. **Takes note** on the work plan proposed, the vision adopted, and the activities already undertaken by FAO to propose the new guidelines for the WCA 2030 and **recommends** FAO to pursue consultations with stakeholders to collect the feedback from member countries.

33. **Recommends** FAO to include in the guidelines for the WCA 2030 recommendations on strategies, methods, and techniques to collect data in conflict zones. At the same time, it is recommended to clarify the differences, if any, between the modular approach and the integrated census/survey programme.

34. **Encourages** member countries to follow the process of the preparation of the guidelines of the WCA 2030, participate in the consultations and anticipate the implementation of the proposed recommendations when implementing the WCA 2020 round.

35. **Recommends** FAO to undertake technical work to solve the issues still on hold related to the implementation of census of agriculture notably (i) the harmonisation of concepts to delineate urban and peri-urban zones for data collection, (ii) the proposal of a best approach to collect data for livestock in urban areas.

**Agenda item 9: Improving food and agriculture data dissemination**

The Commission:

36. **Acknowledges** that an approach based on the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) provides a systematic framework for planning, designing and executing dissemination processes, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently, and activities are aligned with the overall objectives.

37. **Encourages** countries to integrate the GSBPM into dissemination strategies so that statistical agencies can enhance their ability to navigate challenges, optimize resource utilization and ultimately achieve sustainable and effective public information sharing.

38. **Recognizes** the importance to have a comprehensive strategy of data dissemination based on the diversity of dissemination outputs such as statistical bulletins, interactive statistical tables
released on open data portals, microdata files and associated metadata, and data highlights for wide sharing through instant communication channels and social media.

39. **Encourages** member countries to take advantage of the Food and Agricultural Microdata (FAM) Catalogue to disseminate or redistribute their microdata related to food and agriculture and associated metadata to increase their overall visibility and use.

40. **Acknowledges** the efforts of FAO to support member countries in disseminating data and microdata from agricultural surveys through initiatives such as 50x2030 and the Global Strategy to improve agricultural and rural statistics, and **encourages** FAO to continue technical assistance in this area.

41. **Acknowledges** that the advancements in information technology provide statistical organizations with novel solutions to transition towards more versatile, interactive, interoperable, timely, accessible, relevant and cost-effective data releases, and **encourages** member countries to consider their adoption.

42. **Urges** countries to continue building human resources capacities on data dissemination and data use.

43. **Appreciates** the modernization of FAO IT infrastructure through the setup of a centralized Statistical Data Warehouse and FAO’s new dissemination platform (FAODATA Explorer) and **invites** members to provide comments on the beta version of the FAODATA Explorer.

**Agenda item 10: New developments in the use of alternative data sources for agricultural statistics**

**The Commission:**

44. **Acknowledges** that the adoption of data science methods such as data mining, web scraping, and the use of non-conventional data sources such as social media, mobile phone and geospatial data, are revolutionizing data collection and analysis.

45. **Recognizes** that FAO’s Data Lab is using advanced technologies and non-conventional data to enhance data quality, fill data gaps (e.g. in agricultural statistics and food losses), and help providing global insights, and recommends FAO to collaborate with member countries to validate the methods used and data produced.

46. **Recommends** member countries to consider embracing modern data science techniques and non-conventional data sources to stay relevant and efficient in a data-driven world.

47. **Takes note** of best practices identified through FAO field tests on the use of EO data and trusted methods developed under the UN Committee of Experts on Big Data (UNCEBD) and the UN Committee of Experts on Food Security, Agricultural and Rural Statistics (UNCEAG) and **invites** countries to consider their adoption including the georeferencing of plots boundaries and centroids in agricultural surveys and/or censuses.

48. **Encourages** member countries to develop a long-term strategy for the use of EO data in agricultural statistics (at least five years), which will identify priority areas where EO can add value and efficiency to existing workflows, provide new solutions to old problems, and address new problems stemming from global and societal challenges.

49. **Recommends** FAO to continue providing technical assistance to member countries on the use of EO for specific cases, such as mapping of mixed crops, crop yield modelling,
assessment of impact of disasters on crops, and to provide capacity development on other non-conventional methods.

50. **Encourages** member countries to take advantage of international capacity building initiatives such as those implemented by the UNCEBD and the UNCEAG.

51. **Takes note** of the data innovation lab’s strategy developed by AfDB to assess the readiness of government agencies, including ministries of agriculture, to use big data and unconventional data sources, and to draft a road map towards innovation.

52. **Acknowledges** the opportunity for member countries to establish a network of data innovation labs (DILs) at the national level and **takes note** that AfDB’s DIL initiatives can support them in this area.

**Agenda item 11: Measuring food security and nutrition statistics**

The Commission:

53. **Commends** FAO for its efforts to advance food and nutrition security analysis through the implementation of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) module and recognizes FAO’s technical expertise and guidance to member countries in the application of the FIES module.

54. **Recommends** FAO to continue its collaborative approach to support member countries through the provision of technical assistance and capacity building activities in the measurement of food security and nutrition. Furthermore, it recommends FAO to further strengthen partnerships with international organizations, research institutions and donor agencies to expand data collection initiatives and address data demands in a sustainable manner.

55. **Encourages** member countries to make their food and nutrition datasets publicly available to strengthen the evidence base for informed policy formulation and monitoring.

56. **Recommends** FAO to foster and strengthen regional networks for capacity building and knowledge exchange in food security analysis, recognizing that sharing best practices, experiences and lessons learned will enhance countries’ capabilities in developing effective and context-specific interventions.

57. **Recommends** FAO to advocate for the integration of food security analysis into broader policy frameworks. Emphasizing evidence-based decision-making will support countries in developing policies that address the root causes of food insecurity, such as poverty, inequality and climate change, while promoting sustainable agriculture and nutrition-sensitive approaches.

58. **Welcomes** the efforts of FAO to provide dietary data that are comparable across countries through the new Food and Diet domain to be published in FAOSTAT, and **recognizes** that these data will fill a current data gap as they provide estimates on the levels of macro- and micronutrients that are available or consume for different food groups. The Commission **recommends** FAO to build the capacity of member countries on the compilation, analysis, dissemination and use of dietary data coming from different types of data sources.
Agenda item 12: Progress and new developments on measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicators (SDG indicators)

The Commission:

59. **Acknowledges** the progress made in the availability of SDG indicators under FAO custodianship and FAO’s efforts in building the capacity of countries to report on these indicators, particularly the ones with low reporting rates.

60. **Takes note** of the methodologies developed by FAO to disaggregate the SDG indicators by relevant dimensions and assess progress at the indicator, target and goal level.

61. **Recommends** FAO to continue supporting countries in SDG monitoring.

62. **Invites** countries to communicate their capacity development needs on SDG monitoring by contacting the FAO Chief Statistician mailbox (chief-statistician@fao.org) or the FAO representation in their respective country.

63. **Encourages** countries to increase or sustain their efforts in producing the global SDG indicators.

Agenda item 13: Overview of progress and activities to improve fishery and aquaculture data with focus on SDG 14: life under water

The Commission:

64. **Acknowledges** the necessity for countries to collect data to enable the sustainable management of their fisheries and aquaculture sector and recommends that FAO provides capacity development through in-person training and the implementation of fisheries information systems, such as Calipseo.

65. **Recommends** FAO to assist countries in developing their sampling strategies to begin the process of fish stock monitoring and assessment.

66. **Takes note** of the low response rate of FAO questionnaires in fisheries statistics and SDG Indicator 14.4.1, and **urges** countries to make a stronger effort to report.

67. **Recommends** FAO to simplify the SDG Indicator 14.4.1 questionnaire and continue its support in capacity development to facilitate reporting by countries.

68. **Acknowledges** the importance of building trust with stakeholders and encourages FAO to develop best communication practices to improve the quantity and quality of data collection and reporting of capture fisheries.

Agenda item 14: Any other business (venue, date, topics for next AFCAS Session)

The Commission:

69. **Approves** the proposed date and venue of the 29th Session of the AFCAS (to be in Tunisia in November 2025) and recommends that a programme committee be established to immediately begin to organize the next AFCAS.

5. **Organization of the twenty-eighth Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics**

The 28th Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS) was held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 4 to 8 December 2023. Delegates from 31 AFCAS member
countries, one observer, as well as ten national, regional and international institutions participated. In all, 117 participants were registered and participated in the Session. The complete list of participants can be found in Annex 1.

5.1. Agenda item 1: Opening ceremony

The opening ceremony was marked by five speeches (available in Annex 4) of high-level delegates from the Government of South Africa, Senegal and FAO, and they addressed the audience in the sequence below:

- The Chairperson of the 28th Session of the AFCAS, Mrs Sylvie Dasylva Fall, Head of the Division of Statistics of the Ministry in charge of agriculture of Senegal, gave the opening remarks.
- The opening address to the Commission was made by Dr José Rosero Moncayo, Director of FAO Statistics Division, FAO Headquarters, Rome.
- Dr Babagana Ahmadu, FAO Representative for South Africa also made welcome remarks.
- Mr Joe de Beer, Deputy Director-General of Economics Statistics, Statistics South Africa, also provided his opening remarks.
- Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, Director-General of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development of South Africa, provided the opening speech and officially opened the 28th Session of the AFCAS as the guest of honour.

5.2. Agenda item 2: Election of officers and adoption of agenda

5.2.1. Election of officers

The 28th Session of the AFCAS elected a bureau of officers composed of Mr Itani Magwaba, Executive Manager from Statistics South Africa, as the Chair; Ms Souhir Belaid Ep Saidane, Statistician from the Ministry of agriculture of Tunisia, as the Vice-Chair; Mr Innocent Robert Zulu, Economist from the Department of Economic Planning and Development, Ministry of Finance of Malawi, and Ms Joceline Julie Solonitompaoariny, Head of the Agricultural Statistics Department of Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Madagascar, as Rapporteurs.

5.2.2. Adoption of the agenda

The Commission approved the agenda of the 28th Session of the AFCAS (see Annex 3) and adopted the programme of the Session (see Annex 2).

5.2.3. Implementation of the agenda

Sections 5.3 to 5.14 of the report provide details on the implementation of the agenda.

5.2.4. Closing ceremony

The closing ceremony was marked by two speeches by Ms. Kwena Komape, Deputy Director-General of Economic Development, Trade and Marketing at the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) of South Africa and Dr Babagana Ahmadu, FAO Representative for South Africa.
5.3. Agenda item 3: FAO’s activities on food and agricultural statistics relevant to Africa region since the twenty-seventh Session of the AFCAS

The following documents were presented and discussed in the context of this agenda item:

5.3.1. Implementation of the Recommendations of the twenty-seventh Session of the AFCAS

Collaborative work of the FAO Statistical Division (ESS), the Office of the Chief Statistician (OCS), the FAO Regional Office for Africa (RAF), as well as other FAO statistical units, contributed to strengthen the capacity of Member States in the collection, processing, analysis, publication and dissemination of food, agricultural and rural statistical data. Efforts have been made by FAO to update the list of focal points and liaise with them to collect information on the agriculture sector as well as the other domains or systems, including commodity market developments, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry, AQUASTAT, Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-IS) and plant genetic resources. However, responses rates for many domains followed a decreasing trend since 2021.

In addition, the second phase of the Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (GSARS-II) (Action Plan for Africa 2021–2024) is being implemented by three partners (FAO, UNECA and PARIS21) coordinated by a global office hosted by the FAO Statistics Division in Rome. GSARS-II focuses on training and technical assistance at the country level. Accordingly, 25 African countries have been supported with 15 statistical packages, compressed into four components: (i) Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics; (ii) Training (strengthening of technical capacities of statistical staff, improved graduate programmes on agricultural statistics and facilitated access to scholarships); (iii) Cost-effective methods; and (iv) Increase in data analysis and dissemination capacities.

Two FAO-ESS programmes (50x2030 Initiative and GSARS-II) supported many beneficiary countries on the use of CAPI for data collection. The 50x2030 Initiative elaborated a methodological document on telephone interviews for agricultural statistics. On the harmonization and support on SDG measurements and disaggregation, the FAO Regional Office for Africa supported Eswatini, Gambia and Zambia on the collection, compilation, reporting and use of underreported SDGs 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 5.a.1. The training focused on the analysis and gap assessment of existing survey instruments, training on the methodology of SDG indicators, the integration of selected SDGs in existing survey instruments, and hands-on training on computations and analysis of the indicators.

On the AFCAS’s recommendation to harmonize and support on SDG measurements and disaggregation, FAO-OCS has conducted extensive methodological work on data disaggregation techniques for SDG indicators based on survey data and a comprehensive set of training materials on data disaggregation and small area estimation (SAE) for SDG indicators based on survey data were made available for countries. Some countries such as Benin, Botswana, Mali and South Africa have been supported on data disaggregation and SAE for SDGs. In addition, FAO-OCS expanded the SDG progress assessment approach discussed at the 27th Session of the AFCAS to include methods for the evaluation of the status and trend both at the target and goal levels. Regarding the use of “OpenForis” tools for agricultural statistics, in 2022–2023, in the framework on the GSARS II, FAO-ESS in collaboration with the FAO Forestry Division supported Burkina Faso, Ghana, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia on the use of FAO’s System for Earth Observation Data Access,
Processing and Analysis for Land Monitoring (SEPAL), an OpenForis tool for crop mapping and developing area frame for agricultural surveys.

The Commission also urged FAO to strengthen collaboration with NSOs and agricultural statistics departments on using earth observation data for agriculture statistics. In 2022–2023, FAO-OCS, through the EOSTAT project supported Lesotho, Mali, Rwanda, Senegal and Zimbabwe in building technical capacity to use EO data for official agricultural statistics. The training focused on optimization of field survey design and integration of best practices in georeferencing within the annual agricultural surveys and agricultural census, land cover mapping, crop type mapping, crop yield modelling, field parcel mapping, computation of SDG indicators using EO data.

To support countries in the improvement of fisheries and aquaculture statistics, FAO introduced an updated State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) methodology for assessing global and regional state of stocks with emphasis on transparent, reproducible assessment framework. Other initiatives included FAO Fishery Division’s strengthening capacities of the Fishery Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) and its members (Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Togo) in fisheries data collection and information systems.

Other key FAO statistics activities in Africa included technical support on censuses of agriculture where FAO-ESS and RAF provided technical assistance to about 15 African countries on the preparation and implementation of their censuses of agriculture in the past two years. The second key activity involved technical support on food balance sheets (FBS). In 2022, FAO-ESS built the capacity of four African countries (Cameroon, Comoros, Nigeria and South Sudan) on the methodology and compilation of national FBS. In 2023, with the new global food conversion table, FAO-ESS provided technical support to six African countries (Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Mozambique, South Sudan and Zimbabwe) to compile national FBS and produced data on food availability for human consumption in terms of calories, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals and other macro- and micronutrients.

5.3.2. Response rate to FAO questionnaires and data collection plans for 2024

The paper documents data availability 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 subdomains and the subregions of Africa. Second, it provides information on FAO’s data collection plans for 2024.

It is important to note that countries’ data are compiled by FAO and shared worldwide, showing that the FAO database relies on countries responses to questionnaires. The response rates to FAO questionnaires analysed cover the 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 responses rate for a given territory is defined as the ratio of between the number of filled questionnaires and the number of questionnaires that were dispatched to that territory.

The objective of the session was to take stock of the response rate, discuss on how to improve, and inform member countries. The assessment covered the period 2018–2023. Over this period the response rate increased a little. By domain, the increase goes from 48 percent in 2018 to 50 percent in
2023 for the questionnaire on production statistics in Africa while the rate fluctuates around 70 percent during the same period for the world. For land use data, while the response rate of the questionnaire between 2018 and 2022 is around 45 percent worldwide, in Africa it remains below 20 percent for the same period. Likewise, more than 80 percent of African countries did not fill pesticide and fertilizer questionnaires. The response rate for 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 for the government expenditure on agriculture (GEA) questionnaire in Africa returned to its 2018 level of 30 percent in 2023, after reaching higher levels while the world average rate is above 50 percent. In the forestry sector, less than 15 percent of African countries that received the questionnaire returned it to FAO compared to 45 percent worldwide. The situation is similar with AQUASTAT where the response rate to the questionnaire for Africa was 15 percent in 2020–2021, and 14 percent in 2022 and 2023. For fisheries and aquaculture (more than 40 percent) and DAD-IS (more than 20 percent), the response rates are much better, even if efforts are needed to improve the response rates, especially for DAD-IS. The rates for plant genetic resources and commodity market development were respectively less than 10 percent and less than 15 percent.

FAO expected to introduce new data collection questionnaires for its 2024 plan. The new questionnaires are for plan genetic resources, genetic resources for food and agriculture and land cover. The review revealed the following:

- Often the contacts of focal points at the country level are not updated, yet they change for various reasons including internal staff changes and movements.
- The identification of the concerned institution in the country to fill the FAO questionnaires is in some cases not properly done.
- The concepts and definitions of some questionnaires are not well understood by the focal points, thus resulting in nonresponse.
- Given that data for different sections of the questionnaires are collected by various institutions in the country, having the data source of each data point (metadata) added to the questionnaires will be useful.
- Setting up online questionnaires could make life easier for data compilers at the country level.
- Involving regional economic commissions (RECs) in collecting data through the FAO questionnaires and harmonizing them with similar regional or international organizations collecting the same data could be helpful also in terms of updating the focal points using the approach that UNECA is using for example.
- Training country-level focal points on concepts, definitions and how to fill FAO questionnaires is important.

The Commission:

- **Commends** FAO’s efforts to address and implement the recommendations of the 27th Session of the African Commission for Agricultural Statistics.
- **Acknowledges** that response rates to FAO annual questionnaires in Africa are systematically below world response rates, and that in the cases of pesticide use, fertilizer use, AQUASTAT,
forestry and commodity market development questionnaires, they are very low (less than 20 percent)

- **Takes note** of the new data collections foreseen by FAO in 2024 and **encourages** national focal points to return filled questionnaires in due time.
- **Encourages** countries to better coordinate the compilation of FAO questionnaires at the institutional level, including by identifying the right focal points and institutions to be involved, communicating their contact information to FAO, and establishing good collaboration between these relevant institutions.
- **Encourages** members and FAO to consider the adoption of an interoperable system for questionnaire compilation (such as SharePoint).
- **Encourages** FAO to consider the development of online questionnaires for collecting data with member countries.
- **Recommends** FAO to organize online trainings or consultations targeting questionnaire focal points to explain concepts and definitions, to discuss how to fill the FAO questionnaires properly, to improve collaboration between FAO and data providers, to facilitate the update of focal point or contact information, and to discuss and address any other reporting issues.

5.4. **Agenda item 4: Implementation of the 50x2030 initiative in Africa region**

5.4.1. **Introduction of the 50x2030 Initiative**

The 50X2030 Initiative is a tri-party programme of the World Bank, FAO and IFAD working on minimizing the agricultural data gap, building national statistics systems, building institutional capacities to produce, process, analyse, disseminate and use data, and promoting evidence-based agricultural policies in 50 low- and lower-middle-income countries around the world by the year 2030.

Its objective is to bridge agricultural data gaps and promote evidence-based decision-making by developing a fit-for-purpose, integrated and financially sustainable agricultural survey programme that meets country data needs and fosters a culture of evidence for decision-making.

The Initiative has the following four key focuses:

- timely and high-quality agricultural data production that fits the needs of the country,
- capacity building of National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Agriculture to produce, process, analyse, disseminate and use data for policymaking,
- generate global public goods to modernize data production and complement decision-making, and
- policy advocacy for data-smart agriculture.

The Initiative is designed to strengthen the capacity of countries and build national statistical systems to generate timely and high-quality agricultural data to enable governments to adopt policies and plans to address food crises, climate change vulnerabilities, improve agricultural production, create jobs and build resilience.

The 50X2030 Initiative is comprised of three components: (i) data production, (ii) data use, (iii) methods and tools. Technical assistance for the design and implementation of the agricultural survey
programme is led by FAO, capacity building efforts to promote data use are led by IFAD, and methods and tools to produce global public goods to modernize data collection and complement decision-making are led by the Data Production and Methods team of the World Bank. The Initiative is led by a programme management team (PMT) from the Development Data Group of the World Bank. The PMT coordinates implementation efforts, provides technical assistance to component leads to ensure quality and effective implementation, leads country engagement and advocating for data use and data-smart agriculture, coordinates with governments and international community, and mobilizes resources for programme implementation. The PMT is advised by a partnership council comprised of participating development/donor partners and selected member country representatives.

The 50x2030 Initiative’s financing model is structured with emphasis on impact and programme sustainability. It is a country-contribution-heavy initiative that utilizes World Bank’s IDA/IBRD allocation as well as country resources, a strong beginning with concrete steps towards sustainability. IDA/IBRD resources are country contributions: countries are borrowing financial resources for survey programmes and national statistics systems to inform policies. The financing model follows a 70/30 strategy where the initiative is financed by its partner countries through World Bank’s IDA/IBRD resources for the 70 percent dedicated to data production. The remaining 30 percent is financed by donors and philanthropic organizations to enable the Initiative to provide much needed technical assistance for data production and use and promote evidence-based agricultural policies.

5.4.2. Implementation of the 50x2030 Initiative in Africa and lessons learned

The 50x2030 data production model covers farms for both agricultural households and non-household holdings. It comprises an annual core survey on crop, livestock, aquaculture, fishery and forestry production. It employs a set of specialized tools in a rotational way, including costs linked to agricultural production/income; labour and productivity; gender decision-making; production practices and environmental aspects of farming; and machinery and equipment used for agricultural production.

The key outputs include priority indicators informing national agricultural policies/programmes and used to monitor progress in the agricultural sector. For instance, it is used to generate data for selected CAADP indicators, SDG 2 and SDG 5. The key outputs include statistical bulletins and thematic fact sheets; full set of bidimensional excel tables; multidimensional interactive tables on open data portals; and anonymized microdata disseminated.

The 50x2030 Initiative has value added such as: (i) long-term support, which is useful for establishing a permanent system of agricultural statistical surveys; (ii) integration with existing national systems of surveys and census operations; (iii) a modular approach of 50x2030 tools that allows for the integration of specific modules with country relevance; (iv) implementation is facilitated when initial strengthening of capacities took place (example of GSARS); (v) important efforts needed on specific operations such as data cleaning and data dissemination for guaranteeing a high level of quality for data and open access to users; (vi) high level of governance at the country level is crucial for being able to match the deadlines (as agriculture surveys are seasonal, etc.) and make resources available at the right time for data collection.
5.4.3. The “Enquête Annuelle Agricole” in Senegal – achievements and perspectives

To address many challenges surrounding the agricultural statistical system, Senegal has adopted the AGRISurvey approach and recently joined the 50x2030 Initiative. Several organisational and methodological innovations have been made to the annual agricultural survey that have led to an increase in the supply of statistics on both quantity of information produced and quality, visibility and access to agricultural data. The paper reviewed these innovations and presented future challenges. The enhancements required include the following:

- The reorganization of the approach with the consideration of livestock and horticulture; non-household farms; the introduction of rotating modules on labour revenues; production methods and environment; machinery and equipment; making it possible to calculate some SDGs (2.3.1; 2.3.2; 5.a.1a; 5.a.1b; CAADP indicators; indicator on rural land tenure; gender-sensitive indicators such as women’s entrepreneurship index, generational replacement index, etc.);
- Broadening the coverage of the agricultural sector by taking into account non-rainfed agricultural activities (horticulture, livestock) and integrating non-household farms into the scope of the agricultural survey;
- Refining the methodology of yield squares on both the questionnaire and the sampling;
- Improvement of the sampling strategy by developing a sampling frame;
- Capacity building for the analysis, dissemination, documentation and archiving of survey data;
- Improving the visibility of statistical outputs and access to data and microdata, thematic tables, survey reports, anonymized microdata; and
- Documentation and automation of the data processing and tabulation process.

5.4.4. The Annual Agricultural Sample Survey in the United Republic of Tanzania – achievements and perspectives

The United Republic of Tanzania is one of the 50 countries within the low-/lower-middle-income group that benefit from 50x2030 Initiative. The implementation of the Initiative started this year, integrated into the national statistical system (NSS) and it is getting financial support under the United Republic of Tanzania Statistical Master Plan, Phase II. Based on the 50x2030 Initiative’s objectives, the United Republic of Tanzania needs to build a strong system for agricultural data, monitor and report on SDG’s and CAADP’s indicators, provide quality data for policymakers, monitor and evaluate development programmes at the country level.

The annual agricultural sample survey (AASS) in the United Republic of Tanzania for the year 2023/24 has taken on board the agriculture core module, the non-standard units survey as well as the income, labour and productivity module to start with. Other modules will be rotated as has been suggested.

The small area estimation techniques will be applied to generate indirect estimates at the council level to better support the country planning and monitoring. This will depend on the availability of results based on the AASS. This Initiative needs a high coordination of the key actors (Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, Local government etc.) within the NSS. The Development of a dashboard to monitor the progress of data collection at the enumeration areas level helps to estimate
the duration of the exercise and enhance data quality. In addition, data quality control is important, therefore all levels of control should be in place while planning for the survey.

5.4.5. National Agriculture Sample Survey in Sierra Leone – achievements and perspectives

Following the meeting with the World Bank, FAO, and the 50x2030 PMT in June 2022, Sierra Leone expressed strong interest in being a partner country of the 50x2030 Initiative. The Government of Sierra Leone embraced the Initiative as essential in addressing the availability and quality of agricultural data in Sierra Leone and strengthening the country’s agricultural statistics system. The 50x2030 Initiative was jointly launched by the World Bank, FAO and IFAD, with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and Statistics Sierra Leone (STATS SL) as the key implementers. The Programme Implementation Plan was then signed in March 2023 by the 50x2030 PMT team, the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, and the Statistician General.

The Government of Sierra Leone currently implements the 50x2030 Initiative as a subcomponent of the World Bank IDA project on harmonizing and improving statistics in West Africa (HISWA-P19265). Sierra Leone strongly relies on this to produce agricultural survey data necessary to monitor regional and international development agendas (i.e. SDGs, CAADP indicators, etc.) and the national development agenda (specifically the government’s flagship programme on agriculture and food security named Feed Salone). The Government of Sierra Leone considers the availability of reliable, up-to-date and consistent agricultural statistics as a critical enabler to achieving the targets set out in its flagship programme.

The last agricultural census in Sierra Leone was conducted over four decades ago. Data on agricultural activities has relied on annual agricultural sample surveys (the conduct of which has been lately irregular due to lack of resources). The last comprehensive national agricultural survey (NASS) was conducted in 2014, and since then, the sector has relied on projections complemented by crop-cutting surveys conducted on a limited scale.

In a bid to change the narratives and reverse the current trend in agriculture and food security indicators the government of Sierra Leone planning to implement the Feed Salone initiative. The Feed Salone flagship programme is aimed at boosting agriculture productivity, increasing local food production, reducing dependence on food imports, reducing hunger, increasing export earnings, creating jobs and building resilience. The Feed Salone initiative is intended to be guided by a comprehensive and up-to-date data system, essential for effective monitoring, seeking feedback and guiding policy and decision making.

Through the Feed Salone initiative, the Government of Sierra Leone sets out ambitious targets geared towards achieving its overall goal. It aims to reduce food imports by 25 percent each year, increase export of cocoa and oil palm by 20 percent each year, create 35 000 formal jobs through agro-industrial zones, cut chronic hunger by 50 percent by 2028. The Government of Sierra Leone sees the implementation of the surveys under the 50x2030 Initiative as timely in providing baseline data and monitoring the progress of set targets and indicators.

The achievements of 50x2030 include, among others, capacity building on CAPI where the capacity of MAFS and STATS SL Staff on data collection using CSPro was developed, as well as capacity
building on data quality checks and monitoring; implementation of Household Listing of 520 selected enumeration areas, to select a total of 5 200 households, before implementing the main surveys (post-production and post-harvest), and carrying out the national sample units (NSU) survey in 90 markets across the country.

The Commission:

- **Commends** the work of FAO on the 50x2030 initiative which currently has engaged 27 African countries and calls upon FAO to continue with the implementation of the Initiative offering technical support on the design and implementation of agriculture surveys that meet the specific needs of countries.
- **Urges** member countries that are part of the Initiative to publicly disseminate anonymized microdata collected through the 50x2030 Initiative.
- **Recommends** FAO to maintain flexibility in the survey programme to facilitate better integration with existing survey programmes in the country and to integrate additional thematic questionnaires.
- **Recommends** FAO and the Programme Management Team of the 50x2030 initiative to clarify the funding mechanism of the Initiative’s surveys programme, provides clear guidance to countries that are interested to be part of the initiative on the mechanism they need to follow for inclusion, and consider the expansion of the programme to additional countries.

5.5. **Agenda item 5: Global Strategy for improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics phase II (GSARS-II) and statistical capacity development**

5.5.1. **Introduction of GSARS phase II**

The Global Strategy for improving 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 three 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 I 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 I.

The second phase of the GSARS (Action Plan for Africa 2021–2024) is being implemented by three partners (FAO, UNECA and PARIS21) coordinated by a global office hosted by the FAO Statistics Division in Rome. The focus of Phase II has been put on training and technical assistance at the country level to drive practical use of data for both accountability reporting and national policy needs. To meet this goal, GSARS-II has been built on lessons learned from Phase I.

The overarching objective of Phase II 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 I. 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 first phase of GSARS and information collected at the national level. Countries with low capacities were proposed basic packages (Agripro, tools, indicators) in priority whereas more advanced countries or countries having benefitted from technical assistance (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, COMESA and SADC – that will directly benefit from certain TA activities and contribute to the implementation of some activities in the countries. Since the beginning of the project, implementing partners have achieved significant outputs in collaboration with partner countries: UNECA 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 in identifying data gaps to facilitate data assessment and planning in the Strategic Plan for Agriculture and Rural Statistics (SPARS) process using ADAPT; and FAO provided trainings and TA for preparation of SPARS in six countries, on the use of cost-effective survey methods, on data processing and analysis, data dissemination, compilation of national, SDG and CAADP indicators and FBS to all 25 African beneficiary countries, according to their priority needs.

In 2024, GSARS-II aims to expand the trainings and information sharing at the 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.

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

5.5.2. Progress on the implementation and future plans of the Global Strategy for improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics

The presentations made by the three implementing partners (FAO, PARIS21 and UNECA), stressed on the progress of the implementation of Phase II and the future plans of the Global Strategy for improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics. The coherence with ongoing development agendas (SDG, CAADP, African Union Agenda 2063) as well as the synergies with other regional initiatives (50x2030, PAS II, SHaSA) were highlighted.

The programme is implemented through four components:
- Component 1 on Strategic planning, led by FAO, with the collaboration of PARIS21 for the support on ADAPT;
- Component 2 on Formal training, implemented jointly by UNECA and PARIS21;
- Component 3 on Cost effective survey methods led by FAO; and
- Component 4 on Data analysis and dissemination, also led by FAO.

In terms of progress of the implementation, each of the 25 beneficiary countries received support on at least six packages. Most of the countries have reached a very good pace of implementation of the activities even though some countries are still slow due to some internal constraints. The extension of the programme until June 2024 will enable the completion of most of the activities by the first quarter of 2024.

The discussions and presentations highlighted the effectiveness of the programme in strengthening the technical capacities on agricultural statistics in the African region. Thus, the country delegates strongly recommend the implementation of a third round of the programme with focus on the following areas:

- The extension of technical assistance to emergent and innovative areas such as geodata tools, use of new technologies for data collection, processing and analysis, forecasting modelling
- The harmonization of the curricula for the training in master’s degree programmes between the Statistical Training Centres (STCs)
- The extension of the duration of the training in master’s degree to allocate more time for students to absorb the volume of lectures.
- The enhancement of technical capacities on dissemination and communication of agricultural data.
- The extension the programme to more countries in the region.

5.5.3. Country experience – Zambia

The presentation started by highlighting the different sources and methods implemented in Zambia in the compilation of agriculture statistics. Census, surveys and administrative data were mentioned to be the main sources. This was followed by looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the agricultural statistical system. The strengths included: enhanced coordination between ZamStats and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and Livestock in surveys undertaken; new cost-effective methods for data collection, analysis and dissemination, use of CAPI for data processing; and adherence to a common set of standards and protocols for data collection, methods and analysis. The weaknesses included: lack of qualified personnel in processing and analysis of data due to high turnover of staff; lack of utilization of space-based technologies, such as satellite imagery and GIS; and limited resources being allocated to agricultural statistics.

The components of the GSARS-II from which Zambia benefited were the training on cost-effective survey methods, the analysis and dissemination components. The Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organizations (GAMSO) and the Generic Statistical Business Process (GSBP) under which the GSARS-II is implemented were explained to the participants, followed by the benefits that Zambia gained from the GSARS-II. The packages were implemented in a synergistic way, as they completed and benefited from each other, with the following benefits:
• HR policies (by PARIS21): new organigram that links better the production of statistics to the demand of users;
• Basic training in agricultural and rural statistics (by UNECA): enhanced capacity of officers involved in planning, execution and dissemination of agriculture statistics;
• Scholarships (by UNECA): to train the new generation of agricultural statisticians, Zambia had two scholarships in official statistics specialized in agriculture statistics. Students have since then graduated;
• Typology: capacity on statistics related to agricultural productivity and classification of farmers was built for officers from national institutions working closely with farmers;
• Tools: officers were trained in SPSS, and this helped build capacity in data cleaning, analysis, tabulation and report writing.

The Commission:

• **Commends** FAO and partner institutions including UNECA, PARIS 21, the three statistical training centres and the 25 member states for the successful implementation of the GSARS-II and **acknowledges** that the GSARS-II has effectively delivered and met the expected outcomes.
• **Recognizes** the importance of the scholarship programme on Masters of Statistics in Agriculture for the region and that the partnership with statistical training centres would continue to be critical in the successful implementation of the current and future Phase of the GSARS.
• **Recommends** the harmonization of Master programmes in Agricultural Statistics (MAS) across statistical training centres to the extent possible, and the extension of the duration of the current MAS programme.
• **Urges** member countries to introduce mechanism(s) that will ensure that scholars/trainees will utilize the skills and knowledge gained to further the work of their institutions.
• **Requests** FAO to ensure the continuity of capacity development activities on agricultural and rural statistics through a third phase of the GSARS and recommends FAO to expand GSARS-III to more countries.
• **Recommends** FAO, in the context of a potential extension of the GSARS, to maintain the existing packages of GSARS-II and to consider its expansion to include the use of EO data and methods for statistics, the application of forecasting methods, the conduct of impact assessment, the use of free statistical software (e.g. R, Python), and the development of new training modalities (e.g. e-learnings).
• **Encourages** FAO and/or its development partners to communicate with member countries through official channels, when launching calls for expression of interest related to initiatives, strategies or programmes aiming at strengthening the capacity of national agricultural statistical systems.
5.6. **Agenda item 6: Progress in global and regional agricultural statistics capacity development initiatives in Africa**

5.6.1. **Summary of capacity building initiatives by regional organizations**

The AFCAS is an opportunity to discuss and promote other regional and international initiatives in the field of agriculture statistics. During this session, the African Development Bank (AfDB) discussed the capacity of African countries to produce agriculture statistics, countries’ priority capacity development needs, the AfDB model for the provision of capacity development to national governments and the most recent trainings and technical assistance provided by AfDB in the region. The Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT) reflected on their diverse and very useful collaboration with AfDB. The African Centre for Statistics (ACS) at UNECA presented the roadmap for the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa 2023–2030, and UNECA’s main initiatives in support to this roadmap, including the geospatial databases and digital census tools developed by the ACS that can be used respectively in the context of agrifood value chain analysis and support to data collection field work. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) presented its approach and main activities to support countries in strengthening their capacity to use data for agriculture and rural policies and decision-making. Finally, the African Union Commission (AUC) presented the CAADP biennial review (BR) process and progress made in the context of the 4th BR.

5.6.2. **Overview of a diverse and very useful collaboration with FAO (AFRISTAT)**

AFRISTAT’s working objective is the development of statistics. Its mission is to contribute to the development of economic, social and environmental statistics in Member States and to strengthen their skills in these areas (capacity building). AFRISTAT’s action covers various areas of statistics: institutional organization and management of statistical systems, strategic programming, national accounting and macroeconomics, monitoring of the economic situation, monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction strategy and SDGs (formerly MDG), consumer prices, business statistics, household surveys, monitoring of the informal sector, agricultural statistics, socio-demographic statistics, emerging statistics, data processing, dissemination of statistical data, etc.

The action in the field of agricultural and food statistics is structured around five areas: (i) support to Member States for carrying out surveys and agricultural censuses; (ii) analysis of economic, social and environmental aspects associated with agricultural activities; (iii) participation in strategic planning and coordination of agricultural statistics activities within the sub-region; (iv) methodological innovation; and (v) training. AFRISTAT’s technical assistance is carried out in close collaboration with the main technical and financial partners, who are often international organizations such as FAO, the African Union (AU) or AfDB.

Three examples of collaboration between AFRISTAT and FAO are assistance in the implementation of capacity building actions in master sampling frames and food balance sheets (2016–2018); modelling and data collection on food loss during storage process (2022); and assistance in methodological development and capacity building for SDG indicators 2.3.1 and 2.3.2.
5.6.3. UNECA experience

The priority actions for the transformation and modernization of official statistics initiative led by UNECA focused on developing and using a strategic toolkit to guide decision-making and identify the desired state; digitalization to optimize investments and support relevant learning; improved capacity development, which focused on agility beyond traditional technical and statistical capabilities; and designing organizational capital that includes developing new skills, improving or developing infrastructure, partnerships and statistical culture.

The ACS aims to develop systems, applications and strategies that can easily be used, adopted and repurposed to suit the requirements of stakeholders, especially Member States. The ACS is currently building a geospatial information system under various themes with several variables/indicators being measured in different African countries so that data users and decision makers can have a data repository in one place. Most data are available for all African countries at the national level. The ACS is developing several regional geospatial databases to support regional initiatives. The Programme of Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) databases cover all existing and planned infrastructure facilities in the continent.

UNECA also contributes to the establishment of digital database of subnational level limits, often called “Second Administrative Level Boundaries (SALB)”. It has a repository of 25 000 historical hardcopy maps including African cities, base maps, boundaries, climate, elevation, energy, gazetteer points, gazetteer populated places, global land cover, land cover, soil, telecommunications, transport (airports, ports, railways, roads), and vegetation.

The ACS is building an agricultural commodity value chain database to assess and monitor the agricultural production potential by crops as well as the situation of markets and commercial flows. It combines several databases, including: agriculture area, agricultural productions by subnational units, infrastructures, trade flows, and settlements (population, density). The aim is to develop a spatially enabled database and information products to analyse and model, from a dynamic point of view, the interrelationships between the agro-ecological conditions, the situations of human settlements, the changes in the urban environment (dwelling evolution, peri-urban zones, etc.), and the situation of markets and exchanges, among others.

African statistical systems would need to adapt such that: the global thinking within ECA will be to mainstream this technology as a core function within and across departments; the use of innovative technologies to assist and complement the way we do things is institutionalized; sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership will be forged to leverage on the strengths of each institutional partner and encourage optimal use of resources. In addition, regular upskilling is encouraged (developed) to better equip staff on the new technologies, and there is a need for channelling resources to further enhance the capability of the institution in adapting to these new technologies. On the other hand, the NSS would need to adapt to be able to derive insights. For example: the NSO is likely to need to improve its IT infrastructure for the storage and manipulation of the big data; there is a need to consider putting in some formal agreements or legislation with data providers – this is important for the safeguarding of the data, and to ensure a regular and stable supply; and the new analytical skills are likely to be required to work with the large and diverse data, such as machine learning.
5.6.4. AUC experience in the context of the biennial review

The Maputo Declaration (2004–2014), adopted by African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government in 2003 in Maputo, Mozambique, is the Flagship Programme of the AU for agricultural transformation, development and food security. This was followed by the Malabo Declaration (2015–2025) on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Likelihood, adopted by AU Heads of State and Government in June 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. The 7th commitment of Malabo seeks to strengthen mutual accountability for actions and results. This entails conducting a biennial agricultural review process that involves tracking, monitoring and reporting on implementation progress; fostering alignment, harmonization and coordination among multisectoral efforts and multi-institutional platforms for peer review, mutual learning and mutual accountability; and strengthening national and regional institutional capacities for knowledge and data generation and management that support evidence-based planning.

To inform this process, tools have been developed for the biennial review process. The tools include technical guidelines that provide the profile of each the 59 indicators and detailed metrics and computing methods; country performance reporting template that is used by countries to collect data required for the country report preparation based on the guidance provided in technical guidelines; technical notes that exhibit the benchmarking methods for evaluating country progress in terms of being “on-track” or “not on track” for a specific target of the Malabo commitment; and an e-biennial review (e-BR) online tool to ease for data entry and generate automatically individual country scorecards that show if the country is “on track” or “not on track”.

There are notable challenges in the CAADP BR process, both process- and data-related. The process-related challenges include limited timeliness in collecting, cleaning and analysing data; scarce resources for the multistakeholder validation of draft national BR reports; limited trained personnel for prompt data collection and high staff turnover; and limited technical capacity and coordination among CAADP focal points affecting the accuracy of estimations. Data-related challenges include: suspicious data patterns where the repetition of the same numbers over the years casts doubts on data validity; discrepancies in indicators characterized by the differences between reported data and expected values for various indicators, both internally and externally; data variability and inconsistencies with significant variations in reported data from year to year, indicating inconsistencies in measurement or reporting; inconsistency with external data marked by differences between reported data and external sources that question the reliability of reported information; and missing values and measurement units where significant missing values and inconsistency in measurement units hinder accurate reporting, and result in numerous instances of missing values across various indicators.

The Commission:

- **Commends** the work of AfDB, AFRISTAT, UNECA, IFAD and AUC in the areas of statistical capacity building development, modernization and transformation of national African statistical systems, and strengthening of agricultural data use and the monitoring of the CAADP implementation.

- **Encourages** FAO and various institutions mentioned above to strengthen their collaboration in order to identify and build on synergies, and improve coordination in the implementation of their technical assistance activities and programmes, including the evaluation of statistical
capacity development and technical assistance priority needs in the region, the development of capacity for the production and use of agricultural statistics, the improved integration of agricultural statistics in National Strategies for the Development of Statistics, and the modernization and digitalization of national agricultural statistical systems.

- **Recommends** member countries to establish good national coordination mechanisms between CAADP focal points and relevant institutions in charge of producing agricultural statistics with the objective to facilitate the monitoring of the CAADP implementation, improve the coherence and quality of the data reported in biennial reviews (BR), and further disseminate and reflect on national BR results and lessons learned from the reporting process at the national level.

- **Recommends** member countries to harmonize the mechanism for the nomination of focal points at the national level to avoid duplication of efforts and the reporting of conflicting or low-quality information.

- **Recommends** FAO, the AUC and other organizations collecting data from national institutions in the area of agricultural statistics to share information on their channels of communication with national counterparts.

**5.7. Agenda item 7: Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators (ASTI)**

**5.7.1. Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators: institutionalization and new national data collection approach**

The Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators (ASTI) programme has been a global leader in compiling and analysing agricultural research data for over two decades. It focuses on institutional developments, investments, human resource capacity and research outputs in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), and functions through a vast network of national research agencies, regional coordinating bodies and international institutions. The programme, formerly managed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), is now transitioning into FAO. This transition poses challenges and opportunities for ASTI, requiring a new vision and improved operational mechanisms. This session presented the main implications of this process for AFCAS member countries. The role of national statistical authorities will be crucial to enhance the quality, timeliness and completeness of ASTI data. The institutionalization of ASTI and the adoption of a new data collection approach include national validation, aiming to integrate ASTI into both global and national statistical mechanisms while fostering increased country ownership. This is why FAO has been developing a new ASTI data collection approach that is fit-for-purpose, to integrate the ASTI into the NSS. This new approach is built towards a more institutionalized and sustainable process through two tiers: Tier 1 core aggregates (FAOSTAT) and Tier 2 detailed and granular variables (ASTI platform). The ultimate aim of this new data collection approach is to integrate ASTI into NSS mechanisms.

**5.7.2. Shared experiences: lessons learned from intergovernmental dialogues**

The report presents lessons learned from intergovernmental dialogues about the ASTI process. It presents the national statistical bodies and national statistical plans of Nigeria that include the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the National Consultative Committee on Statistics (NCCS) and the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) (the last one being planned from 2024 to 2028). The paper also presents the points discussed during the Togo workshop on intergovernmental dialogues about the ASTI process by stressing the following: recent data and future strategies for
sustainable agricultural research data collection; the focal person for ASTI is from National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs) across countries; the focus was to explore pathways for the institutionalization of ASTI, and discuss collaboration of NSO and NARIs.

The Commission:

- **Recognizes** the importance of data on science, technology and innovation for guiding policies that aim to enhance agricultural productivity and, therefore, poverty reduction and hunger eradication. However, it also recognizes the scarcity of these data and the need to improve its collection and to systematize the dissemination of quality, official and country owned indicators.

- **Acknowledges** the ongoing transition towards a more institutionalized and sustainable Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators (ASTI) programme in FAO and takes note that FAO will be seeking opportunities to pilot new data collection approaches in selected countries in the region.

- **Commends member countries to support** ASTI activities in the region and encourages FAO to conduct specialized capacity building activities with the national institutions that produce agricultural statistics.

- **Recommends** the integration of the National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs) into the National Statistical Systems and to undertake data quality assessments, or where applicable statistical quality certifications for ASTI data.

- **Encourages** member countries to initiate national dialogues to establish fit-for-purpose data collection models for ASTI data.

5.8. **Agenda item 8: Progress in the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture (WCA) 2020 and vision on the WCA 2030**

5.8.1. **Country experience in the WCA 2020 round – Lesotho**

The FAO WCA 2020 guidelines have been very useful for Lesotho as this was the first census to follow the classical approach (one-off census). Previous censuses were basically annual production surveys with larger samples, even though most indicators were covered. All FAO WCA 2020 guidelines were followed from methodology up to tabulation, even though themes like aquaculture, forestry, fisheries were left out as these are small at the household level. Household food security was also not covered as the census covered only rural areas. However, FIES is usually collected in the labour force survey.

The part of the guidelines that was exploited the most was the concepts and definitions, most of which fit the context of Lesotho. The slight exception was on the definition of a holding, which is the same as a household as all household members use the same labour force and equipment. Twenty-two (22) out of 23 essential items were collected. The presence of aquaculture on a holding was not collected because it does not exist yet at the household level. The Ministry of Agriculture is introducing aquaculture at the community level. The FAO WCA 2020 guidelines provided a strong foundation for conducting the 2019/2020 agriculture census. The next round of census (WCA 2030) does not need to change much as everything is already covered. However, it is important to have an agriculture census expert to assist with meeting the target of producing relevant indicators.
FAO provided technical assistance for the census. It assigned two consultants to work with the census team from the planning stage up to after dissemination. An agriculture census expert was available for stakeholder workshops, questionnaire design, pilot, listing, main data collection, post-enumeration survey (PES), report writing etc., and an IT consultant assisted with CAPI and data processing. The Lesotho Government paid for the entire survey (data collection, communication, transport, publicity etc.).

Lesotho conducted its first PES. The overall goal of the PES was to assess the quality of the census data collected by measuring the magnitude of non-sampling errors in terms of (i) coverage errors and (ii) content errors. A one-stage stratified probability sample design was used comprising 30 post-sampling units (PSUs) from 500 PSUs amounting to 480 households by 30 enumerators and 6 supervisors. FAO guidelines and UN post-enumeration surveys operational guidelines (2010) were adhered to. For coverage error evaluation, the dual system estimation was applied in estimating the coverage error estimates. For content error evaluation, age, sex, marital status, relationship, and education level of individual persons were evaluated for content errors.

The net difference rate (NDR) was low for both males and females implying that the inconsistency of reporting sex was very low for both sexes. The index of inconsistency was low, at 10.9 percent for both sexes, meaning respondents provided reliable information. A rate of agreement (RA) of 94.6 percent showed that census and PES responses for sex were highly in agreement; 78.5 percent of age responses for both census and PES were in agreement. The NDR was low for all the age categories, however, age groups “0–4” and “10–19” were under-reported in the census (-0.3 and -1.2 respectively). The aggregate index of inconsistency is medium for age (25.2 percent). The highest index of inconsistency occurred among the “5–9” age group (32.7 percent), meaning many cases varied between the census and PES. In addition, the agriculture population of 1 009 228 obtained in the main agricultural census is also within the estimated confidence limits. The main census coverage rate is 98.37 percent. There was no need to adjust the census results since both surveys aligned. With a coverage rate of 94.8 percent, an omission rate of 5.2 percent, a net coverage error of 5.1 percent, a coefficient of variation of 5.6 percent and the census agriculture population of 1 009 228 falling within the estimated confidence limits, it was concluded that the census results were highly precise and could be used for planning and policy.

5.8.2. Lessons from the WCA 2020, emerging issues and proposed outline and strategy for the WCA 2030 guidelines

FAO is the UN agency responsible for providing census methodological guidelines to countries through the WCA. The current round is the WCA 2020, which ends in 2025. FAO is developing the new WCA 2030 guidelines, for the period 2026–2035. This work started with a review of lessons, consultations with stakeholders and the preparation of a concept note, followed by the preparation of a first draft. Part of the consultation is the discussion with countries on possible areas of revision and improvement for the preparation of the new WCA 2030.

An online survey sent to all member countries in 2022 showed that the classical census (55 percent of the countries) and combined census with administrative registers (35 percent, in the European Union) are the most popular methodologies while the modular approach (9 percent) is mainly used in Africa. The main source of the census frame is the last population census (used by 46 percent of the countries), followed by the last agricultural census (41 percent) and administrative registers.
(18 percent). CAPI (66 percent) and CAWI (34 percent), and post (28 percent) overtook PAPI (26 percent) as the main data collection mode, while telephone interviewing (CATI, 22 percent) is gaining ground. A growing number of countries rely on the use of technologies such as GIS and interactive online databases to disseminate results.

There are some areas of concern. For instance, census questionnaires continue to be overloaded in many countries. Items that are not structural (e.g. production) and belong to sample surveys are forced into the census. Juridical holdings are excluded in some countries, and georeferencing is not used for the location of holdings. In some countries, censuses are sample-based (mainly in Africa), providing structural data on farms, but not fulfilling key objectives: data for small administrative units, benchmark data, complete frames, and measurement of rare events. Also, in some countries, there are significant delays in publication of the census results or not adequate dissemination.

There are several considerations when preparing the new guidelines. The WCA 2030 will consider the current and emerging global development priorities (2030 Agenda and the SDGs) and other critical policy matters, with a prominent focus on addressing climate change. The use of new technologies and innovations in agriculture has accelerated in the past decade and should be considered by the statistical system, either census or sample surveys. Measuring the impact of development policies and programmes leads to expanding data requirements to be met by the agricultural census and the integrated system of agricultural surveys. Special attention will be given to identifying and establishing the relevance and coherence of the WCA 2030 to their main and specific objectives; the WCA 2030 will continue to play a key role in the collection of structural statistics on the agriculture sector in many countries as well since it will provide the baseline and frame for other agricultural surveys; the WCA 2030 will incorporate to the extent possible the requirements of the new development agenda, the use of new technologies and innovations in agriculture, and emerging policy, keeping in mind that the agricultural census is a complete structural survey.

Possible highlights of the proposed changes in the WCA 2030 include: close alignment and relation to the AGRIS (50x2030 Initiative); revision of the modalities for census taking from four modalities to three modalities (classical, modular, and the registered-based census). Another highlight is that the use of advanced data dissemination tools and integration of institutional users in the data analysis and dissemination process should continue to be promoted. The access and use of microdata will continue to be promoted and the guide will stress data confidentiality where needed. The WCA 2020 emphasized the extensive adoption of digital, mobile, and geo-information technologies, along with the data revolution (such as PDA, GPS, and CAPI), and the WCA 2030 will keep advocating for these strategies. Furthermore, the utilization of big data presents novel prospects, both in constructing the framework for non-household farms and in enhancing data validation and editing procedures.

The WCA 2030 will continue to distinguish three types of items: essential, frame and additional. Essential items include those that are imperative for national purposes and international comparability. Frame items are those deemed necessary for the establishment of frames for supplementary census modules or follow-up surveys, while additional items include other items that countries consider useful given their particularities. The programme should strongly insist in the need of maintaining additional items to a minimum. New items proposed to be introduced under the WCA 2030 include: number of parcels (frame item); area of temporary crops planted (essential item); presence of hydroponics/vertical cultivation (frame item). The deleted items/themes include theme 11: household
food security (because it corresponds to household surveys and not to the agricultural census); theme 15: environment/greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Items changing themes are theme 10 (WCA 2020) – intrahousehold distribution of managerial decisions and ownership of the holding – moving to the pertinent themes.

The Commission:

- **Commends** the progress made in the implementation by countries of the WCA 2020 and highlights the record participation of African countries in this round of the WCA.
- **Commends** the effort made by FAO to accompany technically and financially the census operations across African countries and recommends FAO to continue its support to member countries through technical cooperation projects and to advocate with financial partners the mobilization of funds for the implementation of censuses of agriculture.
- **Takes note** on the assessment made by FAO on the implementation of the WCA 2020 which provides information of technical aspects of the implementation of censuses around the World.
- **Takes note** on the work plan proposed, the vision adopted, and the activities already undertaken by FAO to propose the new guidelines for the WCA 2030 and **recommends** FAO to pursue consultations with stakeholders to collect the feedback from member countries.
- **Recommends** FAO to include in the guidelines for the WCA 2030 recommendations on strategies, methods, and technics to collect data in conflict zones. At the same time, recommended to clarify the differences, if any, between the modular approach and the integrated census/survey programme.
- **Encourages** member countries to follow the process of the preparation of the guidelines of the WCA 2030, participate in the consultations and anticipate the implementation of the proposed recommendations when implementing the WCA 2020 round.
- **Recommends** FAO to undertake technical work to solve the issues still on hold related to the implementation of census of agriculture notably (i) the harmonisation of concepts to delineate urban and peri-urban zones for data collection, (ii) the proposal of a best approach to collect data for livestock in urban area.

5.9. **Agenda item 9: Improving food and agriculture data dissemination**

5.9.1. **Modernizing data dissemination model in the context of agricultural survey programmes**

Official statistics serve the crucial role of meeting the evolving and diverse information needs of various user categories. As these needs continually expand and diversify, it becomes imperative to cultivate and enhance a dissemination system that effectively highlights the comprehensiveness and variety of statistical information. This entails not only keeping pace with the changing demands of users but also proactively developing mechanisms to communicate the richness and breadth of available statistical data.

The advancement in information technology provides statistical organizations with novel solutions to transition towards more versatile, interactive, impartial, timely and cost-effective data releases. Web-based technologies empower statistical agencies to offer increased access to both statistics and
metadata at a reduced cost. Unlike traditional print publications, web-based platforms eliminate constraints on the amount of detail that can be made available. However, to fully capitalize on the advantages of these modern technologies, statistical organizations need to ensure that their dissemination services and tools evolve in tandem. This evolution may, in some instances, necessitate a substantial redesign of existing dissemination strategies. Adapting to these technological shifts is essential not only for maintaining relevance but also for maximizing the benefits of a more dynamic and accessible approach to data dissemination.

In technical assistance programmes like 50x2030 and GSARS, FAO strongly advocates for partner statistics agencies to enhance access to data from agricultural statistics programmes while leveraging modern technologies for optimization. This entails a strategic re-evaluation of dissemination practices, including:

- **Simplified reports for communication:** Recommending a shift in reports’ purpose towards simplified communication and highlighting key insights rather than just disseminating a collection of tables. This adaptation ensures that reports serve as effective tools for communication on statistics.
- **Data portal distribution:** Encouraging the distribution of data through data portals to enhance the user experience. These platforms not only improve accessibility but also can streamline internal data management processes within the agency, contributing to overall efficiency.
- **Dissemination of micro-datasets:** Emphasizing the dissemination of micro-datasets to maximize their value for evidence-based decision-making. This approach enables further research and analysis, enhancing the agency’s credibility and transparency in analytical work.
- **Strategic communication strategy:** Proposing the development of a communication strategy centred around the release of key outputs for wider public outreach. This strategy aims to ensure broad awareness of results among the public, fostering a better understanding and appreciation of the agency’s contributions.

By adopting these suggested adaptations, partner statistics agencies can not only enhance the accessibility of agricultural data but also leverage modern technologies to streamline processes, maximize the value of datasets, and communicate results effectively to a wider audience.

Achieving sustainability in dissemination programmes is crucial for statistical agencies, and this requires careful programming and securing of resources. From this perspective, adopting a GSBPM (Generic Statistical Business Process Model)-based approach to dissemination offers significant advantages. This structured methodology helps statistical agencies mitigate constraints and reduce the risks of falling short of the ultimate objective of any NSO, which is the effective sharing of public information.

**5.9.2. FAO Food and Agriculture Microdata Catalogue: Unlocking the power of microdata**

Launched in July 2019 with the aim of becoming a one-stop-shop for agriculture-related microdata and metadata, the Food and Agriculture Microdata (FAM) catalogue provides an inventory of datasets collected through farm and household surveys and censuses containing information related to FAO’s mandate (e.g. agriculture, food security, nutrition, emergencies). Three years after its creation, the
catalogue is now populated with over 1,300 studies. The majority are datasets collected by FAO (directly or indirectly by providing technical and financial support to other institutions) or by external organizations granting FAO the license to redistribute them. After highlighting the various benefits of microdata dissemination and the substantial progresses made in terms of FAM maintenance and enrichment since the 27th Session of the AFCAS, the paper presents the statistical workflow and standards adopted by FAO for microdata dissemination, and outlines ways in which AFCAS member countries can benefit from this initiative.

5.9.3. New FAO data dissemination platform – beta version: the FAODATA Explorer

This paper presents an overview of FAO's modernization project related to the establishment of an integrated statistical data warehouse (SDW) and FAODATA Explorer, FAO's new centralized dissemination platform. It describes the context and objectives of this project, its IT infrastructure and the workflow that supported the release of the beta version of FAODATA Explorer on 15 September 2023, containing the FAO SDG data domain (i.e. the data series for the 21 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship). The FAODATA Explorer is still under development and will gradually be populated with existing FAO statistics on food, agriculture, nutrition, fisheries, and aquaculture currently disseminated through FAOSTAT, FishStat and other platforms.

FAO has started to modernize its IT infrastructure through the setup of a centralized statistical data warehouse and FAODATA Explorer, FAO's new dissemination platform that enables access, search and sharing of structured data and metadata based on an internationally agreed SDMX standard and related tools. The project will continue its integration of FAO disseminated data, while modernizing and bringing in efficiencies in the business processes. Through this project, the quality of FAO data and statistical outputs will improve by using harmonized standards, concepts and codes towards improving data coherence, compatibility, accessibility and clarity. The organization project will take into consideration the necessary time and efforts for change in practices for a proper adoption of dissemination using SDMX.

The ongoing FAO project to leverage the SDMX standard for the dissemination and exchange of data will dovetail with the ongoing efforts for greater data digitalization in Africa to catalyse innovative solutions for data production and improvements in the quality of disseminated statistics. Coordination of these interventions will be needed, before long, to maximize their cumulative impacts on increased data quality and data user satisfaction while decreasing data management and administrative costs through countries’ response burden and related statistical work.

The Commission:

- **Acknowledges** that GSBPM-based approach provides a systematic framework for planning, designing, and executing dissemination processes, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently, and activities are aligned with the overall objectives.
- **Encourages** countries to integrate the GSBPM into dissemination strategies so that statistical agencies can enhance their ability to navigate challenges, optimize resource utilization, and ultimately achieve sustainable and effective public information sharing.
- **Recognizes** the importance to have a comprehensive strategy of data dissemination based on the diversity of dissemination outputs such as statistical bulletins, interactive statistical tables
released on open data portals, microdata files and associated metadata, and data highlights for wide sharing through instant communication channels and social media.

- **Encourages** member countries to take advantage of the FAM Catalogue to disseminate or re-distribute their microdata related to food and agriculture and associated metadata so to increase their overall visibility and use.

- **Acknowledges** the efforts of FAO to support member countries in disseminating data and microdata from agricultural surveys through initiatives such as 50x2030 and the Global Strategy to improve agricultural and rural statistics and **encourages** FAO to continue technical assistance in this area.

- **Acknowledges** that the advancements in information technology provide statistical organizations with novel solutions to transition towards more versatile, interactive, interoperable, timely, accessible, relevant, and cost-effective data releases, and **encourages** member countries to consider their adoption.

- **Urges** countries to continue building human resources capacities on data dissemination and data use.

- ** Appreciates** the modernization of FAO IT infrastructure through the setup of a centralized Statistical Data Warehouse and FAO’s new dissemination platform (FAODATA Explorer) and **invites** members to provide comments on the Beta version of the FAODATA Explorer.

5.10. **Agenda item 10: New developments in the use of alternative data sources for agricultural statistics**

5.10.1. **Earth observation for official statistics in Africa: experience from pilot projects in countries in Africa**

The main rationale is to use earth observation tools for agricultural statistics. Big data from earth observation offer a viable solution as an alternative or an integration to traditional survey-based methods. EO is potentially relevant to produce agricultural statistics with a focus on: crop acreage, crop yield and crop plot boundaries mapping. Some challenges have to be managed in the use of EO data for land cover mapping, crop type mapping, crop acreage and yield estimates, and in responding to the most pressing methodological and/or capacity development needs.

5.10.2. **Innovate Africa: the African Development Bank Data Innovation Lab’s approach and actions**

The Data Innovation Lab (DIL), an initiative of the Africa Information Highway (AIH) at the African Development Bank, is dedicated to accelerating Africa’s development through data and innovation. It focuses on leveraging the power of new sources of data and big data to foster sustainable socioeconomic development across the continent. The DIL aims to establish an environment conducive to innovation, supporting economic growth and better development outcomes. This is achieved through establishing data innovation labs, building collaborative networks, providing technical support and fostering partnerships for data-driven development.
5.10.3. Data-driven strategies: FAO’s Data Lab tools for filling data gaps and obtaining timely insights

The FAO Data Lab was created at the end of 2019 in response to the need to: have timely information to support decisions; use new methods and technologies to extract data from unstructured sources; and find solutions to issues related to the crisis of traditional data collection systems.

The Data Lab’s main areas of work and products include early warning systems, comprised of (i) daily food prices monitor, e.g. integration between nowcasting food prices and daily food prices acceleration monitor; (ii) banking sector monitor such as banking sentiment indicator and financial indicators; (iii) automatic tweet/article classification into several topics; (iv) topic explorer dashboard (sentiment analysis by topic); and (v) Data Lab trends: free search engine over 28 million tweet/articles.

Another area of work is text mining and text analytics such as the extraction of quantitative information on food losses from unstructured sources (scientific article, reports, etc.), that is then converted into the “food loss and waste database”, a tabular dataset; a standalone application to automatically predict metadata for FAOLEX (legal/policy) documents; the analysis of Pathways documents for the Food Systems Summit that were converted into statistical information and displayed in an interactive dashboard; MetroPolicy, a method for estimating how decisions reflected in national planning documents (such as national development plans and poverty reduction strategy papers) are supported through the use of statistics. The FAO Hand-in-Hand Initiative involves filling in data gaps by web scraping data from NSOs and Ministries, at the national and subnational level, as well as vulnerability mapping, including land cover mapping with costless geospatial data acquisition and quicker results than traditional approaches.

There is a need to overcome traditional data collection challenges. Non-traditional data sources and methods like social media, IoT devices, web scraping, and text-mining are revolutionizing data collection and analysis, big data, data science and artificial intelligence have a growing role in national and international data systems. FAO’s Data Lab is using advanced technologies and non-conventional data to enhance data quality and coverage, e.g. in agricultural statistics and food losses, and providing global insights. Organizations and countries should embrace modern data science techniques and non-conventional data sources to stay relevant and efficient in a data-driven world.

5.10.4. Bridging agricultural data gaps: innovations in geospatial and non-conventional data sources

In decision-making processes that impact the economic, demographic, social and environmental aspects of society, official statistics play a crucial role. They rely on the thorough and precise gathering of data. However, this process can be significantly hindered by data gaps. These gaps, which denote the lack of data or incomplete data sets, can greatly affect the trustworthiness, representativeness and overall usefulness of these statistics. Addressing these data gaps is essential to ensure that the statistics we rely on for understanding various aspects of society are as robust, representative and useful as possible. This endeavour enhances the quality of the data and bolsters the integrity and efficacy of the decisions based on them.

The paper showcased new developments in the use of alternative data sources for agricultural statistics in two specific domains: firstly, geospatial data science with the Earth Observation for Statistics (EOSTAT) project and the Farmer Registry project funded by AfDB; secondly, practical experiences...
in leveraging non-conventional data sources to gain timely insights with activities conducted by the FAO Data Lab and the AfDB’s Data Innovation Lab.

Launched by FAO-OCS and FAO-ESS, the EOSTAT project aims at building and strengthening technical capacity in NSOs in the use of earth observation big data and artificial intelligence as an alternative data source, and in methods to improve the overall quality, completeness, granularity and timeliness of agricultural statistics with a focus on crop acreage and crop yield. The paper provided an update on the status of work in Lesotho, Mali, Rwanda, Senegal and Zimbabwe and described upcoming related activities in the region for the next biennium. Members were invited to express their views on the progress achieved and remaining challenges, and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.

The FAO Data Lab, established in late 2019, aims to modernize the Organization’s statistics and expand data coverage using innovative methods and technologies for extracting data from unstructured sources. Its initial project involved gathering subnational data from official statistical websites to address gaps and validate the national agricultural production dataset. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the need for timely information to support decision-making became critical, particularly during emergencies. This led to a heightened demand for real-time information and automated analysis from non-conventional sources. To meet these emerging data needs, the Data Lab has been developing and managing various databases, including global newspaper articles, daily food prices information, and data on food loss and waste from scientific articles and other documents.

The Commission:

- **Acknowledges** that the adoption of data science methods such as data mining, web scraping, and the use of non-conventional data sources such as social media, mobile phone and geospatial data, are revolutionizing data collection and analysis.
- **Recognizes** that FAO’s Data Lab is using advanced technologies and non-conventional data to enhance data quality, fill data gaps (e.g. in agricultural statistics and food losses), and help providing global insights, and recommends FAO to collaborate with member countries to validate the methods used and data produced.
- **Recommends** member countries to consider embracing modern data science techniques and non-conventional data sources to stay relevant and efficient in a data-driven world.
- **Takes note** of best practices identified through FAO field tests on the use of EO data and trusted methods developed under the UNCEBD and the UNCEAG and **invites** countries to consider their adoption including the georeferencing of plots boundaries and centroids in agricultural surveys and/or censuses.
- **Encourages** member countries to develop a long-term strategy for the use of EO data in agricultural statistics (at least five years), which will identify priority areas where EO can add value and efficiency to existing workflows, provide new solutions to old problems, and address new problems stemming from global and societal challenges.
- **Recommends** FAO to continue providing technical assistance to member countries on the use of EO for specific cases, such as mapping of mixed crops, crop yield modelling, assessment of impact of disasters on crops, and to provide capacity development on other non-conventional methods.
• **Encourages** member countries to take advantage of international capacity building initiatives such as those implemented by the UNCEBD and the UNCEAG.

• **Takes note** of the data innovation lab’s strategy developed by AfDB to assess the readiness of government agencies, including ministries of agriculture, to use big data and unconventional data sources, and to draft a road map towards innovation.

• **Acknowledges** the opportunity for member countries to establish a network of data innovation labs (DILs) at the national level and **takes note** that AfDB’s DIL initiatives can support them in this area.

5.11. **Agenda item 11: Measuring food security and nutrition statistics**

5.11.1. **The Food and Diet domain**

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, together with country-wide responses aimed at reducing the disease transmission, has underscored the gap in what we know about people’s dietary habits. The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (2022) highlighted that there are still data gaps on people’s food consumption, nutrient intake and their nutritional status. According to the experts, policymakers are often not aware of the existence of data available or do not use the data appropriately. Furthermore, sources of dietary data are not typically harmonized. Comprehensive dietary data are paramount to understanding and explaining the diverse forms of malnutrition that may result from food insecurity. Moreover, these data play a crucial role in guiding agrifood systems policies. In this context, three FAO divisions (the Food and Nutrition Division, the Statistics Division and the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division) embarked on an innovative joint effort to harmonize dietary data, increase their dissemination, and improve the utilization and comparation of food availability, food consumption and diet quality statistics and indicators. This initiative brings together, for the first time, statistics from individual food consumption surveys, women’s dietary diversity data, household consumption and expenditure surveys, and supply utilization accounts. It disseminates the statistics through a common “Food and Diet” domain on FAOSTAT.

The discussions focused on the new datasets on vitamins, minerals and other macro- and micronutrients for the world that FAO-ESS generated from the supply utilization accounts of the food balance sheets, household and consumption surveys, and dietary surveys from various countries and using the recently updated global conversion table. The datasets are expected to be published on FAOSTAT in early 2024.

Countries appreciated the FAO initiative in producing such important food security and nutrition data at the global level and requested FAO to build the capacity of countries to generate the same nutrients datasets from relevant surveys in countries, and from national food balance sheets.

5.11.2. **The use of the FIES to inform the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC)/Cadre Harmonisé (CH) assessments**

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) and the Cadre Harmonisé (CH) are two widely used classification systems for assessing food security and acute malnutrition in countries facing crises. However, both the IPC and CH have been sometimes criticized for their reliance on limited primary data sources, which can lead to inaccurate or incomplete assessments. In recent years, the Food Insecurity
Experience Scale (FIES) has emerged as a reliable and flexible survey-based tool measuring food security at different severity levels and generating primary information on access to food within different food security monitoring and classification systems.

The FIES consists of three key components:

- **Survey Module (FIES-SM):** This module comprises a set of survey questions, typically eight core questions, with dichotomous yes/no responses.
- **Analytic protocol:** A robust analytical protocol is employed to convert the survey data into a probabilistic measure of the food insecurity status of the population of interest ranging among various possible severity levels.
- **Reference scale:** A reference scale is used to calibrate the data and ensure comparability across different regions and populations.

The FIES-SM is highly flexible and can be implemented at the individual or household level. Additionally, it provides insights into food insecurity experiences over varying time frames, such as the past year, past 30 days, or both.

The IPC framework, on the other hand, is not a direct food security indicator but rather a systematic process that assembles evidence-based consensus among key stakeholders to classify the severity and extent of food insecurity and malnutrition. It utilizes standardized procedures and technical consensus-building to make informed assessments. IPC has three distinct scales:

- **Acute food insecurity:** Focuses on identifying areas with a significant proportion of households experiencing severe food energy shortages or livelihood changes that endanger lives or livelihoods.
- **Chronic food insecurity:** Concentrates on identifying areas with a substantial proportion of households with a long-term inability to meet essential food requirements in terms of both macro- and micronutrients.
- **Acute malnutrition:** Aims to identify areas with a substantial proportion of children suffering from wasting or oedema.

These scales encompass various food security and malnutrition indicators and specific thresholds for classifying severity and identifying key drivers. IPC assessments involve collaborative analyses conducted by technical working groups, including representatives from government bodies, international organizations, NGOs and civil society. These groups assess food security and nutrition situations based on existing available information to make informed decisions.

The integration of the FIES into IPC assessments represents a significant advancement in the field of food security analysis. The FIES offers the capacity to provide disaggregated, comparable and nuanced data, which are crucial for making informed decisions and targeting interventions effectively. As data availability and analysis techniques improve, the FIES is poised to play an increasingly pivotal role in enhancing our understanding of food security on a global scale.

The FIES is a measurement system developed by FAO for the severity of the food insecurity condition experienced by households or individuals. It has been widely used in various countries to inform food
security policies and programmes, and it became the methodology at the base of SDGs Indicator 2.1.2 to monitor access to food (Goal 2). In recent years, the FIES has also been proved to be useful to inform the IPC and CH assessments.

5.11.3. Experience of the Vulnerability Assessment Committee in using the FIES to inform IPC in Malawi

The FIES is being used in Malawi as a comprehensive tool for evaluating food and nutrition security. It has been integrated into surveys and Malawi has derived estimates from FIES and used those estimates to inform the vulnerability assessment. The journey began by integrating the FIES module into national surveys, i.e. integrated household surveys (IHS IV in 2016; IHS V in 2020; and IHS VI, which is underway), and the Malawi vulnerability assessment and analysis (VAA) process. This integration allowed the country to robustly capture the experiential dimension of food insecurity at the household level, providing a richer and more nuanced understanding of the food security situation in Malawi. From these surveys, Malawi derived estimates that served as important indicators for food and nutrition security. The FIES-based estimates provided an overview of the prevalence of food insecurity and highlighted the severity of the issue. In addition, these indicators allowed Malawi to measure progress over time and observe the impact of interventions.

The FIES has been adopted in the VAA in Malawi for both chronic and acute food insecurity analysis. With its ability to capture the severity of food insecurity, it provides valuable insights for analysts, aiding in the identification of vulnerable populations and the development of targeted response strategies.

Looking forward, Malawi plans to use FIES to contribute to the IPC acute food insecurity analysis. The experiential data provided by FIES will enhance the understanding of acute food insecurity situations and will enable the country to respond quickly and effectively.

The Commission:

- **Commends** FAO for its efforts to advance food and nutrition security analysis through the implementation of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) module and recognizes FAO’s technical expertise and guidance to member countries in the application of the FIES module.

- **Recommends** FAO to continue its collaborative approach to support member countries through the provision of technical assistance and capacity building activities in the measurement of food security and nutrition. Furthermore, it recommends FAO to further strengthen partnerships with international organizations, research institutions, and donor agencies to expand data collection initiatives and address data demands in a sustainable manner.

- **Encourages** member countries to make their food and nutrition datasets publicly available to strengthen the evidence base for informed policy formulation and monitoring.

- **Recommends** FAO to foster and strengthen regional networks for capacity building and knowledge exchange in food security analysis, recognizing that sharing best practices, experiences and lessons learned will enhance countries’ capabilities in developing effective and context-specific interventions.
• **Recommends** FAO to advocate for the integration of food security analysis into broader policy frameworks. Emphasizing evidence-based decision-making will support countries in developing policies that address the root causes of food insecurity, such as poverty, inequality and climate change, while promoting sustainable agriculture and nutrition-sensitive approaches.

• **Welcomes** the efforts of FAO to provide dietary data that are comparable across countries through the new Food and Diet domain to be published in FAOSTAT, and **recognizes** that these data will fill a current data gap as they provide estimates on the levels of macro- and micronutrients that are available or consume for different food groups. The Commission **recommends** FAO to build the capacity of member countries on the compilation, analysis, dissemination and use of dietary data coming from different types of data sources.

### 5.12. Agenda item 12: Progress and new developments on measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicators (SDG indicators)

#### 5.12.1. Progress in SDG indicator reporting

As the custodian agency of 21 SDG indicators and a contributing agency to another five, one of FAO’s top priorities is to improve the capacity of member countries to measure and report SDG indicators and monitor the progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Overall, the average reporting rate in Africa for the 21 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship modestly exceeds the world average, with the African reporting rate starting slightly behind the global rate in 2017 but managing to overtake it in 2021. There are gaps in the reporting of specific SDG indicators that explain such differences, whereas there are also notable differences in the relative performance of the five main subregions in Africa in terms of reporting. Both Northern and Middle African countries are below the world average, and appropriate efforts should be made in each case to address this situation.

In addition to reporting indicators at the national level, the production of high-quality disaggregated estimates of SDG indicators can offer extremely valuable information for policymaking and monitoring. In this respect, FAO-OCS has conducted extensive methodological work on data disaggregation techniques for SDG indicators based on survey data and is well positioned to support AFCAS members with technical assistance and capacity development initiatives.

Finally, with 2023 marking the mid-point of the 2030 Agenda, the assessment of SDG progress at the indicator, target and goal level is now particularly relevant. In this respect, FAO-OCS has recently expanded the progress assessment approach discussed at the 27th Session of the AFCAS to include methods for the evaluation of the current status and trend both at the target and goal levels. To facilitate the implementation of such methods, and encourage member countries to adopt harmonized approaches, FAO has recently launched a first version of a Shiny application freely available to all AFCAS members.

#### 5.12.2. Innovative methods for data disaggregation of SDG indicators with use cases from RAF and other regions

Monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its central pledge of leaving no one behind has generated a tremendous increase in the demand for disaggregated data and statistics. The overarching principle of data disaggregation is that SDG indicators should be disaggregated,
where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location, or other characteristics in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The production of high-quality disaggregated estimates of SDG indicators imposes significant challenges to national statistical systems, both in terms of data requirements and operational complexity. As the custodian agency of 21 SDG indicators and an active member of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) working group on data disaggregation and the task force on small area estimation, FAO has done considerable work to support countries in the implementation of indirect estimation techniques to disaggregated SDG indicators. AFCAS members are invited to take note of the latest updates on measuring SDG indicators and express their views and recommendations to FAO on the methods proposed by FAO to produce disaggregated estimates of SDG indicators and role that FAO can play to support countries in their implementation, as well as their specific capacity development needs on SDG progress assessment, data disaggregation, and for the computation of the 21 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship.

5.12.3. Enhanced tools and methods for SDG progress assessment at the national, regional and global level

With 2023 marking the mid-point of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, assessing whether and when the SDG targets and goals will be achieved is a central issue. The statistical methodology developed by FAO to assess the status and trend of SDG indicators was discussed during the 27th Session of the AFCAS. The methodology has remained substantially stable during the biennium and has been systematically adopted to produce the annual FAO SDG progress report. The UN Statistics Division and custodian agencies have been urged to find ways of performing status and trend assessments for targets and goals as a whole (not only for individual indicators). Although an agreed UN-wide harmonized approach has not been endorsed yet, FAO has proposed a simple method that has been used for the first time this year for the comprehensive assessment of Goal 2.

5.12.4. Food losses measurement in Ethiopia

The initiative of the pre- and post-harvest loss survey is derived from the Ethiopian ten-year development plan (2021–2030), which aims to reduce these losses. To achieve this goal, up-to-date data on pre- and post-harvest losses are needed. Even though various agricultural surveys have been conducted in by the Ethiopian Statistical Service (ESS) there were no official statistical data on pre- and post-harvest losses. To fill this data gap and understand the magnitude of the losses, the ESS conducted a pilot survey in collaboration with FAO’s technical and financial support through a formal request of assistance. The pilot survey was conducted in three major regions of the country, namely Amhara, Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region, and covers four major crops (maize, wheat, faba bean and haricot bean). The post-harvest loss survey was conducted by splitting it into an off-farm survey and an on-farm survey. The on-farm survey was a subsample of the annual agricultural sample survey and gets its sampling frame from the fourth housing and population census cartographic work. The primary sampling unit was the enumeration area (EA) and secondary sampling units were households (HHs) found from the fresh listing of the households selected based on a systematic sample selection method. The list of markets, cooperatives, unions and processors was used as a sampling frame for the off-farm survey. A sample of wholesale and retail traders who buy and sell the survey crops was taken from the fresh list of traders found in each market selected based on a systematic sample selection method. Loss points covered in this pilot survey are those at the farm level (pre-harvest loss, harvest loss, stacking loss,
threshing loss, cleaning, or winnowing loss, storage loss and transport loss); and at the off-farm stage (transaction/selling loss, processing loss and transport loss), among others.

The data collection was based on farmers’ estimated measurement (inquiry-based) and the objective measurement approach. The methodology that was applied to collect the data for both the farmer estimate and objective measurement at each stage of post-harvest loss operation is derived from the recommended approaches stated on the post-harvest loss measurement guideline prepared by FAO in 2018. A total of 20 HHs are selected in each EA having the required crop types. All 20 households have been included in the inquiry-based data collection and 10 out of the 20 households have been selected to conduct the objective measurement in addition to the farmer estimate.

Notable challenges were encountered in the conduct of this survey. Timing challenges were mainly during the off-farm survey, as some actors like unions and cooperative unions were hard to reach because the survey was conducted during or near the harvesting time. There were also challenges with accessing some important survey equipment’s and infrastructure such as a laboratory. This is because it is preferable to use a laboratory-based approach to compute the storage loss, and only when this is not available is the count and weigh method used, as articulated in the post-harvest loss guideline.

The Commission:

- **Acknowledges** the progress made in the availability of SDG indicators under FAO custodianship and FAO’s efforts in building the capacity of countries to report on these indicators, particularly the ones with low reporting rates.
- **Takes note** of the methodologies developed by FAO to disaggregate the SDG indicators by relevant dimensions and assess progress at the indicator, target, and goal level.
- **Recommends** FAO to continue supporting countries in SDG monitoring.
- **Invites** countries to communicate their capacity development needs on SDG monitoring by contacting the FAO Chief Statistician mailbox ([chief-statistician@fao.org](mailto:chief-statistician@fao.org)) or the FAO representation in their respective country.
- **Encourages** countries to increase or sustain their efforts in producing the global SDG indicators.

5.13. **Agenda item 13: Overview of progress and activities to improve fishery and aquaculture data with focus on SDG 14: life under water**

5.13.1. **SDG 14 indicators: Overview, reporting progress with focus on SDG 14.4.1 and bottlenecks**

Oceans and seas and their resources support human well-being and livelihoods, with up to 40 million full-time equivalent jobs based on the ocean economy (OECD, 2016), half of which is in marine capture fisheries and fish processing. Marine capture fisheries provide a major source of high-quality proteins and essential macro- and micronutrients, with the consumption of fish increasing in all countries (FAO, 2020). Sustainable Development Goal 14, “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”, recognizes the importance of the fishery sector’s contributions and responsibilities towards improved livelihoods and sustainable development. Countries can use Goal 14, its targets and indicators to gain a better picture of their natural capital, the sustainability of their development strategy and the health of their ecosystems.
While countries are gaining experience in collecting data and information for reporting on some of the fisheries-related SDG indicators, they have requested further assistance on the definitions, methodologies and reporting mechanisms to ensure an accurate representation of their fisheries in the global assessments of the SDG targets. In its role as a custodian agency of SDG 14 indicators, FAO has a mandate to support countries to strengthen their capacities to collect, process, analyse and report data, while ensuring that different national data sets are comparable and aggregated at the subregional, regional and global levels to monitor the SDGs.

In this AFCAS forum, we present the progress made thus far on SDG 14 indicators, with a special focus on SDG 14.4.1 – the proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels – and use the opportunity to exchange on good practices and lessons learned among countries in the region, with a view to accelerating the implementation of SDG 14 indicators under FAO custodianship. We focus on reporting difficulties including bottlenecks in communication, existing data and gaps for calculating indicators in terms of human and technical capacity; country experiences in carrying out pilots and lessons learned; and a review of the capacity development activities that have taken place and tools available.

We note a substantial improvement in the reporting rate and quality of the questionnaires received between 2019 and 2022 globally, while noting a decrease in reporting and stable quality for sub-Saharan African questionnaires. An important indicator of progress is to reduce the proportion of unassessed stocks or stocks with unknown status, which arise from challenges that countries face in data and technical capacity, limited funds for human resources, training and technical tools. We note that this number is particularly high in sub-Saharan Africa (73 percent) relative to the global average (40 percent).

Data limitations are challenging and require an important investment from countries. Useful data collection requires a statistically sound sampling design planned with stock assessment in mind. This design requires considerable technical capacity in statistics and fisheries science. The FAO-NFISS team has led several training courses (e.g. CHIMEA) to assist countries in improving their fisheries statistics, with important elements for stock assessment and monitoring. FAO-NFISI has led several training courses in stock monitoring, including hands-on training with the R-shiny stock monitoring tool, available to the global fisheries community via the i-Marine virtual research environment.

Communication bottlenecks are mitigated by updating the SDG focal point contact list at each publication of the UNSD National Statistics Office roster updates; by requesting countries to fill in focal point information in the questionnaire; and via requests to country representatives participating in capacity development exercises to update the focal point lists with their knowledge.

Several promising locally led initiatives of digital fisheries information systems are underway on the African continent, and countries have indicated that sharing the experience of the FAO team in developing regional databases would be highly appreciated. It is consistently recommended that harmonisation be improved, with recommendations for the development of code systems used for the key data collected in the region (i.e. catch, frame surveys, human effort, length and biological data). Analytical tools that could be made available via a digital FIS (e.g. a dashboard of key indicators, or even links to stock assessment models) are also of interest to better explore and exploit the data in the monitoring process. A strong recommendation from countries has been the need for a regional effort...
to collect and manage data, including regional databases and regional efforts to report on and manage shared fisheries resources.

There is great potential for digital technologies to enable transparent and equitable information systems that pave the way for responsible governance of tenure (SSF Guidelines 10.6). These systems should include gender-disaggregated “bioecological, social, cultural and economic data relevant for decision-making on sustainable management of small-scale fisheries” (SSF Guidelines 11.1). Digitizing fisheries data collection has the potential to increase self-reporting of fishing activities to demonstrate compliance with existing regulations.

5.13.2. Shared experiences: Testimony from invited African focal points: South Africa

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) of South Africa, as of 2020, assessed 61 fish stocks (with 39 percent considered to be of concern in terms of stock status), a marked difference to the 43 stocks assessed in 2012 with 54 percent of concern. Fisheries in South Africa generally report catches of target species correctly at the species level, and most bycatch species relatively correctly but chondrichthyanys are often grouped at higher taxonomic levels. Data are collected for all sectors that are awarded rights, including small scale. The South African recreational sector has many participants, but they are restricted to angling, cast nets for bait and collecting along the shore and must have permits to do so, recently available online. Commercial fisheries data exist as far back as the 1800s, but current models generally only use data collected since the 1980s/2000s, which are reported at set level with varying levels of detail. Paper logbooks are still standard and those are variously captured into spreadsheets, unsupported databases and defunct supported databases. A summary table of the data collected for the various sectors is provided. Commercial data are a critical input to most resource assessments. Research surveys are conducted for the larger commercial species/sectors (for example the small pelagic acoustic surveys and demersal trawl surveys). A brief overview of the demersal trawl surveys is given. Production of SDG Indicator 14.4.1 required collating information and understanding of stock assessments from scientific working groups, the agency that completes most stock assessments for the department and the RAM legacy stock assessment database. A summary is presented of the 10 stocks that are assessed and account for 94 percent of South Africa’s annual marine fisheries landings.

The Commission:

- **Acknowledges** the necessity for countries to collect data to enable the sustainable management of their fisheries and aquaculture sector and recommends that FAO provides capacity development through in-person training and the implementation of fisheries information systems, such as Calipso.
- **Recommends** FAO to assist countries in developing their sampling strategies to begin the process of fish stock monitoring and assessment.
- **Takes note** of the low response rate of FAO questionnaires in fisheries statistics and SDG Indicator 14.4.1, and urges countries to make a stronger effort to report.
- **Recommends** FAO to simplify the SDG Indicator 14.4.1 questionnaire and continue its support in capacity development to facilitate reporting by countries.
• **Acknowledges** the importance of building trust with stakeholders and encourages FAO to develop best communication practices to improve the quantity and quality of data collection and reporting of capture fisheries.

5.14. **Agenda item 14: Any other business (venue, date, topics for next AFCAS Session)**

The Commission discussed the date and venue for the Twenty-ninth Session of the AFCAS. Tunisia is a candidate to host the 29th Session of the AFCAS. It was proposed that Tunisia will inform the Commission on the venue.

The Commission also recommended the FAO Regional Office and headquarters, and countries to discuss potential topics and get back to the committee of the 28th Session with the topics to be covered.

5.15. **Agenda item 15: Adoption of the draft report and way forward**

At the end of the Session, the Commission reviewed and approved the recommendations compiled during the 28th Session of the AFCAS discussions. The Commission also discussed what should be done before the 29th Session of the AFCAS in 2025.

**The Commission:**

• **Approves** the proposed date and venue of the 29th Session of the AFCAS (to be in Tunisia in November 2025) and recommends that a programme committee be established to immediately begin to organize the next AFCAS.

5.16. **Agenda item 16: Closing ceremony**

Dr Babagana Ahmadu, FAO Representative for South Africa, gave closing remarks and thanked South Africa for hosting the 28th Session of the AFCAS. He also thanked the drafting committee, the team of interpreters, all the speakers for interesting presentations, officers of the AFCAS (the bureau, chair from South Africa, vice-chair from Tunisia, and the two rapporteurs), delegates from different countries and observers.

The Deputy Director-General for economic development, trade and marketing at the Department of agriculture, land reform and rural development (DALRRD) of South Africa, Ms. Kwena Komape, gave the closing speech to participants of the 28th Session of the AFCAS. Ms. Komape thanked the delegates, FAO representation, partner organizations and the government of South Africa for making the 28th Session of the AFCAS successful. She also thanked the participants for the active participation and lively discussion through the Session and called upon members to own the recommendations of the 28th AFCAS Session and to ensure follow-up and implementation.
6. Annexes

6.1. Annex 1: List of delegates

AFRICAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS (AFCAS)
Twenty-eighth Session
Johannesburg, South Africa: 4–8 December 2023

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Punto Focal de la Revisión Bienal sobre la Declaración de Malabo (PDDAA)
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**Eswatini**  
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Forestry officer  
Ministry of tourism and environmental affairs

Thulani Owen SIBIYA  
Agriculture Economist  
Ministry of Agriculture  
National Early Warning Unit

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**Gabon**  
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Innocent Robert ZULU
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Morocco (participated online)
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**The 28th AFCAS National Organization Committee**

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Mmapeo Ellen MATSEI
Assistant- Head of Substance Sub-Committee

Prince MTSWENI
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Mike RASESEPA
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Sulile MOLUTSOANE
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MONDAY, 4 December 2023

09h00-10h00 **AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING CEREMONY**

1. Opening Remarks by **Mrs Sylvie Dasylva Fall**, Head of the Division of Statistics, Ministry in charge of agriculture, Senegal, AFCAS Chairperson  
2. Address by **Dr José Rosero Moncayo**, Director of FAO Statistics Division, FAO Headquarters, Rome  
3. Address by **Dr Babagana Ahmadu**, FAO Representative for South Africa  
4. Address by **Joe de Beer**, Deputy Director-General Economics Statistics, Statistics South Africa  
5. Opening Speech by **Mooketsa Ramasodi**, Director-General, Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, South Africa

**Group Photo 28th Session of the AFCAS**

10h00-10h30 **Coffee break**

10h30-11h00 **AGENDA ITEM 2: ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

1. Election of Officers  
2. Word by the President of the 28th AFCAS  
3. Adoption of Agenda
AGENDA ITEM 3: FAO'S ACTIVITIES IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS RELEVANT TO THE AFRICA REGION SINCE THE 27TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

11:00-11:30 Overview of FAO’s statistical activities in Africa and achievements of key recommendations of the 27th AFCAS Session (Dramane Bako, FAO-ESS)
11:30-12:00 Response rate to FAO questionnaires and data collection plans for 2024 (Valerie Bizier, FAO-OCS)
12:00-12:30 Discussions

Lunch break

AGENDA ITEM 4: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 50X2030 INITIATIVE IN AFRICA REGION (chair: José Rosero Moncayo, FAO-ESS)

14h00-14h05 Opening and objectives of the session (chair: José Rosero Moncayo, FAO-ESS)
14h05-14h20 Introduction of the 50x2030 Initiative (Abul Kalam Azad, 50x2030 PMT)
14h20-14h45 Implementation of the 50x2030 Initiative in Africa and lessons learned (Audrier Sanou, FAO-ESS)
Partner country experiences in developing national agricultural survey programmes
14h45-15h00 The Enquête Annuelle Agricole in Senegal – achievements and perspectives (Sylvie Da Silva)
15h00-15h15 The Annual Agricultural Sample Survey in United Republic of Tanzania – achievements and perspectives (Titus Mwisomba)
15h15-15h30 National Agriculture Sample Survey in Sierra Leone - achievements and perspectives (Edward Kargbo)
15h30-16h00 Q&A
16h00-16h20 Coffee break
16h20-17h00 Roundtable: discussion and recommendations on key issues for national agricultural surveys and the 50x2030 Initiative

Adjournment of session
18h30 FAO cocktail to welcome participants

TUESDAY, 5 December 2023

9:00-12:00 AGENDA ITEM 5: GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL STATISTICS (PHASE II) AND STATISCAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT (chair: Oliver Chinganya, UNECA)

09:00-09:10 Introduction of GSARS session (chair)
09:10-09:30 Progress on the implementation and future plans of the Global Strategy to improve agricultural and rural statistics (Lassina Pare, FAO-ESS)
09:30-09:50 Country experience – Zambia (Patrick Chuni)
09:50-10:10 Country experience – Guinea (Moussa Doumbouya)
10:10-10:20 Coffee break
10:20-10:40 Country experience – Madagascar (Joceline Solonitomboarinony)
10:20-12:00 Roundtable: discussion and recommendations on key issues for the future GSARS phase

12:00-13:30 Lunch break

13:30-15:30 AGENDA ITEM 6: PROGRESS IN GLOBAL AND REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN AFRICA (chair: Valerie Bizier, FAO-OCS)

13:30-13:45 AfDB Agricultural Statistics Capacity Building Programme – Key Achievements since the 27th AFCAS Session (Vincent Ngendakumana, AfDB)

13:45-14:00 Overview of a diverse and very useful collaboration with FAO (Madior Fall, AFRISTAT)

14:00-14:15 The African Centre for Statistics initiatives: Supporting member States in navigating the dynamic data ecosystem and landscape (Oliver Chinganya, UNECA)

14:15-14:30 Using data for agricultural and rural policies and decision-making process: what needs to be done? (Aliou Mballo, IFAD)

14:30-14:45 CAADP biennial review process and progress (Godfrey Bahiigwa, AUC)

14:45-15:30 Discussions

15:30-15:45 Coffee break

15:45-17:00 AGENDA ITEM 7: AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INDICATORS (chair: José Rosero Moncayo, FAO-ESS)

15:45-15:55 Introduction (José Rosero Moncayo, FAO-ESS)

15:55-16:15 Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators: Institutionalization and new national data collection approach (Hernán Daniel Muñoz, FAO-ESS)

16:15-16:30 Shared experiences: Lessons learned from intergovernmental dialogues (David Babalola, NBS-Nigeria)

16:30-17:00 Roundtable: discussions and recommendations on key issues for ASTI’s institutionalisation roadmap

17:00 Adjournment of session
WEDNESDAY, 6 December 2023

9h00-12h00 **AGENDA ITEM 8: PROGRESS IN THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF THE CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE WCA 2020 AND VISION ON THE WCA 2030**

9h00-9h20 Progress in the implementation of the WCA 2020 in Africa and the world
(Eloi Ouedraogo, FAO-ESS)
Country experiences in the preparation and implementation of censuses of agriculture in the WCA 2020 round
9h20-9h35 Country experience in the WCA 2020 round – Lesotho (Nthati Tsoaeli)
9h35-9h50 Country experience in the WCA 2020 round – Angola (Carlos Pedro)
9h50-10h05 Country experience in the WCA 2020 round – South Africa (Tshepo Pekane)
10h05-10h30 Discussion
10h30-10h40 Coffee break
10h40-11h10 Lessons from the WCA 2020, emerging issues and proposed outline and strategy for the WCA 2030 guidelines (Eloi Ouedraogo, FAO-ESS)
11h10-12h00 Roundtable: discussion and recommendations on key issues for the WCA 2030

12h00-13h30 Lunch break

13h30-15h15 **AGENDA ITEM 9: IMPROVING FOOD AND AGRICULTURE DATA DISSEMINATION**

13h30-13h45 Modernizing data dissemination model in the context of agricultural survey programmes (Amsata Niang, FAO-ESS)
13h45-14h00 Country experience – Senegal (Data dissemination model and microdata dissemination) (Sylvie Da Silva)
14h00-14h15 Country experience – United Republic of Tanzania (Titus Mwisomba)
14h15-14h30 FAO Food and Agriculture Microdata Catalogue: Unlocking the power of microdata (Clara Aida Khalil, FAO-OCS)
14h30-14h45 New FAO Data dissemination platform – Beta Version: the FAODATA Explorer (Valerie Bizier, FAO-OCS)
14h45-15h15 Discussions

15h15-15h30 Coffee break

15h30-17h00 **AGENDA ITEM 10: NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE USE OF ALTERNATIVE DATA SOURCES FOR AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS**

15h30-15h45 Earth Observations for official Statistics in Africa: experience from pilot projects in countries in Africa (Lorenzo De Simone, FAO-OCS)
15h45-16h00 Development of the Farmer Registry in Zimbabwe and the role of geospatial data and technology (Thomas Nyikayaramba)
16h00-16h15 Innovate Africa: The African Development Bank, Data Innovation Lab’s Approach and Actions (Rafik Mahjoubi, African Development Bank)
16h15-16h30 Data-Driven Strategies: FAO’s Data Lab Tools for Filling Data Gaps and Obtaining Timely Insights (Christian Mongeau, FAO-ESS)
16h30-16h45 Development of the Farmer Registry in South Africa (Ellen Matsei)
16h45-17h00 Discussions
17h00  Adjournment of session

THURSDAY, 7 December 2023

8h30-10h00  AGENDA ITEM 11: MEASURING FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION STATISTICS

8h30-8h50  The Food & Diet Domain (Talent Manyani, FAO-ESS)
8h50-9h10  The use of the FIES to inform the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC)/Cadre Harmonisé (CH) assessments (Talent Manyani, FAO-ESS)
9h10-9h30  Experience of the VAC in using the FIES to inform IPC in Malawi (Innocent Zulu, VAC)
9h30-10h00  Discussions

10h00-10h30  SPECIAL EVENT: LAUNCH OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

10h30-10h45  Coffee break

10h45-13h00  AGENDA ITEM 12: PROGRESS AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS ON MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL INDICATORS (SDG INDICATORS)

10h45-11h00  Progress in SDG indicator reporting (Valerie Bizier, FAO-OCS)
11h00-11h15  Innovative Methods for Data Disaggregation of SDG Indicators with use cases from RAF and other regions. (Clara Aida Khalil, FAO-OCS)
11h15-11h30  Enhanced Tools and Methods for SDG Progress Assessment at the National, Regional and Global Level (Clara Aida Khalil, FAO-OCS)
11h30-11h50  Discussions
11h50-12h05  Capacity Development and Technical Assistance Programme on SDG Indicators 2.3. and 2.3.2: The experience of Burkina Faso (Eric Kaboré)
12h05-12h20  Capacity Development and Technical Assistance Programme on SDG Indicator 2.4.1: The experience of Burundi (Ambroise Nikwibitanga)
12h20-12h35  Food Losses Measurement in Ethiopia (Mohammed Jemal)
12h35-12h45  Overview of AQUASTAT and SDG 6.4 indicators (Patricia Moreno)
12h45-13h00  Discussions

13h00-14h30  Lunch break

14h30-16h00  AGENDA ITEM 13: OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS AND ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE FISHERY AND AQUACULTURE DATA WITH FOCUS ON SDG 14: LIFE UNDER WATER

14h30-14h45  Enhance fishery and aquaculture data in support to Blue Transformation: Main challenges and possible enhancements (Stefania Vannuccini, FAO-NFISS)
14h45-15h00  SDG 14 indicators: overview, reporting progress with focus on SDG 14.4.1 and bottlenecks (Anne-Elise Nieblas, FAO-NFISS)
15h00-15h15 Shared experiences – Testimony from invited African focal points: Regional/FCWC (Hafsat Ochuwa Abdullah; Akanbi Bamikole Williams)
15h15-15h30 Shared experiences – Testimony from invited African focal points: South Africa (Tracey Pamela Fairweather)
15h30-16h00 Discussions
16h00 Adjournment of session
18h30 Government dinner to participants

FRIDAY, 8 December 2023

9h00-9h30 AGENDA ITEM 14: ANY OTHER BUSINESS (VENUE, DATE, TOPICS FOR NEXT AFCAS SESSION)
9h30-11h00 AGENDA ITEM 15: ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT REPORT
11h00-11h15 Coffee break
11h15-12h30 AGENDA ITEM 16: CLOSING CEREMONY
12h30-14h00 Lunch break
AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING CEREMONY

1. Opening Remarks by Mrs Sylvie Dasylva Fall, Head of the Division of Statistics, Ministry in charge of agriculture, Senegal, AFCAS Chairperson

2. Address by Dr José Rosero Moncayo, Director of FAO Statistics Division, FAO Headquarters, Rome

3. Address by Dr Babagana Ahmadu, FAO Representative for South Africa

4. Address by Joe de Beer, Deputy Director-General Economics Statistics, Statistics South Africa

5. Opening Speech by Mooketsa Ramasodi, Director-General, Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, South Africa
AGENDA ITEM 2: ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

- Election of Officers
- Word by the President of the 28th AFCAS
- Adoption of Agenda

TECHNICAL SESSIONS

AGENDA ITEM 3: FAO'S ACTIVITIES IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS RELEVANT TO AFRICA REGION SINCE THE LAST 27TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

- Overview of FAO’s statistical activities in Africa and achievements of key recommendations of the 27th AFCAS Session
- Response rate to FAO questionnaires and data collection plans for 2024

AGENDA ITEM 4: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 50X2030 INITIATIVE IN AFRICA REGION

- Introduction of the 50x2030 Initiative
- Implementation of the 50x2030 Initiative in Africa and lessons learned.
- Partner country experiences in developing national agricultural survey programmes
  - The Enquête Annuelle Agricole in Senegal – achievements and perspectives
  - The Annual Agricultural Sample Survey in United Republic of Tanzania – achievements and perspectives
  - National Agriculture Sample Survey in Sierra Leone - achievements and perspectives
- Roundtable: discussion and recommendations on key issues for national agricultural surveys and the 50x2030 Initiative

AGENDA ITEM 5: GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL STATISTICS (PHASE II) AND STATISTICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

- Progress on the implementation and future plans of the Global Strategy to improve agricultural and rural statistics
- Country experience - Zambia
- Country experience – Guinea
- Country experience – Madagascar
- Roundtable: discussion and recommendations on key issues for the future GSARS phase

AGENDA ITEM 6: PROGRESS IN GLOBAL AND REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT INITITATIVES IN AFRICA
• AfDB Agricultural Statistics Capacity Building Programme – Key Achievements since the 27th AFCAS (AfDB)
• Overview of a diverse and very useful collaboration with FAO (AFRISTAT)
• The African Centre for Statistics initiatives: Supporting member States in navigating the dynamic data ecosystem and landscape (UNECA)
• Using data for agricultural and rural policies and decision-making process: what needs to be done? (IFAD)
• CAADP biennial review process and progress (AUC).

AGENDA ITEM 7: SPECIAL SESSION ON THE AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INDICATORS (ASTI) PROGRAMME

• Introduction
• Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators: Institutionalization and new national data collection approach
• Lessons from intergovernmental dialogues: Towards a roadmap for the institutionalisation of ASTI

AGENDA ITEM 8: PROGRESS IN THE WORLD PROGRAMME FOR THE CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE (WCA) 2020 AND VISION ON THE WCA 2030

• Progress in the implementation of the WCA 2020 in Africa and the world
• Country experiences in the preparation and implementation of censuses of agriculture in the WCA 2020 round
  o Country experience in the WCA 2020 round - Lesotho
  o Country experience in the WCA 2020 round - Angola
  o Country experience in the WCA 2020 round – South Africa
• Lessons from the WCA 2020, emerging issues and proposed outline and strategy for the WCA 2030 guidelines
• Roundtable: discussion and recommendations on key issues for the WCA 2030

AGENDA ITEM 9: IMPROVING FOOD AND AGRICULTURE DATA DISSEMINATION

• Modernizing data dissemination model in the context of agricultural survey programmes
• Country experience – Senegal (Data dissemination model and microdata dissemination)
• Country experience – United Republic of Tanzania
• FAO Food and Agriculture Microdata Catalogue: Unlocking the power of microdata
• New FAO Data dissemination platform – Beta Version: the FAODATA Explorer

AGENDA ITEM 10: NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE USE OF ALTERNATIVE DATA SOURCES FOR AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

70
• Earth Observations for official Statistics in Africa: experience from pilot projects in countries in Africa.
• Development of the Farmer Registry in Zimbabwe and the role of geospatial data and technology.
• Innovate Africa: The African Development Bank, Data Innovation Lab’s Approach and Actions.
• Data-Driven Strategies: FAO’s Data Lab Tools for Filling Data Gaps and Obtaining Timely Insights.
• Development of the Farmer Registry in South Africa

AGENDA ITEM 11: MEASURING FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION STATISTICS

• The Food & Diet Domain
• The use of the FIES to inform the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC)/Cadre Harmonisé (CH) assessments
• Experience of the VAC in using the FIES to inform IPC in Malawi

SPECIAL EVENT: LAUNCH OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

AGENDA ITEM 12: PROGRESS AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS ON MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL INDICATORS (SDG INDICATORS)

• Progress in SDG indicators reporting
• Innovative Methods for Data Disaggregation of SDG Indicators with use cases from RAF and other regions.
• Enhanced Tools and Methods for SDG Progress Assessment at the National, Regional and Global Level.
• Capacity Development and Technical Assistance Programme on SDG Indicators 2.3.1 and 2.3.2: The experience of Burkina Faso.
• Capacity Development and Technical Assistance Programme on SDG Indicator 2.4.1: The experience of Burundi
• Food Losses Measurement in Ethiopia
• Overview of AQUASTAT and SDG 6.4 indicators

AGENDA ITEM 13: OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS AND ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE FISHERY AND AQUACULTURE DATA WITH FOCUS ON SDG 14: LIFE UNDER WATER

• Enhance fishery and aquaculture data in support to Blue Transformation: Main challenges and possible enhancements
• SDG 14 indicators: overview, reporting progress with focus on SDG 14.4.1 and bottlenecks
• Shared experiences: Testimony from invited African focal points: Regional/FCWC
• Shared experiences: Testimony from invited African focal points: South Africa
CLOSING SESSION

AGENDA ITEM 14: ANY OTHER BUSINESS (VENUE, DATE, TOPICS FOR NEXT AFCAS SESSION)

AGENDA ITEM 15: ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT REPORT

AGENDA ITEM 16: CLOSING CEREMONY
Opening remarks

Dr José Rosero Moncayo,
Director, Statistics Division, FAO

Mr Dipepeneneng Serage, Deputy Director-General department of agriculture, land reform and rural development of South Africa,
Ms Kvena Komape, Deputy Director-General department of agriculture, land reform and rural development of South Africa,
Mr Joe de Beer, Deputy Director-General of Statistics South Africa,
Ms Silvi da Silva, Chair of the AFCAS,
Mr Ahmadu Babagana, FAO Representative for South Africa,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning!

It is a great pleasure for me to warmly welcome you all to this 28th Session of the African Commission for Agriculture Statistics. Two years ago, Senegal hosted a very interesting and relevant AFCAS in virtual mode. Now, we are in South Africa and I have to say that it feels good to meet old friends in person and to get to know new ones.
It is important that we stress that AFCAS is a statutory body of FAO and its overall objective is to review the state of food and agricultural statistics in Africa and advise and support Member Nations on the development of their agricultural statistical systems.

To begin with, let me express my sincere gratitude to the Government of South Africa, our host, to its Ministry of Agriculture and to Statistics South Africa. My thanks to you for the effective collaboration with FAO in the organization of this important African statistical event. I also take this opportunity to thank FAO colleagues, who have worked very hard on the organization and logistical arrangements of the Commission.

Dear friends, the importance of agricultural statistics has been increasingly recognized worldwide. There is a growing awareness among the international community of the need to improve agriculture statistics, not only to better manage the agriculture sector but, also to support the overall economic and social development of a country. Investment decisions to foster agricultural productivity as well as policies to reduce food insecurity and malnutrition need to be based on sound statistical information and the impact of development programmes can only be measured and evaluated effectively with good quality statistics.

Despite all of this, we observe in the region important data gaps. As it will be presented in the meeting, several statistical domains do not reach a 20 percent response rate to FAO questionnaires, particularly in the case of pesticide and fertilizer use and on statistics of water and forestry. Even in well positioned domain such as agricultural production, less than 50 percent of African countries report any data. Much more efforts are needed to improve this situation.

As part of the programme of this session, we will touch upon several topics that are relevant to the development of agriculture and rural statistics in the region. To begin with, we will have two sessions that will report on two of the largest initiatives that FAO Statistics is implementing in the region to strengthen the statistical capacity of African countries to produce, analyse, disseminate, and use data for policies.

One of these initiatives is the Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. This sentinel programme of FAO exists since 2012 and is currently in its second phase, phase that is very much linked with the plan to support the strategy on harmonization of statistics in Africa. Since 2021, this Initiative has provided assistance for preparation of SPARS (strategic plans for the development of agricultural statistics) in seven African countries. In addition, in-country technical assistance on the use of cost-effective methods, master sampling frames, data processing and analysis, data dissemination, compilation of national, SDG and CAADP indicators and Food Balance Sheets has been provided by FAO to 25 African beneficiary countries, according to their priority needs. Furthermore, as part of the initiative, the UN Economic Commission for Africa has granted 50 scholarships to young statisticians and PARIS21, another of the partners of this initiative, has organised successful trainings for top- and middle-level managers on HR policies and on strengthening leadership and communication skills in statistical agencies of the region.

Another initiative that will be presented and discussed in this meeting is the 50x2030 Initiative which is the biggest and most ambitious programme the world has ever seen to support countries to produce
more and better agricultural data through the implementation of agricultural survey programmes. This programme is implemented in partnership with the World Bank and IFAD. In the last 3 years, we have achieved significant outputs. Currently, the initiative has engaged with 23 African countries (among them: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo and Uganda) supporting them on the design and implementation of integrated agriculture surveys. We will hear and discuss about the progress achieved with this initiative and we will also present its effort to promote the use of the data by institutions that design and implement policies.

Dear friends, agricultural censuses and surveys are the backbone of an agricultural statistical system, one that aims to produce more and better data in a way of filling the data gaps that exist in the sector. On this regard, this session will present a report on the progress of the World Programme of the Census of Agriculture 2020 and in particular, we will highlight the efforts that FAO is making to prepare the guidelines for the next census round, the WCA 2030 that will cover the period 2026–2035. The preparation of the guidelines is based on a review of countries’ experiences under the WCA 2020 round, and on a wide consultations of FAO technical divisions and member countries. The reviews and consultations allow the recognition of new and emerging trends and requirements and during this session and we would like to hear from you points or elements that you believe need to be revised or included in the new guidelines.

As it can be expected, the session also includes in its agenda a topic on the progress on the measurement of the 21 Sustainable Development Goals indicators for which FAO has custodianship. Very recently, in the context of the SDG summit, the Secretary-General of the United Nations sounded the alarm on the SDGs, declaring them to be in “deep trouble” and calling for a drastic “rescue plan”. A recent report of FAO shows the situation of reporting of on food and agriculture-related SDG indicators where it is clear that more is needed to fill data gaps in indicators such as labour productivity and income of small-scale food producers, sustainable agriculture, land ownership by women, fish stock sustainability, or sustainable forest management. For this reason, it is important that we discuss on this Commission about how we can further support you to collect and disseminate these indicators.

Speaking about filling data gaps, the agenda of this meeting includes a discussion on new developments in the use of alternative data sources for agricultural statistics. While we need to strengthen the traditional mechanisms to collect and process data, we also need to take advantage of what the so-called data revolution has to offer. Advances on IT technologies as well as in data science methods, allow us to manage and process data in a speed that was beyond the imagination just a decade ago. On this, geospatial data offers many advantages to build crops mask maps and derive statistics on area harvested and agricultural production. At the same time, being agriculture a sector that is vulnerable to risks and uncertainties, the use of big data and machine learning for the design of early warning mechanism is another natural area in which statisticians can dedicate some efforts. During this session we will hear from different efforts and experiences on this and discuss a potential regional agenda on this area of work.
Another important topic that we will address in this meeting relates to the subsector of fisheries and aquaculture. For many African countries, fisheries and aquaculture constitute a dynamic and relevant sector in their economies, with strategic importance to secure food security and nutrition to the population. In this session of the AFCAS we will provide, for discussion, an overview of progress on fishery statistics with focus on the SDG Indicator 14.4.1 of measuring fish stocks and will present an overview of activities that FAO is putting in place to improve the data on this subsector.

Dear friends, the agricultural sector needs investments in science and technology. It is through the advancement of science and the application of new or adapted technologies that productivity can be enhanced in a way that is sustainable with the environment. However, the area of data on science and technology in agriculture is not well developed. There is a serious scarcity of data, which is situation that limits our capacity to inform evidence-based policy and decisions. For this reason, for the first time, AFCAS will discuss this topic. A programme on agricultural science and technology indicators will be presented based on the data that can be provided by national research agencies under the guidance of the national statistical offices as the coordinator of the national statistical system.

Finally, this session will address the topic of measuring food security and nutrition. The last SOFI report published in July this year pointed out that 282 million people suffer from hunger in Africa, equivalent to 19.7 percent of its population. Considering this, the measurement of food security and nutrition in the region is of vital interest. It is important to sharpen our understanding of what type of indicators can help us to monitor the SDG of Zero Hunger and which type of assessment are used for estimating populations in situations of crisis of emergency that need of humanitarian assistance. This session of the AFCAS will touch on this and will also present efforts that FAO is doing to publish in FAOSTAT a domain on food and diets, with the intention to share statistics on all forms of dietary related data. Furthermore, AFCAS will also witness the launch of the African Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition, a publication that FAO does together with the African Union Commission, UNECA and WFP to inform country members on the latest trends in undernourishment, food insecurity and malnutrition.

In this way, we have an intense agenda to cover which has been prepared in a way to ensure discussion through the promotion of the active participation of the different delegations that are present here. In essence, we want to hear your feedback on the different topics that we will discuss and how FAO can better assist you in strengthening your own agricultural statistical systems. FAO statistics is at the service of its country members, therefore, let us know how we can tailor our programme of work to be more aligned to your needs and requirements.

I would like to finish thanking the large number of delegations that have come as well as representatives of regional organizations for your time and interest to collaborate in activities of common interest. FAO is determined to keep this Commission as the most relevant forum in the region to discuss agriculture statistics.

I look forward for the discussions and personally to learn from all of you. It feels great to be back in South Africa, cradle of humankind and country of the great Mandela.

Thank you very much for your attention.
Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Republic of South Africa
Director of FAO Statistics Division, FAO Headquarters, Rome,
Deputy Director-General Economics Statistics, South Africa
President of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics,
Distinguished representatives of the diplomatic community, development partners, international and regional organisations,
Colleagues from FAO,
Distinguished delegates and guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
It is my honour to address you on behalf of FAO’s Director-General, Dr Qu Dongyu, at this Twenty-eighth Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS).
Allow me first of all to express my sincere thanks to the Government of the Republic of South Africa for hosting with FAO this 28th Session of the AFCAS.
I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the South African authorities for facilitating the good organization of this Session. There is no doubt that this will help ensure the success of this important event.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all participants from Member States and partner organizations. The interest in AFCAS by so many members and partners shows the value of this meeting. AFCAS has been held every two years since 1962 and has remained since then an important forum to share information on the state of food and agricultural statistics, and to monitor the development of agricultural statistics on the African continent.

As you may know, accurate statistics lie at the heart of FAO’s Constitution, with Article 1 stating that "the Organization shall collect, analyse, interpret and disseminate information relating to nutrition, food and agriculture".

The production of quality data and information at the global level depends primarily on the capacity of countries to produce them. For that reason, this Commission was established to serve as one of the main avenues for measuring progress made by FAO and African countries in the development and dissemination of agricultural statistics and systems.

AFCAS aligns with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031, emphasizing the organization’s commitment to supporting member countries with the tools and knowledge necessary to build resilient agricultural statistical systems towards a broader aim of transforming agrifood systems to be more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Agriculture, being the backbone of our society, requires meticulous planning, informed decision-making, and sustainable practices to ensure food security and economic prosperity. Statistics, as the bedrock of evidence-based insights, contributes significantly to achieving these objectives.

Statistics serves as a powerful tool for assessing crop yields, predicting market trends, and formulating effective policies. Accurate statistical data enables farmers, policymakers, and stakeholders to make informed choices regarding crop selection, resource allocation, and investment strategies. This, in turn, enhances productivity and efficiency in the agricultural value chain. Moreover, statistics facilitates risk management by providing a comprehensive understanding of environmental factors, climate variations, and disease patterns that may impact crop production. This knowledge allows farmers to implement adaptive strategies, ensuring resilience in the face of uncertainties.

This Session of the Commission provides an opportunity to review and exchange on a number of issues, including:

- the progress in global and regional agricultural statistics capacity development initiatives in Africa
- the progress and new developments on measuring sustainable development goal indicators.
- the progress and results of the implementation of the 50x2030 Initiative in the Africa region.
- the progress in the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020 and vision on 2030
- the progress in the implementation of the phase II of the Global Strategy for improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics and statistical capacity development.
- and the measurement of food security and nutrition statistics

Also on the agenda is the launch of the Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023, a joint publication by FAO, the African Union, UNECA and the World Food Programme.

I wish participants at this 28th Session of the AFCAS a fruitful meeting and that the deliberations can contribute significantly to the development of agricultural statistics to support transformation to a more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agrifood systems in Africa for better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life for all, leaving no one behind.

Thank you.
AFRICAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Twenty-eighth Session

Johannesburg, South Africa: 4 – 8 December 2023

Address by:
Mooketsa Ramasodi
Director-General, Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, South Africa

SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE MINISTER AT THE
African Commission of Agricultural Statistics
(AFCAS)
VENUE: BIRCHWOOD HOTEL

Deputy Director-General, Statistics South Africa
FAO Representative for South Africa
Director of FAO Statistics Division, FAO Headquarters, Rome
AFCAS Chairperson
Distinguished delegates from FAO member states
Ladies and gentlemen

The South African Government is honoured to host the 28th Session of the AFCAS under the theme ‘Leveraging data and statistics for agrifood systems and transformation in Africa’.

We pay homage to Senegal hosting a virtual session of the 27th AFCAS in Dakar in November 2021.
This 28th AFCAS will discuss key areas related to statistical capacity development programmes in Africa, the monitoring and compilation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators, the implementation of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture by 2030 and the use of alternative administrative and Big Data sources for agricultural statistics as well as forestry, water use, fisheries and aquaculture statistics.

I wish the delegates fruitful discussions and interactions this week which will produce relevant recommendations for the promotion of best practices and innovative methods in the production of agricultural statistics in the country.

Ladies and gentlemen, as the Minister of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development I am always fascinated by how agricultural statistics give perspectives and details of the sector performance.

**Role of agriculture**

Although primary agriculture contributes only 3 percent to South Africa’s economy, it plays an important role in the creation of jobs (contributing 6 percent to total employment), reducing inequality, eradicating poverty, ensuring food security, and increasing the country’s exports. Furthermore, there is no doubt that primary agriculture has an impact in other sectors such as agro-processing (manufacturing), transport, wholesale, and retail sectors.

**Role of agricultural statistics**

The Departmental of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development values the significant role of quality statistics in informing decisions on planning and policy formulation and monitoring thereof. To this end, the department has a dedicated unit producing monthly forecasts and statistics on major crops production, quarterly agriculture contribution to the economy and annual trends in agriculture.

We also appreciate the role Statistics South Africa plays in coordinating and also producing agricultural statistics. The collaboration between Stats SA and the department is amply demonstrated by co-hosting the 28th AFCAS,

It’s important to note that our country has produced regular agricultural statistics since the early 1900s.

**FAO’s Global Strategy**

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, the country welcomes and values the framework as outlined in FAO’s Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. This Global Strategy has an important role to play in African countries developing durable agricultural statistics systems which provides statistics to grow and develop the agriculture sector in the 21st century. To this end, the country took its’ first step in the development of a register of smallholder farmers to supplement the existing list of enterprises registered for tax.

In conclusion, I am hopeful that the 28th AFCAS will achieve its overall goals of:

- Reviewing and discussing FAO statistical activities in Africa region since the last Session virtually hosted in Dakar, Senegal in November 2021;
- Studying the status of food and agricultural statistical systems in the region; and
- Advising member countries on recent developments, innovation and harmonization of agricultural statistics in the general context of FAO’s statistical activities.

Once again, you are welcome to our country. I hope you enjoy your stay, the scenery and we can all have beneficial and fruitful engagements as African countries in this conference. Again, you are welcome.
