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STATUS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AFRICA ACTION PLAN TO IMPROVE STATISTICS FOR FOOD SECURITY, SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Table of Contents

	Pages
I. Introduction	2
II. Global and regional plans.....	3
III. Technical content of the Africa Regional Action Plans	3
IV. Governance structure.....	4
V. Resource mobilisation	5
VI. Implementation strategy	6
VII. Status of implementation in Africa region	6
VIII. Next steps	7

I. Introduction

1. The purpose of the report is to present to the 27th Regional Conference for Africa the progress made in preparing the Africa Action Plan to implement the Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics and the key proposals contained in this Action Plan, including the governance and funding mechanisms. The report describes also the activities accomplished to date for implementing the Global Strategy, such as resource mobilization initiatives and partnership arrangements established with regional organisations to develop Regional Plans as well as work undertaken to develop methodological guidelines and to assist countries.

2. The United Nations Statistical Commission initiated the process of developing a Global Strategy during its fortieth session, in February 2009, at which a consensus was reached on the need to address the current unsatisfactory situation of agricultural statistics and to launch a renewed initiative of statistical capacity building in order to strengthen national agricultural statistical systems. The Statistical Commission established a "Friends of the Chair Group on Agricultural Statistics" to steer the development of the Global Strategy. The process involved extensive consultations with all key stakeholders, including national statistical offices and ministries of agriculture, international meetings and sessions of the governing bodies of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). To reach out to a broader audience, an online forum was also organized through a Wikipedia web page.

3. The Global Strategy was finalized by the World Bank and FAO. The purpose of the Global Strategy is to provide a framework to enable national and international statistical systems to produce the basic information needed to guide decision-making in the twenty-first century. The Global Strategy is based on three pillars:

- a) Establishing a minimum set of core data that countries will disseminate on a regular basis to meet current and emerging statistics demands;
- b) Integrating agriculture into national statistical systems in order to meet the expectations of policymakers and other data users that statistical information be linked across the economic, social and environmental domains;
- c) Fostering the sustainability of agricultural statistical systems through better governance and statistical capacity-building.

4. The Global Strategy defines a comprehensive conceptual framework for the production and use of agricultural and rural statistics, and for the information requirements of various data users. The conceptual framework, the assessment of national agricultural statistical systems and the choice of a core set of indicators all point to the need to integrate agriculture into national statistical systems.

5. The Global Strategy identifies the main tools upon which this integration will be achieved. The development of a master sample frame for agriculture will be the foundation for all data collection based on sample surveys or censuses. An integrated survey framework will be established to provide comparable data over time and across countries, using an annual survey of selected core items and periodic data collection from a set of rotating panels covering economic and environmental issues. The integration across data domains will also be ensured by an integrated data management system for all official statistics related to agriculture.

6. The United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), at its 41st session in February 2010, endorsed the technical content and strategic directions proposed by the Global Strategy. The Commission at the same time urged the development of an implementation plan including a country statistic assessment, comprehensive technical assistance, training program and a well-targeted research agenda to support the implementation of the Global Strategy.

7. The Commission recognized that the implementation of the Global Strategy would require the mobilization of resources and technical support from countries, the donor community, and international organizations providing technical assistance.

8. Following the recommendations of the Commission, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank, in close consultation with the Friends of the Chair on Agriculture Statistics and a large number of national and international stakeholders, have developed a Global Action Plan. The Global Action Plan is a long-term programme of capacity development to rebuild a sustainable national agricultural statistical system. It follows a phased approach with a first phase of five years starting in 2011 within a longer term perspective (up to 15 years).

9. The Action Plan is expected to lead to a substantial increase in:

- the number of countries with the capability to produce, analyse and disseminate the minimum set of core data proposed in the Global Strategy, in order to meet the current and emerging statistical demands of national and international stakeholders;
- the number of countries with a sustainable agricultural statistics system through an effective coordination and the integration of agriculture in the national statistical systems;
- the number of people working on agricultural statistics that have appropriate skills resulting from training and technical assistance.

10. The global statistical stakeholders agreed with the main proposals included in the Plan and some recommendations are raised to consider the specificities and the needs of the different regions, and urged FAO to establish as soon as possible the funding tools notably the Global Trust Fund and the global governance to start the implementation of the Global Strategy.

II. Global and regional plans

11. The Action Plan provides the overall framework for implementing the Global Strategy. It gives a broad description of activities that should be undertaken at Global, Regional and Country level in a consistent and complementary manner¹. The Action Plan contains a description of the technical components on which the capacity development programme is based, of the governance arrangements that will steer and monitor the implementation of the Plan, of the implementation strategy for the selection of the priority countries and of the resource mobilization strategy and funding arrangements to raise the resources necessary for the implementation of the Plan.

12. The Global Action Plan will be complemented by more specific Regional Action Plans which will take into account the institutional set-up, the statistical capacity of different regions and the characteristics of the agricultural sector in the Region. The Regional Plans will be developed by Regional organizations with FAO support. They will build on the guidance contained in the Global Action Plan to elaborate specific technical assistance and training programmes tailored to the regional needs for capacity development. They will also specify the responsibilities of the Institutions that will lead the implementation of the Regional Plan and describe the governance arrangements that will ensure proper decision making and monitoring processes. In accordance with the priorities of the countries in the region, the Regional Plans will be developed in a harmonized way following the technical content and strategic directions recommended by the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

13. The Regional Plan for Africa has been developed by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Africa Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and FAO.

¹ See Table 2.1 of the background document: “Improving Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development. Action Plan to implement the Global Strategy”).
http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/ess/documents/meetings_and_workshops/Resource_Partners_Oct2011/Global_Strategy_Action_Plan_R4_11.doc

III. Technical content of the Africa Regional Action Plans

14. The Action Plans named "Improving statistics for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development – An action plan for Africa 2011-2015" includes a comprehensive framework for assessing technical and operational capacity of the countries, a technical assistance component, a training component and a research component. The components have been integrated in a logical framework to ensure that the activities of research, training and technical assistance are integrated and sequenced in a way that ensures the results of one component feed the others.

15. **Country Assessment.** The country assessment is the basis for the implementation of the action plan. It will also provide a baseline against which progress can be measured. The country assessment will be carried out in two stages and will determine the ability of countries to produce the minimum set of core data and the critical constraints in the statistical system. The first stage will be carried out in all countries using a standardized questionnaire, and will establish baseline information on the national statistical capacity. The results of this first stage assessment will be used as input for a second stage assessment and a formulation of national actions plan proposals.

16. **Technical Assistance Plan.** Technical assistance activities have two sub-components. The first involve the development and documentation of statistical standards and technical guidelines for all aspects of the agricultural statistics system. This will be based on the new methodologies and technologies developed under the research plan. The documentation of technical standards will be the basis for the assistance provided to countries.

17. The second sub-component is the delivery of technical assistance to countries for capacity development.

18. **Training Plan.** Training curricula will be designed and training materials will be prepared, including e-learning courses and theoretical and practical knowledge requirements will be defined for different levels of core skills needed to produce basic official statistics. These activities will be carried out at the regional level.

19. **Research Plan.** The purpose of the Research Plan is to develop and disseminate advanced and cost-effective methodologies, tools and standards which will be adopted by national statistical agencies for efficient production of reliable agricultural statistics. The research activities on priority topics will be conducted by the most qualified regional and international institutions and will be coordinated at global level to ensure synergies and avoid duplication of efforts. The Statistics Division of FAO will also undertake methodological developments in the fields in which it has comparative advantage.

IV. Governance structure

20. The governance structure of the action plan is based on the successful experience of other regional programmes as the International Comparison Programme (ICP). It recommends the establishment of governance arrangements at global, regional and national levels to steer and monitor the implementation of the Plan. In order to avoid as much as possible the creation of new structures, it makes use of existing institutions or coordination mechanisms. The key elements of the proposed governance structure are described below.

Global Level

21. **Global Steering Committee.** The Global Steering Committee (GSC) is the ultimate decision making body.

22. **Global Executive Board.** The Global Executive Board (GEB) is a sub-group of the GSC from which it will receive delegated authority to oversee the execution of the decisions.

23. **Global Office.** The Global Office, based in FAO Statistics Division and led by a global coordinator, will ensure the implementation of the global action plan at the global level and the overall technical coordination of with regions action plans. The Global Office will act as Secretariat of the

GSC providing recommendations on indicative allocation of funds between activities at the global, regional, and country level and between regions. The FAO Statistics Division will task with the normative and technical coordination work, establishing standards, providing centralized technical and practical guidance on cross-regional issues.

Regional Level

24. **Regional Steering Committee.** The Regional Steering Committee (RSC) is the decision making body at regional level and will provide guidance and oversight for the implementation of the regional and country activities defined in the Regional Plan. The RSC will assess country proposals and prioritise the use of the funds among countries.

25. **Regional Executive Board.** The Regional Executive Board (REB) is a sub-group of the RSC from which it will receive delegated authority to oversee the execution of the decisions. The REB will carry out RSC's functions in the interim between RSC's annual meetings. In particular, it will provide policy direction to the implementation of the Regional Plan.

26. **Regional Office.** The Regional Office (RO) will serve as Secretariat of the RSC and will be located in the African Development Bank (AfDB) and tasked with the coordination of the Africa action plan activities. Among the staff of the RO, a Monitoring and Evaluation specialist will task with the M&E activities.

National Level

27. **National Agricultural Statistics Coordination Committee.** The National Agricultural Statistics Coordination Committee (NASCC) is one of the standing agricultural data users-producers committee put in place to enhance the role of data users in national statistical development. The countries where a NASCC does not exist will be encouraged to establish one. This person will deal with the administrative and technical work in the implementation of the action plan in the country. All the subsectors of food, agriculture and environment (crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries, environment, natural resources, food and nutrition security) will be represented. The role of the NASCC is to oversee the development of the agricultural statistic system, including the regional action plan activities, and ensure that it is integrated in the national statistic system.

28. **National Strategy Coordinator.** The National Strategy Coordinator (NSC) is the person dealing with the administrative and technical work in the implementation of the action plan in the country. He will be a senior officer and will be designated by the leading organisation responsible for agricultural statistics in the country. He will work with the NASCC and other national stakeholders and with the Regional Strategy Coordinator to implement the national action plan activities.

29. **Technical Working Group.** The Technical Working Group (TWG) is a team of 5-7 officials from different domains of the agricultural sector (crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries, environment, natural resources, food and nutrition security) assembled to assist the NSC.

V. Resource mobilisation

30. For effective implementation of the Global Strategy and its action plans, a comprehensive and flexible resources mobilisation strategy has been developed and is being implemented. This includes an intensive communication campaign advocating for the implementation of the Global Strategy and the importance of sound national agricultural statistics systems for effective food, agricultural and rural development policies. The communication campaign involved several high level visits to key donor agencies, presentation of the Global Strategy at various forums, preparation and wide dissemination of leaflets and creation of a dedicated webpage.

31. The communication campaign culminated with a successful Resource Partners meeting organised on 28 October 2011 at the FAO Headquarters in Rome. During this meeting several Partners clearly indicated their intention to support the implementation of the strategy. In particular, the financial support is expected from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, DfID, Italian Cooperation,

African Development Bank and Asian Development Bank that will cover about 50% of the total budget for the five years of the Global Plan. A Global Trust Fund hosted by FAO has been created and initial funds are being received.

32. A Regional Trust Fund will be created by African Development Bank for Africa Action plan. The plan will be financed through the Statistical Capacity Building Programme already approved by the AfDB. This effort will continue in order to secure the remaining funds needed for full implementation of the strategy.

33. In addition to financial support through contribution to the Global and Regional Trust Funds, several other modalities can be used to support the implementation of the Global Strategy. The following modalities are foreseen:

- Bilateral agreements between resource partners and countries;
- Bilateral agreement between resource partners and FAO;
- South-South cooperation agreements;
- Regular programme resources of FAO.

34. All these modalities of support to countries should contribute to expanding country coverage of the Global Strategy focusing interventions on the key elements agreed and ensuring complementarities between actions from various Partners.

VI. Implementation strategy

35. A phased and modular approach has been adopted for the implementation of the Global Strategy. The Global Action Plan will target 90 countries worldwide (40 countries in Africa and 50 countries in other regions) to be covered during the first phase of five years (2011-2015). The activities will first start in a small number of pilot countries (about 20 countries) and will be gradually expanded to more countries as lessons are learned and more resources are made available. However, global public goods developed by the Plan, such as methodological guidelines, will be made available to all countries by developing a knowledge-based dissemination platform. For countries which have already reached an adequate level of statistical capacity, this may be enough to meet the three pillars of the Global Strategy.

36. In order to ensure that the implementation of the plan is driven by countries and addresses identified national gaps, country assessments will be conducted in two stages and the outcome will be country proposals to be submitted for funding, which are tailored to address priority needs at country level, agreed upon by all stakeholders and take into account on-going assistance being received by the country.

37. The regional office will provide technical support to countries for conducting in-depth assessment, identification of their priority assistance needs and preparation of country proposals for funding.

38. In each region, the selection of priority countries for implementation of the Action Plan will be under the responsibility of RSC.

39. The implementation will therefore strive to balance the need of achieving rapid results in the production and dissemination of core agricultural data of good quality with the need to develop sustained capacity over a longer period of time within a structured programme.

VII. Status of implementation in Africa region

40. Many activities in line with the Global Strategy are already being carried out at global, regional and country levels.

41. For Africa region, AfDB and UNECA are responsible for regional technical assistance and training activities respectively, while FAO is responsible for adapting the global research agenda to

the specific needs of the Africa region. The governance structure is being setting up with the creation of the Regional Office by AfDB with the recruitment of a Regional Coordinator. The Regional steering Committee (RSC) includes both users and producers of statistics, under the high-level stewardship of the Chief Economist/Vice-President of AfDB as chairperson has also been established and held its first meeting. The Regional Executive Board has been constituted and its members have been identified.

42. A Standard questionnaire and guidelines for the first stage country assessment have been developed at global level in consultation with key national and international institutions. The guidelines for analysing the questionnaires, as well as the guidelines for in-depth country assessment are being developed. The country assessments are already underway in Africa.

43. A fund has made available from BMGF to support the first and second stages of national statistical system assessment in 7 African countries and to formulate national action plans. Funds are expected from others resources Partners for the same exercise in other countries.

44. The governance structure of the Africa action plan will be set up in all African countries (National strategy coordinator and Technical Working Group) to coordinate, oversee and monitor the implementation of the action plan at national level.

VIII. Next steps

45. The governance structures are being established at the global and regional levels (GSC, Global Offices, the RSCs and the Regional Offices for Africa) and should become fully functional at the beginning of 2012.

46. After the setting-up of the Trust Funds (the Global one and the Regional one) and the pursuing of the implementation of the communication strategy, it is expected that more financial and technical partners will be involved in supporting the regional action Plan. The operational effectiveness of the governance structures will accelerate the implementation of activities at national, regional and global levels. National governance structures have to be operational with the appropriate person designated as National Strategy Coordinator.

47. Country Assessment work is on-going in Africa under the leadership of Regional Organisations (AfDB and FAO Regional Office for Africa). This work will lead to the selection of a first group of African countries in which implementation of the Strategy will start in 2012. The number of countries will be gradually increased as more funding or technical support will be made available.