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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

Thirty-second Session

Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, 11-14 April 2022

Summary Report of recommendations of FAO Regional Statutory Bodies (statistics, fisheries)

Executive Summary

FAO's regional programme includes four thematic regional Statutory Committees and Commissions. These provide a platform for countries across the Africa region to engage in dialogue and deliberate the collective direction of the thematic area of work of the committees and/or commissions. The committees/commissions further synthesize the discussions and identify priorities and recommendations aimed at streamlining national and/or regional agendas in the concerned thematic areas.

This document provides an overview of the topics discussed and relevant recommendations for the attention of the Regional Conference for Africa arising from the following Bodies' sessions held in 2021:

- The 27th Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS)
- The 19th Ordinary Session of the Committee for Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Africa (CIFAA)

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A. The 27th Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS)

1. The 27th Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS) was held in virtual mode, from 15 to 18 November 2021, with Senegal as the host country. Delegates from AFCAS member countries as well as national, regional and international institutions participated. To assist Member States in improving data collection, processing, analysis, dissemination, comparability and development of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators, the Session focused on six key items: (i) FAO's activities in food and agricultural statistics relevant to Africa region since the last 26th Session of the Commission; (ii) impact of COVID-19 and adaptations of statistical operations; (iii) challenges and methodological development for collecting SDG indicators in Africa; (iv) "Data-Smart Agriculture" or "50x2030" initiative and innovation in agricultural statistics; (v) use of earth observation data for producing agricultural statistics; (vi) enhancing fishery and aquaculture data to support the monitoring and sustainability of the sector, and contribute to SDGs – achievements and challenges.
2. The main recommendations of the 27th Session of AFCAS can be summarized as follows:
 - a) Member countries are encouraged to:
 - Make more effort to respond to FAO's questionnaires in a timely and complete manner and, in case the country does not have the data to answer the questionnaires, to respond by indicating this situation.
 - Reduce dependence on face-to-face training and interviews, and to introduce alternative modalities such as virtual learning and remote data collection. In particular, members are encouraged to consider and evaluate, whenever appropriate, Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) as a reliable alternative to face-to-face surveys in context like the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Promote their statistics by large dissemination to make them available for use and exploitation.
 - Develop an integrated system for agricultural statistics through effective governance, strategic planning, integrated surveys, and master sample frames.
 - Engage with new data science methods and non-conventional data sources for agriculture statistics.
 - Use geospatial information to generate national statistics that complement those received through regular data collection and can be used to fill gaps in existing statistical domains or generate new ones.

Furthermore, the Commission called upon member countries to:

- Make use of a unique designated group of focal points, including the ones for SDG and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) at country level, to ensure coherent reporting on both frameworks and contextualization, prioritization of SDGs at national level, and to optimize capacity development efforts on related indicators.
- Actively commit to funding fisheries data management i.e. collection, processing, storage, dissemination etc., and to develop capacity building initiatives to improve fisheries data.
- Fully own and sustain received assistance.
- The Commission urged member countries to harmonize SDG assessment approaches to allow comparability of results, noting that different assessment approaches are currently adopted leading to contradictory results and confusion among users.

- b) The Commission recommended that FAO:
- Collaborate more with National Statistics Offices (NSOs) and agricultural statistics unit within the ministries of agriculture, animals, and fisheries in countries on the institutionalization of the crop type mapping and crop yield mapping capacity that is being built through country projects. This will ensure continuity and sustainability.
 - Provide technical assistance to member countries for the implementation of indirect estimation approaches for data disaggregation of SDG and other national priority indicators.
 - Provide support on the deployment of OpenARTFISH and to follow-up and improve data generated annually by this tool.
- c) The Commission recommended that FAO and development partners coordinate their efforts to support countries in the improvement of fisheries and aquaculture statistics and to integrate these statistics and SDGs into national statistical systems.
- d) The Commission called upon international and regional organizations to further strengthen their partnership to ensure more synergies when implementing their respective capacity building programs for agricultural statistics.

B. The 19th Ordinary Session of the Committee for Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Africa (CIFAA)

3. The 19th Session of CIFAA¹ was held in Lilongwe, Malawi from 30 November to 2 December 2021 in a hybrid mode, with international participants having attended the Session remotely. The Session covered four main topics: (i) Implementation of Voluntary Guidelines to ensure Sustainability of Artisanal Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and poverty eradication (SSF Guidelines) and commemoration of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022); (ii) Digitalization of Aquaculture in Africa; (iii) Best practices for improved fish safety and loss reduction in inland fisheries and aquaculture, and the preparation of the 12th meeting of the African Network of professionals in Fish technology and safety (ANFTS); and (iv) the independent Study on CIFAA strategic re-orientation.
4. The Session highlighted the nutritional, economic, and cultural importance of inland fisheries and as key components of sustainable ecosystem functioning. It discussed the potential contribution that aquaculture could play in many African countries' poverty alleviation and food security programmes.
5. The Committee:
 - Recognized the SSF Guidelines as a global consensus on principles and guidance for small-scale fisheries (including inland) governance and development.
 - Acknowledged the timeliness and relevance of the independent review study to develop innovative approaches in support of an improved functioning of CIFAA, especially in view of the changes that the institutional environment of CIFAA has undergone since its creation and its iterations.

¹ <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/organization/22020/en>

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- Commended FAO to maintain CIFAA as the unique continent-wide Regional Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Body working to foster and promote regional cooperation in the development, management, utilization, and conservation of fisheries resources of inland waters of Africa.
 - Agreed to maintain CIFAA within the FAO Constitution Framework with improved statute and Rules of Procedure and to work closely with the African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to align the role of the Committee with the strategic frameworks such as the AU Agenda 2063, the AU Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa and the FAO Strategic Framework.
6. The Committee made the following recommendations:
- a) Members are encouraged to:
 - Support the strengthening of small-scale fisheries organizations to give inland fishing communities a stronger voice in decision-making and policy processes, with a focus on women and gender, their organization, including in the context of the African Union Non-State Actors platform.
 - Recognize the importance of developing digital aquaculture and its status across the Africa region and further support regional and national programs/projects and implementation of digital aquaculture.
 - b) FAO to:
 - Allocate more funds, within its regular programme budget, to implement more efficiently CIFAA decisions and recommendations.
 - Promote the commemorations of IYAFA 2022 among its members and encourage governments, organizations and partners to advance a regional roadmap for the celebrations.