

REPORT OF THE

**TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE
ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMISSION
ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS**

**Held in Phuket, Thailand
11 – 15 September 2006**



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**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (RAP)
BANGKOK, 2007**

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| ABCDQ | Agricultural Bulletin Board on Data Collection, Dissemination, and Quality |
| AFSIS | ASEAN Food Security Information System |
| AOAD | Arab Organization for Agricultural Development |
| APCAS | FAO Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics |
| APRC | FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific |
| CPC | Central Product Classification |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FASAL | Forecasting Agricultural output using Space, Agro-meteorology and Land-based observations (India) |
| FIVIMS | Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems |
| GIS | Geographic Information System |
| GPS | Global Positioning System |
| ICAS | International Conference on Agricultural Statistics |
| IWG.AGRI | Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Agricultural and Rural Indicators, comprising UNECE, EUROSTAT, FAO and OECD |
| UNECE | United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, |
| EUROSTAT | Statistical Office of the European Community |
| ICARRD | International Conference on Agrarian Reforms and Rural Development |
| ICR | Intelligent Character Recognition |
| ISIC | International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities |
| JICA | Japan International Cooperation Agency |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NASS | National Agricultural Statistics Service (of USA) |
| NBS | National Bureau of Statistics (of China) |
| NSC | National Statistical Commission (of India) |
| NSO Thailand | National Statistical Office Thailand |
| OAE | Office of Agricultural Economics (of Thailand) |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PADI | Poverty Analysis Data Initiative (of World Bank) |
| RDES | Regional Data Exchange System |
| SEAFDEC | Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center |
| SNA | System of National Accounts |
| UEMOA | West African Economic and Monetary Union |
| UNSD | United Nations Statistics Department |
| UNFPA | United Nations Fund for Population Activities |
| WCA | World Census of Agriculture |
| WFS | World Food Summit |

REPORT OF THE TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

INTRODUCTION

1. At the invitation of Royal Government of Thailand, the Twenty-first Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS) was organized by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) at Phuket, Thailand from 11 to 15 September 2006. The Session was attended by a total of 72 participants, including 60 delegates from 20 member countries. Ten representatives of FAO, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) participated in the Session. One observer each from Timor-Leste and Thailand also attended. The list of participants and observers is given in Appendix B.

2. The Twenty-first Session of APCAS commenced with the inaugural address by Ms Thananoot Treetipbut, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Royal Government of Thailand. Extending a warm welcome to the participants, she stated that this privilege to host the Session of APCAS was significant as it coincided with the Thai people's celebration of the Sixtieth Anniversary of the King's accession to the throne. She highlighted the importance of agriculture in the economy on account of the preponderance of the population dependent on the sector, in the Asia and Pacific Region in general, and in Thailand, in particular. She noted, however, that poverty in rural areas persisted despite overall decline in global, regional and even national levels of poverty, as reflected in the progress made so far towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This had posed a challenge for policy-makers and planners.

3. Ms Treetipbut invited the attention of the Commission to the rapid structural changes that were taking place in the economy in the process of globalization. These changes had necessitated a greater need for the country's management to evolve balanced, sustainable, and cohesive national and subnational strategies to ensure the continuity of agricultural development. This objective, in turn, required that a qualitative, standardized, timely and responsive statistical system be put in place.

4. The Deputy Permanent Secretary stressed that the national statistical system must work in close collaboration and coordination among data producers and data users, within the country as well as across the region, as it strived to fulfill its mission of establishing a policy-making environment that relied on quantitative indicators, professional independence and objectivity. The national statistical system must be anchored on the high credibility and strong reputation of its staff and adequacy of its information technology and human resource infrastructure. "The Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy: the King's Philosophy", which was the main theme of the draft Five-Year National Economic and Social Development Plan to be implemented during 2007-2010, provided guidance on the direction to be followed.

5. Welcoming the delegates, Ms Jirawan Boonperm, Deputy Secretary-General, National Statistical Office Thailand thanked FAO for choosing Thailand as the host country for the APCAS Session and hoped that the Commission would continue the tradition of shaping a positive vision for the future of agricultural statistics. She wished for a productive and enjoyable stay of the delegates at Phuket.

6. Recalling the rewarding experience of hosting the last session of APCAS in New Delhi, September 2004, the Outgoing Chairman Mr S.M. Jharwal, Principal Adviser, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India stated that the deliberation had encouraged the process of sharing information for strengthening the agricultural statistics in the region. He acknowledged the enduring efforts of the countries of the Asia and Pacific region for sustaining the accelerated economic growth, which had been improving the well-being of the people and reducing the food insecurity and incidence of poverty. The Outgoing Chairman noted that the countries in the region had experienced some of the worst natural disasters in recent years but that in the face of these crises, strong regional cooperation for reconstruction and recovery had been clearly demonstrated. He stated that the role of statistics relating to rural economy had since assumed a much greater significance in measuring the impact of the policies and programmes, especially in monitoring achievements of Millennium Development Goals relating to poverty.

7. Mr S.M. Jharwal informed the Commission of the major developments in India since the last Session, particularly the launching of the project "Forecasting Agricultural Output using Space, Agro-meteorology and Land-based Observations (FASAL)" which aimed to complement and supplement the existing system of agricultural statistics. He also related that a permanent National Statistical Commission (NSC) had been positioned to serve as a nodal and empowered body for all core statistical activities in the country, including agricultural statistics. It was mandated to evolve, monitor and enforce statistical priorities and ensure coordination among different agencies involved.

8. In his statement, Mr He Changchui, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific of FAO, welcomed the participants to this Session of APCAS on behalf of the Director-General of FAO and on his personal behalf. He expressed his gratitude to the Royal Government of Thailand for taking keen interest in the work of the Commission, for hosting this Session and for providing excellent facilities for fruitful and productive discussions. He also thanked the member countries for their overwhelming response to FAO's invitation to this Session.

9. Mr He noted the emerging structural transformation of the agriculture sector in many countries in the wake of globalization of economies in the world. In this connection, he expressed the concern of the policy-makers on the issues of diversion of agricultural land for urban and industrial purposes, degradation of existing agricultural land, sinking water table in some areas, and land affected by water-logging. Inadequate and inappropriate use of fertilizers and pesticides were also cited as areas of concern. He noted that these trends must be contained. He added that strategies must be formulated to provide food and nutritional security to the rural areas in this region, which were largely characterized by subsistence agriculture.

10. Mr He related that these same issues confronted the representatives from government and civil society organizations who met for the International Conference on Agrarian Reforms and Rural Development (ICARRD) in March 2006, in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The ICARRD declaration signed by about 100 countries gave FAO the mandate to adopt appropriate measures to implement the decisions, to evolve reporting guidelines and to identify the indicators to monitor the implementation. The statisticians of member countries would, therefore, have to expand their professional concerns to include agrarian reform and rural development domains which support adoption of people-centred approaches. Mr He noted that this Commission would have the opportunity to deliberate on these issues during the session on “Statistics on Rural Household’s Livelihood and Well-Being”.

11. Mr He made special mention of the work done under the Japan-assisted project on development of Regional Data Exchange System (RDES) that had been catalytic in strengthening agricultural statistics systems in the region. The project also contributed in further increasing the analytical capacities in the countries.

12. Mr He highlighted the leading role played by FAO in reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts for the benefit of people affected by natural calamities and the importance of national statistical professionals in providing data for damage assessment, impact mitigation and long term rehabilitation. He urged the member countries to seek new initiatives and to set priorities for furthering this process.

13. In the address of Mr Haluk Kasnakoglu, Director, Statistics Division, FAO, read by Mr Hiek Som, Chief, Surveys and Statistical Development Service, FAO Statistics Division, he expressed extreme satisfaction on the participation of some 60 senior statisticians from 21 countries (including an observer from Timor-Leste) in this Commission Session, making this the highest attendance in recent years. He thanked the governments of member countries for taking a keen interest in the work of the Commission and demonstrating their growing support to statistical activities pursued by FAO. Updating the Commission on the initiatives of the Statistics Division during the last two years, he highlighted the distinct features of modernized FAO statistical database on agriculture, the FAOSTAT that had undergone a major overhaul after a decade. This was done by upgrading supporting hardware to host a larger data base for better analysis and capability of exchanging data with most of the international databases. The thematically structured FAOSTAT system was now a full matrix of integrated and compatible statistics on 200 countries and on more than 200 primary products and input items. These were configured as core and satellite database covering areas such as agricultural production, consumption, trade, prices and resources and were integrated to permit simple and flexible data exchanges. The core of updated FAOSTAT also provided metadata, or “information on statistics”, which were as important as the numbers themselves.

14. During the development of the new FAOSTAT, a need for a compatible product at country level, one that would enable a better organization of the data collected by different agencies on different aspects of agriculture, was recognized. The Statistics Division had thus developed a product, called CountrySTAT that had the capability to integrate the efforts of several data producers within a country, and served to be a “one-stop shop” to users of agricultural statistics. In addition, FAO had undertaken

an initiative to consolidate the metadata database of national agricultural statistics of the member countries.

15. Mr Kasnakoglu also described the main features of the “World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010” (WCA 2010), the decennial programme stewarded by FAO since 1950 that had facilitated the international comparison of data on structural aspects of agriculture. In the new World Programme, the objectives of the agricultural censuses were extended to allow for collection of MDG related data. The programme advocated a modular approach to the planning of agricultural census and surveys which could provide a cost-effective option. The programme also gave guidance on the collection of community-level data.

16. Delivering the keynote address, Mrs Anchalee Ooraikul, Secretary-General, Office of Agricultural Economics, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Thailand extended a warm welcome to the delegates and expressed happiness on the return of APCAS Session once again to Thailand after 16 years. Referring to the rapid development of the industrial sector in the region as compared to agriculture, she conveyed her concern on a lack of attraction of agriculture. This could result in relocation of labour force that could cause social and economic problems in the countries. There was, therefore, a need to make agriculture more competitive by enhancing productivity, increasing incomes and improving resources utilization by re-orienting policies and plans for the sector. In this context she acknowledged the importance of social development based on knowledge and information. She stressed the importance of the global information since changes in production and consumption of a certain agricultural commodity in one country may affect its supply and demand in another country. Against this background, the project of ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS) had been conceived to facilitate planning for food security in the region through systematic collection, organization, management, analysis and dissemination of food security information. She hoped that the deliberations in this Session of APCAS would bring out better understanding and cooperation among countries and contribute to the improvement of food and agricultural statistics in the region.

17. The APCAS Secretary thanked the Royal Government of Thailand for hosting this 21st Session of the Commission. He was especially grateful to the Thai Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, particularly the National Statistical Office, and the Thai Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, especially the Office of Agricultural Economics for the excellent arrangements made for the Session. Acknowledging the participation of twenty out of twenty-four member countries of the Commission, he thanked the respective member countries’ governments for their keen interest in the activities of the Commission. He also welcomed Timor-Leste as an observer in this Commission Session. He appreciated the interest of two development partners, JICA and SEAFDEC, for taking part in this conference. He thanked the delegates and his colleagues from FAO Headquarters, as well as from the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, who made technical contributions. Finally, he appreciated the efforts put in by the Thai Organizing Committee led by Ms Rajana Netsaengtip, Liaison Officer for the Session, for their untiring efforts in organizing the Session.

18. Ms Jirawan Boonperm, Deputy Secretary-General, National Statistical Office Thailand and Head of the Thai delegation was unanimously elected the Chairperson of the Twenty-first Session. Mr Shamsudin bin Abdul Aziz, Head of the Malaysian delegation, was elected as the First Vice-Chairperson and Mr Ebrahim Sarmadi, Head of the Iranian delegation, was elected as the Second Vice-Chairperson.

19. The Commission also unanimously elected Mr Romeo Recide (Philippines) as the Chairperson of the Drafting Committee. Mr Allan Nicholls (Australia), Mr Rajiv Mehta (India), Ms Chalermkwun Chiemprachanarakorn (Thailand) and Mr Hiek Som and Mr M.K. Srivastava of FAO were co-opted as members of the Committee.

20. The Session adopted the Agenda given in Appendix A. The list of documents is given in Appendix C. The speeches and addresses delivered in the opening Session are attached in Appendix D (Inaugural Address), Appendix E (Welcome Statement), Appendix F (Opening Address), and Appendix G (Keynote Address). The list of the member countries of the Commission, as of September 2006, is cited in Appendix H.

FAO'S ACTIVITIES IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE STATISTICS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC SINCE THE LAST SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

(Item 4 of the Agenda)

Overview of FAO's activities in Asia and the Pacific during 2004-2006

(Item 4a of the Agenda)

21. Three documents were introduced under Agenda Item 4a. The Secretary of the Commission introduced the document APCAS/06/3, "Overview of FAO's Activities in Food and Agricultural Statistics during 2004-2006 in the Asia and Pacific Region". The Commission appreciated the efforts and contribution of FAO in the area of development of agricultural statistics in the region during the last two years.

22. The Secretary made the Commission aware of the conclusions of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC) held in Jakarta, Indonesia from 15 to 19 May 2006 and their data related implications, particularly those relating to monitoring MDGs and strategies for reducing vulnerability of the population to natural disasters.

23. The Secretary further informed the Commission that during the last biennium the two main priorities for FAO Statistics Division had been: (i) the modernization of FAOSTAT and (ii) the preparation of the new World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010, for the censuses to be carried out during 2006-2015.

24. The Commission noted the improved format and design of the new FAO Statistical Yearbook which was a consolidation of earlier series of FAO yearbooks on production, trade, fertilizers, forest products and fisheries. The two printed volumes and the CDs of the new Yearbook were released in 2005. The Commission also appreciated the usefulness of the annual regional publication "Selected Indicators of Food and Agriculture Development in Asia-Pacific Region".

25. The Commission commended the initiative of the FAO Statistics Division to establish a metadata database of national agricultural statistics systems of the member countries.

26. The Secretary made the Commission aware of the guiding considerations and the process that went into the preparation of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010 (WCA 2010) which had been released for use by the countries towards the end of 2005. In particular, the Commission appreciated that the new Programme responded to the challenge faced by countries to collect data on a wide range of subjects with limited budget. Despite the enlarged scope of the new Programme, it provided the countries with the flexibility needed for designing the agricultural census that met their needs and fit into the available budget. Key structural data was restricted, however, to only 16 items.

27. The Commission was pleased to note that FAO Statistics Division continued to maintain a close cooperation with UN and other International Organizations involved in food and agricultural statistics in the Asia and Pacific region and in the world.

28. The Commission reviewed the activities of FAO in the area of statistics relating to forestry and fishery sectors.

29. The Commission noted the continued efforts of FAO for building capacity in the region for enhancing the level of analysis of statistics and for undertaking census and surveys. The Secretary informed that a Roundtable Meeting on Programme for the 2010 Round of Censuses of Agriculture was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 28 November to 2 December 2005. FAO also organized an Expert Consultation on Analysis and Dissemination of Census and Survey Data Bangkok, Thailand, during 18–21 July 2005.

30. The Commission noted the information on the operational and pipeline projects under which technical assistance was provided to the countries or was planned to be provided in the near future.

31. Document No. APCAS/06/4, "The New Release of FAOSTAT and Developments in CountrySTAT" was presented to delegates by Mr Robert Mayo. The presentation highlighted that the new FAOSTAT (i) provided a stable and reliable technical environment (software and hardware); (ii) improved the quality of the data by providing robust tools for compiling, validating, estimating and analyzing data; (iii) enhanced data integrity by ensuring that appropriate methodologies, metadata and data standards were consistently applied and made available to users; (iv) developed integrated frameworks and consistent statistical systems for the collection, production, consolidation and organization of selected data into the modules and conceptual frameworks that constituted the FAOSTAT statistical system; (v) improved user access to FAOSTAT data by enhancing and creating new mechanisms for data dissemination, in particular to provide access to data across domains; and (vi) incorporated new user requirements for system functionality and access to new data sets.

32. The Commission congratulated the FAO on the achievements and new developments in FAOSTAT.

33. An introduction to, and recent developments in, CountrySTAT were presented to delegates. The successful testing of CountrySTAT in 2005 with national statistical offices was reported. The ongoing CountrySTAT projects in conjunction with the joint Food Security Project of FAO and EC was reported as well as the implementation of CountrySTAT in the Philippines, with regional versions of CountrySTAT being under development in UEMOA (West African Economic and Monetary Union) and AOAD (Arab Organization for Agricultural Development). The delegates welcomed the developments in CountrySTAT.

34. Mr Minamiguchi, Vulnerability Analysis Coordinator, Asia FIVIMS Trust Fund Project GCP/RAS/170/JPN, presented document APCAS/06/5 – “Identification of Areas and Populations Vulnerable to Food Insecurity”. He reported on the applications of subnational level food security indicators and household socio-economic survey data for identifying vulnerable groups and areas in Cambodia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Advanced statistical analysis techniques, namely, principal components and non-hierarchical clustering analyses, were utilized to produce vulnerable group profiles. However, systematic errors, inconsistencies and discrepancies were found in a survey data set, thereby making it necessary to first remove ‘statistical noises’ from the data set before undertaking vulnerability assessment. It was suggested that national statistical agencies conduct logical tests on survey and census data before official release.

35. In addition to the vulnerable group profiles, vulnerability indices were calculated in Sri Lanka for each of the four food security analysis categories, i.e. food availability, food accessibility and affordability, health and nutritional status of people, and other food security and vulnerability related proxy variables. The indices were then grouped by district for the whole island and by DS division for Monaragala District using equal interval and natural break classifications, respectively. The results of the analysis revealed the different dimensions of vulnerability that people had faced even in the same regions where interventions and policies were carefully elaborated. Results also showed the need to conduct vulnerability analysis at lower geographic levels in order to minimize ‘inclusion and exclusion’ problems. As output FIVIMS maps could be presented in different ways depending on the types of classification methods, guidance on the use of FIVIMS information was being prepared by the FIVIMS Technical Committee in Sri Lanka to assist FIVIMS information users at the decision and policy-making level to better understand the strengths and limitations of the vulnerability study, properly interpret the outputs of the analysis, and make rational decisions accordingly.

36. The Commission noted that there might be different concepts used in various countries for the same data item in FAOSTAT. This difference made it difficult for international comparison. Users had thus to pay attention to the relevant metadata provided along the data published.

37. The Commission pointed out that the reliability of data included in FAOSTAT was dependant on the source of data used by member countries for reporting the figures to FAO. In this regard, the Commission stressed that in the process of data production, the pre-test and pilot of surveys and censuses were a major factor. It was recommended that technical assistance be provided to countries to build or enhance

their capacity in conducting agricultural surveys or census, including the related pre-tests.

38. The Commission noted that for the identification of vulnerable areas, a district might not always be an appropriate study unit. Countries could decide on the suitable administrative or geographic unit for the vulnerability analysis purpose, depending on the national situation.

Strengthening regional data exchange system on food and agricultural statistics in Asia and Pacific countries

(Item 4b of the Agenda)

39. The Commission was informed of the progress of the Regional Data Exchange System (RDES) through Document APCAS/06/6, "Progress Report on FAO/Japan Project GCP/RAS/184/JPN – Strengthening Regional Data Exchange System of Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries".

40. The Commission was reminded that sixteen developing member countries participated in the project and that these countries had made several suggestions to attain the objectives of the project during the fourth meeting of Focal Points in Bangkok, Thailand in October 2005.

41. The Commission noted that data pertaining to harvested area, production and yield for major crops as well as number of livestock were loaded in RDES, following standardized units, item definition, table formats and others. It was reported that the RDES also contained information related to ongoing FAO activities, links to statistical websites in food and agricultural statistics in Asia and Pacific region. Therefore, the RDES had been developing not only as a database but also a portal website (<http://www.faorap-apcas.org>) for APCAS countries, whether participating in the RDES project or not.

42. The Commission was informed that the Project would develop and strengthen the database function with CountrySTAT as a core software of RDES. This pilot version of the new RDES was demonstrated to the Commission.

43. The Commission was informed by some member countries that the RDES project (GCP/RAS/184/JPN) and the ASEAN project "ASEAN Food Security Information System" (AFSIS) often had two different focal points, which weakened the needed coordination between the two Projects and added to the response burden of countries. The Commission noted that a linkage between RDES and AFSIS would avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the quality of work.

44. The Commission was informed that there was a need to expand the data items covered in each RDES country. The new data items were needed to share the experience of countries in monitoring poverty and development. Also, the Commission noted that there had been an increasing demand for subnational data. The role played by RDES in this regard was appreciated. However, there might still be a need for further improving RDES data. The Commission recommended that countries expand their capacity building to subnational level, even if the RDES project itself contributed only to the national level capacity building.

45. The Commission was informed that Japan, as the donor of the Project, appreciated the efforts of member countries and FAO for efficient implementation of the Project, and requested a close coordination with AFSIS. Involvement of FAO as an international organization with knowledge and experiences in AFSIS would benefit the countries. The Commission was reminded that the sustainability of RDES as a regional database in Asia and the Pacific was very important. Japan expressed that they would continue the contribution in the field of statistical activities on food and agriculture. The details of the next steps and the nature of contribution were under consideration.

46. The Commission was advised that the Fifth RDES Focal Points meeting would be held in the middle of March 2007 to review project activities.

Statistics on rural household's livelihood and well-being (Item 4c of the Agenda)

47. Document APCAS/06/7 – “Introduction of the International Handbook on Rural Household, Livelihood and Well-Being: Statistics on Rural Development and Agriculture Household Income” was presented. The Commission was informed that this handbook was an initiative of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Agricultural and Rural Indicators (IWG.AGRI) which was composed of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), EUROSTAT, FAO, and OECD. The IWG.AGRI established the task force on Statistics for Rural Development and Agriculture Household Income, in 2003. The task force prepared a draft of the handbook which was reviewed and endorsed by the Joint UNECE/EUROSTAT/FAO/OECD Meeting on Agricultural Statistics in Europe, in Rome, in 2005.

48. The Commission was informed that the handbook had two parts: Rural Development Statistics; and Agriculture Household Income and Wealth. The handbook contained mostly experiences and best practices in developed countries. It noted that the handbook was available on the Web pages of UNECE and FAO. A limited number of hard copies would be published in 2007.

49. In the round table discussion that followed the presentation, the Commission appreciated that FAO and the World Bank were in the process of documenting experiences in developing countries as a supplement to the original handbook. In this regard, the Commission noted that the work done by the World Bank under the Poverty Analysis Data Initiative (PADI) produced a book on data sources which might be a useful reference.

50. Delegates from India, Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Fiji, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, Bangladesh, China and Myanmar reported on their countries' experiences, mentioning the national institutions responsible for undertaking household income/expenditure surveys, farm economy surveys or socio-economic surveys which covered aspects such as socio-economic situation of rural households, household income and/or wealth. The Commission recommended that FAO enter in contact with these institutions to obtain relevant experiences and that member countries cooperate with FAO and/or the World Bank in this undertaking.

STATE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE STATISTICS IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION

(Item 5 of the Agenda)

Report on the situation based on responses to country questionnaires

(Item 5a of the Agenda)

51. Document No. APCAS/06/8 “Review of the Present State of Food and Agricultural Statistics in Member Countries of the Commission – Summary of Country Questionnaires” was presented by Mr Romeo Recide.

52. The Commission noted that the practice in previous APCAS sessions of having each participating country reporting the state of its agricultural statistical system could be made more efficient. Building on a practice that was started in the Twentieth Session of the APCAS in New Delhi, India, member countries were instead requested to fill out a well-structured questionnaire that sought a detailed report on activities in the area of food and agricultural statistics in their respective countries. Through the Statistical Metadata Survey Questionnaire, delegates were asked to provide information on the infrastructure and organization of the agricultural statistics system, the resources and the output, as well as information on specific issues affecting the system. The questionnaire consisted of a main body and three annexes.

53. It was reported to the Commission that twenty-one countries responded to the survey. Fifty-three statistical tables covering items in the main body of the questionnaire were presented. It was emphasized that the summary tables reflected the responses contained in the questionnaires and that no attempt to validate the data had been made. The summary tables were presented to present an overview of the different approaches that countries use to generate statistics on agriculture and food.

54. Deficiencies in the submitted questionnaires were pointed out. It was apparent in many instances that some concepts and information asked in the questionnaire needed more clarification. In addition, countries reported that the questionnaire was complex and that obtaining country-level responses (as opposed to agency-level responses) required more time and effort. Nevertheless, the Commission recognized the value of complete and accurate information generated from the questionnaires in establishing a country’s metadata of agricultural statistics. The Commission therefore recommended that FAO continue to provide guidance to countries in filling up the questionnaires with more accuracy and thoroughness.

Use of knowledgeable farmers as enumerators

(Item 5b of the Agenda)

55. In document APCAS/06/9, “Use of Voluntary Enumerators in Agricultural Data Collection”, Mr Montol Jeamchareon presented the experience in Thailand about the use of farmers for collection of agricultural data and subsequent preparation of regular reports and monitoring of indicators needed in early warning systems. The objectives of using farmers were to acquire accurate data and timely agricultural economic information at an affordable cost and to promote close cooperation between the Office of Agricultural Economics (OAE) and farmers.

56. The Commission was apprised that such effective use of farmers had enlarged the capacity of OAE in expanding the number of samples, data items and frequency in conducting surveys, notwithstanding the constraints on the number of OAE staff. Further, the quality of collected data had improved especially in terms of timeliness. The use of farmers in this way also provided an efficient channel for OAE to disseminate information to farmers.

57. The Commission noted that the following issues had emerged: (a) highly qualified enumerators had a tendency to leave after a short time, (b) some were also employed by other agencies and could not do the job properly, (c) many were too busy in some seasons, and (d) in some areas it was difficult to find qualified volunteers. Plans to overcome these problems included better training and improved remuneration.

58. The Commission acknowledged that, while there were still some problems, the programme offered an alternative solution for cost-effective data collection.

Production of small area data from the agricultural census

(Item 5c of the Agenda)

59. Mr Allan Nicholls presented the document APCAS/06/10, "Production of Small Area Data from the 2005-2006 Australian Agricultural Census", which detailed a new approach being taken to enable a range of small-area data to be produced from the 2006 Australian Agricultural Census.

60. The Commission noted some background information about the Australian Agricultural Census, most notably that a mail-out/mail-back approach was used and that therefore no suitable geographic information was available to code farms to a small area. The Commission was advised that in the 2006 Agricultural Census a question on the location address of the holding was included, and that this information would be coded to a new micro-level geographic unit called a "mesh block". The small size of mesh blocks would make it possible to aggregate or align them closely to most administrative, social, economic and environmental boundaries.

61. The Commission was apprised of some constraints to the production of small-area data, but the new approach provided for an expanded data, characterizing a wide range of regional structures. This suited better user needs than the previous standard statistical geography. The level of improvement in data availability was illustrated by a number of maps which showed the increased geographic resolution of information for a range of policy related information needs.

62. The Commission was informed of the key benefits to users, of the public relations campaign used to encourage farmers to participate, and the fact that "mesh block" boundaries were designed to remain constant, thus avoiding the problem of changing boundaries when using time series data.

CountrySTAT

(Item 6 of the Agenda)

Establishing CountrySTAT as a basis for a national statistical information and analysis system

(Item 6a of the Agenda)

63. Mr Romeo Recide presented the document APCAS/06/11 “Establishing CountrySTAT: Experience in the Philippines” to the Commission. The CountrySTAT was a web-based system that could serve as a statistical framework for the organization, harmonization and synchronization of data collection and dissemination in food and agriculture for analysis and policy-making. It was a customized country-specific version of the FAOSTAT. The CountrySTAT provided tools for data exchange, and promoted the use of data and metadata standards. It served as the gateway for food and agricultural statistics, including metadata for member countries. Just as importantly, it served as a source of country-level data for FAOSTAT.

64. The Commission was informed that FAO contracted the Philippine Statistical Association (PSA) to undertake the project entitled “Strengthening the National Statistical Systems in Selected Countries in the Asia and Pacific Region.” The establishment of CountrySTAT in the Philippines and its 15 other countries in Asia were the key features of this Project.

65. The Commission learned that the CountrySTAT framework was based on the framework of FAOSTAT. The CountrySTAT framework called for the identification of core data sets which were anchored on the FAOSTAT accounts, namely: food accounts, resource accounts, economic accounts, trade accounts and price accounts. The statistics and indicators that supported or characterized each set of accounts could simultaneously support other accounts.

66. The Information Technology (IT) solution used in the implementation and development of the CountrySTAT system was the “PC-Axis Software Family”. The PC-Axis software package served as the engine of the system. It could be freely downloaded in the web (<http://www.pc-axis.scb.se/pcaxis.htm>) but the software required a licence from Statistics Sweden when used for disseminating statistics either in CD-ROM or in the Internet.

67. The Commission heard that the first major activity toward the installation of CountrySTAT was training of staff of different agencies in using the PC-Axis software family. This training also aimed at the development and implementation of guidelines or standards for the creation of PX-files and the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among agencies involved. The guidelines would help preserve consistency of the keywords of PC-Axis files when these were posted at the CountrySTAT Web page. The MOU would serve as the expression of commitment of major statistical agencies to cooperate in the implementation of CountrySTAT in the Philippines. The MOU was signed by the heads of agencies in August 2006.

68. The Commission was informed that the CountrySTAT had been installed and working in the Philippines. It was accessible via sub-domain of the main website with

URL <http://countrystat.bas.gov.ph>. To ensure that the system stayed fully functional, the CountrySTAT Core Group composed of selected personnel from different operating units in the Central Office of the Bureau was created. This Core Group was supported by a Technical Working Group (TWG) which was responsible for updating and uploading data sets into the BAS website and the CountrySTAT.

69. The Commission was advised that one of the major components of the Project was the conduct of a one-week subregional workshop on the CountrySTAT and metadata, to be attended by the RDES focal points of sixteen countries. Among the future actions planned to be undertaken were the demonstration of CountrySTAT as an advocacy on the use of statistics, the updating or enhancement of the existing linked metadata in the BAS website and the linking of the CountrySTAT Philippines and the BAS website.

70. In subsequent discussion, the Commission was reminded that while the CountrySTAT might prove to be an effective tool for disseminating data, measures should always be taken to ensure that the data being disseminated were of the best quality possible. In this respect, the suggestion to implement logical tests on data before they were disseminated should be given due consideration.

71. The Commission was informed of the key elements that were needed in the process of establishing the CountrySTAT in the Philippines. These included: (i) the existence in the country of a substantial body of statistical holdings, and its corresponding metadata, which could be organized following the CountrySTAT framework; (ii) intensive training of concerned personnel on the CountrySTAT statistical framework and the corresponding IT solution (PC-Axis Software Family); (iii) the identification of one institution capable of serving as host; and (iv) the full support and cooperation of all other agencies contributing to CountrySTAT.

72. The Commission agreed that installing CountrySTAT would be beneficial to countries and recommended that FAO actively pursue this initiative of installing CountrySTAT in member countries. In this region, this initiative could be pursued initially for RDES participating countries.

Metadata as a tool to improve the quality and the usefulness of statistics

(Item 6b of the Agenda)

73. Two documents were discussed. The Secretary of the Commission introduced the document APCAS/06/12 – “FAO’s Initiative on Metadata of National Agricultural Statistics” which reviewed the past and current work at FAO regarding metadata. Two editions of the publication “National Methods of Collecting Food and Agricultural Statistics” were issued in the 1970s and the 1980s respectively, each covering about 110 countries. Through FAOSTAT, in recent years, the work in this area covered the FAO Data Quality Framework, International Agricultural Bulletin Board on Data Collection, Dissemination and Quality (ABCDQ), and Data Quality Stamp.

74. The Commission was informed that the main purpose of the metadata was to enhance better use and management of statistical resources. The efforts currently deployed to document metadata at country level included the provision of an

Annotated Outline of “Metadata for National Agricultural Statistics” and a supporting Statistical Metadata Survey Questionnaire. The questionnaire had been used for regional commissions on agricultural statistics in Asia, Africa and Latin America since 2003, with revisions as needed.

75. The Commission was informed that sixteen countries in Asia and the Pacific had been invited to prepare country reports on metadata for national agricultural statistics, using the above outline, for presentation at a Subregional workshop to be held in October 2006. These country reports would be useful for the improvement of agricultural statistics in the countries. They could be posted on the Web page of the countries concerned and would be combined to produce a compendium on the subject for publication by FAO.

76. Ms Phunvadee Porntimakorn presented the document APCAS/06/13 – “Statistical Data Directory: A Tool to Improve Quality and Usefulness of Statistics in Thailand”. The Commission was informed that under the decentralized statistical system in Thailand, the National Statistical Office (NSO) had played a significant role as the major statistical data producer, while various other statistical units in line ministries also generated statistical data mainly for their own purposes.

77. Currently, little coordination existed among statistical agencies, creating problems such as duplication of and gaps in statistical data production in the country. Moreover, it had been found that because some of the statistics produced were inconsistent and incomparable, they could not be integrated.

78. The NSO was in the process of amending its Statistical Act, which had been in force for over 40 years. By the amended Act, the NSO would be given more power to perform a management role in the National Statistical System. NSO would have to set up a Statistical Master Plan outlining the responsibilities of key agencies of line ministries on their own management of statistical data to ensure availability of accurate, adequate and relevant data for country development.

79. The Commission was informed that in preparation for the setting up of the Statistical Master Plan, NSO had started to create a Data Directory system since 2004. This was aimed at taking stock of statistical data production in the country and to pinpoint the inadequacies of the statistical system. The Data Directory was a database of metadata illustrating data items produced by 200 departments in 20 line ministries. These metadata had highlighted inconsistent classifications and definitions, gaps between needs and availability, as well as the limitations in using existing data. In addition, the Data Directory, which was planned to be updated annually, could benefit data users by facilitating access to data from various sources.

80. The Commission recognized that there was a strong need for metadata. It commended FAO for taking the initiative of documenting the metadata for national agricultural statistics. It urged member countries that would take part in the forthcoming Workshop on the subject in October 2006 to seriously prepare their reports following the outline provided for this purpose and to fill in the supporting questionnaire as accurately as possible.

81. Some countries, including Australia and the Philippines reported that it was worth spending adequate efforts to document the metadata. While there might be some reluctance at the beginning, staff involved appreciated the value of metadata once the documentation was completed as they understood better the methodology used and the quality of data produced. These often led to the introduction of improvements for future activities.

82. The Commission noted that some countries had documented the metadata but had difficulties to maintain or update the information. It commended Thailand for updating the Statistical Data Directory every year. Such approach of regular updating should be adopted by member countries, at least every three or five years.

83. The Commission recognized that in countries where the statistics offices were small, maintaining a metadata system was a difficult task. It recommended that, in such cases, a minimum set of metadata, including methodological reports of surveys and agricultural censuses, be compiled for future reference.

84. The Commission noted that some parts of the questionnaire used for collecting metadata from countries could still be improved. It recommended that it be revised based on comments made regarding this matter during the session.

WORLD PROGRAMME FOR THE CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE 2010

(Item 7 of the Agenda)

Presentation of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010

(Item 7a of the Agenda)

85. The document APCAS/06/14 “Presentation of the new World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010: Main Features and Innovations” was discussed. The Commission was informed that the preparation and publication of this programme was a major priority for the Statistics Division during the last two years. The guiding considerations that went into preparation of the new World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010 (WCA 2010) included: (i) the limited budget of statistical offices of countries for meeting ever increasing data demands called for development of a strategy for data collection; (ii) the scope of data analysis often remained limited if the surveys were undertaken as isolated independent exercises; (iii) the integration of surveys could be a cost-effective way to increase the scope of analysis and avoid duplication in data collection efforts; and (iv) with changing approaches to development planning and policy, multi-faceted data were needed on communities which were often the target units for development projects.

86. The attention of the Commission was drawn to the work done by the Statistics Division of FAO in collaboration with United Nations Statistics Department (UNSD) and United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) for establishing a link between the concepts of “agricultural holding” and “household”. The efforts made for reaching a common set of guidelines in the publications of two UN institutions, circulated in the conference as APCAS/06/14 – Addenda, for making population census as a basis for collection of agricultural data were noted.

87. The Commission learned that the main features and innovations introduced in the WCA 2010 included: (i) widened objectives of agricultural census to collect data for monitoring of MDGs and related subjects like food security; (ii) advocacy of an integrated system of agricultural census and surveys; (iii) the flexibility provided to countries to plan their census as per their needs using the modular approach to census planning; (iv) availability of technical guidance on wide variety of data items arranged in thematic volumes; (v) guidelines on collection of community-level data as part of collection of Agricultural Census Operations; (vi) harmonized concepts and classifications; and (vii) option to widen the scope of agricultural census to cover aquaculture and other rural activities.

88. The Commission was informed that the varying cut-offs used by the countries for reducing the burden of data collection often made the international comparison of statistics on “number of holdings” difficult. The Commission noted that in Sri Lanka all the holdings, irrespective of scale of their operations and size of their asset owning status, were enumerated during the listing phase but detailed agricultural census was carried out on the holding which had more than a certain number of trees or animals and engaged in agricultural production for sale.

89. In general there was an appreciation of the idea of integrating agricultural census with population census and a suggestion was made to identify one or two questions to be included in the population census for obtaining a frame for the agricultural census. However, the Commission noted that the integration of population census with the agricultural census could be difficult in situations where the two operations were separated by three or four years. The Commission heard the experience in the USA and American Samoa in integrating the population census with the agricultural census and noted that caution might be needed during census planning, particularly when using the cut-offs on size of holdings, deciding on long and short questionnaire approach, or in deciding to include agriculture-related questions in the population census. The issues that needed to be considered would relate to response fatigue, enumerator burden, and the purpose for which data were to be used.

90. Conceptual issues to deal with specific situations prevailing in the member countries were clarified by making reference to the definition of an agricultural holding, International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), and System of National Accounts (SNA). The Commission was informed that the widened scope of the publication for the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010 helped the countries use this publication as a reference book for their census planning. The purpose of the book was to provide guidance on aspects which were commonly covered by countries in their agricultural census and surveys programme. The programme recommended only 16 core data items to be included in the census of all countries for international comparisons. The rest of the programme was optional. The Commission was informed that aligning the list of crops with Central Product Classification (CPC) might pose difficulties as many crops led to several products or had several uses.

91. The Commission heard the presentations made by some member countries outlining the key features of their statistical systems for collection of agricultural statistics and the methodologies used. On the basis of these presentations, the

Commission gathered that the countries were at different stages of development of their statistical systems and there existed a diversity of methodologies used in the region. It was noted that some countries in the region were using Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR) technology for speedy processing of their population and agricultural census data, whereas some others were using remote sensing technology for crop forecasting. Use of econometric modelling for crop forecasting was also noted by the Commission. The use of Global Positioning System (GPS) for ground-truthing of agricultural surveys had been developed in Thailand. The Commission concluded that apart from collaboration through the multilateral agencies, cooperation between countries to learn from each others' experience could hasten the process of development in the region.

92. The Commission noted that there had been a rise in number of stakeholders in the statistical systems and the depth of their interest had also increased. In order to ensure that the statistical systems in countries respond to their needs, adequate dialogue between users and producers should be encouraged.

Community-level data in agricultural census

(Item 7b of the Agenda)

93. Document No. APCAS/06/15 "Recommendations on Community-level Data in the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010" was presented by Mr Mukesh Srivastava while APCAS/06/16 "Collection of Village-level Data through the 2003 Agricultural Census and 2006 Economic Census in Indonesia" was presented by Mr Piotojo. The second document described the Indonesian experience in collecting village level data.

94. The Commission was made aware that the community-level data was being sought in an increasing number of countries to meet the need of the planning process which tended to focus more and more on people rather than just on the economic production. The definition of the community as a statistical unit for the survey was discussed and the suitability of community-level data items for collection during the agricultural census operation was presented. Some examples of analysis using community-level data were also presented. The Commission noted that a community-level database involving primary community-level data collected through population and agricultural censuses and summary data from other censuses or surveys, as well as administrative sources could prove a handy reference for policy makers. It could be particularly useful if interfaced with some Geographic Information System (GIS) software which permitted standard or user-defined queries that met common analytical needs for policy-making.

95. The presentations were followed by a roundtable discussion on the topic: "Uses of Community-level Data for Programme Formulation, Monitoring, Impact Assessment and Policy Analysis". During the discussion, China, India, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam presented their experiences in collection of data on this topic. A widespread support and use of this type of data in the countries of the region was noted by the Commission. Most countries which presented their experience, collected data on common or similar set of items which could be grouped under geography, socio-economic conditions and access to community

infrastructure. The most common use of this data, highlighted during the Session, related to identification of poor villages or communities. Regarding difficulties in getting data for poverty status and likely response biases of reporting agencies, the Commission was of the view that involvement of both officials and the elected representatives in reporting could enhance the data quality.

96. To overcome the inconsistencies experienced by some countries between the data collected from holdings and that from communities, the Commission recommended that the data which were suitable for collection from holdings or households should not be collected at community level. Instead, it might be practical to add the summarized holdings or household data to the community-level database. The primary collection of community-level data should be confined to objectively verifiable indicators, particularly those relating to existence of infrastructure or access to facilities.

97. The Commission drew the attention of its members to the definition of the “community” given in the FAO publication on WCA 2010, but noted that in defining the statistical unit for collection of community-level data countries would need to consider the administrative division of the country, the level at which data were summarized in other relevant surveys, the purpose for which data were to be used, the geographical unit of attention in the planning process, and the stability in boundaries of the statistical units chosen for the purpose.

98. The Commission noted that there might not exist a unique method for preparing the composite indicator using the community-level data. Depending upon the specific needs, several indicators could be constructed using the same database.

Fishery and aquaculture statistics in the framework of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010

(Item 7c of the Agenda)

99. Document APCAS/06/17 “Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics in the Framework of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010” was presented by Mr Simon Funge-Smith. The Commission noted that the contribution of aquaculture and fisheries to employment, food production and food security in many of the countries of the Asia and Pacific region was significant. Fisheries and aquaculture statistics were often dealt with outside of the agricultural statistics framework and this presented difficulties in their subsequent integration into national planning. Aquaculture, as a rapidly emerging production sector, often co-existed with agriculture and shared many of its common features and resources. In this respect, there was considerable opportunity to integrate aquaculture statistics into the framework of agriculture census and surveys. This integration could result in efficient use of limited resources, besides providing a more holistic understanding of how aquaculture and agriculture interact. The Commission recognized the need to take into account the basic understanding of participation in and dependence upon capture fisheries.

100. The Commission observed that the inclusion of even a single question in either the agriculture census or population census could provide an extremely useful listing or sampling frame to facilitate subsequent, more detailed, aquaculture or fisheries

surveys. In some countries, aquaculture was sufficiently important to warrant a dedicated aquaculture module in the agriculture census. The scope of such a model would depend upon the country situation and its data needs.

101. The Commission heard a discussion covering a wide range of issues related to the scope of coverage of the aquaculture census and the practical considerations in its implementation. The Commission noted that there existed a considerable diversity across countries in the region in the level of development of the aquaculture sector and its importance to the national economy. The Commission considered various technical issues connected with the definition of “agricultural holding” and that of “aquaculture holding”, as well as the coexistence of the two activities, and the need to collect complete statistics on fisheries and aquaculture statistics. The Commission thus recognized that the issue of definition of the statistical unit of an agri-aqua survey was central for ensuring coverage of various types of holdings.

102. Aquaculture operations which were not based on land such as cockle, scallop and mussel farms, seaweed farms, and floating fish cages and pens, required special consideration as these were located in open water. Special circumstances such as these demonstrated the need for a carefully formulated screening question in the core WCA module to ensure that it would elicit a positive response from all those associated with any aquaculture activities.

103. The Commission noted that there was a need for meaningful communication among users and providers of aquaculture and fisheries data and the concerned agencies undertaking agriculture or population censuses. This was required to ensure that information useful for management or planning of the sector was obtained completely, which would need availability of comprehensive sampling frames. Due attention was also needed to be given for collection of data for assessment of illegal fishing. The Commission recommended that collaboration between statistical agencies and the fishery and aquaculture agencies should be encouraged for improving the statistics on fisheries and aquaculture. Such collaboration might be in the areas of providing technical guidance, using of field structures and data processing infrastructure.

OTHER MATTERS

(Item 8 of the Agenda)

Venue of the twenty-second session of APCAS

(Item 8a of the Agenda)

104. The Head of Malaysian delegation offered to host the Twenty-second Session of the Commission scheduled to be held in 2008. The Commission welcomed the invitation by acclamation and conveyed its thanks to the Government of Malaysia for the proposal. It requested the Commission Secretariat to pursue the matter with relevant authorities.

Other business

(Item 8b of the Agenda)

105. The Secretary of the Commission informed the delegates about the Fourth International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS-IV), which would take place from 23–25 October 2007 at the Friendship Hotel in Beijing, China. He also informed that the ICAS-IV would be hosted by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of China. The Scientific Programme Committee was chaired by FAO. He made the delegates aware of the nature of the Conference and encouraged them to participate in the Conference for their better integration with the international statistical system. The Chinese delegation also welcomed all delegates to attend this Conference.

106. The observer from Timor-Leste expressed his appreciation of this meeting which provided him an opportunity to learn from experiences of other countries in the Asia and Pacific Region in compiling agricultural statistics. He informed that Timor-Leste, which achieved independence in 2002, was currently working to set up an adequate statistical system for the country. He added that the first Population Census which was conducted in 2002, included two questions relating to agriculture. The purpose of these questions was to identify the households engaged in crop or livestock production. He wished that the FAO could provide his country more assistance.

107. The Host Government, Thailand, arranged a field visit for the delegates to Phuket Abalone Farm, which was the first commercial abalone farm in Thailand, located in Koh Sirey, a small island near Phuket town. This was followed by an observation tour to Phuket Marine Biological Centre under the jurisdiction of the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, located at Muang District, Phuket Province.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT AND CLOSING OF THE SESSION

(Items 9 and 10 of the Agenda)

108. The Commission concluded the Twenty-first Session on 15 September 2006 after considering and adopting the report prepared by the Drafting Committee.

ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

TWENTY-FIRST SESSION

Phuket, Thailand, 11 – 15 September 2006

AGENDA

1. Opening of the Session
2. Election of Chairman, Vice Chairmen and Drafting Committee
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable
4. FAO's Activities in Food and Agriculture Statistics in Asia and the Pacific since the last Session of the Commission
 - a. Overview of FAO's Activities in Asia and the Pacific during 2004-2006
 - b. Progress Report on FAO/Japan Project GCP/RAS/184/JPN – Strengthening Regional Data Exchange System on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries
 - c. Statistics on Rural Household's Livelihood and Well-Being
5. State of Food and Agricultural Statistics in the Countries of the Region
 - a. Report on the Situation Based on Responses to Country Questionnaires
 - b. Use of Knowledgeable Farmers as Enumerators
 - c. Production of Small Area Data from the Agricultural Census
6. CountrySTAT
 - a. Establishing CountrySTAT as a Basis for a National Statistical Information and Analysis System
 - b. Metadata as a Tool to Improve the Quality and the Usefulness of Statistics
7. World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010
 - a. Presentation of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010
 - b. Community-Level Data in Agricultural Census
 - c. Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics in the Framework of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010
8. Other Matters
9. Adoption of the Report
10. Closing of the Session

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS

By

Ms Thananoot Treetipbut
Deputy Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Information and Communication Technology of Thailand

Delivered to

The 21st Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics
Phuket, Thailand
11 – 15 September 2006

Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government and the Thai people, I have a great pleasure in welcoming you to the Twenty-first Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics.

We are privileged that Thailand was given this opportunity to host this very important event, especially in this year when Thai people are celebrating the occasion of the King's 60th anniversary of his accession to the throne.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The majority of the population in most countries in our region is in the agricultural sector. As a good example, that around 42.7 percent of the total workforce in Thailand is employed in this sector. Statistics obtained from the latest Agricultural Census in 2003 shows that the total number of agricultural holdings was 5.8 million, and that 34.8 percent or approximately 22 million of the population is member of agricultural holders' household members.

Although the agricultural sector has played an important role in our economy, farmers have always formed a majority of the poor in the country. The overall global, regional and even national levels of poverty might have gone down as measured by MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) or other kinds of indicators, but there is still a lot of poverty in the agricultural sector. How to help them out? This is the challenge facing every country.

Moreover, at present the process of globalization has generated a new level of complexity in the world in which we operate. Changes are more rapid and fluid, instigating an even greater need for a country management structures. The governments are facing up to the challenges and should be aware of the importance of having a balance, sustainable, and cohesive national and subnational strategies to ensure the continuity of agricultural development.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Critical to the success of implementing these strategies is a good plan, emphasizing the importance of the result-based framework that focuses on monitoring and evaluation of its outcome. This requires a lot of detail, and relevant statistics as key input into the process. Without access to quality information and statistical data or a responsive statistical system and capable personnel, the result-based framework will fall short of achieving its intended objectives.

To serve this mission, the national statistical system has strived to make available such relevant agricultural statistics at high quality, timely and accepted standard. This requires close collaboration and coordination among data producers and data users within the country as well as across the region in the process of statistical development.

Looking ahead, once charged with this high expectation, the NSOs will have to work closely with their partners to establish:

- An evidence-based policy-making environment with reliance on quantitative indicators.
- Professional independence and objectivity, anchored on high credibility and strong reputation.
- Adequate information technology and human resource infrastructure.
- Responsive to changing users and evolving needs.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

In Thailand, the final draft of a Five-Year National Economic and Social Development Plan to be implemented during 2007-2010 has just been released. “The Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy: the King’s Philosophy” is put as a main theme of this plan. The Philosophy provides guidance on appropriate conduct covering numerous aspects of life and points the way for recovery that will lead to a more resilient and sustainable economy, better able to meet the challenges arising from globalization and other changes.

His Majesty has also emphasized on agricultural activities to assist the rural people to have better lives and self-reliance. In this plan, the government will focus on adjusting and improving of agricultural structure, emphasizing effective administration and management of zoning and identifying right time of planting. Food security and establishment of income base for farmers are also the areas of focus.

The National Statistical Office and the Office of Agricultural Economics, MOA have worked closely in a cohesive fashion in establishing efficient agricultural statistical system in the country to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of related government policies and programs are followed through.

As I said earlier, it is clear that there is a rising demand for good quality agricultural statistics in the countries in our region. I understand that this Twenty-first Session of APCAS is intended to provide a good forum for us to review the state of

food and agricultural statistics in the region, focusing on the preparation for the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010 and the new initiative of FAO on CountrySTAT programme, among other new interesting developments.

I anticipate that you will have truly fruitful discussions in the next five days and that you can reach relevant conclusions and agreements which member countries can implement back in their own countries.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an auspicious time now for me to declare open the Twenty-first Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics and to wish you a pleasant stay in Phuket.

Thank you.

WELCOME STATEMENT

By

**Ms Jirawan Boonperm
Deputy Secretary-General
National Statistical Office of Thailand**

Delivered to

The 21st Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics
Phuket, Thailand
11 – 15 September 2006

Sawaddee Kha,
Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you, on behalf of Mr Sue Lo-Utai Secretary General of the Thai National Statistical Office, to this 21st Session of Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics. I would like to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules and travelling to Phuket to participate in this very important conference.

I also would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to FAO for choosing Thailand as the venue for this significant event and providing Thai organizations to be part of it.

I hope this conference will continue the tradition of shaping a positive vision for the future in regard to agricultural statistics. Apart from this, we would also aim at building up a close networking in agricultural statistics in support of our future cooperation in the region.

This is now a pleasant season in the Southern part of Thailand especially in Phuket: well-known as “Pearl of the Andaman”. We, as Thais, would like to invite you all together with your family to find time to enjoy our beautiful seaside scenery, as well as the warmth of our people.

I hope that the next 4 days will be very productive and enjoyable for all of us. Please do enjoy your stay in Phuket. I would like to assure you that my staff and I are committed to assist you to make this conference a success. Please feel free to tell us if you need any further assistance.

I wish all participants a very productive and successive event.

Thank you,
Khob Khun Kha

OPENING ADDRESS

By

He Changchui
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Delivered to

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Phuket, Thailand
11 – 15 September 2006

Mr Chairman,
Your Excellency, Minister for Information and Communication Technology,
Distinguished Delegates and Dignitaries,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all, on behalf of the Director-General of FAO and on my personal behalf, to this Twenty-first Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS).

I am grateful to the Royal Government of Thailand for taking keen interest in the work of the Commission, for hosting this session and for providing excellent facilities and an environment conducive to fruitful and productive discussions. I am personally grateful to you, Your Excellency, for sparing valuable time to inaugurate this 21st Session of APCAS.

I note that this is not the first time that the Commission is benefiting from the hospitality of the Government of Thailand. During the last four decades of the Commission's existence, this is the fourth Session of the Commission held in Thailand, including those hosted by the Government of Thailand.

I am particularly delighted that some 60 delegates from 20 member countries are attending the meeting, together with observers from international institutions interested in the work of FAO. I am thankful to the Governments of member countries for taking keen interest in the work of the Commission and for sending their delegates. As the demands for reliable food and agricultural statistics are ever increasing and the need to collect data on newer and more complex areas is becoming more prominent, sharing of experience between member countries becomes important for minimizing the duplication of efforts and for enhancing knowledge networking. I am happy to note from the agenda that countries, including Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, will be presenting their experiences and initiatives to other member countries during the course of this Session.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

At the first World Food Summit (WFS) in 1996 world leaders made a global commitment to reduce by half the number of hungry people in the world by 2015. The

commitment to the cause of providing food security was reiterated at the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit. The situation still demands that we accelerate progress towards meeting the WFS goals, as resolved by world leaders at the 2002 World Food Summit: *five years later*.

The provisional estimates made by FAO for the year 2001–2003 indicate that more than 820 million people in the developing world are undernourished. This does not represent a significant improvement compared to the situation prevailing at the time of the WFS. However, in terms of prevalence of hunger, we have witnessed an improvement in the developing countries during the last decade, particularly in this region where the percentage has fallen from 20 to 16 percent.

On the food production side, increasing globalization of economies in the world, and in particular in the Asian countries, is leading to a structural transformation of the agriculture sector in many countries. Diversion of agricultural land for urban and industrial purposes, degradation of existing agricultural land, a sinking water table in some areas, land affected by water-logging, and inadequate and inappropriate use of fertilizers and pesticides are causes of concern for policy-makers in many countries of Asia. While making efforts to contain these adverse and often irreversible changes, we need strategies to provide food and nutritional security to the rural population in this region which is largely characterized by subsistence agriculture practised on small holdings in rural areas.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

A new vision of sustainable development and agrarian reform is needed: one that responds to the challenges confronting the poorest men and women in rural areas around the globe. This was the issue confronted by representatives from government and civil society organizations who met for the International Conference on Agrarian Reforms and Rural Development (ICARRD) in March 2006, in Porto Alegre, Brazil. About 100 countries signed the declaration and reiterated the importance of traditional and family agriculture, and other small-holder production as well as the roles of rural communities in contributing to food security and the eradication of poverty.

The ICARRD declaration recognized the leadership of FAO and gave us the mandate to adopt appropriate measures to implement the ICARRD decisions. FAO was also expected to evolve a set of reporting guidelines and to identify the indicators to monitor the implementation of the declaration. The statisticians of member countries will have to make their contribution by providing reliable data to achieve this task.

Thus, in my view, the scope of your professional work has further enlarged from mere measurement of agricultural development to gathering reliable data on agrarian reform and rural development which supports analysis to facilitate adoption of people-centred approaches. You will get an opportunity to discuss this subject during the session on “Statistics on Rural Household’s Livelihood and Well-being”.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is the first meeting of the Commission after the launch by FAO in 2005 of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010 (WCA 2010), the ninth

in the series. The new programme will be useful to those countries which plan to conduct their national censuses during the decade 2006-2015. FAO has already held a round-table meeting for the statisticians of this region to make them aware of the new features of this programme.

The new FAO World Programme for the Census of Agriculture has added “Monitoring of MDGs” as one new objective of agricultural census. You will also note from the document on WCA 2010, available here, that the scope of the programme has been enlarged to cover a wide variety of new themes. It is expected that the modular approach to planning of censuses and surveys advocated in this programme will allow countries to collect data on a variety of subjects in an integrated and cost-effective manner.

It is professionally satisfying to note that the document on WCA 2010 shows us a way to enlarge the scope of the agricultural census to cover various dimensions of rural life. A new dimension of community-level data has been added in the new World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010. I hope that the suggestive list of indicators proposed under this component of agricultural census will help you plan your data collection efforts better, contributing thereby to the process of rural development.

A few papers will be discussed on the agenda items related to this WCA 2010, including statistics on aquaculture which is very important in this region.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In order to facilitate wider analysis and utilization of available data and its effective use in the process of policy formulation, it is important to create – at the national and subnational levels – statistical databases with common data structures and compatible software so that communication and exchange is possible, not only between the producers of agricultural statistics but also between users and producers of statistics.

I am pleased to inform you that FAO has launched the new FAOSTAT just two months ago. FAOSTAT, which is currently the world’s largest and most comprehensive statistical database on food and agriculture, has been redeveloped to better serve the users. It is gratifying to note that the FAOSTAT site receives over 10 000 hits daily and over 10 million records are downloaded every day.

Along with FAOSTAT, a new country-level version, CountrySTAT, has been developed and piloted in some countries. The product will offer a two-way bridge between national and international statistics on food and agriculture and will facilitate integration of efforts of several data producers within a country.

I see from the Timetable that the topic “The new release of FAOSTAT and developments in CountrySTAT” and the “Experience of the Philippines in implementing CountrySTAT”, are going to be presented and discussed during the meeting. I invite you all to be aware of the capabilities of these systems and take full advantage of the availability of these products in the statistical systems of your respective countries.

I would like to mention that the work done under the Japan-assisted project on development of Regional Data Exchange System (RDES) has been catalytic. FAO greatly appreciates the continued support from Japan in strengthening agricultural statistics systems in the region, and in further increasing the analytical capacities in the countries. The progress made by this project will be discussed in detail during the Session.

I am also glad that an experience undertaken under another Japan-funded project on “Identification of Areas and Populations Vulnerable to Food Insecurity” will be presented at this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

There will be five important papers presented by delegates from Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, as I mentioned earlier, reporting on recent developments in agricultural statistics. I am grateful to the authors from these countries for their contributions and willingness to share their countries’ experiences with other members. Special mention is due to Thailand for contributing two documents, one by the National Statistics Office and the other by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. I would also like to acknowledge the work done by Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, Philippines in processing and presenting the information provided by countries in FAO metadata questionnaire, in addition to a technical paper.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

From the point of view of a user, the quality of data and the information on technical aspects as well as related concepts, definitions, classifications and procedures adopted to produce the data are of paramount importance. However, this aspect of statistics tends to be neglected in many countries.

Realizing the importance of this subject, FAO has taken the initiative to create awareness on this matter and to provide a framework for countries. Apart from laying down the framework for ensuring quality of data collected and disseminated by countries, the Statistics Division of FAO is working to prepare a meta-database on National Agricultural Statistical Service. For this initiative a beginning has been made with Asian countries. A subregional workshop on metadata is being organized in Manila next month. You will get a chance to appreciate this subject in depth in at least two technical sessions of this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

FAO’s mandate is not just to work on developmental issues. It has played a leading role in reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts for the benefit of people affected by natural calamities. Since the disaster of 26 December 2004, we have led efforts in advising governments on rehabilitation in the fisheries, agriculture and forestry sectors in tsunami affected countries. We have also helped to repair and replace lost and damaged boats and equipment, and to restore damaged farmland and coastal eco-systems.

The contribution of statisticians is also needed in providing data for assessment of damage caused by natural disasters and for planning for mitigation of its effects and long-term rehabilitation. In my view, community-level databases covering several aspects of the life and well-being of the communities will go a long way in this direction. I am happy to note that a round-table discussion on this topic has been included in the Timetable.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

APCAS has provided strong support for the development of agricultural statistics in the region throughout its 43 years of existence. The Commission works not only to monitor the progress in development of agricultural statistics and takes cognizance of the needs of countries, but it also sets directions for further developments of statistical systems by working as a platform for sharing country initiatives. FAO looks to its member countries in deciding new programme initiatives and for setting priorities in the course of FAO reform. I request that you observe how previous undertakings have been implemented and recommend directions for our future actions. FAO looks to you for this guidance. In turn, I wish to assure you that we at the FAO Regional Office in Bangkok are always ready to extend technical assistance to our member countries to the best of our expert capability, despite any resource limitations.

Finally, let me again convey my sincerest gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting this session of the Commission. I acknowledge the hard work of the secretariat staff from the National Statistics Office and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand in the preparation and organization of this meeting. I should also like to thank my colleagues from FAO headquarters and the regional office for their technical contributions and managerial efforts for making this meeting valuable and productive.

I wish you all success in your deliberations and a pleasant stay on this beautiful island.

Thank you.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

By

Mrs Anchalee Ooraikul
Secretary-General, Office of Agricultural Economics
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand

Delivered to

The 21st Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics
Phuket, Thailand
11 – 15 September 2006

Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my great pleasure and privilege to address the 21st Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics or APCAS. The Office of Agricultural Economics, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand is honoured to co-host, with the Food and Agriculture Organization and the National Statistical Office of Thailand for this important gathering, which reflects the aspiration to promote the standardization of food and agricultural statistics in the Asia and Pacific Region. We would like to extend our warm welcome to all delegates and guests from participating countries. I am pleased to see that APCAS has returned once again in Thailand after its first session 1970, the second in 1978 and the third in 1990.

Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

During the last two decades, the industrial sector in the region has been developed more rapidly in comparison to agriculture. In many countries, rural inhabitants have been leaving the agricultural sector and become the workers in the cities where they can earn more incomes. The low productivity, price fluctuation and natural calamities that occasionally occur in agricultural sector are also the accelerating factors for the relocation of labour force. In some areas, the resources in agricultural sector have been left under-utilized due to the migration of farmers. If this phenomenon persists, it will cause the problems to the countries in both economic and social aspects. Thus, there is the need to boost up the productivity together with incomes in agricultural sector to make it more competitive and can encourage rural people to utilize fully the available resources for agricultural production. The agricultural sector has been changed to be more mechanized to avoid the shortage of labour force and increase efficiency and productivity. In order to keep pace with this development, policies and plans should be developed more properly to prevent any adverse affects to the country economy. All reliable data, information of relevant factors and alternatives are needed for its most effective policy results.

We are all aware that knowledge and information are essential for social and economic development. The Office of Agricultural Economics has recognized the

increasing demand for reliable and timely information required for policy planning in agricultural sector. We have continuously developed our information system in combination with the utilization of appropriate Information and Communication Technology. At present, the Office of Agricultural Economics database covers a wide range of the primary data related to production, prices and production costs at both provincial and national levels. The information system covers more than 30 commodities of crops, livestock and fisheries with inclusion of socio-economic and early warning system. All major commodity profiles have been improved through the methodologies such as Geo-Informatics and Crop Cutting Techniques. We also prepared the necessary information and recommendation for the decision-making process of the government.

To develop effective policies and plans in the time of globalization and high competition in the world market, we cannot rely on only information of our own countries. The worldwide information is presently vital for development of such policies and plans. The changes in production and utilization of certain agricultural commodity in one country may affect to the others. The important of the worldwide or global information is true not only in economic aspect but also in politic and humanitarian issues. The adequate information of food supplies will facilitate the attempt to relief the state of undernourishment of people in the world. If food insecurity occurs in any country, the surplus countries would be inevitably supposed to provide food aid. With this in mind, there are many endeavours to establish the international agricultural information system where FAO is the major agency taking care of this issue at world level. In ASEAN+3 countries, which are China, Japan and Korea. We also have set up the ASEAN Food Security Information System Project or AFSIS Project. The overall objectives of AFSIS include facilitating food security planning and implementation in the region through the systematic collection, organization, management, analysis and dissemination of food security information.

As for the construction of effective international information system, I have mentioned during the Meeting of Directors-General of Agricultural Statistics and Information in ASEAN+3 countries, this year, that we need a complete set of data from every country. The aggregation of standardized data from all countries will allow us to correct picture of the regional or world situation as well as the comparison among countries. To obtain the practicality of the information system, every country has to provide required information to the system by using the same standard. However, the preparedness of each country is varying. We can hardly to expect that all countries will be able to function at the same level of standard or quality. As a result, we cannot solely improve our capabilities to build up the information system and leave any one country behind. All countries have to go together. The more advanced countries have supposed to provide necessary supports to the countries that have limited resource and capacity. The cooperation among countries has to be enhanced to ensure that all countries can provide reliable information on a timely basis and can make use of it effectively as well.

I heartedly hope that the 21st APCAS Session will bring about the better understanding and cooperation among countries in the region and lead to the success of our endeavours to improve food and agricultural statistics in the region.

Thank you for your kind attention.

**ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMISSION ON
AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS**

Members as of September 2006

| | |
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| Australia | Malaysia |
| Bangladesh | Myanmar |
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| Lao PDR | Viet Nam |

**DATES AND PLACES OF SESSIONS OF THE
ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS**

| | | |
|--------------|---|---|
| First | – | Tokyo, Japan, 26 September – 3 October 1966 |
| Second | – | New Delhi, India, 9 – 14 December 1968 |
| Third | – | Bangkok, Thailand, 26 – 31 October 1970 |
| Fourth | – | Seoul, Korea, 6 – 12 October 1972 |
| Fifth | – | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 16 – 20 July 1974 |
| Sixth | – | Manila, Philippines, 25 – 31 March 1976 |
| Seventh | – | Bangkok, Thailand, 17 – 23 August 1978 |
| Eighth | – | Kathmandu, Nepal, 26 – 31 October 1980 |
| Ninth | – | Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2 – 7 December 1982 |
| Tenth | – | Jakarta, Indonesia, 26 July – August 1984 |
| Eleventh | – | Seoul, Korea, 29 May – 3 June 1986 |
| Twelfth | – | Colombo, Sri Lanka, 10 – 16 August 1988 |
| Thirteenth | – | Bangkok, Thailand, 29 October – 2 November 1990 |
| Fourteenth | – | Beijing, China, 8 – 13 June 1992 |
| Fifteenth | – | Manila, Philippines, 24 – 28 October 1994 |
| Sixteenth | – | Tokyo, Japan, 28 October – 1 November 1996 |
| Seventeenth | – | Hobart, Australia, 2 – 6 November 1998 |
| Eighteenth | – | Bali, Indonesia, 6 – 10 November 2000 |
| Nineteenth | – | Seoul, Korea, 21 – 25 October 2002 |
| Twentieth | – | New Delhi, India, 20 – 24 September 2004 |
| Twenty-first | – | Phuket, Thailand, 11 – 15 September 2006 |