



CFS

COMMITTEE ON
WORLD FOOD
SECURITY



CFS Policy Recommendations on

Closing Data Gaps and Promoting Evidence-Informed Decision-Making in Agriculture¹

Designing and evaluating agricultural policies and programmes requires high-quality, reliable, and accurate information and data. However, there currently exists enormous gaps in agricultural data and rural statistics.

Despite considerable efforts, most low and lower-middle-income countries still cannot cover basic agricultural data needs for evidence-based policies and investment. A majority of these countries do not conduct regular household and agricultural surveys, lack sustainable data systems, and have insufficient capacity to analyse and use even the limited data at their disposal. For instance, fewer than half of all FAO Members are able to officially report their basic national level data and statistics on food and agriculture to the organization including on crop and livestock production, harvested area, farm gate prices, food balance sheets, gross and net agricultural incomes, use of agricultural inputs, and land use and land cover.

That said, the potential for data collection and analysis to strengthen our food systems and make better policy decisions for food production and rural development remains large and untapped.

Recognizing that much more needs to be done to close the data gaps in agriculture and rural statistics and promote data-informed, gender-sensitive decision-making in agriculture and food systems, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), at its 46th Plenary Session in October 2019, endorsed its first 4-year Multi-Year Programme of Work 2020-2023, in which is included a major work-stream on Data collection and analysis tools for food security and nutrition.

The Committee is now kicking off work on this project to produce policy recommendations on closing data gaps and promoting evidence-informed decision-making in agriculture¹ for food security and better nutrition.

¹ The term 'agriculture' refers to agriculture, forestry and fisheries.



Objective:

This project aims at developing inter-governmentally agreed policy recommendations to support national and international efforts to address data gaps in agriculture and rural statistics with the ultimate goals of contributing to ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting more sustainable agriculture and food systems.

The Committee will develop these recommendations starting from a scientific report of the CFS High-Level Panel of Experts² (CFS HLPE), and using a multi-stakeholder, inclusive approach that allows UN specialised agencies, civil society, the private sector, foundations, and research institutions to work together with Member States to develop the most appropriate policies.

Among its various objectives, these policy recommendations will:

- Contribute to addressing problems such as low capacity of countries to produce, analyse and use quality and granular agriculture and rural statistics;
- Promote the use of forecasting and other innovative tools and techniques (geospatial, big data, earth observations, etc.) to complement survey-based techniques;

² The HLPE is the science-policy interface of CFS. It is made of up to 15 members among renowned academics, professors and experts in fields relevant to food security and nutrition.

CFS Secretariat is supported by:



- Address inadequate funding of the National Statistical Offices;
- Encourage data literacy of farmers, producers and agricultural workers;
- Use integrated survey programme to facilitate multi-dimensional data collection and analysis.

Timeline:

- **2021:** Preliminary activities including the preparation of the zero draft of the CFS HLPE Report on Data collection and analysis tools for food security and nutrition
- **1 July 2021:** Open public event on the project
- **2022:** Official start of the project with the launch of the CFS-HLPE Report
- **2022 – 2023:** At least four open debates and two rounds of formal negotiations
- **October 2023:** Adoption of the policy recommendations at CFS 51

CFS is seeking voluntary contributions from its Members and other stakeholders to fund this project. CFS Secretariat can provide a detailed budget of related activities for further consideration.

Through this project, CFS aligns its efforts with other ongoing programmes and initiatives aimed at closing the agricultural data gap.

Contact:

If your country or organization is interested in supporting this work process or the development and implementation of other CFS policy products, please contact CFS@fao.org

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