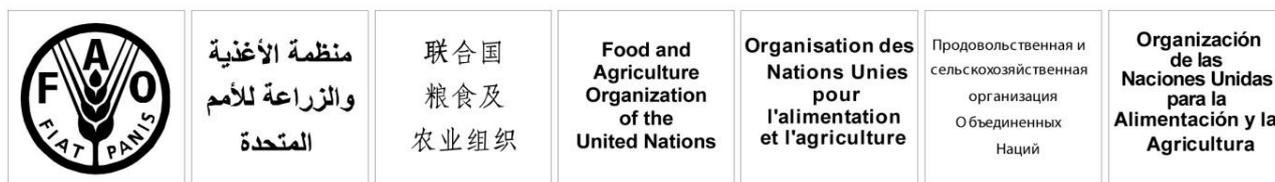


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**South-South Co-operation to Build Country Capacity to
Produce Agricultural and Rural Statistics**

Contributed by: Mukesh K. Srivastava, Senior Statistician
FAO-RAP
Email : mukesh.srivastava@fao.org

South-South Co-operation to Build Country Capacity to Produce Agricultural and Rural Statistics

Background

The Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics arose from a recognition that the quantity and quality of agricultural and rural data coming from national official sources has been on a steady decline since the 1980s. This decline comes at a time of increasing demand for new statistics and the need to integrate data on agriculture, fisheries and forestry to understand their effects on the environment and climate change to deal effectively with policy issues relating to sustainability of agricultural practices.

An Action Plan for the Global Strategy foresees a three-pronged approach to build capacity of countries, which includes Technical Assistance and Training backed by Research to identify appropriate cost effective methodologies. The Plan, which is a long term effort to remedy the situation, has been approved by the UN Statistics Commission and has received support from major donors like DFID and BMGF, but it is currently underfunded. The resource base to fully realize the goals of Global Strategy initiative itself needs to be expanded, and in addition, more resources will be required as further technical assistance and training requirements are identified during the implementation of the strategy at country level. There is a need to take advantage of complementarities that exist between on-going programmes of technical cooperation between countries in the region, as well as those of sub-regional organizations like ASEAN, SAARC and SPC. Synergizing the activities under the Global Strategy with bilateral and sub-regional cooperation instruments will be critical to the success of the Global Strategy.

There is growing consensus around the world that South-South Cooperation (SSC) is an effective instrument for catalyzing development, thereby expanding potential opportunities for collaboration and sharing resources in the global south. SSC is widely accepted as a complementary model of development cooperation, in particular for sharing knowledge, technologies, policies, best practices, lessons learned and experiences among countries, towards overcoming common challenges and achieving development goals of food security, poverty reduction and sustainable environment. The model also extends readily to statistical development.

The development landscape has changed considerably in recent years, to the extent that home-grown technological solutions are rapidly advancing in several “emerging economies”, creating unprecedented opportunities for South-South and Triangular Cooperation. Globally, more attention is now being paid to both the inclusivity of growth and its environmental sustainability. Attention is particularly focused on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) which face development challenges that impede their capacity to leverage opportunities offered by globalization. Consequently, SSC is gaining momentum and helping developing countries to jump-start and benefit from innovations, lessons and good practices, tried and tested elsewhere in the south. Internationally, there is an urgent call to FAO, alongside other UN agencies and non-State actors to take concrete measures to support SSC initiatives.

In particular, FAO is expected by its Members and the wider development community to play a major role in facilitating SSC according to its mandate as a specialized agency for food and agriculture. Ultimately, SSC will facilitate the achievement of FAO’s renewed Strategic

Framework, meeting member countries' priorities through promoting national leadership and strengthening countries' capacities to sustainably lead their own development processes.

New South-South Cooperation Strategy of FAO

FAO has developed a SSC Strategy which provides a framework of reference for FAO's involvement in SSC at global, regional and country level. The new strategy offers flexibility to accommodate different sets of donor and recipient requirements, including multi-agency partnerships.

The SSC Strategy has been largely shaped by both internal and external drivers of change, these include:

- ✓ strong FAO leadership support for SSC within FAO, which has led to the establishment of a special unit on this subject;
- ✓ SSC seen as a key implementation mechanism to achievement of five Strategic Objectives (SOs) and supported by Functional Objectives (FO), specifically the one on increasing the Outreach;
- ✓ Global development challenges and evolving development cooperation and aid architecture, coupled with a strong drive towards achieving more with less, building on the principle of complementarities.

In specific terms, **FAO's new approach to SSC differs**, in that it intends to:

- ✓ *widen the scope and set of modalities*
- ✓ *ensure a more flexible approach*: the new approach will be more demand-driven (less-rigid), with the possibility of long-, medium- and short-term expertise deployment, even at short notice;
- ✓ *mainstream SSC into the Strategic Framework*: SSC is an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the SOs and Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs). The new SSC approach closely aligns to FAO's core functions and, in this regard, complementarities will be sought with other FAO strategies;
- ✓ *be more field-oriented, in line with decentralization principles*: opportunities will be identified at country and regional level.
- ✓ *increase resource mobilization for SSC*: efforts will be made to proactively mobilize resources from a more diversified base;
- ✓ *increase its global relevance and local impact*: the new Strategy is well harmonized with the UN South-South and Triangular Cooperation framework, with greater potential for synergies, and harmony with the development priorities of member countries;
- ✓ *build expanded partnerships*: the Strategy envisages building multi-tier, inclusive and innovative partnerships and alliances to support SSC

Fundamentally, SSC provides an important and effective means to support the delivery of four out of the seven FAO Core Functions in its Strategic Framework, which align closely to the four SCC pillars described in the SSC Strategy, in particular *Core Function 3 (policy support)*, *Core Function 4 (capacity development)*, *Core Function 5 (knowledge exchange)*, and *Core Function 6 (partnerships development)*. Therefore, FAO aims to serve as a leading global SSC facilitator in areas of its mandate and where it has strong comparative advantages.

FAO will pursue a broader and more diverse set of SSC modalities, which offer greater flexibility, and are categorized as follows:

- ✓ ***Deployment of medium- and long-term expertise:*** this will involve the exchange of development solutions, capacities, and best practices through the deployment of long-term experts, providing technical advice, demonstrating new technologies, and opportunities for learning by doing and hands-on training.
- ✓ ***Exchange of short-term technical capacity:*** the exchange of best practices and ad hoc sharing of expertise, through study tours, short courses and workshops.
- ✓ ***Training and short-term capacity building initiatives:*** structured, modular educational exchange, through supporting the creation of centers of excellence, the exchange of professors and curricula, etc.
- ✓ ***Exchange of in-kind support and technological solutions:*** such as the exchange of software and technical solutions to statistical methodologies.

Experience and potential of SSC in Asia

Till the recent past the main thrust of the FAO SSC experiences have been the deployment of experts from one country in the South to another based on specific agreement and terms of references. Most of the SSC expertise has been concerned with crop production and closely working with farmers and extension workers.

The revised modality as explained in SSC strategy allows for a variety of modalities to be accommodated. The latest example in this regard is the experience with Turkey. Selected officials from five ECO countries were trained in Food Security policy analysis and project cycle management. The course design was a combination of course work and distance learning in partnership with a university in Ankara with financial support from the Turkish government and international development agency (TIKA) – the distance learning part of the course shall continue till early April and the second part of the course work will be held after that. The costs in this case included: Travel costs for participants, accommodation (full board), training costs (university) and a minimal amount for other expenses (\$25/day/person).

Yet another example is an FAP Project: Strengthening Agricultural Statistics and Food Security Information in the countries in the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD) through South-South Cooperation (GCP/INT/161/JPN). The project, costing USD 2.5 million, has been started in November 2013 for a period of five year and foresees providing technical assistance to CARD countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia) for the improvement of rice statistics through the use of expertise from ASEAN countries which already have experienced successful model, called AFSIS, for establishing South-South Cooperation in the field of agriculture statistics.

The new SSC strategy of FAO is an excellent opportunity to promote exchange of knowledge and experience among APCAS member countries. Asia and Pacific region has produced many leading statisticians of the world and it has some excellent teaching institution and well developed statistical systems. At the same time, the region contains some countries which lag far behind, with no facilities for teaching statistics and consequentially the manpower employed in the statistical system does not have any formal training in statistics.

Given a diverse situation in this region the appropriate choice of SSC modality will depend on the conditions and the needs in each case. For example, needs in Timor L'este and the modalities for SSC is rather different from what one would consider for Laos or Cambodia. The former may require a full package to develop the whole system from scratch; while in the latter plugging specific gaps may be more appropriate or feasible strategy for rapid development. One could think of specific training courses in one of many institutes in the region, on the job-training, deployment of experts from one institution to another, development of manuals, guidelines, translation of text books in local language etc.

Objective of the Roundtable

The objective of the round-table discussion is to explore the potential and modalities for increasing South-South cooperation, possibly with the support of a third partners and with technical expertise from FAO, and synergize the on-going bilateral and multi-lateral technical cooperation efforts to get the optimum development outcome at the country and regional level in the field of agriculture statistics.

The possible modalities foreseen at this stage could be:

- ✓ Regional or sub-regional projects focusing on a selected group of countries, supported by trust funds established by a lead donor and/ or in kind contribution of member countries in the south;
- ✓ Seconded experts working with FAO to gain expertise and then in member countries of the South;
- ✓ Visiting Young Professional Programme for countries in the South: funded by a trust fund by a country in the South and/or North;
- ✓ In kind support by member countries to capacity building efforts.

The conclusions of the roundtable will provide FAO a better understanding of:

- ✓ Specific needs of the countries for training and technical assistance that can be accommodated in SSC;
- ✓ Available opportunities and offers for providing technical assistance and training to the countries in need;
- ✓ International Cooperation framework of countries which can be dovetailed for SSC;
- ✓ Modalities for seeking and providing support, while taking advantage of FAO technical expertise and comparative advantage in the field of agricultural statistics.

In suggesting possible strategies, FAO should be seen as playing catalytic role of a facilitator in the international cooperation and providing the expert services, rather than as donor.