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Integration of Agriculture into the National Strategy for Development of Statistics

General framework of the strategic *planning* for agricultural statistics

There is little agreement about the boundaries of agricultural statistics system. This is due to the fact that, besides providing food to the population, animal and vegetable production economic activity exploits the majority of land and water resources together with inputs, services and equipments, it impacts income and well-being of farmers and of a large segment of rural population and affects rural environment. It is thus necessary for national leaders and their partners getting involved in the development of a strategy for agricultural statistics, to achieve as soon as possible an agreement upon the boundaries of this field, taking into account all sub-systems composing the National Statistical System (NSS).

The strategies for the development of statistics of agriculture, of the sub-systems and that of the central organization, should be integrated and articulated with a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). In addition to sectoral strategies, the NSDS should include strategies for the system cross-cutting functions such as regulation, coordination and strategic management, normalization, deontology, dissemination, storage, quality, communication, funding, programming, human resources management, monitoring and evaluation.

There is need for a governance mechanism to be created at different levels for the integration of agriculture into the national statistics system and the NSDS. Where such an institutional arrangement exists, the governance mechanism should be effective.

Since 2008 the international community, i.e. developed and developing countries, global and regional development partners, have been involved in a large consultation process aiming at developing a Global Strategy to improve agricultural and rural statistics. The purpose of the Global Strategy is to support countries in becoming capable, on a permanent basis, of providing regularly a minimum set of core data agreed between countries and international institutions. The implementation plan of the

Global Strategy will be submitted for final approval to the 42nd session of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations, the beginning of 2011.

In order to integrate data production objectives with the support that will be provided for the implementation of the Global Strategy, many countries will have to revise their NSDS as well as their national sectoral strategies, while some others will elaborate a new NSDS, including fully and explicitly the development of the agricultural and rural statistics system. Beforehand, each participating country will

adapt the content of the global strategy to its own needs, adding specific objectives and integrating the technical and financial support proposed by the FAO – the leading agency – and other development partners such as the World Bank, regional development Banks, and all other partners.

The following modality and timing of integration of agriculture according to the NSDS status may be adopted:

- No NSDS under preparation
 - advocate and work for the elaboration of a NSDS with agricultural sector fully integrated
 - initiate to develop a strategy for agricultural statistics
- NSDS under implementation and close to the end
 - advocate for the integration of agricultural sector in the NSDS
 - develop a parallel strategy for agricultural statistics to be integrated in the next NSDS
- A NSDS at an early implementation stage
 - develop a parallel strategy for agricultural statistics to be partially integrated in the mid-term review of the NSDS and fully in the next NSDS

Suggestions for the attention of countries

As some recent studies have found, so far only few developing countries have included agricultural and rural statistics in their NSDS. As a consequence of this, NSDS adopted in the last years have not given these domains sufficient attention, especially if compared to the growing need for data strictly related to agriculture such as hunger and poverty, climate change, water and land use, and the increasing use of human or animal food products for biofuel production.

Remedying this situation is a long term effort that will require countries to start soon a reflection aiming at proposing national authorities and partners a general strategy in order to adjust the situation in the medium-long term, while identifying the most effective measures to be adopted in the short run. Steps include:

- To estimate national statistics offer insufficiencies with reference to actual needs generated by agricultural and rural development policies, i.e. data gaps;
- To decide whether to elaborate an independent exercise for the design of a sectoral strategy or to integrate this exercise in the design of a new NSDS;
- To identify the measures to be implemented in the short run, in collaboration with main partners;
- To recommend a calendar for next agricultural and population census, specifying how to coordinate these two structural operations;
- To outline a first version of the national agricultural and rural statistics system, as integral part of the national statistical system.

For national authorities, the first task will be the creation of a discussion group in charge of proposing some of these actions, and to supervise the elaboration of a sectoral strategy for agriculture and rural environment. This inter-ministerial group, will be composed by statisticians both sectoral and from the central organization, users, ministry decision makers and partners; statistical regulations will foresee its creation, composition and the terms of reference; the lack of such regulation will give the Head of

State the power to order its creation, for instance by means of a proposal emanated jointly from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Central Statistics Office.

To guide its reflection, the group will start analysing the argumentations and recommendations provided by the Global Strategy for agricultural and rural statistics development, assessing their consistency country-wide and will define guidelines following the three pillars of the Global Strategy, i.e.:

- To agree upon a minimum set of core data that the country will provide to meet the current and emerging demands;
- Integration of agriculture into the national statistical systems achieved by an integrated survey framework; a survey and census programme able to cope with data need; an integrated base of data, micro-data and meta-data largely accessible;
- The development of a sustainable statistical system ensured by improved governance of the statistical system and capacity building including human and financial resources, tools and knowledge.

The group will meet the main partners to take stock of the ongoing mutual commitments with all institutions and partners, and to become acquainted with partner's present and future commitments to support to the development of sectoral statistics, in the general framework of the development of statistics. Consultation with those non-represented organizations will be explicitly foreseen; and notably regional and continental organizations of which the country is a member and which are involved in policies and programmes for statistical capacity building. As reference, annual "Partner Report on Support to Statistics – PRESS" is delivered by PARIS21, providing snapshot of ongoing statistical support programmes by donor partners and recipient countries.

More specifically, the group will formulate recommendations on past activities data and meta-data storage, statistics national coordination improvement, implementation and strengthening of the consensus building process with partners represented in the countries, and will propose a roadmap draft for the elaboration of a strategy for agriculture and rural statistics, both independent or integrated in the next NSDS.

Suggestions for the attention of partners

External assistance may allow least developed countries to advance faster; while most of them are facing challenges such as hunger, food security, rural and urban poverty.

Assistance will be as much effective as consistent, predictable and careful to development needs of these countries. Partners directly involved in statistical capacity building will coordinate their interventions adapting to the national statistical context the principles of aid effectiveness enunciated in the Paris Declaration, of which many of them are already signatories. This adaptation might be formulated as follows:

- Ownership - Developing countries set their own policies and strategies for the development of statistics and ensure action coordination for national statistics development support;
- Alignment - Donor countries align support behind national statistics development strategies, statistical institutions and procedures in the field of statistics;
- Harmonisation - Donor countries actions for national statistics development strategies are better harmonized and more transparent, allowing better collective effectiveness;
- Results –Resources management for statistics and decisional process in the field of statistics shift focus to results for all parties engaged in public statistics;

- **Mutual Accountability** - Donors and partners are accountable for national statistics development results.

A group of partners will be created in the country for the formalization and supervision of the activities of coordination among partners, and of consultation and exchange with the bodies created by the authorities for guiding agricultural and rural statistics development.

Country participation to the Global Strategy implementation will be part of the agenda of this group. Consultation with non-represented organizations will be explicitly foreseen, and notably regional and continental organizations of which the country is a member and which are involved in policies and programmes of statistical capacity building.

Dialogue will not be limited to represented partners policies and programmes but will take into account those of regional, continental and global organizations, of which the country is member and notably all global and regional programmes such as: the International Comparison Program, the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, the Implementation Strategy for the System of National Accounts 2008, the Harmonization of Statistics Strategy in Africa, the strategic Regional Framework for the Development of Statistics in Africa, and all regional strategies for the development of statistics at the moment under discussion.

It is recommended that the FAO Statistics Division, PARIS21 partners, the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities of the United Nations, training institutions, and many others¹, get organised in a way to ensure easy access to the technical knowledge necessary for the design and management of national programmes for agricultural and rural statistics development.

PARIS21 delivers the annual "Partner Report on Support to Statistics – PRESS"². The information provided on ongoing statistical support to countries, eventually integrated and updated on the spot, can be a useful tool for the preparation of support programmes for statistical development strengthening.

Guidelines and pilot studies

FAO and PARIS21 have jointly drafted a "Guidelines for the integration of statistics on agriculture into the National strategies for the Development of Statistics." This draft document will be circulated for peer review before finalization.

Three countries - Lao PDR, Mozambique and Peru – have been selected for piloting the application of the guidelines. Initial contacts have been established with these countries. Actual work for this exercise will start very shortly.

¹ See the PARIS21 website: Global Directory of Partners in Statistical Capacity Building.

² See the PARIS21 website PARTNER REPORT ON SUPPORT TO STATISTICS (PRESS) - 2009 ROUND