

Capacity Building for Better Agricultural Statistics

Misha Belkindas

The World Bank

Washington, USA

Email: mbelkindas@worldbank.org

Abstract: The past seven years have seen an unprecedented interest in statistics generally and a substantial increase in the resources available to develop and strengthen the capacity to collect, compile, process, and use statistical data. The aid agencies and the international statistical community have developed a number of approaches to capacity building in statistics and many of these are now beginning to show results. The Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS) provides the framework for the international community to work together to strengthen both national and international statistical systems.

The starting point is that effective capacity building requires countries themselves to take the lead in identifying their own needs and in setting their own priorities. Many countries have now prepared strategic plans for the statistical systems, based on a detailed assessment of existing strengths and weaknesses, which identify realistic goals and which set out what needs to be done to enable these goals to be reached. The most effective of these plans are based on wide consultation with all stakeholders, cover the whole of the statistical system and build on what is already in place. The major challenge now is to mobilize the resources for the investments that are needed and to deliver both technical and financial assistance in a cost effective and sustained manner.

If agricultural statistics is to benefit from these new approaches, then it is essential that the staff and management involved in producing and using these data are able to develop effective plans of their own, which are integrated and coordinated with the national strategies. This means dealing with issues such as coordination and management as well as data collection, understanding the demand for data and how this is changing and being ready to employ innovative approaches to increase efficiency. It also means having a clear focus on results, producing better data for better policies and more effective rural development.