

AFGHANISTAN

Country Challenges

Afghanistan is a mountainous landlocked country at the crossroads between South and Central Asia. Its economy is mostly agricultural, though in recent years agriculture practices have remained on a subsistence level and the country has relied on international aid to support basic nutritional needs. While approximately 58 percent of its land area is devoted to agriculture, production amounts to only about 25 percent of its economy. Agriculture production has additionally been stunted by increasingly volatile weather conditions and little access to arable land. Afghanistan's delicate security situation and governance challenges have resulted in an agricultural statistics system that is severely lacking in terms of methodology, coverage, quality and human and financial resources. The absence of proper land records and the displacement of large numbers of households in the past have made the administrative reporting system unreliable. Though international partners have made efforts to strengthen the socioeconomic database, and modern technology such as GIS and aerial photography is now being used, these steps have mainly served the government's short-term requirements, and have not helped develop sustainable statistical capacity in the agricultural sector, as well as other sectors.



Approximately 58 percent of the land in Afghanistan is dedicated to growing crops



Agriculture in Afghanistan accounts for around 25 percent share of its GDP



Global Strategy Solutions

The In-depth Country Assessment (IdCA) carried out by the Global Strategy in Asia Pacific identified a number of immediate actions for Afghanistan, starting with an increase in capacity to produce agricultural statistics. The increase can be met through a number of actions, including training statisticians and data collectors, as well as assisting with the implementation of needed surveys and censuses. An effective coordination mechanism between the Ministry of Agriculture (MAIL), Irrigation and Livestock and the Central Statistics Office should also be built, in order to avoid duplication and ensure uniform concepts and classification systems are adopted. Scientific methodologies for agricultural and livestock surveys that are efficient and feasible, in light of Afghanistan's capacity challenges, should also be put in place.

Current Country Work

The Global Strategy in Asia Pacific is working with Afghanistan's Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock and its Central Statistics Office to address its unique agricultural statistics challenges and develop a realistic plan that builds a foundation for better agricultural statistics and planning. The plan will concentrate on the following actions:

- Develop a strategic plan for agricultural and rural statistics
- Develop an improved sampling methodology for agricultural and livestock surveys
- Pilot an agricultural and livestock census
- Develop a system for collection of market prices and market information
- Undertake cost of cultivation studies for wheat and other main cereal crops
- Conduct a training in remote sensing

Towards a Statistics Secure Future

Afghanistan has advanced toward its goals of agriculture statistics capacity building and implementing a strategic plan for agricultural and rural statistics (SPARS) through a reaching a number of milestones. An in-depth country assessment has been completed and acted upon, followed by a SPARS roadmap, which has been endorsed. The SPARS is expected to be completed in early 2017. In 2015, the Global Strategy held a remote sensing training in India for Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigations and Livestock staff. A mission to Afghanistan in early 2017 will finalize the SPARS and help to set up work on technical assistance activities, which will focus on two areas: developing a master sample frame and improving cost of production statistics.



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