SRI LANKA

IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL & RURAL STATISTICS

Global Strategy

Country Challenges

Agriculture is vital to the developing island nation of Sri Lanka, employing about one third of its labour force and using close to 42 percent of the country's total land area. However, agriculture only contributes about 8 percent to the country's overall GDP. Sri Lanka has no national strategy for the development of statistics, and statistics data is collected on a stand-alone basis without coordination among producing agencies, leading to instances of duplication and inconsistencies. Except for rice, data collection for agricultural crops, including plantation crops, livestock, fisheries and forests, are collected through administrative reporting systems that are not considered high quality. Though the methodology for rice production estimation is considered objective, it has scope for further improvement. Little work has been done on the collection of environmental statistics, and cost of production statistics are not available at all for livestock, forestry and fisheries. Sri Lanka's national accounts, particularly in forests and fisheries, have weaknesses and gaps that need to be addressed.

Agriculture uses close to 42 percent of Sri Lanka's total land area

In Sri Lanka, agriculture only contributes about 8 percent to the country's overall GDP

Global Strategy Solutions

An In-depth Country Assessment (IdCA) by the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Asia Pacific recommended a number of actions for Sri Lanka. Weaknesses and gaps in agricultural sector national accounts should be identified first to improve overall decision making and policies. Methodologies for highland vegetable crop statistics, rice crop cutting surveys and livestock production statistics need to be revised as well. In the fisheries and rice sectors, reliable cost of production data needs to be gathered and disseminated. Finally, better statistics on food security are needed through generating improved food balance sheets and building a framework for long-term improvement of the food sector statistical system.

Current Country Work

The Global Strategy in Asia Pacific is collaborating with Sri Lanka's Department of Census and Statistics to initiate a number of projects and provide short-term technical assistance that will meet the country's agricultural and rural statistics needs. The following actions are being implemented.

- Improve the methodologies for rice crop cutting surveys and crop forecasting

- Improve the methodology for highland crop statistics

- Improve data quality for the food balance sheet

- Improve livestock production statistics

- Develop a Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SPARS)

Towards a Statistics Secure Future

Sri Lanka has begun implementing the recommended projects and is currently in the advanced stages of improving the methodology for rice crop-cutting surveys and highland crops, which has resulted in the recommendation of alternative methodologies for rice production and highland crop production estimation. These alternatives are being pilot tested before a nationwide recommendation is made. Work in Sri Lanka has also led to the completion of a number of reports vital to the Global Strategy and Government goals, including an In-Depth Country Assessment, country proposal paper for short-term technical assistance and training, a Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics roadmap, and draft technical reports on new methodologies for highland crops and estimating rice production. The IdCA and country proposal paper have been endorsed by the Sri Lankan Government.

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