

Twenty-First Session of the
Asia Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS)
Vientiane Capital City, Lao PDR 18-21 Feb 2014

Opening Remark by Dr. Bouppha Samaychanh,
Head of Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB), Ministry of Planning and Investment

His Excellency Dr. Vilayvan Phomkhe, Minister of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry;
Mr. Mukesh Srivastava, Secretary of the Commission, FAO;
Distinguish Country Delegates,
Colleague Heads of National Statistical agencies)
Representatives of International Organizations,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

It gives me great delighted to extend to you all distinguish delegates for a very warm welcome on behalf of the Lao Bureau Statistics (LSB), Ministry of Planning and Investment and to say how grateful we are to have you here to convene this very importance event of the 25th Session of the Asia Pacific Committee on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS) in a small and charms Vientiane Capital City of the Lao PDR.

The Session of the Asia Pacific Committee on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS), which is conducted every two years, has always been considered a very important forum for Regional Statistical Community as well as the National Statistics System to assess current status, consult-exchange experiences, lesson learnt and propose a framework and solutions to improve and strengthen the agricultural statistics for better evidence-base policies as well as the way-toward the best practices in the process of the implementation of the ten (10) fundamental principles of official statistics which was endorsed in 1994 and reaffirmed in 29 January 2014 (revised preamble only), and will be endorsed by UN General Assembly to its 45th commission session.

As it is clearly stated in the working agenda of the Session which will focus on the wide range of important and relevant topics, the achievements in the past two years since the 24rd Session Da-Lat, Vietnam will be reviewed and discussed as stated by Director General of Planning and Cooperation Department. Given the importance and contents of the Session, it is a great honour for LSB to work and coordinating with Ministry of Agriculture and with FAO to organize this important forum.

Excellences; Ladies and Gentlemen!

It has become commonplace to say, and repeat saying, that scarcity of resources is the most severe constraint to the development in general and in particular for the statistical development, these resource constraints have meant that statistical development is often given low priority, even though statistics are needed to made sound policy decisions and well-targeted and realistic interventions. On the other hand, our statistical agencies have not managed to take full advantage of the changing tide by effectively demonstrating and disseminating statistics and provide good statistics on timely manner to deliver on the Nation's Development Goals. However, in practices, no matter how much we can do by ourselves on the national level as well as at the regional level, whether it be development on the data sources, production and dissemination to improve official statistics, it is never enough, there is always a long way to go, as the demands has been changed rapidly overtime and it is involve both quantity and quality in accordance to the economic-social and environmental development aspects.

In the case of Lao PDR, the increasing on national and international demands on the quality official statistics to support evident-base policies formulation as well as the process of monitoring and evaluation provide us opportunities and at the same time also big challenges for National Statistics System.

Excellences; Ladies and Gentlemen!

Given the needs, it is appropriate recall some of the notable achievements, we have received considerable of government supports thru the legislation and institutional arrangement: statistics law approved by the National Assembly in June 2010 after the Strategy for Development of National Statistics System 2010-2020 endorsed in May 2010 by the Government of Lao PDR. Number of staff for LSB, Province and District Office Statistics and Line Ministry has been gradually increased. National budget support for Statistics Activities, in particular the data collection and capacity building program for the National Statistical System also has been considerable increased. In addition we also received the technical and financial support from the development partners and international donors.

The LSB has become the coordinating body of production and dissemination of statistics and information within the Vertical and Horizontal National statistical system. How do we coordinate? The Statistical Steering Committee (SSC) created to oversee the implementation of SDNSS (chaired by Head of Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) and include member of Multi Development Agencies (MDAs) (DG/DDG level). We plan to set up a *Statistics Working Group (SWG)*, which will be platform for donor coordination, which is under the Macroeconomic Sector Working Group. Departments at LSB work and serve as secretary to SSC and lead the implementation of four key strategic objectives and 12 working programs SDNSS 2020. The National Implementation and Coordination Team designated each supporting project and report to the Project Steering Committee.

In regards to the Agriculture Statistics, as we all acknowledged that is one of main national statistic in Lao PDR as a developing country; the rural population accounts for nearly 75% and relies on agriculture for living. Developing agriculture Statistic is also being taken to account in our strategy of development statistic under working program No.9 out of 12 working program from SD NSS 2020. Agricultural Statistical Indicators, data sources and report timeline has been identified in the indicators development framework. Action Plan for National Agriculture Statistics prepared with the support from ADB under the implementation of Regional action plan of Global Strategy to improve Agriculture and Rural Statistics and endorsed by Ministry of Agriculture.

In addition to its administrative data collection and reporting system, LSB together with The Department of Planning and corporation (DoP) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) conducted agriculture census 2 times in 1998/99 and in 2011, which obtained a great amount of scientific, reliable and valuable data and filled in the many blanks of basic data. Those data is expedient for government to monitor social-economic performance in rural areas and provide a basis for decision-making for the timely progress and achievement of policies for agriculture and rural areas. Moreover those data is also valuable information for international organization and other public users. You will hear more about the Lao Agriculture Census thru the later session including its dissemination.

Excellences; Ladies and Gentlemen!

Despite advantage that we have gain, it is importance to note that the successful implementation of SD NSS 2020 will require enormous commitment, comprehensive institutional arrangement, capacity building program; good coordination mechanism, sufficient human resources and financial support from the Government, Development Partners, International Donors and other stakeholders to perform work programs is critical.

LSB and the NSS including the Ministry of Agriculture in transition, it is required considerable amount of time and investment to strengthen the organization. The essential role the agricultural statistics play in promoting agricultural development and overall socio-economic development of our people in the Lao PDR have been repeatedly highlighted. *The law is not enough for statistics, we need a good development framework and plan and very importance is how strategizing to effectively implement it.*

In a spirit of true cooperation and collaboration, we in this region of the world, proud of cultivating all past and present civilizations and cultures, must join in an action-oriented effort to addressing and solve the problems that beset to the better quality of Agricultural Statistics Development.

We greatly encouraged by the presence at this meeting of outstanding statisticians who will no doubt bring their expertises and wide experiences to bear on discussions of these very important topics. We are therefore confident that the decisions and recommendations of this meeting will effectively address the problems at hand and lay the necessary foundation for the development and improvement in the collection and utilisation of agricultural statistics and set the stage for the socio-economic development and the general well-being of the people of Asia and Pacific in the coming years.

We are aware that this is a great opportunity for LSB and Ministry Agricultural colleagues to renew contacts and discuss issues, problems of mutual interest in particular to share and learn experiences with colleagues from different countries in the Asia Pacific Region, international organizations and advanced statistics countries in the context of Lao PDR integration into the regional and global statistics community.

For the international participants, we hope that your stay will be a memorable one. For those who have been here before we hope your stay this time would be more pleasant than the previous ones and get to know more of the local culture and customs of our country.

Lastly, we would also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to our development partners and international donors who have provided support for the development of the strategic plan and contributing to its implementation and for their support with Government to our statistics development and in institutional building.

On behalf of LSB and organisers, we wish the APCAS meeting has a great success and fruitful deliberations throughout the next four days.

Thanks you!

