

Summary of
Briefing and Partnership Consultation on the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Asia and the Pacific
13 November 2014, Bangkok, Thailand

The Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics initiative is the outcome of a three-year effort initiated by the UN Statistical Commission and supported in the Asia Pacific region by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP); as well as national statistics offices, agricultural ministries, and other government and private institutions producing and using agricultural statistics in the region.

In Asia Pacific, the Global Strategy is guided by a Regional Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) which was drafted with the objective to not only rebuild statistical systems producing agricultural statistics, but also to meet emerging data requirements and the need to monitor cross-cutting issues throughout the region.

Implementation of the RAP began in early 2013 with the intention of covering twenty countries by the end of the 2017. Work is well advanced in five countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Samoa, and Sri Lanka) where technical assistance and training activities have begun with in-depth country level assessments of capacity to produce agricultural and rural statistics developed in coordination with national stakeholders and development of proposals for short-medium term high priority activities needed to improve agricultural and rural statistics. Early work has also started in Fiji.

The objective of the Briefing meeting was to bring together members of the international development community to facilitate a broader consultation on the implementation of the Regional Action Plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Asia Pacific. The main areas of focus were to brief participants on progress made on the implementation of the Global Strategy, to provide an open forum for development partners to share their ongoing activities for agricultural statistics in the region, and to outline opportunities for greater collaboration in the future. The meeting also provided an opportunity to the representatives of the pilot countries to meet the potential resource partners.

Participants

Participants in the Briefing and Partnership consultation included: (1) Embassies of Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Korea, Switzerland, and Thailand; (2) Members of the Regional Steering Committee – representing countries, research institutions, and implementing partners of the Global Strategy; Selected GS implementing countries; and observers from the Republic of Korea and representatives of regional organizations such as the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS).

Welcoming Remarks

The *Briefing and Consultation on the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Asia Pacific* was opened jointly by Mr Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative, FAO, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; Ms

Margarita Guerrero, Director, Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP); and Ms Dalisay Maligalig, Principal Statistician, Asian Development Bank (ADB). The session highlighted the importance of agricultural statistics in the region – particularly its contributory role in monitoring food security in the region. The Global Strategy in this regard was noted as a critical initiative to the improvement of agricultural statistics in the region that would require the contributions of the larger international development community in the region going forward.

Progress in Implementation of the Technical Assistance Component of the Global Strategy and Emerging Scenario

An Overview of Global Strategy activities in Asia Pacific was presented to participants of the Briefing and Consultation – highlighting the progress of activities in each of the initial implementing countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Samoa and Sri Lanka. Implementation in the region was noted to be well advanced with the recent completion of an in-depth country assessment in each of the implementing countries. The assessment sought to outline the main constraints to the production and dissemination of agricultural and rural statistics and was noted to be an input to future technical assistance activities – most notably the development of a country proposal to highlight short to medium term needs for the production of agricultural statistics; and the drafting of a Strategic Plan for Agricultural Statistics (SPARS) which would serve as an advocacy document for the sustainability of agricultural statistics in the long term. The Regional Office reiterated its commitment to keeping all partners of the development community up to date on the latest advances in activities of the Global Strategy for the remainder of the initiative.

Status and Experience on GS activities at country level

In the following sessions, participating countries in the implementation of the Global Strategy in Asia Pacific were asked to present their experiences in partaking in the Global Strategy initiative and resulting outcomes that were identified during the in-depth country assessment process. Each country highlighted a set of short term country proposals that not only reflected the gaps and deficiencies identified through the in-depth country assessments, but also sought to lay the foundations for a stronger and more sustainable agricultural and rural statistics system in each respective country.

In this session, presentations were made from the countries of Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Samoa. An outline of these proposals is available directly from the Regional Office of the Global Strategy. Attendees of the briefing and consultation were encouraged to follow up with the Regional Office of the Global Strategy should there be interest in either partnering with the Global Strategy or getting involved directly with the country to meet their immediate needs financially.

Discussions

- It was clarified that the scope of the Global Strategy was well beyond the traditional definition of agriculture that focused on crops and livestock. It was noted that the Global Strategy scope also extended to: Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment, and Rural Statistics.
- On the discussion of potential partnerships with the Global Strategy, participants were encouraged to follow up with the Regional Office for the Global Strategy to discuss

partnership modalities for future activities in both current implementing countries and those countries that would follow in the remainder of the first phase.

- Many of the country proposals presented directly involved the use of new technologies that would require support in both technical assistance and training. The most requested areas of assistance included: (i) use of remote sensing for crop estimation; (ii) use of IT for data collection; and (iii) improved tools for dissemination.
- Sustainability was noted to be a crucial component to the success of the Global Strategy and participants of the briefing were receptive to the approach the Global Strategy has taken to ensure that the process has been country-driven.

Follow Up

Participants of the Briefing and Partnership Consultation meeting were supportive of the Global Strategy's initiative in the Asia Pacific Region and urged the Regional Office to maintain communication with the international development community in the region as the project progresses.