

Concept Note

Workshop on Strategic Planning for Agricultural and Rural Statistics

17-19 March 2015

Bangkok

Background

The *Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics* (GS) initiative is the outcome of an international effort endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission and is implemented 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). The GS is tasked with the objective to not only rebuild statistical systems producing agricultural statistics, but also to meet the emerging data requirements and the need to monitor cross-cutting issues throughout the region. These objectives are guided by the three pillars of the GS which outline a multi-pronged approach through technical assistance, training, and research.

Implementation of the GS in Asia Pacific is guided by a [Regional Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific](#) (RAP) with an initial target to reach 20 countries by 2017. Implementation has thus far started with in-depth country level assessments of capacity to produce agricultural and rural statistics in six countries: Bhutan, Fiji, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Samoa, and Sri Lanka. An additional eight countries are expected to begin in 2015. Country assessments have taken a country driven approach bringing together national stakeholders which in turn helps to develop short-medium term high priority projects needed to improve agricultural and rural statistics. These assessments also feed into development of Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SPARS) that will outline and propose a long-term direction for the improvement of agricultural and rural statistics in the country.

Since 2013 considerable experience has been gained and lessons learnt while undertaking in-country work in the region. It has been widely recognized that institutional arrangements for coordinating statistical activities and sharing responsibility between NSOs and line Ministries significantly impact the development of agricultural statistics in the countries. Coordination issues in particular tend to become complex in the light of the statistical legislation, which empower the NSOs for all statistics and ignore the role and contribution of line ministries in agricultural and rural statistics. With the limited resources the NSOs may prioritize most important statistical activities which feed into macro-economic statistics. In the process the statistics which is used for day-to-day management of agricultural and rural sector may get neglected.

On the technical aspects as well, there are choices to be made in developing an integrated agricultural statistical system such as improving the existing administrative reporting system vis-a-vis adoption of sample surveys for data collection, need for development of Master Sampling Frame and integrated survey framework for agriculture statistics, integration of data captured through different technologies (RS, GIS, GPS, personal interview), maintenance of integrated databases on social, economic and environmental dimensions of human activities etc. which will need to be taken care of while preparing the country strategic plans. Since each country has different approaches and technical interventions, as well as different degrees of success, it would provide a great opportunity to learn from each other's success and lessons learnt by bringing them together and sharing their experiences. Expert feedback and advice on these issues can also significantly improve the quality of assistance being provided to countries under the GS project.

As regard to funding arrangements, current GS resources may be able to support the development of SPARS as part of in-country activity and a few short to medium term improvement projects in the selected countries. Overall implementation of SPARS will however be guided by the sustained availability of resources from Government budget in the long run and mobilizing external donor assistance. Since most countries already face resource constraints due to ever increasing demand on their capacity, mobilizing additional resources is a major issue for them. Resource mobilization strategies at the national and regional level are needed to support the countries in this endeavour.

In order to deliberate on the above issues, a three day “Workshop on Strategic Planning for Agricultural and Rural Statistics” is being organized in Bangkok, Thailand from 17 - 19 March 2015. The workshop will bring together experts and researchers from countries and international organizations.

Objective

The objective of the Workshop is to share best practices and experiences on development of integrated NSS; which may ultimately support the development of SPARS and the sustainability of agricultural and rural statistics in GS implementing countries and newly selected countries.

Outputs

1. Best practices and experiences shared among participating countries on applicable approaches to integrate agriculture into NSS - particularly the roles and responsibilities of NSO and line Ministries.
2. Recommendations provided to guide GS experts and consultants at national and international level in the development of SPARS.
3. Best country practices shared on the development of resource modalities for supporting SPARS and the sustainability of the agricultural and rural statistics.
4. Improved quality of SPARS documents to be produced in each of the GS countries.
5. Recommendations to promote inter-departmental/ministerial coordination, resource mobilization and other priority issues are discussed and agreed.

Participants

Participants of the Workshop will include

- Experts from international organizations FAO, ADB, UNESCAP, USDA
- Experts from countries/organizations (NSO/MOA) which have best practices to share on integration.
- National Strategic Coordinators/International consultants from fifteen countries in the region where GS work is in progress or is expected to start in 2015.
- A total of about 50 participants are expected to attend the event.

Duration

The Workshop is scheduled for three days during 17 - 19 March 2015.

Venue

The Workshop will be held in Bangkok, Thailand.

Sustainability of the activity

The development of a Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics is one of the main outputs of the Global Strategy initiative in Asia Pacific, and it is envisioned that the outputs of this workshop would directly support the conceptual development and effective implementation of SPARS in each of the GS implementing countries.