



SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

BRIEFING PAPER: PACIFIC STRATEGIC PLAN TO IMPROVE AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL STATISTICS

Stakeholders Meeting on the Implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics,

(15-17 June, Bangkok Thailand)

Introduction:

1. This paper is for presentation at the Stakeholders Meeting on the Implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. It was prepared for the information of participants, in lieu of attendance by Anna Fink, Agricultural Statistician at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).
2. The paper provides a brief overview of discussions currently undergoing, regarding the creation of a sub-regional initiative for the inclusion of small Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) into the Asia Pacific Regional Action Plan on Agricultural and Rural Statistics (RAP).

Objective:

3. The overall objective is to support food security, sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation in the Pacific through the development of evidence based policy. This will be done by establishing a long-term comprehensive action plan for the Pacific on agricultural and rural statistics: a Pacific Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (PSPAR).
4. The Strategy will be designed to meet the specific requirements of PICTs, small PICTs in particular, to enable them to partake in the wider global initiative on agricultural and rural statistics. It will provide a governance structure, source of funds, and be fully integrated with the regional Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) and countries' own National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). The Strategy should cover all elements of statistical collection, analysis, dissemination, as well as active promotion of, and technical support to improve data use, as well as research, training and general technical assistance.
5. The ultimate outcome would be the creation of a PSPAR which provides the foundation for cross-governmental coordination and collaboration in the generation and use of vital agricultural and rural statistics for evidence based policy development.

Background/rationale:

6. The current process for the development of Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SPARs) in the RAP is comprehensive and so far both Samoa and Fiji in the Pacific have benefitted from entering into it.
7. However, many of the smaller PICTs face challenges which make the standard SPAR process unsuitable. Many small PICTs have statistical offices which may have no more than one or two personnel responsible for all statistical collections. This means they face severe, first and foremost human resource constraints as well as financial limitations. Furthermore, many small PICTs have large exclusive economic zones but relatively limited land areas and small commercial agricultural sectors.
8. Nevertheless, subsistence agriculture remains a crucial source of sustainable livelihoods and food production in these countries. Agricultural and rural statistics are therefore vital for informing policy on environmental sustainability, food security and poverty reduction.
9. Consequently, there is a need for a mechanism to enable smaller PICTs to collect core minimum agricultural and rural statistics without placing significant additional demands on already overstretched resources.

Methodology:

10. The development of a PSAR needs to evolve through consultation with the PICTs concerned to ensure it is both relevant and effective. It is therefore proposed that a roundtable discussion be held with PICTs to garner their views on the initiative as a first step. Further consultation and endorsements will be sought at other relevant regional fora¹.
11. If there is interest in the initiative, consultations could commence in a handful of PICTs as forerunners to understand the likely specific requirements for the broader, Pacific-wide Strategy. In general, a balance should be maintained between placing demands on countries financial and human resources and the need for country ownership of the regional strategy.
12. It is anticipated that the Strategy would focus on leveraging ongoing work in the region and within countries on agricultural statistics data collection, for example, by extracting agricultural data from the Standardised Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (SHIESs) supported by SPC and the inclusion of agricultural modules in Population Censuses. The Strategy should focus on the practicality of interventions and ensuring countries get the best value for money from their statistical activities.
13. Where possible, south-south cooperation will be used and lessons taken from the application of the Global Strategy in other Small Islands Developing States.

¹ The upcoming 2020 World Round of population and housing censuses Pacific planning workshop convened by SPC's *Statistics for Development Division* 27 – 31 July in Noumea, provides a timely opportunity to flag Strategy-related data requirements with the region's Government statisticians.