



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
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Global Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Statistics

I. Why Do We Need a Global Strategy?

1. The Independent External Evaluation of FAO stated that “the time has come for a total re-examination of the statistical needs for the 21st century and how they can be met.”¹ This was followed by an Independent Evaluation of FAO’s Role and Work in Statistics which concluded that there was an urgent need to improve the capacity to produce agricultural statistics at the country level, which had steadily declined since the 1980’s as had the resources made available to agricultural statistics by both countries and development partners.

2. The two evaluations found that many countries were not meeting the minimum requirements for agricultural statistics. The evaluations also pointed to a growing need for information to guide policy concerning the environment, climate change, food security, biodiversity, investment in agriculture and water and land use. These are issues that go beyond national boundaries yet are of crucial importance in terms of agricultural policy. The increasing demand for alternative uses of agricultural products, such as bio-fuels, is also raising policy issues that require information that is simply not available, especially in the developing countries.

3. The fact that there is a lack of sound information in support of agricultural development and food security policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, and increasing demands and needs for agricultural statistics, have also revealed the major weaknesses and deficiencies of the current system of agricultural statistics in most countries. One major issue identified, is the lack of coordination between national statistical offices and ministries of agriculture with the result that National Strategies for Development of Statistics (NSDS), in

¹ Paragraph 610 of FAO Conf. document No. C 2007/7A.1-Rev.1

(<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/012/k0827e02.pdf>)

general, do not properly cover agricultural statistics. This highlights the urgent need for a new conceptual framework to provide the guiding principles and the foundation for integrating agricultural statistics into the national statistical system.

II. Purpose of the Global Strategy

4. The purpose of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural Statistics is to provide a vision for national and international statistical systems to produce the basic statistical information in support of policy and decision making, as it relates to the agricultural sector, required for the 21st century. The immediate goals are:

- Countries will agree upon a minimum set of core agricultural data and will pledge to provide such a minimum core data set annually to meet the current and emerging needs of policy and decision making, markets and trade, and investment.
- Agriculture will be integrated into the national statistical systems in order to meet policy maker and other data user expectations that the data will be comparable across countries and over time.
- The integration will be achieved by an agreed upon conceptual framework as a foundation and an establishment of innovative methodological systems and solutions to build the national statistical infrastructure.

5. The achievement of these goals will require a renewed commitment by countries to strengthen their food and agricultural statistics through capacity building and other actions as required. The Strategy will also have a catalytic effect in mobilizing external resources in support of the long-term development goal of a sound statistical system.

III. Key Components of the Global Strategy

6. The key components of the Global Strategy include the following:

- Identification of data requirements and of a new conceptual framework;
- Identification of a minimum core data set;
- Integration of agricultural statistics into the national statistical system through better institutional coordination;
- Adoption of new methodological tools to facilitate the integration: master sampling frame, integrated survey framework and integrated database; and
- Development of a global programme of statistical capacity building.

7. The Global Strategy is based on a thorough assessment of users' needs and the statistics currently available. This assessment revealed that there was a serious decline in the quantity and quality of agricultural statistics while at the same time many new data requirements are emerging. These emerging data requirements include issues closely interlinked to agriculture such as poverty and hunger, climate change, land and water uses, and the increasing use of food/feed commodities to produce bio-fuels.

8. Given these emerging data requirements, a new conceptual framework needs to be developed to define the dimensions, units, scope, coverage, and boundary of agricultural production and activities. Such a conceptual framework would provide the foundation for the Global Strategy and help translate policy issues into statistical language; show how to integrate agricultural statistics into the national statistical system; apply harmonized concepts, definitions, and classifications across different domains ensuring consistency among all indicators; and organize data items in a comprehensive and coordinated way, avoiding data overlaps and data gaps.

9. The assessment of national agricultural statistical systems in the context of the conceptual framework points to an urgent need to improve the statistical capacity of countries to rebuild their statistical systems to meet the new demands and challenges. The assessment also showed a need to improve the coordination between national statistical offices and other producers of agricultural statistics.

10. The Global Strategy also identifies a minimum core data set that every country will pledge to provide at the national level and on an annual basis. This minimum core data set is required to provide national and international policy-makers with the necessary information about issues of interest to countries and also issues that go beyond national boundaries; it will reflect agreement reached among national and international statistical organizations, donors, and other stakeholders under a United Nations mandate. The minimum set of data requirements will include statistics on production (including on areas, livestock numbers and yields), trade, land cover and water use, the contribution of agriculture to the national economy (including to GDP, employment and export earnings), the effect of agriculture on the environment and climate change, and the monitoring of efforts to reduce poverty, which are not independent of each other. It will also address the need to integrate agriculture into the national statistical system.

11. The Strategy identifies three interlinked methodological tools upon which the integration will be achieved. Firstly, each country will develop a master sampling frame that will provide frame for all agricultural statistical data collections. All data collections based on sample surveys or censuses will then have their sample units selected from the master sample frame. Secondly, an integrated survey framework will be established to collect agricultural statistical data consistently across countries and over time. Thirdly, the concept of a master sampling frame will facilitate the establishment of a data warehouse that will include all official statistics related to food and agriculture.

12. The implementation of these principles will require improved governance at the national level with clear identification of roles and responsibilities for the national statistical office, the ministry of agriculture and other line ministries. Agricultural statistics in many countries are largely provided by the Ministry of Agriculture with little coordination with the National Statistical Office. The strategy recommends that each country establishes a national statistical council to coordinate different data producers. The strategy, on the other hand, leaves to each country to decide the specific institutional framework and the allocation of responsibilities among the various institutions.

13. Better coordination will also be needed among international organizations that are supporting statistical capacity building and providing technical support to developing countries. The Global Strategy advocates for the coordination of donors' efforts to improve agricultural and rural statistics and to establish a programme of statistical capacity building on the identified set of methodological tools.

14. The Strategy is a long term effort that will be implemented in stages according to the level of development of the statistical system of each country. Those needing to reform their statistical system will begin with the minimum core data set and build the rest over time. The next group is the countries with National Strategies for the Development of Statistics being implemented. These national strategies need to be reviewed in light of the Global Strategy and revised if necessary. The third group includes the countries with developed statistical systems. In cases where these systems do not meet the integration requirement, there will be a need to begin by developing a master sample frame for agriculture and an integrated database.

15. Given the dynamic nature of agriculture and interrelated issues, the strategy should be considered to be a living document to be updated when needed to reflect evolving situations.

IV. Process to Develop the Global Strategy

16. The United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) initiated the effort to develop a Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural Statistics at its 39th Session in 2008 with the establishment of an international working group. A draft report providing a framework to develop the strategy was prepared and discussed at a meeting of experts and stakeholders held in Washington in October 2008². This meeting was attended by top managers of national statistical offices and ministries of agriculture from 27 countries and representatives of international organizations, as FAO, the World Bank, IMF, EUROSTAT and OECD. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the United Kingdom Department for International Development were also represented. The outcomes of this meeting formed the basis for a paper discussed at the 40th Session of the UNSC in February 2009³.

17. The UNSC recognized the current unsatisfactory situation of agricultural statistics and the essential role of agricultural and rural statistics for policymaking. The UNSC recommended the development of a global strategy to improve agricultural statistics to meet the increasing demand for information at both the national and international levels and established a working group of national and international representatives, called “Friends of the Chair Group (FoC)”, to steer the process. Members of the FoC Group of the UNSC include Brazil (chair), Australia, China, Cuba, Ethiopia, Italy, Morocco, Philippines, Russian Federation, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, USA, FAO, United Nations Statistics Division, EUROSTAT and the World Bank. FAO has been called upon to lead this international effort serving as secretariat of the FoC Group of the UNSC in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

18. Four Task Teams of the FoC were formed to revise key components of the document (conceptual framework; quality framework for the assessment of national agricultural statistical system; minimum set of data requirements, and master sample frame and integrated survey framework). The Chair of the FoC, with the support of a consultant and the FAO Secretariat, would consolidate all comments and prepare a revised document to be submitted to the UNSC at its 41st Session in February 2010.

19. The intergovernmental process for the adoption of the Global Strategy led by the UNSC and involving primarily heads of national statistical offices is complemented by a parallel intergovernmental process guided by FAO governing bodies and involving representatives of ministries of agriculture, given their important role in the compilation of agricultural statistics.

20. The FAO Statistics Division has since been working closely with other international development partners, including the World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB), EUROSTAT, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), and UNSD to facilitate the creation of the FoC and assist its work; to prepare and revise the background document; and to organize a series of meetings to discuss and review the global strategy paper. In this process the FAO Statistics Division has coordinated input from all FAO Departments with substantial statistical work.

² http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/dsis/exmeetingagristat/library?l=/agricultural_washington/agendapdf/_EN_1.0_&a=d

³ Report on global initiatives to improve agricultural and rural statistics (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc09/2009-3-AgriStats-E.pdf>)

V. Worldwide Consultation on the Strategy

Seminar for Permanent Representatives to FAO

21. A Seminar chaired by the ADG, ES was organized on 23 June 2009 for the Permanent Representatives to FAO to discuss the Global Strategy. Permanent Representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, China, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, France, Haiti, Iran, Italy, Jordan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Liberia, Libya, Norway, Oman, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Somalia, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Zimbabwe attended the Seminar.

22. Permanent Representatives at the meeting expressed their strong support to the Global Strategy initiative. Statistics was considered to be a fundamental and important area of work for the Organization and as such was recognised as a 'core function' in the Programme of Work and Budget. A renewed initiative to improve agricultural statistics was also in line with other important initiatives of FAO, such as the Impact Focus Area on Capacity Building for Information and Statistics and the CountrySTAT project. Permanent Representatives acknowledged the challenges for improving statistical capacity and recommended the increased use of technology in these endeavours. They supported the Global Strategy on establishing statistical councils as the coordinating bodies in countries, and enhancing international partnership with other international development agencies. Several areas of statistical data needed for policy analysis and making were also addressed. They requested to be kept informed and related information on the development of the Global Strategy to be posted to the website.

ISI Satellite Meeting on Agricultural Statistics

23. The meeting was held in Maputo, Mozambique, on 13-14 August 2009, back-to-back with the 57th Session of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) held in Durban, on 16-22 August 2009 to review the draft Global Strategy. It was hosted by the National Statistical Office of Mozambique (INE-Mozambique) and supported and sponsored by AfDB, EUROSTAT, FAO, PARIS21, UNSD, USDA, and the World Bank. More than 200 senior experts from international organizations, national statistical offices and ministries of agriculture attended the meeting. Funding agencies such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation also showed their interest and sent delegates to the meeting to discuss possibilities and modalities for participating in this global initiative.

24. Some important conclusions and recommendations were reached at the meeting. The meeting recognized the present weakness of food and agricultural statistics and the important role they play in meeting the needs of the current and emerging policy analysis and decision making process. It supported the proposed approach of the Global Strategy to integrate agricultural statistics with other sectors of national statistical systems, the need for establishing clear functions and effectiveness of the coordination structures, and the need for mainstreaming statistics into national development plans with adequate budgets. It emphasized the importance of halting and reversing the decline in capacity in developing countries and recommended capacity building for agricultural statistics to be coordinated and strengthened.

Other Regional and Global Consultations

25. In addition to FAO Asia and the Pacific Regional Office's Expert Consultation on Statistics in Support of Policies to Empower Small Farmers (Bangkok, 8-12 September 2009), the document will be presented at the following meetings for further consultation and endorsement:

- FAO 21st Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics, Accra 28-31, October 2009;
- FAO/IICA, Working Group in Agricultural Statistics, Rio de Janeiro, 10-12 November 2009;
- PARIS21 Consortium Meeting, Dakar, 16-18 November 2009;

- FAO Conference, Rome, 18-23 November 2009; and
- 41st Session of the UNSC, New York, February 2010, for the final endorsement of the Global Strategy.

VI. Way Forward

26. The Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural Statistics has gained wide support and endorsement from the Permanent Representatives of member countries who attended the Seminar organized last June at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy; and from delegates of international development agencies, national statistical offices, and ministries of agriculture who attended the ISI Satellite Meeting on Agricultural Statistics in Maputo, Mozambique.

27. The Global Strategy will provide guidance for national and international agricultural statistical systems on ways to meet the needs of policy and decision making in the 21st century. The agreement reached on a minimum core data set, the integration of agriculture into the national statistical system and the adoption of common methodologies will improve the quality of the statistics provided. More importantly, this integration will provide a stronger support for advocating the importance of agriculture, for mobilizing resources at the national and international levels, and for rebuilding the statistical capacity of the key data producers. An essential pre-requisite to the implementation of the strategy will be the support of countries in establishing the appropriate governance mechanism and in providing adequate resources to agricultural statistics. The donor community should accompany this country-led process by providing the necessary financial and technical support.

28. Once adopted, the Global Strategy will be followed by an implementation plan to be prepared in 2010 following review by the national and international partners and additional input received. FAO will lead the implementation of this Global Strategy as part of the work to be carried out under the Impact Focus Area on Capacity Building in Information and Statistics in close partnership with relevant International and Regional Institutions.