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CONFERENCE

Thirty-seventh Session

Rome, 25 June - 2 July 2011

Implementation Plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural Statistics

Executive Summary

- The 36th Session of the FAO Conference (Rome, 18-23 November 2009), supported the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics and noted that, following its endorsement by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in February 2010, an implementation plan would be developed.
- This paper outlines the actions being taken by FAO, in partnership with other international, regional and national institutions to develop the Implementation Plan of the Global Strategy and mobilize the required resources for its execution. Following the adoption of the Global Strategy by the UNSC, an inclusive process has been followed to develop the Implementation Plan, with the involvement of all key stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels. A regional approach has been adopted to take account of the different levels of statistical development among regions as well as to ensure ownership by regional institutions. The implementation plan provides for the development of a standard framework for the country assessment that will be used as a basis for implementation of targeted interventions at the national level. A comprehensive technical assistance programme, an articulated training programme and a targeted research agenda have been developed. A governance framework with coordinating structures at the global, regional, and national levels is proposed. The Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for the mobilization of resources and technical support from developed countries, the donor community and international organizations providing technical assistance. The implementation plans are in line with FAO corporate strategies for Capacity Development and Resource Mobilization and the Impact Focus Area process (IFA).
- FAO is supporting the regional institutions to take the lead for the preparation of regional plans. The Global Plan and the Regional Plan for Africa are being finalized while the preparation of the plan for Asia, the Pacific and Latin America has been started. The outline of the Global Plan and Africa Plan were presented and discussed by more than 300 senior experts from over 70 countries during the Fifth International Conference on Agricultural Statistics held in Kampala, Uganda, in October 2010.

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- The Implementation Plan has a long-term perspective of 15 years with phased and regional approach. The duration of the first phase is five years. The implementation of the plans will result in substantial improvement of the availability and quality of agricultural statistics, particularly in developing countries, and development of sustainable capacity to produce the minimum set of core data defined by the Global Strategy.
- FAO and other partners are working to finalize the plans and mobilize resource partners for funding their implementation. A dedicated donor meeting is planned in Rome in July 2011 to secure the resources needed. A preliminary visit to some resource partners was jointly undertaken, in February and March 2011, by senior officers from FAO, the World Bank and the African Development Bank in preparation of the Donor meeting. It is planned to set up a Global Trust Fund and a Regional Trust Fund for Africa to support the implementation plans.

Suggested action by the Conference

- The FAO Conference is invited to take note of the progress made and request countries and resource partners to support the implementation of the Global Strategy and the mobilisation of the required resources.

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Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to describe the progress made in developing the Implementation Plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (hereinafter referred to as the Global Strategy). It also summarizes the steps taken to integrate inputs from stakeholders, to obtain regional ownership and to mobilize the resources required for implementing the Global Strategy.
2. The initiative to develop the Global Strategy came as a response to the declining trend of the quantity and quality of agricultural statistics in the context of a growing data demand to inform policies related to the transformation of agriculture in the 21st century, climate change, food insecurity and issues related to sustainable agriculture development.
3. The purpose of the Global Strategy is to provide a framework to enable national and international statistical systems to produce the basic information needed to guide decision making in the 21st century. The Global Strategy is based on three pillars:
 - Establishing a minimum set of core data that countries will disseminate on a regular basis to meet current and emerging demands, particularly food security, sustainable agriculture development and climate change;
 - Integrating agriculture into national statistical systems in order to meet policy makers' and other data users' expectations that statistical information are linked across the economic, social and environmental domains;
 - Fostering the sustainability of the agricultural statistical systems through governance and statistical capacity development.
4. The Global Strategy defines a comprehensive conceptual framework for the production and use of agriculture and rural statistics and information requirements of various data users. The conceptual framework, the assessment of the national agricultural statistics systems and the choice of a core set of indicators all point to the need to integrate agriculture into the national statistical systems.
5. The Global Strategy identifies the main tools upon which this integration will be achieved. The development of a master sample frame for agriculture will be the foundation for all data collection based on sample surveys or censuses. An integrated survey framework will be established to provide comparable data over time and across countries using an annual survey of selected core items and periodic data collections from a set of rotating panels covering economic and environmental issues. The integration across data domains will also be ensured by an integrated data management system for all official statistics related to agriculture.

Actions taken since the last FAO Conference

6. The Global Strategy was presented at the 41st Session of the UNSC in February 2010 where it was unanimously endorsed. The Commission urged FAO and the Friends of the Chair Group to expedite the development of the Implementation Plan aimed at strengthening the national agricultural statistical system, with the steps necessary to develop the master sample frame, the integrated survey framework, and the data management system. The Commission recommended that a comprehensive technical assistance and training programme be established. It also recommended that the Implementation Plan should include a well-targeted research agenda to support the implementation of the statistical methodology required by the Global Strategy and also the development of methodological guidelines which take into consideration the specific conditions in developing countries, such as small scale agriculture, mixed cropping, agriculture under difficult conditions and nomadic livestock. The Commission recognized that the implementation of the Global Strategy would require the mobilization of resources and technical support from countries, the donor community and international organizations providing technical assistance. The Friends of the Chair Group was requested to report back to the 42nd Session of the Commission on the progress made in the development of the Implementation Plan.
7. Following the UNSC decision of February 2010, important progress has been made in the preparation of the Implementation Plan. Under the auspices of the Friends of the Chair Group, several

specific meetings were organized. These meetings served two purposes: to generate and receive further input on the Implementation Plan and to obtain a commitment from the main stakeholders. The draft Global Implementation Plan and the Implementation Plan for Africa are the result of a wide consultation with national statistical offices and international organizations, as well as with agricultural ministries and other governmental organizations represented in FAO governing bodies.

8. A worldwide consultation on the first drafts of the Global and Africa implementation plans was held at the Fifth International Conference on Agriculture Statistics (ICAS V) in Kampala from 13 to 15 October 2010. About 300 senior experts from 77 countries attended the Conference. During ICAS V, the technical sessions focused on the content of the four technical components of the implementation plans (Country Assessment Framework, Technical Assistance programme, Methodological Research agenda and Training programme) and the governance mechanisms at national, regional and global levels. The content of the plans were reviewed and discussed in detail in light of experiences of countries, regional and international agencies and valuable inputs and recommendations were provided for the revision of the plans.

9. A Roundtable Meeting of Donors was held during ICAS V on 13 October 2010. It resulted in a strong support to the Plan by the donors present at the meeting and willingness to consider funding for its implementation at global and regional levels. Senior officers from FAO, the World Bank and the African Development Bank undertook a joint visit to resource partners in February and March 2011, in preparation for a dedicated donor meeting planned for July 2011 at FAO.

10. Several activities were undertaken in order to involve regional partners. The draft outline of the Implementation Plan was also presented at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Bangkok (ESCAP), held in Bangkok, Thailand, on 15-17 December 2010. A progress report on the preparation of the Implementation Plan was presented to the 42nd Session of the UNSC in February 2011, including a side event to discuss the Implementation Plan. The draft Implementation Plan was presented at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Executive Committee meeting, held in Havana, Cuba, on 6-8 April 2011, and at the Second Meeting of Pacific Statistics Steering Committee held in Suva, Fiji, from 30 March to 1 April 2011.

Goal and Results expected from the Implementation Plan

11. The goal is to implement the Global Strategy in all developing countries so that they are able to produce on a sustainable basis the minimum set of core data that meet international quality standards, are comparable across countries and are needed for planning and implementing effective food security, sustainable agricultural policies and addressing issues related to climate change.

12. The Implementation Plan will provide the framework for the country assessment that will be used as a basis to begin the implementation at the national level. The Plan will provide the statistical standards that will guide the development of the required methodology and determine the training and technical assistance needs. In order to avoid duplication of efforts and to ensure the international comparability of the resulting agricultural statistics, a global, regional, and national governance structure will be established.

13. It is expected that the implementation of the Global Strategy by countries will result in substantial improvement of agricultural statistics in the next decade, particularly in developing countries. For example in the Africa region, the following targets against the baseline of 2010 for the first phase of five years are established:

- 60 percent of the countries producing and reporting minimum set of core agricultural data;
- 80 percent of the countries have functioning coordination structures for agricultural statistics (up from current 28 percent);
- At least 35 countries with a Sector Strategic Plan for Agricultural Statistics (SSPS) designed in the context of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) for integration of agriculture into the national statistical system.

Main Components of the Global Strategy

14. In accordance with the recommendations of the Statistical Commission and in line with FAO capacity development strategy, a technical assistance programme, an articulated training programme and a targeted research agenda are being developed as key elements of a comprehensive statistical capacity development programme. Moreover, the strengthening of country and regional systems will be based on a comprehensive assessment of their technical and operational capacity that will identify actions at country, regional, and international levels in order to define priority areas, resources required and the relevant timeframe.

- **Country Assessment.** The preparation of a framework and accompanying guidelines for countries will provide an assessment of their statistical capabilities, the data they currently provide, and their readiness to begin to implement the components of the Global Strategy. The assessment will determine the national capability to produce the minimum set of core data on a sustainable basis and indicate the main areas in need of improvement to be supported by the implementation of the Global Strategy. These assessments will provide the basis for the choice of methods to develop the master sample frame, the integrated survey framework, and the data management system. Based on the assessment of the statistical capabilities and the revised NSDS, the technical assistance and training requirements will be outlined. National Action Plans based on revised NSDSs will identify the responsibilities of the different stakeholders.
- **Training.** Implementation of the training component of the Global Strategy will aim to: (a) strengthen the capacity of national agencies concerned with the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of agricultural statistics by increasing the knowledge, skills and competencies of their staff; and (b) strengthen and sustain the capacity of regional/subregional training centres to develop and deliver good quality training in statistics related topics. The country assessment will contain a review of the training needed in each individual nation to provide them the capability to begin the implementation of the Global Strategy and sustain the system over time. An issue is that training for agricultural statisticians needs to be integrated with training needs of other sectors or elements of the national statistical system. The effort will begin with a detailed analysis of training needs to provide a baseline assessment. Training needs to include the data users to help them understand how the data can be used. It is recognized that technical assistance will be required to assess the training needs and to provide the actual training.
- **Technical Assistance.** Technical assistance will be required in many areas depending on each country's capabilities. The starting point will be the need for technical assistance identified by the country assessments. It will also provide guidance for the development of the National Sector Strategic Plans for Agricultural Statistics and their integration into the NSDSs to produce the minimum set of core data. Technical assistance will include support to establish or strengthen the governance mechanism, undertake advocacy and policy dialogue between government and development partners for mainstreaming agricultural statistics, determine the methodology to be used, and provide guidance for the overall implementation. The technical assistance will be coordinated at the regional and global levels to ensure consistent methods are used, resulting in internationally comparable output. This coordination requires a global and regional governance mechanism to implement the Global Strategy. A key technical assistance principle, however, is that there should be country ownership in the implementation process. Also statistical standards need to be defined and operational guidelines provided to support the preparation of training materials and technical support activities including statistical methodology for sample frames, sample survey frameworks covering concepts and definitions.
- **Research.** The purpose of the Research Component is to develop and disseminate advanced and cost effective methodologies, tools and standards related to the pillars of the Global Strategy to Improve Agriculture and Rural Statistics. The dissemination will be carried out through methodological guidelines, handbooks and documentation of good practices in priority research topics, which will be used by agricultural statisticians for efficient production of reliable agricultural statistics. The priority areas have been defined, including quick wins.

The results of this component will serve as input for both the training component and the technical assistance component. At the Global Level the Research Component will address all research topics which are relevant to various regions, e.g. implementation of an integrated survey framework; linking area frames with list frames; use of remote sensing; adoption of new technologies; forestry and deforestation; crop forecasting and early warning; inland fishery; aquaculture; interaction between climate, environment, global warming and agriculture; land cover monitoring. It will also have the role of facilitating the contacts and exchange of information, in order to generate synergies and avoid duplication of efforts in developing advanced and cost-effective methodologies and tools in data collection, elaboration, analysis and dissemination. Networking will be an important tool. A living data base will be created that will include research projects conducted all over the world in order to share knowledge. This data base will be complemented by an inventory of the best practices. The inventory and the data base will be an instrument for transmitting knowledge and best practices not only from developed to developing countries, but also among developing countries themselves. Also, statistical standards need to be defined and operational guidelines provided to support the preparation of training materials and technical support activities including statistical methodology for sample frames, sample survey frameworks including concepts and definitions, statistical techniques for data collection, validation, estimation, and analysis.

15. The technical components will be coordinated through an overall logical framework that will ensure that the linkages between the activities of training, technical assistance and research are integrated and properly sequenced. An important purpose of the Global Implementation Plan is to provide an overall monitoring system, including indicators, to assess performance of the Regional Implementation Plans.

16. **Governance.** Effective implementation of the Global Strategy will require good governance at global, regional and country level. A governance structure is required to establish common implementation policies, to provide the needed technical support in a way that ensures all stakeholders take ownership in the outcome, to effectively coordinate the activities, given the complexity of issues to be tackled, to monitor the progress in the implementation against agreed milestones and to ensure full transparency about the use of resources and the outcomes achieved. The establishment of a governance structure considers lessons learned from the governance structure used for the International Comparison Program (ICP). The proposed governance framework provides the roles and responsibilities of the global, regional, and national governing bodies and entails defining linkages among governance structures at all levels.

- *Global level:* A Global Strategy Steering Committee will be established, that includes National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Agriculture. The Friends of the Chair Working Group will become integrated into the Global Steering Committee, which will also include representatives of the regional coordinating organizations and representatives of key data users. A Global Strategy Implementation Office based at FAO will coordinate the execution of the Global Implementation Plan, set standards, ensure harmonization across regions, coordinate with other global initiatives, undertake advocacy and provide support to regions that are unable to take the lead in implementation. It will also ensure vertical consistency with the overall Implementation Plan of the Global Strategy.
- *Regional level:* The governance mechanism at the regional level aims to provide an institutional framework and coordination arrangements for the implementation of the Global Strategy. It defines not only governance structures at all levels but also linkages and reporting lines among them. The regional governance structure will, inter alia, execute the Implementation Plan, allocate resources, monitor implementation, assess and report on progress made. A Regional Steering Committee (RSTC) will be established in each region where the Global Strategy will be implemented. It will be the decision-making body of the Plan. An Executive Committee (EC) will act as the Bureau for the RSTC and will be expected to meet more frequently and get things done on behalf of the Regional Steering Committee. A Regional Implementation Secretariat (RIS) will also be established.

- *National level:* The main beneficiary of the Global Strategy will be the countries that need good agricultural statistics for evidence-based policy and decision-making. Countries will bear the primary responsibility for the Global Strategy implementation through existing institutions. In particular, Ministries of Agriculture and Statistics Offices will both be involved in the governance mechanism.

17. The implementation of the Global Strategy will proceed in stages, in line with the recommendations by the 36th Session of the FAO Conference. At the first stage, the outputs focus on the framework, the country assessment, the development of Regional Implementation Plans and the mobilization of resources for implementation. The Regional Implementation Plans can move forward when regions are ready to develop their initiatives.

Strategy for Implementation of the Plans

18. In agreement with the recommendations of the 36th Session of the FAO Conference, a regional approach has been adopted to take account of the different levels of statistical development among regions and to ensure ownership by regional institutions. Implementation plans are therefore being prepared at the Global and Regional levels.

19. The Regional Implementation Plans are being developed through strong regional ownership, with the UN Regional Economic Commissions and Regional Development Banks as coordinators, where relevant, and other regional and subregional organizations as partners.

20. The Implementation Plan builds on the main pillars of the Global Strategy. The first pillar - the minimum set of core data - is based on the assumption that it may be difficult for every data requirement to be met every year. Therefore, the foundation to start the implementation is the agreement to begin with a minimum set of core data. The country assessments focus on the current capacity of each country to provide the set of core data. It will give indications on the needed resources, training, technical assistance and methodology. The Global Strategy provides a choice of methodologies to establish the master sample frame and set of integrated data that needs to be tailored to each region or country's situation.

21. The country assessment will help the region or country to decide on the methodology and determine the training and technical assistance it needs. While the Global Strategy emphasizes the need to integrate agriculture into the national statistical system (second pillar) and provides guidelines, it leaves it up to each region or country to determine how to do so. One of the outputs of the country assessment is the grouping of the countries which will allow prioritization for phased implementation, according to well defined criteria.

22. Some countries or groups of countries have already started to develop integrated statistics systems that mainstream agriculture into NSDS. The implementation of the Global Strategy will provide them with the tools for completing this process within the general framework of the Global Strategy. The Implementation Plan will also build on ongoing country activities to improve the data situation by taking advantage of major country data collection activities to include agriculture components in upcoming censuses and surveys (population census, household surveys, etc.). In these countries, important results can be achieved in a short time period.

23. In other countries, the assessment will start and will give information on the existing statistical infrastructure, in order to identify the appropriate way for developing a sustainable infrastructure as part of an integrated agricultural statistics system and mainstreaming agriculture into NSDS. The country assessment will also evaluate the technical assistance and training needs of countries.

24. Also research activities will start on priority areas, to develop cost effective and advanced methods to be applied by countries.

Resource Mobilization Strategy

25. The field of agricultural statistics has been considered a low priority area in the agenda of both donors and national governments for many years. A renewed initiative of resource mobilization is essential to attract attention of donors on the current status of agricultural statistics and on the benefits of better quality statistical information for designing and monitoring policies in support of agricultural and rural development. A substantial amount of funding will be needed to improve the quality of agricultural statistics and build a sound and sustainable agricultural statistical system in developing countries. The initial estimation of the budget needed for the execution of the first five-year phase of the Implementation Plan for Africa is about USD 60 million for all the African countries (an average of USD 250 000/year/country).

26. The objective of the resource mobilization strategy is to secure adequate funding and support for the Global and Regional Implementation Plans. The Global Implementation Plan will be supported by a Global Trust Fund (GTF) for Agricultural Statistics. Funds from GTF will be allocated for global public goods and to regions where mobilization of resources is weaker. The resource mobilization effort for this initiative will be coordinated with the overall FAO Resource Mobilization Strategy, particularly in support of Impact Focus Areas (IFAs), as this initiative falls under IFACDIS (Capacity Development to strengthen information and statistics for decision making for the sustainable management of agriculture, natural resources, food security and poverty alleviation) and adopts a programmatic approach.

27. In the Africa Region, regional implementation plan will be supported by a Regional Trust Fund (RTF) to be managed by the African Development Bank.

28. In order to ensure a broader support, donors will have the opportunity not only to contribute to multidonor trust funds, but also to earmark funding for specific technical components of the Implementation Plans or for supporting bilateral country programs.

29. An essential component of the Resource Mobilization Strategy is the communication campaign advocating for the Global and Regional Implementation Plans and the importance of sound national agricultural statistics systems. A series of high-level visits to key donor agencies has been undertaken by senior officers of FAO, World Bank and AfDB.

Progress made and the Way forward

30. Substantial progress has been made in the development of the Implementation plans at the global and regional levels. As a result of the above actions, the Global Implementation Plan and the Implementation Plan for Africa (with AfDB and UN-ECA playing a leading role) are being finalized. In other regions, such as Asia and the Pacific and Latin America the process has been initiated.

31. The way forward will include:

- Finalization of the Global Implementation Plan of the Global Strategy and establishment of the Global Governance mechanism (Steering Committee, the Coordination Office and the Technical Advisory Committee) to steer the implementation of the Global Strategy;
- Collaboration with regional organizations that can take a leadership role in the development of Regional Implementation Plans in Latin America and the Asia and the Pacific regions. Incorporation of best practices and lessons learned from the progress made in the Implementation Plan for the Africa Region;
- Making progress on the Resource Mobilization Strategy establishing the global and regional trust funds. A dedicated donor meeting is planned at FAO in July 2011 to mobilize resources to support the implementation of the plans. A Global Trust Fund and a Regional Trust Fund for Africa are also being set up.