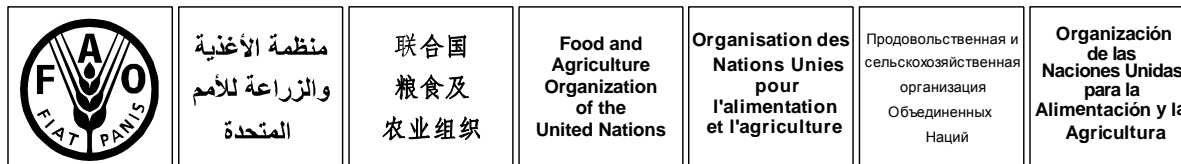


March 2012



## COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

### Twenty-third Session

Rome, 21 - 25 May 2012

### Improving Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

#### Executive Summary

Evidence-based policies for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development at the global, regional, and national levels require timely and accurate statistics. The recent food crisis and the ongoing debates on food price volatility and the impact of climate change on agriculture and food security clearly highlight the weaknesses in available data and the urgent need for strengthening the information base for the design, monitoring and evaluation of relevant, efficient and effective policies.

The Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics was developed under the auspices of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) to address the weakness in agricultural data and reverse the declining trend in countries' capacity to produce timely and reliable data. Following the endorsement of the Global Strategy by the FAO Conference at its 36<sup>th</sup> Session in November 2009 and by the UNSC at its 41<sup>st</sup> Session in February 2010, FAO was requested to develop an Action Plan to implement the Strategy in collaboration with key stakeholders.

This document describes the progress made in developing the Action Plan and activities accomplished to date, such as resource mobilization initiatives and partnership arrangements established with regional organizations.

The Action Plan has been developed by FAO and the World Bank in collaboration with all key stakeholders. The Action Plan proposes a coherent capacity building programme for the development of an integrated agricultural statistical system at national level. The key components of the Action Plan include a framework for the assessment of country statistical capacity and an articulated set of activities at country, regional and global levels which are essential to achieve the three pillars of the Global Strategy. The Action Plan also includes the description of the governance and funding mechanisms. The report describes the activities accomplished to date, including finalization of the Action Plan, resource mobilization initiatives and partnership arrangements established with regional agencies.

**Suggested action by the Committee:**

The Committee is invited to:

- Endorse the Action Plan for Improving Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development and its governance.
- Call on resource partners to assist in the mobilization of the required resources and Member Nations to support the implementation of the Action Plan at global, regional, and national levels and reinforce their commitment to strengthen their national agricultural statistical system.

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## I. Introduction

1. Timely and accurate statistics are essential for implementing evidence-based policies for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development at the global, regional, and national levels. The recent food crisis and the ongoing debates on food price volatility and the impact of climate change on agriculture and food security clearly highlight the weaknesses in available data and the urgent need for strengthening the information base for the design, monitoring and evaluation of relevant, efficient and effective policies.
2. The Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (hereafter Global Strategy) provides a methodological and governance framework to enable national statistical systems to improve the quality of their food and agricultural statistics and, as a result, national governments to develop and adopt evidence-based policies for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development. Agricultural and rural statistics are meant to include also economical and agro-environmental aspects.
3. The Global Strategy was endorsed by the FAO Conference at its 36<sup>th</sup> Session in November 2009 and by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its 41<sup>st</sup> Session in February 2010. The UNSC also urged the development of an Action Plan to implement the Global Strategy, which was developed by FAO and the World Bank in close consultation with the Friends of the Chair Group on Agricultural Statistics (FoC)<sup>1</sup> and a large number of national and international stakeholders.
4. The key elements of the Action Plan were discussed in several meetings and presented to Ministers of Agriculture of all FAO member countries and key partners during the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Conference (2011) receiving strong support. This document describes the progress made in developing the Action Plan and activities accomplished to date, particularly resource mobilization initiatives, creation of governance structures and partnership arrangements established with regional organizations as well as development of methodological tools and assistance to countries.

## II. Technical content of the Global Action Plan

5. The Action Plan is a long-term programme of capacity development to rebuild sustainable national agricultural statistical systems. It follows a phased approach with a first phase of five years starting in 2012 within a longer term perspective (up to 15 years). It is expected to lead to a substantial increase in:
  - the number of countries with the capability to produce, analyze and disseminate the minimum set of core data in order to meet the current and emerging statistical demands of national and international stakeholders;
  - the number of countries with a sustainable agricultural statistics system through enhanced national statistical governance and integration of agriculture in the national statistical system;
  - the number of people working on agricultural statistics that have appropriate skills resulting from training and technical assistance.
6. Country assessment, research, technical assistance and training are the technical components of the Action Plan and have been integrated in a logical framework to ensure that the results of one component feed the others.
7. Country Assessment. The country assessment is the basis for the implementation of the Global Strategy. It will also provide a baseline against which progress can be measured and will ensure that all assistance to countries is based on their own priorities. The country assessment will be carried out in two stages and will determine the ability of countries to produce the minimum set of core data and the critical constraints in the statistical system. The first stage will be carried out in all countries, using a standardized questionnaire, and will establish baseline information on the national statistical

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<sup>1</sup> The Friends of the Chair group on Agricultural Statistics was established by the UNSC at its 40<sup>th</sup> Session in February 2009. It is led by Brazil and includes Australia, China, Cuba, Ethiopia, Italy, Morocco, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and the United States of America. Eurostat and the World Bank participate as observers, while FAO and the United Nations Statistics Division serve as secretariat.

capacity. The results of this first stage assessment will be used at regional level to group countries according to the level of their statistical development and the typology of data quality problems. The use of a core standard questionnaire, agreed upon with key partners, will ensure a greater comparability of the assessments. At the same time, the questionnaire can be adjusted to meet needs specific to particular regions. The information generated will also serve as a basis for a more in-depth second stage assessment in selected countries which will be used in preparing the country proposal.

8. **Research.** The purpose of the Research Plan is to develop and disseminate advanced and cost-effective methodologies, tools and standards which will be adopted by national statistical agencies for efficient production of reliable agricultural statistics. The research activities on priority topics will be conducted by the most qualified regional and international institutions and will be coordinated at global level to ensure synergies and avoid duplication of efforts. Through a wide consultative process, including a survey of key stakeholders in agricultural statistics and various meetings and international forums, priority research topics have been identified based on relevance to developing countries.

9. **Technical Assistance.** Technical assistance activities have two components. The first involves the development and documentation of statistical standards and technical guidelines for all aspects of the agricultural statistics system, mainly based on the new methodologies and tools developed under the research plan. The second component is the delivery of technical assistance to countries for capacity development. The regional institutions will lead this work. Technical assistance activities will be coordinated with existing statistical capacity building initiatives to expand the scope of these efforts and link them to agricultural statistics.

10. **Training.** Training curricula will be designed and training materials will be prepared, including e-learning courses, and theoretical and practical knowledge requirements will be defined for different levels of core skills needed to produce basic official statistics. These activities will be carried out at the global level. At the regional level, the main activities will be to assess countries' training needs, train the trainers and support the use of e-learning for on-the-job training. Direct training on specific topics will be provided in national and regional training centres. The regional offices will provide support to strengthen the capabilities of selected training centres and will promote the access to training by national agricultural statisticians. Countries will contribute to the identification of their training needs, organize in-service training, ensure access to e-learning materials and select the staff for the different training opportunities.

### **III. Governance structure**

11. In order to steer and monitor the implementation of the Action Plan, a governance mechanism which envisages the establishment of governance arrangements at global, regional and national levels has been designed. Some of the governing bodies have been already set up. In order to avoid as much as possible the creation of new structures, it makes use of existing institutions or coordination mechanisms.

#### **A. Global level**

12. **Global Steering Committee (GSC).** The Global Steering Committee is the ultimate decision making body and provides strategic guidance and oversight for the implementation of the Action Plan. The GSC is composed of FAO, resource partners, country representatives of the Regional Steering Committees, the Chair of the Statistical Commission, regional participating partners and other leading international organizations involved in agricultural and rural statistic. The GSC will meet at least once a year to determine the allocation of funds to global, regional, and country level activities and between different regions. It will approve the proposed annual work plans and the progress reports. Other tasks will be to ensure overall coordination, monitor progress in the implementation of the Global Action Plan and support resource mobilization. The GSC will also appoint the members of the Global Executive Board (GEB).

13. **Global Executive Board (GEB).** The Global Executive Board is a sub-group of the GSC from which it receives delegated authority to oversee the execution of the decisions. The GEB will meet at

least three times a year, where possible at the margins of suitable international meetings. The GEB will also carry out GSC's functions in the interim between GSC's annual meetings, providing in particular policy directions to the global activities for the implementation of the Plan.

14. Global Office. The Global Office, based in the FAO Statistics Division and led by the global coordinator, will ensure overall technical coordination of the implementation of the Action Plan and will undertake normative work establishing standards, providing centralized technical and practical guidance on cross-regional issues, and taking into account particular requirements of various sectors (e.g. fisheries and aquaculture, forestry). The Global Office will also act as Secretariat of the GSC servicing its meetings and providing recommendations on the allocation of funds.

15. Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics. FAO has submitted a proposal to the UN Statistical Commission for the establishment of an Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Food Security, Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development Statistics for guiding methodological developments in these statistical domains. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group will also provide guidance to the Global Steering Committee and the Global Office in the implementation of the Action Plan. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group will comprise high-level experts in statistics for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development from national governments and international organizations. It will present an annual report to the Statistical Commission on the progress made in its activities.

## **B. Regional level**

16. Regional Steering Committee (RSC). The Regional Steering Committee is the decision-making body at regional level and will provide guidance and oversight for the implementation of the regional and country activities defined in the Regional Plan. The RSC will assess country proposals and prioritize the use of the funds among countries. The composition of the RSC will typically include representatives of countries, resource partners, regional participating partners (PPs), FAO and selected experts.

17. Regional Executive Board (REB). The Regional Executive Board is a sub-group of the RSC from which it will receive delegated authority to oversee the execution of the decisions. The REB will meet at least three times a year, where possible at the margins of suitable regional or international meetings. The REB will carry out RSC's functions in the interim between RSC's annual meetings. In particular, it will provide policy direction to the implementation of the regional Plan.

18. Regional Office. The Regional Office will serve as Secretariat of the RSC and will be located in one of the participating partners tasked with the coordination of the regional activities.

## **C. National level**

19. The Governance at national level will build as much as possible on existing coordination mechanisms and structures. National governance of the agricultural statistical system entails the establishment, where this does not exist, of a sectoral coordination mechanism that brings together the national statistics office and the ministries responsible for agriculture, forestry, and fisheries and any other institutions that collect agriculture-related data. This sectoral coordination mechanism should be part of the national statistical coordination mechanism, such as the National Statistics Council, which provides governance to the whole national statistical system. Typically, the coordination mechanism for the agricultural sector will be a sub-committee of the National Statistics Council, ensuring that agricultural statistics is integrated into the national statistical system.

20. The National Statistics Council, through the agricultural sub-committee and in coordination with the Global Strategy regional coordinator, will be responsible for carrying out the detailed assessment of the capacity of the country's agricultural statistical system as well as preparing the Sector Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics, in line with the recommendations of the Global Strategy and in consultation with data users and other stakeholders. These governance arrangements should enable the ministries and agencies involved in the collection of agricultural data to integrate the Sector Strategic Plan into the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics

(NSDS). The National Statistics Council will also be responsible for reviewing (as needed) the existing Statistical legislation in order to ensure that clear responsibilities for data collection are assigned to the different national Institutions.

21. The National Statistics Council should develop a strategy to foster public awareness of the importance of evidence based decision making and mobilize resources in support of the implementation of the Sector Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics and of the NSDS.

#### **IV. Regional approach**

22. The Global Action Plan is complemented by more targeted Regional Plans which take into account the institutional set-up, the statistical capacity and the characteristics of the agricultural sector in each region. The Regional Plans are being developed by regional organizations with FAO support. They build on the guidance contained in the Global Plan to elaborate specific technical assistance and training programmes tailored to the regional needs for capacity development.

23. They also specify the responsibilities of the institutions that will lead the implementation of the Regional Plan and describe the governance arrangements that will ensure proper decision-making and monitoring processes.

24. Africa. The Regional Plan for Africa has already been developed by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Africa Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and FAO. The Regional Steering Committee for Africa has been established and met for the first time in July 2011 to discuss the implementation arrangements. The Executive Board has also been established and its members have been identified. AfDB and UNECA are the PPs for regional technical assistance and training activities respectively, while FAO is responsible for adapting the global research agenda to the specific needs of the Africa Region. The Regional Office is being set up in AfDB and country assessments are already under way.

25. Asia and the Pacific. The Committee on Statistics of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) at its second session in December 2010 established a Steering Group on Agricultural Statistics to lead the preparation of the regional Action Plan. The first meeting of the Steering Group, held on 21-23 November 2011 in Manila, committed to prepare a first draft of the Regional Plan by April 2012. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAORAP), UNESCAP and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have set up a joint secretariat to steer the preparation of the Regional Plan, with specific responsibilities on technical assistance, training and research respectively..

26. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) will be a key partner institution for the implementation of the Action Plan in the Pacific. Important synergies have been identified between the Global Strategy and the Ten-Year Pacific Statistical Strategy (TYPSS) 2011 – 2020. In particular, joint work will be undertaken for the implementation of the guidelines for linking the agricultural and population and housing censuses, the integration of an agricultural module in the questionnaire of household expenditure surveys, and the mainstreaming of agriculture into the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS).

27. Latin America and the Caribbean. The sixth session of the Statistical Conference of the Americas that took place in the Dominican Republic in November 2011, decided to establish a Working Group (WG) on Agricultural and Rural Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean, tasked with the development of the Regional Plan and its implementation. Brazil is the coordinator of the WG. Members of the WG will also be Argentina, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Peru. IFAD, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) have also expressed their interest to participate.

28. Other regions. Several initiatives have also been undertaken in close collaboration with the regional offices of the FAO, to involve other regional partners, including the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISSTAT) for

the development of Regional Action Plans respectively for Western Asia and Central Asia and the Caucasus.

## V. Resource mobilization and implementation strategy

29. For effective implementation of the Global Strategy, a comprehensive and yet flexible resource mobilization strategy has been developed and is being implemented. The communication campaign culminated with a successful resource partners meeting organized on 28 October 2011 at FAO headquarters in Rome. The meeting was attended by more than 50 participants from all regions. The meeting endorsed the Action Plan to implement the Global Strategy and made suggestions for its effective implementation and wider dissemination. During this meeting, several partners clearly indicated their intention to support the implementation of the Global Strategy. In particular, the financial support expected from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Department for International Development, the Italian Cooperation, the African Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank will cover about 50 percent of the total budget for the five years of the Plan. A Global Trust Fund has been created at FAO and initial funds are being received. This effort will continue in order to secure the remaining funds needed for full implementation of the strategy.

30. In addition to financial support through contribution to the Global Trust Fund, several other modalities can be used to support the implementation of the Global Strategy. The following modalities are foreseen:

- Bilateral agreements between resource partners and countries. A resource or technical partner may provide direct support to a country to implement the capacity building activities included in the Global Strategy and/or the data collection activities.
- Bilateral agreement between resource partners and FAO. With funding provided by some resource partners (e.g. the EU) FAO is providing technical support to data collection activities such as the agricultural censuses in several countries. These projects will be aligned with the Global Strategy.
- South-South cooperation agreements. More advanced developing countries may directly support other developing countries to implement the recommendations of the Global Strategy. Countries such as Brazil, Mexico, etc. have indicated their interest in providing such support.
- Regular Programme resources of FAO. Through its Technical Cooperation Programme, FAO also provides technical assistance to countries in response to Government requests for support to statistical activities, including preparatory activities to agriculture censuses. These projects will also align with the Global Strategy.

31. A phased and modular approach will be adopted for the implementation of the Global Strategy. The Action Plan will target 90 countries worldwide (40 countries in Africa and 50 countries in other regions) to be covered during the first phase of five years.

32. In order to ensure that the implementation of the plan is driven by countries and addresses identified gaps, country assessments will be conducted and will be the basis for country funding proposals which are tailored to address priority needs at country level, are agreed upon by all stakeholders and take into account on-going assistance being received by the country.

33. In order to ensure successful implementation and the conditions needed for sustainability, the following criteria will be applied to select priority countries:

- Political will and commitment to improve the agricultural statistics, as demonstrated by government contributions in cash or in kind;
- Existence of active donor interest to provide support for implementation of the country activities;
- Possible complementarities with the relevant ongoing planning activities such as the NSDS process, which will facilitate the integration of agricultural statistics into the national statistical system;
- Complementarities with other relevant ongoing or planned large-scale statistical activities such as population censuses, agricultural censuses, or household surveys, which could serve as

the foundation of the statistical system and offer cost-effective solutions in the selection of the most appropriate methodology;

- Level of statistical development.

34. The implementation will therefore strive to balance the need of achieving rapid results in the production and dissemination of core agricultural data of good quality with the need to develop sustained capacity over a longer period of time within a structured programme.

## **VI. Status of implementation**

35. The governance structures have been established at the global and regional levels (GSC, Global Offices, the RSCs and the Regional Offices for Africa and Asia and Pacific) and a Global Trust Fund has been established. A standard questionnaire and guidelines for the first stage country assessment were developed and country assessment work is already under way in Africa and Asia and the Pacific under the leadership of regional organizations. This work is being planned in other regions and will lead to the selection of a first group of 20 countries in which the implementation of the Strategy will start in 2012. The number of countries will be gradually increased as more funding or technical support will be made available.

36. In addition, many activities in line with the Global Strategy are being carried out at global, regional and country levels. In particular:

- FAO and PARIS21 are working together to prepare guidelines for mainstreaming agriculture into NSDS and piloting them in Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique, Peru;
- FAO and UNFPA have completed guidelines for linking agricultural, population and housing censuses. Workshops for implementing the guidelines are being organized in the Pacific, Near East and Francophone Africa;
- FAO is also working with the World Bank Development Research Group for improving the measurement of agricultural productivity and food consumption in Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) studies in six sub-Saharan countries;
- Ethiopia, with technical support of FAO, is using remote sensing and Global Positioning System (GPS) data for developing an area frame as a basis for its annual agricultural surveys;
- GPS and Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) were successfully used in conducting the agricultural census in Mozambique, with preliminary census results available in less than six months. Personal Digital Assistants (PDA) and GPS were also successfully used in the Brazilian agricultural census and these experiences are being expanded to more countries;
- Remote sensing is being used as cost-effective method for crop monitoring and forecasting in Pakistan, with the support of FAO, United States Department of Agriculture and the University of Maryland;
- The CountrySTAT system, which has been developed by FAO to improve the quality and on-line access to national agricultural data, has been successfully adopted in two Asian and 17 sub-Saharan African countries and is now being expanded to more countries and sub-regional organizations (West African Economic and Monetary Union and East African Community);
- FAO is working with several partners to develop a satellite account for agriculture of the revised system of environmental economic accounting which will serve as overarching conceptual framework of the Global Strategy.

## **VII. Suggested action by the Committee**

37. The Committee is invited to endorse the Action Plan for Improving Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development and its governance.

38. The Committee is also invited to call on resource partners to assist in the mobilization of the required resources and Member Nations to support the implementation of the Action Plan at global, regional, and national levels and reinforce their commitment to strengthen their national agricultural statistical system.