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## Statistical Commission

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**Items for discussion and decision: agricultural statistics**

## **Report of the Global Steering Committee on the progress made in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-third session, held from 28 February to 2 March 2012 (see E/2012/24, chap. I.A), the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Global Steering Committee on the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics at the global, regional and country levels. The report presents the results obtained so far in establishing the governance mechanisms, preparing regional action plans, mobilizing financial and technical support and implementing research and capacity development activities. The Commission may wish to take note of progress made and provide recommendations on ways to accelerate implementation. In particular, it may wish to appeal to countries and resource partners to support the implementation of the Global Strategy and the mobilization of the required resources to fill the funding gap.

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\* E/CN.3/2013/1.



# **Report of the Global Steering Committee on the progress made in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics**

## **I. Introduction**

1. The present report provides the Statistical Commission with an update on the progress made in implementing the action plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, on the preparation of action plans in the regions, on the establishment of the governance mechanisms, on the ongoing resource mobilization efforts and related results and on the implementation of initial research and capacity development activities.

2. The Commission, at its forty-first session in 2010, endorsed the technical content and strategic directions of the Global Strategy and urged the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics to develop an implementation plan. A progress report on the preparation of the implementation plan was presented at the forty-second session in 2011 (see E/CN.3/2011/24). The implementation plan and its governance arrangements were endorsed at the forty-third session in 2012 and support was expressed for the establishment of an inter-agency and expert group on agricultural and rural statistics and for its terms of reference.

3. In introducing the description of the progress made, it should be noted that the implementation of the programme experienced partial delays owing to a number of factors, including the setting up of a global trust fund for agricultural statistics and the development of proper administrative and legal arrangements for the disbursement of funds, as well as the time needed for the establishment of regional governance mechanisms and for the recruitment of staff of the global office. During the interim phase, the legal and technical work was supported primarily by the Statistics Division of FAO and the resources of regional partners.

## **II. Governance**

### **A. Global governance**

4. Since its establishment in December 2011, the Global Steering Committee has met four times, either face to face or through videoconferencing or teleconferencing. A number of important decisions were taken at those meetings. The membership of the Global Steering Committee was established, as consisting of representatives of: two countries from each region, all resource partners supporting the Global Strategy, all partners participating in the implementation of the Global Strategy and some selected international agencies and user organizations. It was agreed that the Global Steering Committee would be co-chaired by the Director of the Development Data Group of the World Bank and by the Administrator of the Economic Research Service of the Department of Agriculture of the United States of America for the first two-year term. The Global Steering Committee also decided to establish a Global Executive Board consisting of seven members, delegating to that body the day-to-day decisions on the implementation of the Global Strategy. The terms of

reference of the Global Steering Committee and the Global Executive Board were finalized and endorsed.

5. At its 3rd meeting in February 2012, the Global Steering Committee endorsed the overall integrated budget of the action plan of about \$84 million, which will cover activities for the period 2012-2016 at the global, regional and national levels, and the overall objective of the action plan to strengthen the agricultural statistical system in 90 countries worldwide. The Global Steering Committee also approved, at the same meeting, the allocation of funds for 2012 (including funds expected and in-kind contributions) to the global office and to each region (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near East and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)).

6. During the 4th meeting in December 2012, funds expected for 2013 were allocated to global and regional activities following indications from resource partners, primarily to Africa and Asia and the Pacific. At the meeting, the Global Steering Committee also endorsed the regional action plan for Asia and the Pacific<sup>1</sup> and provided recommendations on the composition of a scientific advisory committee that will advise the global office on the methodological research programme. The scientific advisory committee will be formed by a limited number of prominent international experts in food and agricultural statistics and will contribute to the work of the inter-agency and expert group on agricultural statistics, whose establishment had been recommended by the Statistical Commission at its forty-second session.

7. The Global Executive Board has held three meetings to date, either face to face or through videoconferencing or teleconferencing. At its 1st meeting, the Director General of the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia was nominated to be the Chair of the Global Executive Board for its first two years.

8. During its 2nd meeting, the Global Executive Board endorsed the manual of procedures for disbursement of funds to the participating partners (global and regional implementing agencies) and a simplified global logical framework with a limited number of relevant and measurable indicators. The Global Executive Board also approved workplans and budgets of participating partners for the period from July to December 2012, allocating the funds received up to that moment by the global trust fund (more precisely, the first instalment of the grant from the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). Limited funding was provided to some regions (Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, CIS and the Near East) because of donor preferences and for the preparation of the regional action plans.

9. During the 3rd meeting, the Global Executive Board adopted the principles and methods for estimating the funds available for disbursement in any given calendar year, given that contributions to the global trust fund by resource partners follow a schedule not based on calendar years. The Global Executive Board also reviewed the workplan priorities for 2013 of all participating partners.

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<sup>1</sup> The endorsement was subject to approval by the Committee on Statistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific during its third session, held from 12 to 14 December 2012, and to the inclusion of the recommendations provided by the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics at its twentieth session in October 2012.

10. Progress in the establishment of the global office has also been made. At the beginning of 2012, FAO started the selection for the two key posts of Global Office Coordinator and Research Coordinator. The process has recently been completed and the Global Office Coordinator joined the FAO Statistics Division in December 2012. In the interim period, the FAO Statistics Division has supported all activities related to the Global Strategy with its staff.

## **B. Regional governance**

11. The Regional Steering Committee for Africa held its 2nd meeting on 26 November 2011, several months after the 1st meeting in July 2011 in which the action plan for Africa was endorsed. At the meeting, activities implemented under the regional action plan were presented, including the implementation of the standard country assessment questionnaire in all African countries and the preparation of a detailed workplan and budget for the region, consolidating the activities of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Economic Commission for Africa. The workplan for 2013 was also presented and adopted with some amendments, and 12 countries were selected to start implementation activities. One important decision was to strengthen the collaboration between the Global Strategy and the monitoring and evaluation activities of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme for stronger complementarities and synergies. The meeting also reviewed the composition of the Regional Executive Board, extending its membership to representatives of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, two countries and a donor.

12. In Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Committee on Statistics, in consultation with the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics, formed a steering group comprising a large number of country and organizational representatives to steer the preparation of the regional action plan. ESCAP and the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific provided secretariat services; while the Asian Development Bank (ADB), ESCAP and the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific supported the preparation of the plan in partnership.

13. In Latin America and the Caribbean and in CIS countries, a mandate was given by the respective regional statistical intergovernmental bodies to prepare a regional action plan, and regional working groups were formed for steering the process. Brazil and Mexico are leading the work in Latin America and the Caribbean with the support of the FAO Regional Office. The Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, together with FAO, is leading the work for CIS countries. In the Near East, it is expected that the upcoming session of the Statistical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) will establish a working group for the preparation of an action plan for the region.

## **III. Resource mobilization**

14. Following intensive advocacy efforts, important grant agreements have been signed with the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom,

the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy for a total of about \$41 million (50 per cent of the total budget). This leaves a funding gap of about \$42 million compared with the approved budget of the action plan, and consultations are under way with a number of important multilateral and bilateral donors to meet the funding requirements. Significant financial resources have also been provided by FAO, the World Bank and AfDB. ADB has funded research activities of the action plan for Asia and the Pacific. Many partners have supported the implementation of the Global Strategy, providing in-kind contributions, including staff and technical experts. For example, the Government of Japan has seconded an expert to support the regional office for Asia and the Pacific.

15. The global trust fund has been established and is managed by the Technical Cooperation Department of FAO, a separate unit from the FAO Statistics Division, which is also contributing to its implementation. Initial contributions have been received already by the above-mentioned donors. A remarkable effort has gone into the development of administrative, financial and legal procedures and instruments for disbursing funds to partners and for monitoring/reporting on output. Several units in FAO and partner agencies were involved in the lengthy process, which was a precondition for the implementation of the technical work. All conditions are now in place and disbursements have started. Given the indications received from our resource partners, however, the majority of the available funds will benefit the global office and the African and Asia-Pacific regions. Latin America and the Caribbean and the Near East and CIS regions are receiving only limited funds for the preparation of the regional action plans. Further advocacy work is required to raise funds for those regions.

#### **IV. Global and regional implementation plans**

16. The action plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics was endorsed by the Statistical Commission in February 2012. The results-based logical framework of the plan presents a limited number of high-level outputs. Each regional action plan will have to contain a logical framework whose outputs must fit under the global level outputs to allow for the aggregate reporting of results. At the global level, the results framework is the following:

- Impact: Improved evidence-based decision-making for poverty reduction, increased food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development.
- Outcome: Enable target countries to develop sustainable statistical systems for the production and dissemination of accurate and timely agricultural and rural statistics, comparable over time and across countries.
- Output 1: Effective governing bodies set up and functioning at the global and regional levels.
- Output 2: Coordinating bodies of the national statistical system, legal frameworks and strategic plans established (by the countries) in the target countries, enabling the integration of agriculture into the national statistical system.
- Output 3: New cost-effective methods for data collection, analysis and dissemination developed and disseminated.

- Output 4: Increased capacity of agricultural statistics staff in regional training centres (i.e., trainers) and target countries.

17. **Africa.** The action plan for Africa was endorsed by the Regional Steering Committee for Africa in July 2011, before the finalization of the global action plan. The logical framework for the Africa plan is therefore being amended to fit under the global logical framework.

18. **Asia and the Pacific.** The regional action plan for Asia and the Pacific has been completed and was endorsed by the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics, the Global Steering Committee and finally by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics at its third session, from 12 to 14 December 2012. It provides an overview of the current situation regarding statistical capacity in the region; describes the approach being taken for implementing technical assistance, training and research activities; indicates the governance arrangements as well as the monitoring and evaluation framework; and sets out the workplan and budget for detailed activities at the regional and national levels.

19. **Latin America and the Caribbean.** The first meeting of the Working Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean was held on 6 and 7 September 2012. The meeting reviewed the state of national statistical systems in the region in order to assess the main constraints in their statistical systems and the needs for training, technical assistance and methodological research. The standard questionnaire for country assessment was reviewed and recommendations were provided on ways to adapt it to the region. The outcome of the assessment will provide the necessary elements for developing the regional action plan.

20. **The Near East.** FAO and ESCWA organized an informal experts meeting to initiate the discussions on the regional action plan. The upcoming session of the ESCWA Statistical Committee is expected to provide the mandate for preparing the regional plan.

21. **CIS.** At its 47th meeting, in April 2012, the Council of Heads of Statistical Services of the CIS member countries decided to participate in the Global Strategy and requested the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States and FAO to start the preparation of an action plan for the region. At its 48th meeting, in October 2012, the concept note for the action plan was presented by the Committee and approved. Work for drafting the action plan is ongoing and it is expected to be completed in early 2013.

## V. Research activities

22. In 2012, pending the establishment of the global office, the Statistics Division of FAO has initiated or continued work on several methodological areas identified as priorities under the Global Strategy. Highlighted below are some of the important activities undertaken.

### **Sectoral plan for agricultural statistics and mainstreaming agriculture into National Strategies for the Development of Statistics**

23. The sectoral plan is a key pillar of the Global Strategy. FAO has worked in collaboration with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century

(PARIS21) for the preparation of new guidelines to support countries in ensuring that agricultural statistics is well integrated into the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics. A first-draft document, which includes an outline for aligning the sectoral plan for agricultural statistics with the new approach and guidelines for the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics, has been prepared and was discussed in detail at the expert meeting organized in December 2012 as part of the High-level Stakeholders Meeting on the Global Strategy: From Plan to Action (see para. 27). Good practices and relevant technical documents are already available for use by countries.

#### **Guidelines on linking population census with agricultural census**

24. The guidelines on linking population census with agricultural census are also essential for ensuring the integration of agriculture into national statistical systems and for a cost-effective agricultural census and survey programme at the country level. The guidelines were prepared jointly by FAO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and were published in 2012. The guidelines are being widely disseminated and some countries are already using them as reference documents when planning their population and agricultural censuses.

#### **Handbook on the use of handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) devices for crop-area measurement**

25. The technical handbook will assist many countries where costly crop-area measurements are part of agricultural surveys by substantially reducing the cost of such surveys (the time for measurement can be reduced by 60 per cent). The draft handbook has been prepared by FAO in collaboration with the Joint Research Centre, the World Food Programme and the Agricultural Research Centre for International Development.

#### **Cost of agricultural production**

26. The cost of agricultural production was also identified among the priority methodological topics under the Global Strategy. Work has started in that field and country practices have been compiled for the preparation of general guidelines. Expert group meetings were convened in Africa and in Asia and the Pacific in order to collect country experiences and agree on the way forward. Good practices in addressing the various technical issues related to measuring the cost of production were identified. It was agreed that the handbook on the cost of production would be produced collaboratively, along with training materials. In addition, a software package would be developed to collect, manage and analyse cost of production statistics and support countries in implementing the new methods.

#### **The High-level Stakeholders Meeting on the Global Strategy: From Plan to Action**

27. The high-level meeting was held from 3 to 5 December 2012 in Rome to officially launch the Global Strategy and strengthen partnerships for renewed commitments to support its implementation. The three-day meeting was also an opportunity to organize expert meetings on four priority research areas: new metrics for measuring performance in agriculture and food security, country assessments to measure the capacity to produce agriculture statistics, the development of sector

strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics and the development of master sampling frames for integrated agricultural and household surveys. Agreement on the prioritization of research activities was reached and a workplan for implementing the research proposal over the five years of the first phase of the Global Strategy was developed. The report of the expert meetings and the technical material presented are posted on the Internet (available from [fao.org/economic/ess/ess-events/global-strategy-2012/en](http://fao.org/economic/ess/ess-events/global-strategy-2012/en)). The conclusions of the technical sessions will guide the research agenda and the development of normative material and guidelines on the topics to be produced under the Global Strategy.

## **VI. Country assessment**

28. The standard questionnaire for country assessment has been developed. It was piloted in 59 countries of the Asia-Pacific region by ADB, ESCAP and the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and used to inform the development of the action plan for Asia and the Pacific. Some quality problems with country responses were highlighted and the need to review the questionnaire was stressed. The standard questionnaire was also implemented in the Africa region, under the leadership of AfDB as regional participating partner. Two regional training workshops were organized by AfDB in collaboration with FAO, for francophone and anglophone countries. A dedicated software tool was developed for completing the questionnaire online. Focal points responsible not only for managing the completion of the questionnaire but also for ensuring the coordination among national data producers were selected in each country. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the questionnaire was discussed by the Working Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics and arrangements were made to match up countries with different statistical capacities in order to give them the ability to support the assessment.

## **VII. Capacity development activities**

29. Pilot capacity development activities have also been conducted in a few countries to support the implementation of the three pillars of the Global Strategy.

### **Integrated population and agricultural censuses**

30. Following the development of the guidelines for linking population and housing with agricultural censuses, two regional workshops were held: from 28 May to 1 June 2012 in Nouméa, New Caledonia, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, UNFPA and PARIS21; and from 24 to 28 June in Amman in collaboration with ESCWA and the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics. Strong support was expressed for the guidelines and discussions were held on the benefits from the integration, the particular conditions under which it would be appropriate and the best methods for integration under particular country conditions.

### **Development of a sectoral plan for agricultural statistics in the United Republic of Tanzania**

31. In order to pilot test the implementation of the Global Strategy, a joint mission conducted by FAO and the United States Department of Agriculture visited the



United Republic of Tanzania in order to assess the situation of the agricultural statistics system, recognize user needs, map currently provided technical support in statistics and identify priority areas where further technical assistance and capacity-building are needed. The mission consulted with all key stakeholders, including senior and technical staff from the Government and key development partners. The mission worked with national staff to prepare a proposal that was agreed upon by all partners and is being used as a reference to assistance in agricultural statistics. One of the key activities identified is the development of the sector strategic plan for agricultural and rural statistics in an inclusive process and with the leadership of a national team, supported by a wide range of partners, including FAO, the United States Department of Agriculture and its National Agricultural Statistic Service, the United States Agency for International Development, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, AfDB and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom.

### **CountrySTAT**

32. The CountrySTAT dissemination platform included a section for the dissemination of the minimum set of core data promoted by the Global Strategy. The core set covers four statistical domains (economic, social, environmental and geographical location) and uses 41 key variables. Twenty-one countries under the project were supported in including the core data in their systems.

## **VIII. Way forward and priorities for 2013**

33. Following the adoption of the global action plan by the forty-second session of the Statistical Commission in February 2012, FAO and its partners, using their own resources, undertook intensive work to create the conditions for the implementation of the plan. Governance mechanisms are in place and functioning globally and in some regions. Administrative, financial and legal frameworks have been developed. Key staff in the global office are being recruited and proactive actions for resource mobilizations have resulted in grant agreements with important resource partners for about 50 per cent of the budget requirements. Meetings and consultations with experts have provided technical advice and consensus on the priorities and most suitable modalities for undertaking the research activities. Also, the Global Strategy website continues to be updated and includes documentation on meetings, action plans, technical materials and links to partner organizations.

34. The focus in 2013 will be on undertaking technical work in the areas of methodological research, technical assistance to countries and training at the global, regional and national levels.

35. At the global level, the priorities for 2013 will include:

- (a) Completing the establishment of the global office by recruiting the remaining staff and organizing regular meetings of the governing bodies;
- (b) Providing support to the preparation of regional action plans (with focus on Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near East and CIS);
- (c) Rolling out an intensive advocacy and communication campaign and continuing resource mobilization activities;

(d) Undertaking or continuing research activities on a number of priority topics agreed during expert meetings and endorsed by the Global Executive Board, including a framework for an integrated agricultural statistical programme; a sectoral strategic plan for agricultural and rural statistics; a master sampling frame; an integrated survey programme; methods for estimating the cost of production; methods for estimating nomadic livestock; methods for estimating post-harvest losses; methods for estimating crop area, yield and production in difficult conditions (e.g., mixed crops, repeated and continuous cropping, root crops); the adoption of new technologies for agricultural statistics (including the use of GPS and the use of computer tablets and personal digital assistants (PDAs) to perform computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI)); and the improvement of agricultural administrative data;

(e) Developing corresponding guidelines/handbooks and training materials and translating them into United Nations languages.

## **IX. Points for discussion**

36. **The Commission is invited to:**

(a) **Take note of and comment on the progress made in the implementation of the Global Strategy;**

(b) **Endorse the proposed priorities and way forward;**

(c) **Request countries and resource partners to support the implementation of the Global Strategy and the mobilization of the required resources to fill the funding gap.**

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