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Report of the Global Steering Committee on the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2013/235, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Global Steering Committee of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, submitted to the Statistical Commission for information. The report covers the following four items: (a) governance and resource mobilization; (b) implementation of Global Office activities; (c) implementation of activities at the regional level; and (d) the way forward and priorities for 2014. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

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Report of the Global Steering Committee on the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

I. Introduction

1. The present report aims to inform the Statistical Commission of the progress made in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics since its forty-fourth session. The report covers the following four items: (a) governance and resource mobilization; (b) implementation of Global Office activities; (c) the implementation of activities at regional level; and (d) the way forward and priorities for 2014.

II. Progress report on the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

A. Governance and resource mobilization

1. Governance

2. Mechanisms of governance guiding the implementation of the Global Strategy have been put in place in 2013 at the global and regional levels.

3. At the global level, two Global Steering Committee meetings have been organized in 2013. The main decisions taken were: (a) the approval of a regional action plan for Asia and the Pacific; (b) the revision of the integrated budget; (c) the no-cost extension of the global action plan up to December 2017; and (d) the approval of a proposal for revising the monitoring and evaluation framework. Two meetings of the Global Executive Board have also been organized. Progress in the establishment of the Global Office has also been made in 2013, and the recruitment of the Global Office staff is being finalized.

4. The Regional Steering Committee for Africa held its 4th meeting in June 2013 to approve the workplan and budget for 2013. The Regional Implementation Secretariat, hosted by the African Development Bank, has been established and the recruitment of regional office staff is in progress.

5. The Regional Steering Committee for Asia and the Pacific was constituted in April 2013. Two meetings were organized in 2013 to endorse the workplan and budget for 2013 and to approve the selection of eight countries implementing country-level activities in 2013 and 2014. The regional office has been set up at the Regional Office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Bangkok and is now operational. Recruitment of regional office staff is in progress.

6. The Regional Steering Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean has also been established and met in Trinidad in 2013 to review the draft action plan for the global strategy implementation.

7. Regarding the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Western Asia regions, a mandate was given by the respective regional statistical

intergovernmental bodies to prepare a regional action plan and establish regional mechanisms of governance.

2. Resource mobilization

8. Following intensive advocacy efforts, a proposal of \$10 million was submitted to the European Commission to cover the funding gap of the Global Trust Fund in Africa. Signature of the memorandum of understanding with the European Commission is to be finalized before the end of 2013.

9. The total funds pledged to date, including the European Commission contribution of \$10 million, amount to \$51 million, leaving a funding gap of \$32 million. Mainly activities in Africa, and Asia and the Pacific region and at the global level benefit from these contributions; therefore, additional resource mobilization efforts will need to be conducted for the underfunded regions: Latin America and the Caribbean, the Commonwealth of Independent States and Western Asia.

10. The Global Trust Fund is fully operational. Throughout 2013 remarkable efforts have been made towards the consolidation of the partnership programme. Memorandums of understanding with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) were signed and the corresponding disbursement of funds was placed.

B. Implementation of activities at the Global Office level

1. Research component

11. In 2013, the Global Office initiated and carried forward work on several methodological areas identified as priorities under the research component of the Global Strategy.

12. Significant progress has been made on: (a) the conceptual framework (System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Agriculture), which is a comprehensive and standard satellite account for the integration of agricultural and environmental data based on internationally agreed concepts, definitions, classifications and interrelated tables; (b) the Integrated Survey Framework for producing integrated and consistent agricultural statistics on different observation units such as agricultural plots (concerning environmental aspects), households (concerning the social aspect) and farms (concerning the economic dimension). The following topics will be finalized in 2014: (a) the development of master sampling frames, where specific research is conducted on the identification of the most appropriate frame for specific landscape types, the improvement of methods for linking area frames with list frames and the use of the Global Positioning System (GPS), a geographic information system and remote sensing for setting up a master sampling frame; (b) the cost of agricultural production, where good practices in addressing the various technical issues related to measuring costs of production are being collected; (c) the improvement of methods for crop estimates, in particular improving the estimation of crop area, yield and production; (d) the development of more efficient and accurate methods for using remote sensing and the use of land cover and land use databases; (e) the improvement of methodologies for the compilation of food

balance sheets; (f) the adoption of new technology for field data capture, compilation, transfer and dissemination, which will play an important role in the development of cost-effective data collection methods and the improvement of data quality; (g) the improvement of methods for small-scale fishery; and (h) a better integration of geographic information and statistics methods.

13. The first meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee was organized in July 2013 at FAO headquarters in Rome with the objective of reviewing the research programme and providing advice on the implementation of the research component.

2. Production of guidelines and training material

14. Progress has been made on the preparation of the following guidelines: (a) Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics, which will be peer-reviewed at the beginning of 2014; (b) best practices on nomadic livestock; and (c) a handbook on the use of handheld GPS for crop area measurement. Activities have started on agricultural classifications and the Integrated Survey Framework.

15. Significant progress has been made in the preparation of training material for: (a) linking population census with agricultural census; and (b) estimating greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture.

3. Coordination with other initiatives

16. The Global Office has also ensured synergies and coordination with other ongoing initiatives, such as: (a) the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant to FAO for preparing guidelines on country assessments and carrying out in-depth country assessments in seven countries in Africa and two in Asia; (b) the Agricultural Market Information System project, particularly on food stocks and crop forecasts; (c) FAO country assistance projects in the United Republic of Tanzania in coordination with the United States Agency for International Development and the African Development Bank; (d) the Coalition for African Rice Development initiative of the Government of Japan in Africa; (e) the initiatives of the United States Agency for International Development in Africa: Core Agricultural and Rural Data Survey Project.

C. Implementation of activities at the regional level

1. Africa

17. The African Development Bank signed a memorandum of understanding with FAO in August 2013, and funds have been disbursed by the Global Trust Fund. The main activities in 2013 have focused on the country assessment process, including follow-up missions and the adaptation of the questionnaire to the African context. Almost all African countries have filled out the questionnaire to assess statistical capacity and needs at the country level. A regional training workshop for national strategy coordinators was held in Morocco in November 2013, focusing on the validation of the results and the calculation of capacity indicators, and final results will be published shortly. The African Development Bank has also taken part in country-driven activities in the United Republic of Tanzania, Cabo Verde and South Sudan.

18. Regarding the training component, ECA has also started to implement activities as follows: (a) the training needs assessment framework has been drafted; (b) advisory missions have been conducted in some priority countries; (c) a review of curriculums and syllabuses was carried out during a workshop in Mozambique; and (d) a workshop for human resources managers was held in Senegal. Furthermore, the establishment of long-term scholarships for young statisticians is ongoing.

2. Asia and the Pacific region

19. The Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics was endorsed at the beginning of 2013. The FAO regional office, hosting the regional office, has started to prepare the process of in-depth country assessments in four of the eight priority countries identified in 2013, namely, Bhutan, Indonesia, Samoa and Sri Lanka.

20. With regard to the training component, ESCAP signed a memorandum of understanding with FAO in July 2013 and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific launched two workshops in 2013 on sampling and the minimum set of core data, and two workshops on policy analysis.

21. The Asian Development Bank is contributing funding to the implementation of the Global Strategy through the project “Improving agricultural and rural statistics for food security” in four Asian countries, covering Bhutan, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Maldives and Viet Nam.

3. Other regions

22. The draft regional action plan for Latin America and the Caribbean is currently under review for final submission. Country assessment questionnaires have been sent out to the countries and results are being analysed.

23. In the Western Asia region, country assessment questionnaires have been sent to countries and results presented at a validation workshop in Jordan in December 2013. ESCWA, together with the FAO regional office, has been commissioned by the regional statistical commission to develop a regional action plan for Western Asia.

24. A first draft for the regional action plan for the Commonwealth of Independent States countries was prepared and discussed at a workshop held in Budapest in July 2013. It was endorsed by the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Sochi, Russian Federation, in October 2013 and is currently under review at the global level.

D. Way forward and priorities for 2014

25. At the global level, throughout 2014, the focus will be on: (a) establishing better mechanisms of coordination between the Global Office and the regional implementing partners and the improvement of the existing monitoring and evaluation framework; (b) prioritizing research activities according to urgent needs expressed by countries and the creation of a repository of new cost-effective methods, standards and good practices allowing access to a wide range of users; (c) developing guidelines and training material that can be rapidly used by regions

and countries; (d) mobilizing resources for underfunded regions (Latin America and the Caribbean, Commonwealth of Independent States and Western Asia); (e) promoting the role of the Global Strategy as an umbrella for coordinating statistical capacity development initiatives; (f) an intensive roll-out for the Global Strategy communication plan; and (g) establishing the inter-agency and expert group on agricultural and rural statistics, which was endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its forty-third session.

26. In Africa, activities in 2014 will focus on: (a) follow-up missions to various countries to assist in the establishment of national governance structures; (b) releasing a report on the results of the first stage of the country assessment process; (c) undertaking the in-depth country assessments or starting directly the process of the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics in the countries; (d) providing technical assistance to selected countries; (e) mapping the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme monitoring and evaluation indicators and the minimum set of core data of the Global Strategy in order to ensure that the Africa Action Plan will be able to generate the necessary statistical data and information for the monitoring and evaluation of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme; (f) ensuring that training needs are integrated into sector plans; (g) starting to upgrade the capacity of regional training centres; and (h) providing scholarships for long-term and short-term studies.

27. In Asia, activities in 2014 will concentrate on: (a) in-depth country assessments and preparation of the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics in the eight priority countries; (b) providing technical assistance to selected countries; (c) ensuring that training needs are integrated into sector plans; (d) strengthening the capacity of national and regional training institutions; and (e) developing standard curriculums and syllabuses and developing e-learning material.

28. For the three other regions, priority will be given to the finalization of regional action plans and the mobilization of resources.

29. The Commission is invited to take note of the present report.
