



Global strategy to improve agricultural and rural statistics





Annual consolidated narrative report
2013

1. General Information

Date of submission: 30th April
Reporting period: 2013

	Hard commitment 2013¹
Africa	5,650,455
Asia	3,162,037
CIS	88,000
Latin America	81,049
Near East	90,000
Global Office	6,402,175
Total	9,071,542

Signature of the Head of the Global Office Coordinator


Signature of the Fund Administrator


¹ Budget approved by the GEB.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 Progress towards the Global Logical Framework

The description below provides a summary of the major achievements towards the four outputs of the Global Strategy:

OUTPUT 1

Effective governing bodies set up and functioning at global and regional levels

Governance meetings: Throughout 2013, a total of 8 Global and Regional Steering Committee meetings were organized. At global level two Global Steering Committee (GSC) meetings and two Global Executive Board (GEB) meetings were held. The major decisions approved were the workplans and budget for 2013, the allocation of funds for 2013 and the revision of the integrated budget of the programme. In the Asia-Pacific region two regional steering committees (RSC) took place in April and November 2013; the main decisions taken concerned the functioning of the RSC, the workplans and the identification of pilot countries. In the Latin America and Caribbean region a RSC meeting was organised in June to discuss the first draft of the Regional Action Plan. Two RSC meetings were held in the CIS region in July and October 2013 for validating the Regional Action Plan and finally, a preliminary meeting of the RSC for the Near East region was held in December. No governance meetings were organised in 2013 in Africa.

Regional offices were put in place and are functioning at the Global Office level and in the Asia and Pacific region. Almost all the positions planned for the Global Office have been filled. In Africa positions have not been filled but consultants have been recruited to run the activities in 2013 and the implementing partners have recruited consultants to carry out the tasks. Generally speaking, recruitments were delayed due to long administrative processes.

Regional action plans: The Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan was endorsed by the Global Steering Committee in 2013. In addition, the Global Office provided support for drafting regional action plans to the three following regions: CIS (a draft was validated by the RSC in October and a final version is to be validated), Near East (discussions were initiated in December) and LAC (a draft was discussed in June and the final version is to be validated).

MoUs: Three MoUs were signed in 2013 with the implementing partners: in March with UNECA, in July with UNESCAP and in August with AfDB.

Resource mobilization efforts: The agreement formalizing the Italian contribution to the Global Trust Fund was signed in March 2013. In addition, a funding proposal for an amount of 10 million dollars was prepared by the Global Office in collaboration with AfDB and UNECA and submitted to the EC in September 2013. In the LAC region contacts have been made with potential donors but have not been so far successful.

Organization of technical meetings: The Global Office organized the first meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee in July 2013.

Advocacy, Communication: At global level, a communication plan was developed and efforts have been made towards the development of a strong visual identity and a number of associated promotional materials such as brochures, leaflets, folders, posters, standard document templates etc. An e-Bulletin is regularly produced on a monthly basis and sent to approximately 1200 subscribers in NSOs, Ministries of Agriculture and international organizations. Furthermore, in Africa AfDB is producing a quarterly bulletin on the implementation of the Global strategy in Africa in collaboration with UNECA.

OUTPUT 2

Coordinating bodies of the NSS, legal frameworks and SPARS established to enable the integration of agriculture into the NSS

First-stage country assessments: All the regions have launched or completed the first-stage country assessments. In Africa important efforts have been made for helping countries to complete the questionnaires. This resulted into the organization of a validation workshop with 48 countries in Morocco in December. Fifty-two countries in total have replied, and a publication including the results is expected to be issued in April 2014. In the Asia-Pacific region, the process was already completed in 2012 with responses from 42 countries. In the LAC region 10 countries have filled out the questionnaire; 6 in the Near East region; and all CIS countries.

In-depth Country Assessments (IdCA): In-depth country assessments are the starting point for providing further technical assistance at country level. In 2013 efforts were made towards drafting IdCA guidelines with strong inputs from the Asia-Pacific region. In 2013 the first in-depth country assessments were also carried out in Africa with funding from BMGF in Mali, Uganda and Tanzania, and they were initiated in Nigeria and Burkina Faso. In Asia work started in 2013 with GS funds in Bhutan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Samoa; Bangladesh is covered by a separate BMGF grant.

SPARS: The first draft of the SPARS (Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics) guidelines was produced by the Global Office in December, and a first version to be used in the countries will be made available in April 2014. In particular, attention was given to the need for appropriately integrating the IdCA process into the SPARS process, thus allowing a faster implementation at country level.

OUTPUT 3

New cost effective methods for data collection, analysis and dissemination developed

Progress on the implementation of the research agenda by the Global Office was made as follows:

Framework for agricultural statistics, the conceptual framework (SEEA – Agri): Technical work started on the initial design of a relevant accounting structure and the review of analytical and indicator needs followed by testing of the initial accounting design. Work also commenced on the development of a dynamic database. Countries will be undertaking “proof of concept tests” of SEEA Agri and providing support to the project in 2014.

Framework for agricultural statistics: The Integrated survey framework. The aim of the research project was to improve the way surveys could be integrated taking into account three different target populations: households, farms and parcels. Research concluded with the consideration of various solutions for data integration tested with real data. The technical report will be ready in May 2014 and guidelines will be produced.

Improved methodologies for Master Sampling Frames: This research topic is one of the key technical recommendations from the Global Strategy and should result in Guidelines/Handbook for building and using good quality master sampling frame for integrated agricultural surveys. Research activities have started in 2013 on 3 lines of research: (i) identifying the most appropriate area frame for specific landscape types; (ii) improving methods for linking area frames with list frames and (iii) improving the use of GPS, GIS and RS for setting up a master sampling frame. Work will be finalized in 2014 and specific guidelines produced.

Cost of production: In 2013, the research on Cost of Production (CoP) made progress with the development of the first significant draft of a Handbook on CoP primarily focused on developing countries, and with the organization of an expert group meeting in November. This helped in the preparation of country-level field testing, which is planned to be undertaken in Sri Lanka, Colombia, the Philippines, and Zambia in 2014.

Improving methods for estimating post-harvest losses: Post harvest losses (PHL) have a strong impact on food security in several developing countries and there is no standardized method currently available for estimating their quantity. Work started in 2013 with a literature review and a gap analysis, and will be continued in 2014.

Improving methods for crops estimates: The research topic is focused on 3 topics: (i) improvement of estimation of crop area, yield and production; (ii) developing methods for estimating yields of root crops; and, (iii) improving methods for estimating crop area, yield, production of mixed crops, repeated and continuous cropping. Progress has been made on the two first sub-topics, including literature reviews and gap analyses. The work on root crops is conducted with support from World Bank LSMS-ISA project. In order to expedite delivery in 2014, it was decided to outsource the research topic on mixed crops, and repeated and continuous cropping, to a qualified institution through a Letter of Agreement (LoA).

Improving the methodology for using Remote Sensing: This research topic is focused on the following subtopics: (i) developing more efficient and accurate methods for using remote sensing; (ii) improving methods for using existing land cover and land use databases for Agricultural statistics; (iii) Evaluating the cost-efficiency of remote sensing in developing countries. Significant progress was made on the first two sub-topics: literature reviews and gap analysis were produced, and for improved methods using land cover, land use databases, suggestions on potential approaches were made. For the last topic, in order to expedite itsTo speed up the implementation of the last topic, it was decided to outsource it in 2014 to a qualified institution through a LoA.

Adoption of new technology for field data capture, compilation, transfer and dissemination: This research topic is implemented in collaboration with the World Bank. A free CAPI software is currently under development. Several pilot surveys with a pre-release version of the software were carried out in Saint Lucia, Morocco, Tunisia, Nigeria, Togo, and Djibouti. The CAPI software was publicly released for the first time in September.

Improving methodology of food balance sheets: The objective of this research is to equip countries with tools to enhance the monitoring of national food security, allowing them to quantify the transformation of key staple crops beyond the farm gate. The activity commenced in November by collecting information on major staple crops and conducting the research on crop characteristics and processed product transformation; and it will be continued in 2014.

Improving methodology for small scale fishery: A review of the 2010 WCA census questionnaires and reports was conducted. A literature review and a first draft of the guidelines were also carried out. The guidelines will be completed in 2014.

Better integration of geographic information and statistics: The aim is to develop effective and robust methods for use of geographic information to produce more accurate agricultural and rural statistics. A literature review, a gap analysis and methodological solutions were carried out. The work will be completed in 2014.

Two topics which were initially planned for 2013 were postponed to 2014: *Improving methods for estimating livestock and livestock products* and *Improving quality and use of administrative data to produce agricultural statistics*. A new approach for requesting proposals from a wider list of institutions and for selecting a qualified institution to develop the methods through a Letter of Agreement will be proposed in 2014.

OUTPUT 4

Increased capacity of agricultural statistics' staff in regional training centers and target countries

Preparation of guidelines: The Global Office has started the preparation of the following guidelines in 2013: i) Nomadic Livestock, (ii) use of GPS for crop area measurement iii) agricultural classifications, and iv) dissemination of agricultural micro-data. These guidelines are expected to be finalized during the first half of 2014.

Preparation of training material: The Global Office has started the preparation of the following training material in 2013: i) Greenhouse gas emissions, (ii) linking Agricultural Census and Population Census. This material is expected to be finalized during the first half of 2014.

Training activities in Africa: Under the responsibility of UNECA, significant progress has been made in 2013 on the training component in Africa. A complete inventory of existing training packages and initiatives was completed; frameworks were developed for effective gauging of training demand and supply at country level. In this respect, an HR development and capacity building strategy including training activities was carried out, and an overarching agricultural statistics training curriculum with its respective syllabuses was developed. In addition, scholarships were provided to 44 African students in 2013 to allow them to complete the studies leading to a Masters in Agricultural Statistics . Support to training centres hosting the students was also provided.

Training activities in Asia: SIAP started the implementation of the training component in August 2013 with the launch of a series of three regional workshops for trainers on "Building Training Resources for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics" covering the minimum set of core data for agricultural and rural statistics, data collection through sample surveys and data collection through administrative reporting systems. To increase the capacity to use statistics for policymaking, SIAP in collaboration with the ESCAP Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture organized two policy analysis workshops on food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable agriculture.

Synergies with other activities

The Global strategy is implemented in close collaboration with other existing initiatives in the field of strengthening statistical capacity building in agricultural statistics.

AfDB actively collaborated with FAO in 2013 on two existing projects in Tanzania and Cabo Verde through joint missions.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has strongly contributed to the objectives of the regional action plan in the Asia-Pacific region through the identification of minimum core data sets, the preparation of national action plans, high level advocacy meetings, technical assistance and training on selected topics. The main countries concerned are: Bhutan, Lao PDR, Maldives, the Philippines, and Viet Nam.

The **Global Office** has been working in close collaboration with the other projects carried out by FAO and other partners: in particular, with the AMIS project, whose research activities are directly linked to the GS (e.g. crop forecasting). The Global Office was involved in other coordination activities with several other initiatives: the M&E harmonization group of food security partners including the development of CARDS (Core Agricultural and Rural Data Survey), the Japanese Rice project (CARD), and the LSMS-ISA project of the World Bank. Synergies were also built with specific FAO projects in Ethiopia (BMGF grant on the use of remote sensing), Mozambique (Master plan) and Malawi (Master Plan).

2.2 Risk mitigation strategy

The major risk of the programme is the lack of funding in some regions, namely in CIS, Near East and LAC. The initial seed funding allocated to the regions did not suffice for completing their regional action plans, therefore additional seed funding was allocated in 2013. New resource mobilization strategies will be needed in 2014.

Another risk is the difficulty in coordinating the implementation of activities among partners in the regions and the alignment between regional and global activities. In order to overcome this risk, standardized procedures have been developed and presented to the partners.

Technical solutions have also been proposed for expediting the implementation process. It is now recommended that in depth-country assessments are directly included in the SPARS process in order to reduce the burden on countries and to speed up the process of evaluation and identification of needs.

2.3 Key achievements

The key achievements of 2013 are the following:

1. The foundations of the programme have been consolidated, including the development of standard MoUs for all partners. Furthermore, the financial mechanism for transferring funds to the Participating Partners has been established.
2. From an operational point of view the Global Office and the regional office in Asia-Pacific are in place; implementing teams have been established in Asia and at UNECA; coordination among partners has improved and there is a common understanding on the standard operational procedures to implement the global strategy.
3. First stage country assessments have been almost completed in the 5 regions. A total of 120 countries have filled out questionnaires (52 out of 54 in Africa).
4. The research agenda, despite a slow start, is now producing results which will be soon translated into guidelines and training material from which the countries will benefit.
5. Implementation of training activities is also well-advanced, particularly in Africa where the provision of scholarships has proved to be a big success.

2.4 Key challenges

The 5 key challenges in 2013 were:

1. A slow process for the signature of MoUs between FAO and implementing partners which resulted in a delayed disbursement of funds for implementing the activities. It is also to be noted that the proposal for the allocation of funds is normally approved between February and March of the year in which the activities are being implemented, therefore the activities of the first quarter need to be funded by carried forward funds. This could be a potential issue in the future.
2. Long recruitment processes, which particularly affected the Global Office. This issue was temporarily solved with the recruitment of consultants. Recruiting consultants has also been a solution for UNECA, UNESCAP and AfDB, however, this remains an issue for the implementation of activities in 2014.
3. Low delivery of activities of the research agenda and consequently a reduced delivery of guidelines and training material, which has resulted in the decision to better rationalize the activities, improve monitoring and identify through a more transparent procedure potential institutions able to carry out activities through letters of agreement or expressions of interest.
4. Lack of funding for LAC, CIS and Near East regions, and the existing funding gaps for Asia-Pacific.
5. Overall complexity of processes in place for decision making, due to the complexity of the governance structure at global and regional levels. Between the preparation of a workplan and the disbursement of funds for implementation there is a long validation process which involves the RSC, the GO, the GEB, the GSC and the Fund Administrator.

2.5 Issues affecting potential sustainability of the GS at global level

The main issues affecting the potential sustainability of the Global Strategy at global level are directly linked with some of the 5 challenges described above:

- The existing funding gaps may affect the implementation of the workplans between 2014 and 2017.
- The sustainability of the Global Strategy's funding structure and activities may be affected in case potential donors decide to earmark their contributions and fund activities within the scope of the Global Strategy outside the Global Trust Fund.
- The existing administrative processes involving the planning and implementation of activities are particularly heavy due to the governance structure.
- The use of long-term consultants (rather than recruiting staff for the positions planned in the integrated budget) does not guarantee a continuity of activities and does not allow implementing partners to build their own capacity.
- The Global Strategy funds the strengthening of statistical capacities but not data collection in countries. The question of the overall funding of the agricultural statistical system will have to be adequately addressed at country level to guarantee the sustainability of the Global Strategy.

3. Progress against the Global Logical Framework

Global Output ²	Global Indicator	Global Baseline	Global Target	Achievement to date	Comments
1. Effective governing bodies set up and functioning at Global and Regional Levels	1.1 Regional Action Plans developed	1	5	2 completed 3 to be finalised	The three regional action plans to be finalized are the plans for the regions which have not received funding
	1.2 Consolidated reports submitted to GSC/GEB/Donors	0	5	1 (not including this report)	2 including this report
2. Coordinating bodies of the national statistical system, legal frameworks and strategic plans established (by the countries), to enable the integration of agriculture into the national statistical system	2.1 Integration of agricultural and rural statistics into the NSDSs or National Statistical Strategies	xx	Xx (70% of target countries)	Not available	Data from country assessments in Africa is still missing
	2.2 National budget for agricultural statistics	xx	Increase in national budget	Not available	No source of information available
3. New cost effective methods for data collection, analysis and dissemination developed	3.1 Number of guidelines, reports, produced on funded research topics	0	24	0	4 guidelines drafted in 2013
	3.2 Number of publications on funded research topics published in scientific journals	0	24	0	Indicator to be reviewed (should match country needs)
4. Increased capacity of agricultural statistics staff in regional training centers and target countries	4.1 Regional training centers have permanent qualified trainers/staff	One/two for each centre	Four for each centre	Not available	Not yet applicable
	4.2 Countries having Statistical staff with core statistical skills	xx target countries	At least 15 countries more than the baseline	Not available	No source of information available at the moment

² Global Outputs, Indicators, Baselines and Targets are those defined in the Global Logical Framework.

3.1 Risk Management

Are the risks identified in the Global Logical Framework being effectively mitigated?

The risks have been well identified and the corresponding individual mitigation strategies adapted. The countries are committed, advocacy efforts are being made, seed money has been allocated to regions for developing action plans, and the Scientific Advisory Committee is working efficiently. One last mitigation measure may need to be taken: a revision and adjustment of governing process.

Are there any issues to report on that need to be brought to the attention of the Global Steering Committee in this regard?

Following the 7th GSC meeting (22nd October 2013 in Rio de Janeiro), it was decided that the monitoring framework for the GS will be completely reviewed and revised in order to bring more consistency between global and regional levels and to propose indicators which are meaningful and easily measurable.

Is there a need to revise or update the risks and their respective mitigation activities?

Since the overall M&E framework will be revised, a review of risks and mitigation measures will be also undertaken.

3.2 Design Issues

Is the Global Logical Framework (GLF) as currently designed still entirely relevant to the evolving needs of the Global Strategy and the key stakeholders?

The Global Logical Framework has been prepared on the basis of the 3 pillars of the Global Strategy summarized in the four outputs, however some of the existing indicators could be significantly improved and other ones could be further developed for taking into account the required need for monitoring on a more detailed level of activities. In this respect, the Logical framework should be fully revised in order to improve coordination with other regional frameworks, bearing in mind the importance of having easily measurable and meaningful indicators.

Are there any elements which need to be revised and / or updated? If so, please explain.

The existing GLF does not provide sufficient detail regarding the process of monitoring and evaluation, in particular on the following aspects: (i) how the global and regional frameworks are harmonized; (ii) when the monitoring should take place, (iii) how it has to be carried out; and (iv) what resources are required. In view of these issues, a more detailed development of a narrative component of the Monitoring and Evaluation framework will be developed in 2014.

4. Key Achievements/Opportunities

Please outline the key achievements of the programme, identifying relevant success stories at country, regional and global level.

- In addition to the key achievements described in section 2.33, the Global strategy is considered as the main global coherence framework for strengthening statistical capacity in developing countries. Stakeholders and experts in this field refer to the Global Strategy as it is an internationally recognized channel for improving the availability and use of agricultural statistics.

Please state any opportunity that can evolve for the success of the Global Strategy.

- One of the main challenges for the success of the Global Strategy is to ensure that countries establish the appropriate capacities and resources for developing agricultural statistical systems which meet the demand of national policies and international requirements. The funds made available by the Global Strategy only cover activities for strengthening their national capacities therefore it is crucial to develop additional partnerships, mainly at country level, for ensuring that data collection is funded by governments with the support of development partners. In this light, the development of partnerships with new donors, and increasing the interaction of participating partners with governments, are therefore key elements for ensuring the success of the Global Strategy. An example of opportunity in Africa is the possible linkage of the agricultural statistics plan with national investment plans (CAADP).
- Cooperation among regions will also help ensure the success of the global strategy. The best example is the need to coordinate between regions on training activities where experience has been gained and needs to be shared.

5. Key Challenges/Constraints Encountered

Is it necessary to change or modify key elements of the programme?

The key elements of the programme do not need to be changed.

What are the key constraints currently faced in the implementation of the programme?

The current key challenges are:

- The complexity of existing governing processes at global and regional levels.
- The existing M&E framework which needs to be better adapted to the global and the regional levels, and the logical framework which needs to be revised.

- The proposal for the allocation of funds which is normally approved in the months of February-March of the year in which the activities are being implemented, therefore the activities of the first quarter need to be funded by carried forward funds. This could be a potential issue in the future.
- The use of long-term consultants replacing the planned staff positions mentioned in the global action plan.
- The lack of funding for the LAC, CIS and Near East regions and the existing funding gaps for Asia-Pacific.
- The delays in the implementation of the research plan which have a potential impact on TA and training activities in the countries.

What action is being taken to address them?

- The GO will prepare a note to the GSC highlighting the existing issues and constraints linked to the approval processes. The note will be presented at the next GSC meeting in September 2014.
- The M&E framework is being revised with the support of 2 high-level consultants. A draft proposal will be presented at the next GSC meeting in September 2014
- Implementing partners are invited to recruit staff as planned, or explain to the GSC the reasons why they have not done so, regardless of their internal constraints.
- A new organization for the implementation of the research component is in place for speeding up delivery.

6. Sustainability

Overall sustainability Ratings at Global and Regional levels

Criteria	Region/Global Office	Overall Rating
Sustainability	Africa	
	Asia	
	CIS	Not relevant
	Latin America	Not relevant
	Near East	Not relevant
	Global Office	

Rating	Percentage rating	Meaning
1	33.3%	Performance is exceptional and significantly above expectations
2	33.3%	Performance meets expectations/on track
3	33.3%	Performance is problematic/below expectations

7. Next Steps

For the **Global Office** the major focus of the programme will be centered on delivering the research agenda, providing the regions with guidelines and training material and ensuring coordination of activities with the regions. The M&E framework will be revised for implementation in 2015. In parallel, efforts will be made for raising additional funding at regional level.

In **Africa and Asia and the Pacific**, technical assistance will be provided to priority countries for undertaking In-Depth Country Assessments or for starting directly the elaboration of SPARS. Support will be progressively given to countries with regards to the use of cost-effective methods, using the guidelines provided by the Global Office. In the field of training, the two regions will collaborate towards a harmonization of approaches in terms of curricula and e-learning tools, and will continue to implement the activities started in 2013.

For the three other regions (**LAC, CIS and Near East**), regional action plans will be finalized and the main objective will be to find appropriate opportunities for raising funds.

8 Lessons Learned

Lessons learned – elements of success

Despite the large scope of the programme the amount of time devoted to defining standard operational procedures has helped to avoid fragmentation and to reduce the transaction costs related to its implementation.

The Global Strategy stakeholders are committed towards the success of the Global Strategy at global, regional and country level. There is a strong interest in the coordination of activities related to strengthening statistical capacity around the Global Strategy, which is considered as a reference platform for providing technical assistance to developing countries in the field of statistics. The extension of partnerships is important but at the same time challenging in terms of coordination and alignment of activities. Therein addition, there is a strong demand from the countries which understand that the Global Strategy is a unique opportunity for better mainstreaming agricultural statistics in the national statistical system and building a system able to respond in a sustainable way to national and international requirements.

Lessons learned –constraints

Substantial coordination efforts have served to ensure that the regional element acts as a channel for the global framework to integrate regional needs; undertake country assessments; provide technical assistance and training at national level, and liaise with international, regional and sub-regional offices. Because of the delay in the implementation of some of these activities, the Global Office has decided to strengthen the coordination mechanisms, to review the existing M&E framework and to propose a simplification of administrative processes in the future.

Greater efforts were required to speed up the recruitment processes and align them with the decisions taken by the Global Steering Committee. For some partners, the lack of staff for implementing the increasing number of activities is still an issue which needs to be solved rapidly. For some other partners the possibility of retaining staff is directly linked with the availability of resources.

The first annual workplans did not integrate the need for pragmatism linked to existing administrative barriers and constraints of the implementing partners. Such a huge programme should have planned a more progressive schedule of implementation taking into account the reality. A better prioritization and use of quick wins should have also oriented the initial work programme of the Global Office.