



Global Strategy

IMPROVING AG-STATISTICS

ACTION PLAN OF THE GLOBAL STRATEGY TO IMPROVE AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL STATISTICS

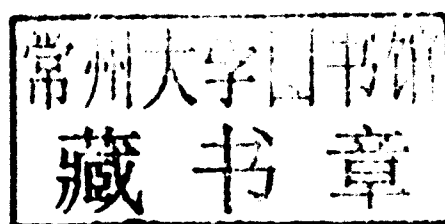


For Food Security,
Sustainable Agriculture
and Rural Development



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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
The World Bank
The United Nations Statistical Commission
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PREFACE

The recent food crisis and the ongoing debates on food price volatility, the impact of climate change on agriculture and food security clearly highlight the weaknesses in the available agricultural data. They also highlight the urgent need for evidence on which to base implementation of the relevant effective policies at the global, regional and national levels. These data requirements are emerging at the same time that many countries, especially in the developing world, are lacking the capacity to produce and report even the minimum set of agricultural data needed to monitor national trends or inform the international development debate.

The *Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics* is a ground-breaking effort to strengthen agricultural statistics (World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and United Nations Statistical Commission, 2011). Development of the Global Strategy, which was initiated by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), is the result of an extensive consultation process with national and international statistical organizations, as well as the national statistics offices, agriculture ministries and the other government institutions producing statistics that fall under its scope. The Global Strategy is a framework for national and international statistical systems that will enable them to produce, and to apply, the basic data and information needed in the twenty-first century.

At its 41st session in February 2010, the UNSC endorsed the technical content and strategic directions of the Global Strategy. It also urged the rapid development of an action plan for implementation (hereafter Global Action Plan) that would begin with a detailed assessment of each country's statistical capacity. The Global Strategy was also endorsed by the 36th session of the FAO Conference (18-23 November 2009), the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS, 2009) and the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS, 2010). The Global Action Plan was to provide a comprehensive technical assistance and training programme and also contain a well-targeted research agenda to deal with unsolved methodological issues and implementation of the statistical methodology required by the strategy.

A worldwide consultation on the first drafts of the Global and African Action Plans (preparation of the Global Action Plan was carried out in parallel with development of the African Action Plan) was held at the Fifth International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS-V) in Kampala, Uganda from 13 to 15 October 2010. It was attended by about 300 senior experts from 77 countries. There, technical sessions focused on the country assessment framework, the technical assistance and training programmes, the methodological research agenda, and the governance mechanisms at the global, regional, and national levels.

A Roundtable Meeting of Donors held during ICAS-V resulted in strong support for the Global Action Plan by the donors present, who expressed a willingness to consider funding for its implementation. Several activities have also been undertaken to involve regional partners in the Global Action Plan, including the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Inter-American Development Bank, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for

Western Asia (ESCWA), Islamic Development Bank, and Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISSTAT) in close collaboration with the regional offices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

A progress report on the preparation of the Global Action Plan was presented to the 42nd session of the UNSC in February 2011 and to the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS), which met from 30 November to 3 December 2011. The Global Action Plan was also presented at the 37th session of the FAO Conference held from 25 June to 2 July 2011, and received strong support from FAO member countries and institutions. At their meeting in Paris, 22-23 June 2011, the agriculture ministers of the G20 adopted an "Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture," which states that the ministers of the G20 "support the *Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics* and invite international organizations to create synergies between this Global Strategy and AMIS (Agricultural Market Information System)" (Group of 20, 2011). Finally, the 43rd session of the UNSC, which met from 28 February to 2 March 2012, fully endorsed the Global Action Plan and its governance arrangements.

The implementation of the Global Strategy will take into account lessons learned from decades of technical cooperation. In particular, it will be aligned with the international consensus on the new approach to capacity development grounded in the five principles of the "Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness" (OECD, 2005) and in the "Accra Agenda for Action" (OECD, 2008).

The new approach to capacity development calls for a systemic perspective that addresses three dimensions: (1) enhancing individual technical capacity; (2) strengthening institutions and organizations; and (3) creating an enabling environment instead of focusing only on a single aspect (FAO, 2010a). It also recommends embracing flexible planning to adapt to specific country contexts, supporting national processes of knowledge creation instead of knowledge transfer, supporting national staff instead of hiring external consultants to undertake activities, and applying a long-term perspective instead of quick fixes (FAO, 2010a).

The Global Action Plan provides a Global Logical Framework and governance structure that will lead to the establishment of improved national statistical systems, supported by global and regional coordinated statistical capacity-building efforts through technical assistance, training and research. The plan takes into account that other statistical capacity-building and development activities are already under way in many countries, and in those cases the efforts will be coordinated. Moreover, the plan foresees synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, such as the *Agricultural Market Information System* (AMIS) recently adopted by the G20 ministerial meeting. AMIS focuses more on a limited number of data items for selected food crops related to monitoring the global food market, mainly in the G20 countries and few developing countries. By contrast, the Global Strategy concentrates on long-term statistical capacity building in developing countries for key basic food and agricultural statistics.

As noted, preparation of the Global Action Plan has been carried out in parallel with development of the African Action Plan. Africa is the first region to initiate the implementation of the Global Strategy, and it has done so by putting in place a well-developed plan. A conference of the main stakeholders, held at FAO in Rome in September 2010, served as one source of input for the African Action Plan. It is recognized that not every region will develop a detailed implementation plan similar to Africa's, but rather a regional activity programme based on the Global Action Plan. Therefore, the Global Action Plan defines the steps to be taken and the overall responsibilities at the global, regional and national levels, with the

understanding that each region will need different levels of support. The requirements spelled out in the Global Action Plan are in harmony with those in the African Action Plan.

Implementation of the Global Action Plan will be country-driven. Therefore, the focus of the plan described in this report is on the technical and training support to be made available.

Organization of This Report

This report begins with a description in chapter one of the goals and purposes of the Global Action Plan. Chapter two provides the proposed global, regional and national governance structures, and then the report moves in chapter three to a review of the interdependent linkages of the technical components of the Global Action Plan, which are described in more detail from chapter four to seven (the country assessments, the technical assistance plan, the training plan and the research plan, respectively). Chapter eight outlines the process, assessment of resources, and timeline that will be required for technical assistance, training, and research to implement the Global Strategy. The report concludes in chapter nine with an overview of the monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements.

Eight appendixes complement the report. Appendix A provides the minimum set of core data from the Global Strategy. Appendix B is an analysis of the stakeholders' requirements, thereby ensuring that users' needs are met in implementation of the Global Action Plan. Appendix C is the results-based logical framework of the Global Action Plan, showing performance indicators, risks, and mitigation measures. Appendix D lays out the governance framework of the Global Strategy. It is followed by appendix E, which describes in detail the terms of reference for the Fund Administrator. Appendix F shows the relationship among the thematic domains, the research topics, and the pillars of the Global Strategy. The outputs of the research plan and corresponding activities are listed in appendix G. Finally, appendix H is a listing of the technical assistance and research activities that have already begun and that require limited resources to produce the highly needed technical guidelines (quick wins).

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The FAO team worked under the supervision of Pietro Gennari, Director of the Statistics Division. The team was led by Naman Keita and included Elisabetta Carfagna (main contributor), Nancy Chin, Giorgi Kvinikadze and Mukesh Srivastava. The FAO team was supported by Trang Nguyen and Consuelo Senoret.

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¹ The Friends of the Chair Group on Agricultural Statistics is led by Brazil and includes Australia, China, Cuba, Ethiopia, Italy, Morocco, the Philippines, Russian Federation, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, and the United States. Eurostat and the World Bank participate as observers, and FAO and the United Nations Statistics Division serve as secretariat

ABBREVIATIONS

AMIS	Agricultural Market Information System
CAPI	Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
ICAS-V	Fifth International Conference on Agricultural Statistics
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LSMS	Living Standards Measurement Study
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NSDS	National Strategies for the Development of Statistics
NSO	National Statistics Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PARIS21	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
PDA	Personal Data Assistant
SSPARS	Sector Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics
UNSC	United Nations Statistical Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Because three out of four poor people in developing countries live in rural areas, agricultural development is vital to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to poverty, food security, and the environment. Today, the commitment to these goals has taken on growing urgency in the global context of the skyrocketing food prices and falling food reserves caused by droughts, higher oil prices and the use of food products to produce biofuels. Meanwhile, over the last two decades the quantity and quality of agricultural statistics have undergone a serious decline. Many countries, especially in the developing world, lack the capacity to produce and report even the minimum set of agricultural statistics required to monitor national trends.

The *Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics* provides the framework essential to meeting the current and emerging data requirements and the demands of policy makers and other data users so that they can fill these urgent needs. The conceptual framework presented in the Global Strategy brings together the economic, environmental and social dimensions of agriculture to monitor how the well-being of households is determined by the productivity of agriculture, the land they use and the environment they share.

At its 41st session, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) endorsed the Global Strategy. It urged the development of an action plan that would begin with a detailed assessment of each country's statistical capacity. The UNSC also directed that the action plan provide technical assistance and training programmes for building statistical capacity and a research agenda to deal with unsolved methodological issues.

The goal of the Global Action Plan is to contribute to greater food security, reduced food price volatility and higher incomes and greater well-being for rural populations through evidence-based policies in line with the first MDG 1: "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger." In addition, improved policies will contribute to the sustainable use of land and water resources and the adaptation of agricultural activities to climate change to meet the challenges of MDG 7: "Ensure environmental sustainability."

The Global Action Plan provides the framework needed to rebuild a sustainable national statistical capacity to produce agricultural statistics and increase their use for better policy decisions. It also supports implementation of the methodology required to produce statistics to meet emerging data requirements and help restore the international support system for agricultural statistics.

The plan is centred on the three pillars of the Global Strategy: (1) establish a minimum set of core data; (2) integrate agriculture into the national statistical system; and (3) foster sustainability of the statistical system through governance and statistical capacity building.

The first pillar—a minimum set of core data—is based on the assumption that it is not possible to meet every data requirement every year. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) database includes over 150 crop items. However, the Global Strategy includes only eight as core data items. These items account for a major proportion of land use, food supplies, and value added from agri-

culture. Although the Global Strategy defines the core items, each country will work with data users and the principles outlined in the strategy to determine its minimum set. A most important concept underlying the minimum set of core data is that the data be collected in a way that allows cross-cutting data analysis to examine the linkages between policy decisions and the resulting outcomes.

The Global Strategy recognizes that a serious shortcoming of the current statistical systems in developing and many developed countries is that data are collected by sector using different sampling frames and surveys. Crop surveys are separate from livestock surveys, and both are separate from household surveys. In many countries, agricultural statistics are produced by the ministry of agriculture and may differ from those coming from the national statistics office. It is difficult, then, if not impossible, to gauge how a policy decision in one sector will affect the other sectors. It is for these reasons that the second pillar of the Global Strategy calls for the integration of agriculture into the national statistical system. The strategy points out that the integrated survey system needs to allow the linkage between the farm as an economic unit and the household as a social unit, and both with the land they use.

The third pillar of the Global Strategy is the governance framework that will support the integration of agriculture into the national statistical system by bringing together the multiple organizations that produce agricultural and rural statistics. The Global Strategy describes the framework for integration that builds off the strengths of each organization and provides a common focus on the data requirements for agricultural statistics. The third pillar also defines the statistical capacity requirements to implement the Global Strategy and to ensure that a sustainable system is put into place.

The main elements of the Global Action Plan are governance, country assessments, and technical components (technical assistance, training and research). The technical components are interlinked and well articulated to form a consistent capacity development programme. A summary of each component of the Global Action Plan and implementation of the Global Strategy follows.

Governance

The Global Action Plan introduces a governance structure that has three levels: global, regional and national:

Global

- **The Global Steering Committee (GSC)** will provide strategic guidance and oversight on the execution of the Global Action Plan to implement the Global Strategy. The GSC is the ultimate decision-making body for the use of the Global Trust Fund for implementing the *Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics* in compliance with the conditions stipulated in the agreements between the Fund Administrator (which will be FAO) and individual Resource Partners.
- **The Global Executive Board (GEB)** will serve as an executive committee of the GSC. The GEB will, between meetings of the GSC, represent the membership of the GSC, facilitate coordination among all GSC members, and facilitate the decision-making process of the GSC. The GEB will exercise functions delegated to it by the GSC. The GEB, in carrying out its functions, will be supported by the Global Office.

- **The Global Office (GO)**, hosted by the Statistics Division of FAO and led by the Coordinator assigned by FAO for this purpose, will ensure overall technical coordination of the implementation of the Global Strategy at the global level and within regions. The Global Office will act as secretariat of the GSC and the GEB.
- **The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics (IAEG)** will bring countries and agencies together to develop and document good practices and guidelines on the concepts, methods, and statistical standards for food security, sustainable agriculture, and rural development. The IAEG will report every two years to the UNSC on its activities and will replace the Friends of the Chair Group on Agricultural Statistics and the Wye Group, which was a working group providing input about the statistics needed to monitor the well-being of households.

Regional

- **Regional Steering Committee (RSC).** This committee will be the decision-making body at the regional level. The RSC will provide guidance and oversight, within the framework defined by the GSC and consistent with the relevant funding agreements, for the implementation of the regional and country activities defined in the regional plan.
- **Regional Executive Board (REB).** Each RSC will evaluate the need to establish a REB. If this board is formed, it would serve as an executive committee of the RSC from which it would receive delegated authority to oversee the execution of decisions. The REB would meet more frequently than the RSC and would carry out the RSC's functions between meetings of the RSC.
- **Regional Office (RO).** The structure and size of the RO will vary by region, depending on regional resources and needs. It will have the major role of coordinating the country assessments and providing the integrated national statistical systems with training and technical assistance. The ROs would also liaise with other international, regional and subregional offices within their region to coordinate their support to countries, thereby avoiding duplication of efforts and ensuring that global standards are being followed.

National

- **National coordinating body.** Governance at the 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 it 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 of the whole national statistical system.

Appendix D describes in detail the governance framework.

The responsibilities of each level in conducting the country assessments and implementing the technical assistance, training and research components within the frame-

work of the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and the Sector Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SSPARS) are described below.

Country Assessments

This effort begins with the preparation of a questionnaire and accompanying guidelines, so that each country can provide an assessment of its statistical capabilities, including the data currently provided by source, frequency and indications of quality. A subsequent, more in-depth assessment will determine the national capability to produce the minimum set of core data on a sustainable basis, and in the longer term will provide the capability for analysis across the economic, social and environmental domains. On the basis of the country assessment, countries will prepare country proposals, driven by their own needs, to be submitted to the RSC for accessing funds raised for implementing the Global Strategy. Country proposals may include developing or updating the SSPARS component of the NSDS to facilitate integration of agricultural statistics into the national statistical system, to guide implementation, and to determine the requirements for technical assistance and training.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance will be available in key areas, depending on each country's capabilities. The starting point will be technical assistance with the country assessments and guidance with the development or update of the sector strategic plans to produce the minimum set of core data. Technical assistance will include support and guidance for establishing the governance structure to integrate agriculture into the national statistical system, promoting the national statistical system, determining the methodology to be used and undertaking overall implementation. The documentation of statistical standards and guidelines to support in-country technical assistance is an important element as well.

The technical assistance should be coordinated at the regional and global levels to ensure that consistent methods are used, resulting in internationally comparable output. In addition, those offering technical assistance should be mindful of other development activities that may already be under way.

Training

Those involved in the training component face the need to improve the statistical capacity in many countries before they can move on to implement the methodology described in the Global Strategy. The different levels of core skills needed to produce official statistics will be defined and translated into theoretical and practical knowledge requirements to be met by training. The documentation of the statistical standards and guidelines described earlier will be used to prepare training materials, especially using e-learning tools. Curricula will be developed to enable regional centres to provide training on the more advanced topics such as sample design, estimation, and the use of new technologies. Training for agricultural statistics will have to be integrated with other sectors of the national statistical system. The training component will include a segment that will prepare managers to better explain to data users how they can use the information provided.

Research

The Global Strategy recognizes the problems faced by developing countries in estimating agricultural production. For example, small holdings and multi cropping practices pose problems for measuring crop area and production. Crop cutting methods are difficult to apply to root crops. In addition, the conceptual framework for agricultural statistics calls for linking the farm, household and land use, which points to the need to establish a sampling frame using new methodologies such as geo-referencing census records. These geo-referenced census records can then be linked to the land use furnished by remote sensing products. The Global Strategy also presents an opportunity to take advantage of the digital revolution and make use of other new technologies such as the global positioning system (GPS) and personal data assistant (PDA). The methodologies for some of these areas have been developed; the problem is determining how to apply them in developing countries. Therefore, the effort will focus on improving the cost efficiency of these methodologies and on adapting them to the specificities of developing countries rather than developing research capacity in each country.

Implementation

The Global Action Plan takes into account lessons learned from decades of technical cooperation. In particular, it will be aligned with the international consensus on the new approach to capacity development grounded in the five principles of the "Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness" (OECD, 2005) and the "Accra Agenda for Action" (OECD, 2008). It recognizes that the top-down approach adopted in the past for capacity building did not achieve the intended goals. The plan will be country-driven with a detailed assessment of countries' agricultural statistics systems as the starting point and basis for the formulation of country proposals, with priorities identified by countries to ensure ownership. The plan adopts a long-term perspective and promotes the predictability of resources through the establishment of a Global Trust Fund to support global, regional and national activities. The funding strategy also encompasses other types of resources such as bilateral agreements and in-kind contributions.

At the global level, the preparation of technical standards and guidelines to support the technical assistance and training programmes can begin. Work on the priority elements of the research agenda and pilot testing of the methodologies needed to meet the emerging data requirements can be initiated as well. These two elements are critical in ensuring successful, cost-effective implementation of the strategy.

At the country level, the overall implementation will be under the auspices of the NSDS and the accompanying SSPARS. The first step for each country is to begin the country assessment and prepare a country proposal that contains the steps it will follow to develop or update its SSPARS and the technical assistance and training it will need to do so. The sector strategic plans will be the main tool for implementation of the Global Strategy at the national level, supported by technical assistance and training. Some countries will already have sector strategic plans in place that only have to be revised to meet the requirements of the Global Strategy. Those without sector strategic plans can receive technical assistance for developing their sector strategic plans as modules of the NSDS.

The Global Action Plan recognizes that the statistical capacity of countries will range from those already providing the set of core data from an integrated statistical system to those that essentially have no system in place. In between are the countries that are at various stages of statistical capacity and whose requirements for technical assistance

and training will likewise vary. A small subset of countries in various stages of development will be targeted to begin implementation. This pilot effort will provide the experience needed to determine how other countries should proceed.

Finally, this report provides an indicative budget that reflects the effort to implement the country assessment, technical assistance, training and research components that will support implementation of the Global Strategy. Although the Global Action Plan fosters sustainability of the agricultural statistical systems in the long run, significant external support and funding will initially be required to begin the process. It should also be noted that the Global Action Plan focuses on capacity development and not on funding actual data collection activities such as censuses and surveys. Therefore, additional funding from countries and partners is critical for supporting these data production activities. The plan has a target of supporting 90 countries during the next five years (Phase 1).

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1 IMPACT AND OUTCOME OF THE GLOBAL ACTION PLAN

The recent food price crises have been accompanied by growing concerns about the effects of agriculture on the environment and issues related to climate change. At the same time, the quality and availability of agricultural statistics have seriously declined.

Agriculture is the primary source of food, clothing, and the materials used for fuel and housing for a growing world population. The challenge is to lift millions of people out of poverty and hunger, reduce the impact of agriculture on the environment and global warming, and sustain water and land resources. Three out of four poor people in developing countries live in rural areas, and most depend directly or indirectly on agriculture for their livelihoods. According to the World Development Report (World Bank, 2008), agriculture is recognized as a vital development tool for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and especially for contributing to food security, raising the incomes of the poor, facilitating economic transformation and providing environmental services.

The Global Strategy is a comprehensive framework for improving and ensuring the sustainability of agricultural and rural statistics (agriculture, in addition to crops, includes livestock, aquaculture, forestry production and small-scale fisheries). The strategy also addresses emerging data needs such as those stemming from the recent spikes in food prices, thereby pushing more people into poverty, and the growing concerns about the impact of agriculture on the environment and climate change. The emerging challenges will require implementing new methodologies and technologies.

The Global Action Plan, fully endorsed by the 43rd session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), allows the Global Strategy to be put in place by describing in detail how it is being implemented. In fact, it is a detailed description of the technical activities to be conducted at the global, regional and national levels, as well as the corresponding governance structures. It also describes the articulation between the technical components that will contribute to capacity development at the country level.

The Global Action Plan directly addresses the three pillars forming the foundation of the Global Strategy:

1. Establishing a minimum set of core data that countries will disseminate on a regular basis to meet current and emerging demands (see appendix A);
2. Integrating agriculture into national statistical systems in order to meet the requirements of policy makers and other data users that statistical information be linked across the economic, social, and environmental domains;
3. Fostering the sustainability of agricultural statistical systems through governance and statistical capacity building.

The first pillar of the Global Strategy identifies a minimum set of core data intended to be the starting point in building agricultural statistics systems for the twenty-first century. Because data requirements exceed what can be provided at any one time, the starting point is to define a minimum set of core data that will be provided on a regular basis by all countries.