



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

ASSESSING COUNTRY CAPACITY TO PRODUCE AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL STATISTICS



GUIDELINES

Publication prepared in the framework of the Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

Guidelines for Assessing Country Capacity to Produce Agricultural and Rural Statistics

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Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

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Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFCAS	African Commission on Agriculture Statistics
AfDB	African Development Bank
APCAS	Asia and the Pacific Commission of Agriculture Statistics
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
CAQ	Standard Country Assessment Questionnaire
CAPI	Computer-Assisted Programme Interviewing
CATI	Computer-Assisted telephone Interviewing
CCIs	Country Capacity Indicators
CPC	Central Product Classification
ERS	Economic Research Service
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GPS	Geographical Positioning System
IBGE	Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics
ICAS V	Fifth International Conference on Agricultural Statistics
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification
IT	Information technology
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
NSDS	National Strategy for Development of Statistics
NSO	National Statistics Office
OVI	Objectively verifiable indicator
ROSSTAT	Russian Federal State Statistics Service
SITC	Standard International Trade Classification
SNA	System of National Accounts
SPARS	Strategic Plan for Agriculture and Rural Statistics
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNSC	United Nations Statistical Commission
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WB	World Bank
WPI	Wholesale Price Index

Preface

The development of these guidelines falls under the framework of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. The Global Strategy is implemented through the accompanying Global Action Plan, endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 41st Session in February 2010. The Global Action Plan provides a comprehensive technical assistance and training programme, and a well-targeted research agenda to resolve methodological issues and implement the statistical methodology required by the strategy.

The need for a framework to measure progress under the Global Strategy was recognized at the 5th International Conference on Agriculture Statistics (ICAS V) in October 2010, when a group comprising the Economic Research Service (ERS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) was formed under the leadership of FAO to work on this subject. The group was later expanded to include the World Bank (WB), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (ROSSTAT), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and other stakeholders.

Country assessments are the starting point for the implementation of the Global Strategy at country level. They are planned in two stages. The first stage, which is also the purpose of the present guidelines, includes assisting countries in filling out a self-administered questionnaire and establishing the baseline information on the country's statistical capacity. The second stage involves an in-depth assessment to be carried out in countries through expert missions and workshops, resulting in a detailed report that will serve as a basis for developing or updating the Strategic Plan for Agriculture and Rural Statistics (SPARS) for the implementation of the Global Strategy at country level.

These guidelines are the result of the first comprehensive effort to develop a standard methodology to assess countries' capacity to produce agricultural statistics. The presented methodology takes into account previous similar international efforts, particularly those led by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), Paris 21, and more recently, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), for building a standard framework to assess statistical systems' capacity and data quality. The assessment framework covers the institutional infrastructure, human and financial resources available, statistical methods and practices, and data availability at the country level.

The guidelines also present a set of operational tools and methods for carrying out assessments in conformity with the proposed framework, which has been developed through an extensive consultative process and pilot testing in all regions. In addition to a standard questionnaire and guidelines on data collection, a set of indicators on different dimensions and capacity elements are also provided. These indicators will serve as a tool for monitoring progress at country level and for providing counterfactual information necessary for measuring impact in countries.

At this stage it is expected that the methodology illustrated in these guidelines will be institutionalized for periodic assessment in all countries.

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The Guidelines on Country Assessments were developed under the overall guidance of Naman Keita, former CountrySTAT Manager, Statistics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The FAO technical team included Michael Trant and Adriana Neciu.

Pilot testing of the work in Asia provided important experiences and direction to this work. Country representatives offered valuable contributions through several meetings, particularly the Training Workshops at Kigali and Addis Ababa, organized by the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the meeting on the Implementation Plan for the Global Strategy at Aguascalientes, organized by the Working Group on Agriculture Statistics of United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECA). Important inputs were also given by the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS STAT) on behalf of its countries. In addition, a large number of experts kindly offered their contribution during the High-level Stakeholder Meeting on the Global Strategy held in December 2012 in Rome, and during the subsequent Task Force meeting.

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Introduction

Overview

This publication is an international effort to develop a standard methodology using objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) to assess the statistical capacity of developing countries. The assessments will provide data for five of the 11 indicators in the results-based assessment framework of the *Global Strategy to Improve Agriculture and Rural Statistics*, and they will serve as a starting point to implement the Global Strategy.

The assessments will gather country level information on the legal and institutional infrastructure, statistical activities, resource deployment and data availability by using a standard questionnaire. The responses will then be converted to a suite of indicators that will reflect countries capacity on agriculture statistics. This information will provide an objective baseline and means of verification to monitor the performance of the project

The Country Assessments are to be conducted in two steps. Step one is an *initial assessment* carried out in all countries using a self-reporting standard questionnaire to gather information on a country's legal and institutional infrastructure, statistical activities, resource deployment and data availability. The responses are then converted to a suite of indicators that reflect a country's capacity on agriculture statistics. The data collected through a Standard Questionnaire will be used to develop indicators in order to create a profile of a country's statistical capacity. These indicators then can be used to create country profiles and group countries into quartiles or quintiles (according to the level of development of their statistical systems) or to identify priority interventions that could be implemented at the regional level.

Step two is an *in-depth assessment* conducted in the selected priority countries through expert missions and stakeholder workshops. The in-depth assessments help provide the information necessary to prioritize capacity-development activities and identify critical areas for intervention. A common methodology and guidelines for carrying out the in-depth assessment are being developed. While the initial questionnaire-based assessments will provide a general indication of the strength and weakness of the statistical systems and a valuable perspective of

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