

**Conference of Development Partners and African Countries  
to Develop a Capacity Building Program  
for Improving Food and Agricultural Statistics In Africa**

**SOL AZUR BEACH HOTEL, HAMMAMET: 3-4 FEBRUARY, 2010**

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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), are organizing a conference on the Strategy for Improving Agricultural Statistics in Africa. The conference will be held in Hammamet, Tunisia, from 3 - 4 February, 2010.
- 1.2 The conference will bring together key development partners from multilateral and bilateral institutions, Training Institutions, sub-regional and regional institutions, National Statistics Offices and Agricultural Statistical Services within and outside Africa.
- 1.3 The agenda for the conference is indicated in Annex I.

**2. Background to the Development Partners Conference**

- 2.1 Since the United Nations Conference on Financing for Development in 2002, both developing and developed countries have committed to a shared responsibility to achieve development results, especially where they are critical to meeting the Millennium Development Goals. This requires data to monitor and evaluate indicators about all phases of the development process from planning, design to implementation and completion.
- 2.2 In particular, agricultural development is critical if countries are to achieve the targets in the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half the number of people suffering from poverty and hunger. This increases the need for monitoring and evaluation tools to learn what does and does not work. These tools require much of the basic data countries should be providing any way, but are often not available.
- 2.3 At the International Conference on Agricultural Statistics, organized by AfDB, FAO, the World Bank and other partners, that was held in Maputo, Mozambique from 13-14 August 2009, a draft proposal for the “Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural Statistics” was discussed. The proposal was elaborated by the Focus Group on Agricultural Statistics created by the United Nations Statistics Commission in 2008.
- 2.4 The purpose of the global strategy is to provide the framework and methodology that will lead to the improvement of national and international food and agricultural statistics. Here, agriculture includes forestry, fisheries and aquaculture. The strategy identifies the key issues and challenges for agricultural statistics, establishes a core set of statistics that are comparable and relevant, and provides methodologies to measure them under a framework to integrate agricultural and rural statistics into the national and international statistical system. The strategy provides a model to integrate the overlapping data requirements from other sectors, and addresses the need to improve

statistical capacity. A key element is the effective integration of agriculture into the national statistical system.

- 2.5 This strategy, produced under the auspices of the United Nations Statistical Commission, is necessary for several reasons. The first is that there has been a decline in the quantity and quality of data, especially of agricultural data, from national statistical offices and/or Ministries of Agriculture, particularly in developing countries. This is true for even basic crop and livestock production data. This decline is taking place at the same time that several urgent and emerging data requirements are also not being met. While most countries, especially developing countries, are not meeting the minimum requirements for agricultural statistics, there is a growing need for additional information to guide policy decisions regarding agricultural and rural development and to monitor progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, data are simply not available to answer questions regarding agriculture's effect on the environment and global warming and the consequences of the emerging production of bio-fuels from feedstock.
- 2.6 The long term goal of the global strategy is to provide a globally agreed core set of indicators for agriculture and rural development under a United Nations mandate. The strategy reflects agreement reached among national and international statistical organizations, donors, and other stakeholders. A minimum core set of statistics is identified that each country will pledge to provide annually and at the national level. This core set is required to provide national and international policy makers necessary information about issues that go beyond national boundaries. It is recognized that this core set will not satisfy all of the national information needs. Therefore, a framework to determine the additional data requirements and level of detail required at the national level in addition to the core set is provided.
- 2.7 The strategy provides a blueprint to ensure the effective integration of agriculture into the national statistical system when national strategies for the development of statistics are developed and implemented. It also establishes a basis for statistical capacity building by identifying methodological practices based on the premise that these enhance the integration of agriculture into the national system.
- 2.8 The plan provides the basis for national statistical organizations and line ministries to combine forces to advocate for additional resources and funding to support agricultural statistics.

### **3. Objectives of the Conference**

- 3.1 The key objectives of the conference are to (i) finalize the guidelines for developing a capacity building program, for improving food and agricultural statistics in African countries. The program will be presented for discussion with donors at the Fifth International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS-V) to be held in Kampala, Uganda in October 2010; (ii) build a donor coalition for raising subsequent funding for the action plan, and (iii) agree on the way forward, next steps and the calendar for implementation

#### **4. Expected Outcomes of the Conference**

- 4.1 The main output of the conference will be a unified approach for developing a common program to guide capacity building efforts for improving food and agricultural statistics in Africa. The AfDB, BMGF and FAO will lead the process of developing the program of assistance for Africa. This will be presented at the 5th International Conference for Agricultural Statistics (ICAS-V) in Kampala, Uganda in October 2010 to mobilize resources for implementing capacity building activities in RMCs.
- 4.2 The Conference will offer opportunities for representatives of international and regional organizations to discuss effective mechanisms for achieving greater synergy amongst themselves as well as harmonizing their statistical capacity building programs within existing coordination mechanisms aimed at improving food and agricultural statistics in Africa. This will ensure greater effectiveness of technical assistance to RMCs.
- 4.3 The conference and its follow up outcomes will also provide valuable input for the development of AfDB's Phase 3 Statistical Capacity Building Program for African countries to be implemented over the ADF-12 period (2011-2013).

#### **5. Participants**

- 5.1 Participants in the conference will include directors and technical experts from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; bilateral agencies and multilateral institutions, including FAO, the World Bank; ECA, AU, UN Agencies; Regional Remote Sensing Centers; sub-regional and regional institutions; National Statistics Offices; Training Institutions and Agricultural Statistical Services within and outside Africa.

#### **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The conference offers an opportunity for developing a clear road map for improving food and agricultural statistics in Africa. It will also help to provide a common framework for rallying donor support to supplement national efforts as well as foster greater coordination of the programs of various development agencies, thus increasing efficiency and cost effectiveness in the delivery of statistical capacity building assistance to improve food and agricultural statistics in Africa.