Statistics Department, Chief Economist Complex  Bulletin No. 4, September 2013

This fourth issue of the Bulletin presents the latest update on the implementation of the Action Plan to Improve Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture, and Rural Development in Africa, which was finalized and published by the AfDB in May 2011. The Action Plan for Africa forms part of the wider Global Strategy endorsed by the international community, which was jointly published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Bank/IBRD, and the United Nations in September 2010. The full text of the Action Plan for Africa can be accessed via the web address: www.afdb.org/en/knowledge/publications. For further details on the Plan, the Secretariat Office of the Action Plan for Africa, housed within the Statistical Capacity Building Division of the Statistics Department, African Development Bank, can be contacted through the following email address: Statistics@afdb.org.

1. HIGHLIGHTS

The Bank’s leading role in spearheading the implementation of the Action Plan for Africa was approved by the Board of Directors of the Bank in July 2013. Agricultural statistics activities have therefore been formally endorsed as part of the normative statistical work program of the Statistics Department within the AfDB.

MoUs have been prepared and negotiated between the FAO and AfDB and ECA respectively, to serve as legal instruments for accessing the Global Trust Fund (GTF), hosted by the FAO. The MoU between ECA and the FAO was co-signed in May 2013 and funds to support training activities for 2012 (carried-over) and 2013 were accessed thereafter. The Board’s approval in July 2013 for the AfDB to take a leading role in the initiative paved the way for the ratification of the MoU thereafter. The first tranche of the funds (2012 carried-over and 2013) are expected to be disbursed for the AfDB in due course.

The Bank and the FAO continue to mobilize additional resources to accelerate Action Plan activities.
In this context, the Bank is leveraging its longstanding partnerships with international and regional organizations, development institutions and the private sector to help secure the finances needed for a seamless implementation of the Action Plan through all its phases. So far, the UK Department of International Development (DFID) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) have become major donors to the Global Trust Fund, which is being managed and hosted by the FAO. The European Commission’s Directorate for
Development and Cooperation (EuropeAid) has also indicated its readiness to support the Plan, while USAID is also a potential donor. The AfDB, for its part, is contributing to the Action Plan implementation through direct and in-kind support.

A number of key meetings have taken place, both regionally and globally, to accelerate the implementation of the Action Plan for Africa. These included:

(a) The 2nd Regional Steering Committee (RSTC) meeting (virtual) held in July 2012 to approve the July–December 2012 Work Plan and Budget.
(b) The 3rd RSTC meeting held in Yamoussoukro, Côte d’Ivoire on 26 November 2012. This was held back-to-back with the 8th African Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD). An annual status report was presented and endorsed by the meeting.
(c) The 4th RSTC meeting (virtual) held on 6 June 2013, which approved the July–December 2013 Work Plan and Budget.
(d) The AfDB also actively participated in the Global Action Plan’s governance meetings, namely the meetings of the Global Executive Board (GEB) and the Global Steering Committee (GSC) (at which ECA is also an active member).

Other important meetings scheduled to take place before the end of the year include:

The 6th International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS VI), which will be held from 23 to 25 October 2013, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Bank will support the participation of 12 country representatives. A paper on “Assessing the Capacity and Needs of Countries to Produce Agricultural Data – the African Experience” will be presented by the AfDB at the conference. It is also expected that a joint AfDB-ECA-AUC presentation on “The Importance of linking statistical activities together with the needs of regional and national policies in the field of agriculture and rural development” will be delivered at the same conference.

Global Conference on ICTs for Agriculture in Kigali, November 4-8, 2013, that CTA (Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation) is organizing in collaboration with over 30 international partners. In the margins of the Conference, AfDB and CTA will jointly organize a side event to present and discuss on their respective work programs in the field of agricultural statistics and explore possible ways of cooperation.

A regional training workshop for National Strategy Coordinators (NSCs) will be organized in Rabat, Morocco, from 27-29 November 2013. This will focus on the formulation and analysis of Agricultural Statistics Capacity Indicators (ASCIs) originating from the Quick Country Assessment (CA) process, which forms an early phase of the Action Plan. The workshop will also seek to secure agreement on the way forward, to ensure a unified approach backed by strong country ownership. At the same time, a training workshop will be held on the use of the In-depth Country Assessment Guidelines and other instruments that are being developed by the Global Strategy Implementation Office. The NSCs will thereafter be required to organize national data user-producer workshops to initiate in-depth assessments of their countries’ specific needs and capacities.

The 23rd Session of the African Commission for Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS) will be held in Rabat, Morocco, from 4 to 7 December 2013. The previous session, held in Nov./Dec. 2011 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, endorsed the Action Plan for Africa and framed a number of resolutions (as outlined in
Bulletin no. 3 of January 2012). In the upcoming session, the AfDB will make a presentation on progress made to date, namely the implementation status of the Action Plan in general, and the state of national Agricultural Statistics Systems in particular.
2. PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION PLAN FOR AFRICA

Recent key achievements are presented below under the following subheadings: (i) General; (ii) Governance mechanism; (iii) Technical Assistance (TA) activities; (iv) Training activities; and (v) Research component.

2.1. General

2.1.1 Meetings and advocacy

The AfDB, through its participation at a number of important regional and international meetings during 2012–2013, has been enlisting the support of international development partners, regional organizations and governments for the implementation of the Action Plan for Africa. These meetings and forums included: the 3rd Statistical Commission for Africa (Stat-Com Africa III) held in Cape Town, South Africa in January 2012; an IFAD workshop on “Innovative Approaches to Rural Data Management: From the Bottom Up” held in Rome, Italy, in January 2012; and a European Union meeting on “Cooperation consultations for the implementation of the Action Plan and discussions on initiatives of common interest related to databases, surveys and policy impact analysis in Africa”, held in Brussels, Belgium on 20 September 2012.

Furthermore, meetings were held between the FAO, ECA, AfDB, and the African Union Commission – Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (AUC/CAADP) in February and March 2013 to leverage synergies in their respective approaches to improve agricultural statistical development. The objective was to scale up efficiencies in the structuring of their initiatives within the framework of the Action Plan.

The AfDB attended and participated at the Stakeholder Dialogue for the development of a Pan African Strategy on Fisheries and Aquaculture Data Collection, Analysis and Dissemination. The meeting was organized in Nairobi, Kenya, from 8-9 July 2013 by the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) in collaboration with FAO, under the NEPAD-FAO Fish Program (NFFP), and the Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources of the African Union (AU-IBAR). The main objective of the Think-Tank event was to discuss a Strategy proposal and agree on a Plan of Action for its implementation. The Strategy will provide a framework and methodology for improving the quality of national fisheries and aquaculture statistics, and will guide policy analysis and decision-making. The AfDB’s participation has enriched the strategy with key lessons drawn from its role as lead agency for the implementation of the Action Plan for Africa.

The AfDB and ECA participated in the official launch of the Global Strategy for Improving Agriculture and Rural Statistics, which took place in Rome, Italy, on 3 December 2012. A comprehensive presentation on the Action Plan for Africa of the Global Strategy was made and appreciated by other regions.

2.1.2 Finances

To initiate the transmission of resources from the Global Trust Fund (GTF) hosted and managed by FAO, the AfDB and ECA have formulated 2012 and 2013 annual work plans and budgets. These have been submitted to the Regional Steering Committee for approval, prior to submission to the Global Executive Board (GEB) for their endorsement. Once approved, the GEB has instructed the Fund Administrator regarding the disbursement of funds.
In the meantime, the AfDB has been using its own resources (from Phase-3 of its Statistical Capacity Building Program -SCB.3) to kick-start Action Plan activities.

2.2 Governance mechanism

In addition to the three technical components of the Action Plan (namely Training, Technical Assistance and Research), provision has been made for a Governance mechanism and a comprehensive and detailed Country Assessment framework. These constitute the basis for the three technical components and play complementary roles in the implementation of the Plan. In addition to governance-related activities that were undertaken at a regional level, the following activities were carried out at the country level:

(a) Thirty-one (31) Country Assessment follow-up missions were conducted by the AfDB to help countries establish national governance structures within the framework of the Action Plan. Already, 44 countries have nominated their National Strategy Coordinators – an important component of recommended governance structures at the country level.

(b) In addition, these follow-up missions provided the AfDB with an opportunity to advocate for support for the Action Plan activities in their meetings with senior government officials. Experience has shown that country ownership and active support by government ministries are crucial to the successful outcome of initiatives such as the Action Plan for Africa.

2.3 Technical Assistance (TA) activities

2.3.1 Country assessment-related TA activities

Technical assistance activities, mainly related to Country Assessments, are well underway. Key activities have included the following:

(a) Two workshops were held to introduce countries to the Global Strategy in general and its Action Plan for Africa in particular, and to train national staff on the Country Assessment process and instruments. The workshops were held in June and August 2012 in Kigali, Rwanda, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, respectively. Each workshop was attended by two officials from each country – one from the National Statistics Office and one from the Ministry of Agriculture.

(b) In addition to establishing national governance structures, the follow-up missions aimed to kick-start the Country Assessment process and data collection. In this respect, to date 42 questionnaires that will help to assess statistical capacity and needs at the country level have been completed and returned to the AfDB, and minimum core indicators have been provided. The data are generally of a good quality.

(c) The standard guidelines for compiling the Agricultural Statistics Capacity Indicators (ASCI) have been reviewed to align to the African Country Assessment questionnaire, through the mapping of the Standard Indicators with the Africa one.

(d) A web-based application tool for Country Assessment data submission has been developed.

(e) Compilation of the received data as well as computations of the Agricultural Statistical Capacity Indicators (ASCI) has started, to include an exhaustive tabulation of results.

(f) The report of analyzed results is being prepared and will be published in due course.
2.3.2 Other country-driven requests within the Action Plan framework

These involved the following missions:

Support to Tanzania:
This entailed an FAO/USDA/AfDB joint mission to hold various discussions with high-level decision-makers as well as technical staff of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), key ministries producing agricultural statistics (e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture), the Ministry of Finance, and development partners. The meetings aimed to (i) outline the status of implementation of the agricultural statistics program and discuss related challenges; (ii) determine the optimum strategic approach to improve agriculture statistics in Tanzania and enlist full support and commitment, including the requisite level of funding from the government; (iii) build a consensus on the roles of key stakeholders and decide on the best way forward.

Support to Cape Verde:
FAO/AfDB joint mission to assist in the preparation of the Census of Agriculture.

Support to South Sudan:
Review of the Concept Note on the planned Census of Agriculture.

Participation in Euro-Mediterranean Statistical Cooperation (MEDSTATII) meetings in Tunisia and Morocco:
To review and discuss Sector Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics of Tunisia and Morocco respectively.

2.4 Training activities

In May 2013, the ECA received the first tranche of finance from the Global Trust Fund for the implementation of the training component of the Action Plan for Africa. The project staff are currently on board and the first phase of the training component is underway. The period from January to August 2013 was dedicated to preparatory work as well as to implementing the initial activities of the project, which included the following:

Development of a project Implementation Plan for 2013, based on the initial Action Plan: Given that the activities planned for the second half of 2012 could not be implemented because the funds were not disbursed in time, it has proved necessary to make an adjustment to the Implementation Plan schedule. The revised Implementation Plan therefore takes into account the activities originally planned for both 2012 and 2013, while keeping a realistic workload, given the limited human resources available. An itemized plan for 2013 has been developed, including a detailed budget and a narrative for the 2012 activities, to be implemented in 2013.

Identification of the skills required for the project staff and recruitment of qualified consultants:
ECA has recruited two qualified candidates who took up their positions in mid-July 2013. The consultants have produced detailed terms of reference for the recruitment of resource persons to conduct the statistical training needs assessment and to prepare the human resources policy guidelines for the agricultural statistics agencies. In addition, detailed terms of reference have been drafted and resource persons are being sought for the development of agricultural statistics training curricula as well as training syllabuses. Furthermore, ECA is in communication with FAO for the review of these curricula in order to scale up existing knowledge and materials on agricultural statistics.
Initial contact with statistical training centers in order to discuss the practical ways in which the scholarship program can be managed. In particular, a mission of the African Group on Statistical Training and Human Resources (AGROST) visited the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Statistique et d’Economie Appliquée (ENSEA) in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, whose director is also the president of AGROST. The mission discussed, among other things, the best way to manage the scholarship program, the strategies for strengthening the capacities of statistical training centers and the short-term training component of the project. In addition, a mission is planned to the East African Statistical Training Center (EASTC) in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania to assess the training and scholarship provision for the Anglophone countries in Africa and forge potential areas of collaboration as well as capacity development.

2.5 Research component

The research component of the Global Strategy is managed by the Global Strategy Implementation Office housed within the FAO. A comprehensive implementation plan for the research component is in place. It makes provision for a Scientific Advisory Team, a Research Coordinator and support staff, as well as setting out key research topics. The research topics were collated from reports of Regional Commissions on Agricultural Statistics, including the African one, as well as feedback from surveys completed by major data producers and users.

So far, the Global Office has been working on the following guidelines that are expected to be published shortly (Africa has contributed to some of them): (i) conducting the second stage (In-depth) Country Assessment, (ii) designing Sector Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SSPARS), and (iii) four guidelines on newly developed methods (on nomadic livestock, agriculture and population censuses, GPS, and greenhouse gas emissions).

3 NEXT STEPS

Over the next few months, the following activities are scheduled to take place:

(a) Continuous resource mobilization by leading agencies including the AfDB to ensure that Action Plan activities are fully funded through to completion.

(b) AfDB Follow-up missions to various countries to assist in the establishment of national implementation structures (where these have yet to be set up).

(c) Reporting (by AfDB) on the results of the quick/first stage of the Country Assessment (CA) process: results tabulation and calculation of Agricultural Statistics Capacity Indicators (ASCI), establishment of county profiles and ranking according to their level of the agricultural statistics systems development.

(d) Undertaking the second stage of the CA (in-depth CA) in the first group of 12 countries with the aim of (i) developing national action plans for improving agricultural and rural statistics and (ii) establishing M&E baseline information: By AfDB, in close collaboration with FAO.

(e) Preparation of the next Quarterly Bulletin on Action Plan activities and events: By AfDB.

(f) Providing technical assistance to selected countries to integrate agriculture into their National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) (specifically, designing Sector Statistics Plans for Agriculture and Rural Statistics
in the context of their NSDS): By AfDB, in close collaboration with FAO.

(g) Mapping CAADP M&E indicators and the Minimum Core Data Sets 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 CAADP: By AfDB, in close collaboration with AUC/CAADP.

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