



Improving Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

An Action Plan for Africa (2011–2015)

Statistics Department
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This third issue of the Bulletin focuses on progress made in executing the **Action Plan to Improve Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture, and Rural Development in Africa** between May and December 2011. The issue reports on key activities undertaken during this period. The Bulletin can also be accessed online at the website of the African Development Bank (www.afdb.org/documents/publications/).

I. OVERVIEW

This Bulletin presents progress made in the execution of the “Action Plan to Improve Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture, and Rural Development in Africa” since the second issue was published in May 2011. It reports on the various activities undertaken since that time and presents the next steps in the implementation of the Action Plan.

II. PROGRESS MADE SINCE THE LAST BULLETIN

Major achievements include: (i) Production and distribution of the document “*Improving Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture, and Rural Development – Action Plan for Africa (2011–2015)*”; (ii) Holding of the 1st Regional Steering Committee meeting (RSTC) in Tunis in July 2011; (iii) Preparations and documentation compiled for Country Assessments; (iv) Meeting of resource partners held in Rome in September 2011, (v) The 22nd Session of AFCAS (African Commission for Agricultural Statistics), held at the end of November/ beginning of December 2011 in Addis Ababa, (vi) Data collection system, and (vii) other related activities.

Launch of the document: “Improving Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture, and Rural Development – Action Plan for Africa (2011–2015)”

The English version of the “Action Plan for Africa (2011–2015)” (both long and short formats) was finalized and printed in May 2011 by AfDB and is being widely distributed among key stakeholders in African countries and international agencies and organizations. It should be noted that the formulation of standalone proposals was funded by the AfDB and BMGF (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation). The Action Plan is intended to be the main reference material for countries and donors alike in their efforts to develop and strengthen statistics for food security, sustainable agriculture, and rural development in Africa over the next five years. It has been also translated into French (under the auspices of the AfDB), for distribution to all French-speaking stakeholders. Plans are underway to produce a related CD ROM and eBook of both language versions (English and French). The English version can be accessed online through the following link:

www.afdb.org/documents/publications/.

1st Regional Steering Committee (RSTC) meeting, July 2011

The Action Plan provides for a Regional Steering Committee (RSTC) as the apex decision-making body. The Committee, which includes both users and producers of statistics, comes under the high-

level stewardship of the Chief Economist and Vice-President of AfDB as its Chairperson. The Committee held its first meeting in Tunis, Tunisia on July 12–13, 2011. A number of key decisions to drive forward the implementation of the Action Plan were reached at this meeting (see *Box 1*).

Box 1: Main decision points and recommendations of the 1st RSTC meeting

- Recast Terms of Reference (TOR) for the RSTC and the Executive Committee (EC) were approved. The Executive Committee, which comprises a smaller body of the three lead organizations (AfDB, ECA, and FAO), acts as the bureau for the RSTC.
- Countries will be represented on the RSTC on a regional basis (5 subregions: West, East, South, Central, and North), with rotations every two years. RSTC membership of the Friends of the Chair (Morocco, Uganda, Ethiopia, Senegal) of the UN Statistical Commission will remain in place over the next two years.
- The single training center representative will be rotated every two years.
- Implementing agencies will prepare and submit to the Regional Secretariat their respective annual work plans related to the components that fall under their remit.
- Country proposals, which will be prepared after the country assessments have been produced, will be approved by the EC, acting on behalf of the RSTC.
- Wherever possible, countries will participate in common crosscutting activities. However, some selected countries will participate in other activities, based on identified priority areas (country-specific activities).
- Arrangements will be made to set up an Executive Sub-Committee on agricultural statistics within the African Group on Statistical Training (AGROST). The Sub-Committee will be responsible for regular supervision and monitoring of the training component, in accordance with the provisions of the Action Plan.
- Country ownership and sustainability of the Scholarship Program will be ensured through country participation/contribution to the training costs (for example, 75% and 25% respectively from donors and the recipient country).
- Specific assessments of training centers' capacities and needs should be undertaken.
- The number of pilot countries participating in country assessments should take account of national specificities (e.g. whether this is characterized by a nomadic livestock system; preponderance of small/large-scale farms, etc.), and start with light and quick country assessments. On the basis of the ensuing results, an in-depth assessment should be carried out for the purpose of preparing National Action Plans.
- The AfDB should determine the best modality to establish a Regional Trust Fund, with all lead partners (AfDB, FAO, and ECA) indicating their contribution levels.
- It was noted that AfDB is already using its own resources for funding some critical activities. These include the preparation/consolidation, printing and publication of the Action Plan for Africa (both long and brief versions), the appointment of the Regional Coordinator, the organization of the first RSTC meeting, and the concept note and framework for the country assessments.
- It was appreciated that the AfDB is ready to start field-testing country assessment instruments and to initiate the assessments themselves.

Preparations for country assessments

The Action Plan for Africa provides for the undertaking of country assessments, to determine national statistical capacity and needs. This is a necessary first step in order to:

- (i) Establish the baselines against which targets can be set and performance measured;
- (ii) Draw up a comprehensive Technical Assistance program for Africa, covering also training and research; and
- (iii) Establish a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to measure changes in the level of statistical capacity over time.

A questionnaire designed jointly by the AfDB and the FAO and customized to Africa's specificities was successfully piloted in Ghana, Rwanda, and Uganda. The questionnaire covers three modules, collecting information in different areas, namely (i) the National Statistical System; (ii) ongoing statistical activities and constraints; and (iii) the agricultural sector. Based on lessons learned as a result of the pilot, the questionnaire has been revised, finalized, and translated into French. Other country assessment instruments being developed include: a manual/guidelines; tabulation and analysis plans; and a web-based data collection and processing system.

The launching and training workshop on the country assessment implementation is scheduled to take place during the first quarter of this year and will be hosted by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), in Kigali.

Meeting of resource partners in Rome, September 2011

A meeting of resource partners was held on September 28, 2011 at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy, in support of the implementation of the

“Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics” and the detailed Action Plan for Africa. The meeting explored ways of mobilizing the required resources, in particular, the creation of a Regional Trust Fund for Africa and a Global Trust Fund to support the implementation of the Strategy in all remaining regions and its coordination at the global level. The meeting endorsed the Africa Action Plan of the Global Strategy. A number of key partners expressed their readiness to provide substantial funds to the Global Strategy and related Action Plans. These included BMGF and DfID-UK, in addition to in-kind contributions from implementing agencies.

Implementing agencies used this opportunity to hold side meetings (on September 27 and 29, 2011), with key donors to discuss possible financing arrangements. Topics included the global decision-making structure and optimum ways to manage financial flows, as well as the required integrated budget. The meeting documentation can be accessed online at:

<http://www.fao.org/index.php?id=27156>.

The 22nd Session of AFCAS (African Commission for Agricultural Statistics), November/December 2011

The Action Plan for Africa and its implementation strategy, including the country assessments, were presented and discussed at the 22nd Session of AFCAS, which was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from November 30 to December 3, 2011.

AFCAS brings together senior statistics officials from FAO member countries of the African continent, who are responsible for the development of agricultural statistics in their respective countries. The 22nd Session endorsed the Action Plan for Africa and framed a number of important resolutions, as detailed in *Box 2*.

Box 2: Main decision points and recommendations of the 22nd Session of AFCAS

The Commission:

- a) Endorsed and noted** with satisfaction the progress made in developing and implementing the “Action Plan for Africa to Improve Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development” for its potential to address constraints in the availability of agricultural statistics.
- b) Highly appreciated** the support and contribution of development partners in the implementation of the Action Plan for Africa of the Global Strategy.
- c) Recommended** that the partnership for the Africa Action Plan of the Global Strategy be broadened to include more institutions, such as the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Economic and Statistical Observatory of Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT), and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), so that their work might contribute to the success of the Global Strategy.
- d) Recommended** that cost of production and post-harvest losses be prioritized in the research topics of the Action Plan for Africa of the Global Strategy.
- e) Recommended** that on-the-job training be emphasized during the implementation phase of the training component of the Action Plan for Africa of the Global Strategy.
- f) Recommended** that countries strongly support the effective implementation of the Action Plan for Africa of the Global Strategy, starting with the country assessments.
- g) Highly appreciated and supported** the initiative to be implemented by AFRISTAT to develop training modules for non-statisticians, beginning in 2012.

Data collection system

The Statistics department of the Bank is revamping its current data compilation system. This entails the development of a new web-based tool that will harmonize and facilitate data collection from countries, as well as the management and dissemination of information through the common AfDB Data Portal.

With the new tool, it will be possible for users to (i) prepare standard templates for each sector/survey that will be used by countries, and (ii) receive electronically (by email or through the website) and in real time country-reported data.

The tool will significantly reduce the time that the Bank spends on data input and management, while also minimizing possible data input errors and improving the data quality, as a result of the robust validation process and rules put in place.

Other related activities

Other related activities during the period May to December 2011 included: (i) the launch of the *Quarterly Bulletin on Food Security Situation in Africa*, published by the AfDB; and (ii) the maintenance and updating of AfDB’s dedicated Data Portal for the food security situation in Africa. These initiatives are elaborated below.

The maiden issue of the **Quarterly Bulletin on the Food Security Situation in Africa** was published in June 2011 and presented an overview of recent trends in food prices, both globally and in Africa, as well as undernourishment and food supply/availability data. It also discussed food security issues in Africa from a broader perspective. Available online at: www.afdb.org/documents/publications/.

The second issue of the Bulletin, published in November 2011, focused on the food security situation in the Horn of Africa, where drought, insecurity and the displacement of huge numbers of population have resulted in a humanitarian crisis requiring a global emergency response. Available online at: www.afdb.org/documents/publications/

The **Food Security Data Portal** that was launched by the AfDB in May 2011 continues to be regularly updated. It provides vital information on such issues as population numbers and distribution (urban/rural); food availability and accessibility; hunger and malnutrition levels, agricultural inputs; and an Early Warning Information System (EWIS) for cereal products. In this way, it serves as the prime information source for the preparation of the AfDB's quarterly Food Security Bulletin. The data used in its compilation emanate from both national and international sources.

To take data dissemination to a new level, the Bank launched its "Open Data for Africa" platform in December 2011 aimed at significantly increasing access to quality data from various national, regional

& international sources. The platform will serve as a knowledge center for collecting, accessing, and sharing data, including emerging development topics such as food security and climate change. More details can be found at: www.afdb.org/statistics.

III. NEXT STEPS

Over the next few months, the following activities will be undertaken by the AfDB, in close collaboration with other implementation agencies and regional member countries, to initiate and accelerate the Action Plan for Africa:

Country assessments

- Launch of the country assessment exercise;
- Training data collectors in collection methods, processing and analysis;
- In-depth assessments, resulting in the development of County Profiles and National Action Plans for improving agricultural statistics; and
- Establishing M&E baseline information.

Integration of agricultural statistics into the NSDS

- Establishing those countries where the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) is not sector-based, with special reference to the agricultural sector;
- Organizing a workshop on how to integrate agriculture into the NSDS;
- Providing technical assistance to selected countries to integrate agriculture into their NSDS.

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