



Implementation Plan for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Africa: 2011-2015

This is the first issue of the Bulletin that has been launched by the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group as part of its communication strategy to inform key stakeholders about progress in executing the Implementation Plan for Africa of the Global Strategy for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

I. Overview

Concerned about the declining quantity and quality of agricultural statistics and the need to provide data to support emerging data requirements and the requirement for the data systems to be integrated to achieve synergy and cost-effectiveness, the United Nations Statistical Commission, in February 2010, endorsed a Global Strategy for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics. The purpose of the Strategy is to provide a framework and methodology that will lead to the improvement of national and international agricultural and rural statistics to guide policy analysis and decision making in the 21st century. The strategy is based on three pillars, namely:

- (i) the establishment of a minimum set of core data that countries will provide to meet the current and emerging demands,
- (ii) the integration of agriculture into the national statistical systems in order to meet policy maker and other data user expectations that the data will be comparable across countries and over time, and
- (iii) the foundation that will provide the sustainability of the National Agricultural Statistical System (NASS) through governance and statistical capacity building.

Africa is the first region to initiate the implementation of the Strategy. Key stakeholders participating in the Strategy implementation are: (i) the African countries (main beneficiaries of the Strategy), (ii) African institutions including the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union (AU), (iii) Regional Economic Communities (RECs) which group together individual countries for purposes of achieving greater economic integration and development, (iv) sub-regional organizations, mainly Afristat (The Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa) and regional statistical training centers, and (v) development partners.

A Conference of African countries and Development Partners on the Strategy Implementation Plan for Africa held in Tunisia in February 2010 endorsed the idea of developing three separate components of the plan and assigned responsibility for their development and implementation to lead agencies as follows:

- Technical assistance (AfDB)
- Training (UNECA)
- Research (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations - FAO)

In addition, the conference recognized that effective implementation of the Global Strategy in Africa will require good governance at global, regional and country levels. It thus called for the establishment of a governance mechanism under the leadership of AfDB to provide an institutional framework and coordination arrangements for the implementation of the Strategy.

II. Progress made so far

Proposals: The three components – technical assistance, training and research – have been developed as stand-alone proposals with their own objectives, outcomes, outputs, activities and budgets. In addition, a governance mechanism has been developed to ensure effective coordination at the various levels from the national, regional to the global levels. It includes proposals to establish: (i) a Global Strategy Implementation Office based at FAO to coordinate the implementation of the global plan; (ii) a Regional Strategy Implementation Office based at AfDB to coordinate the implementation of the Africa plan; (iii) a Regional Steering Committee (RSTC) as the decision-making body of the implementation plan at the

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regional level; and (iv) National Agricultural Statistics Coordination Committees (NASCCs) at the country level led by National Strategy Coordinators. The RSTC and NASCCs will include both users and producers of statistics. The Implementation Plan for Africa will have a long term perspective (10 to 15 years) but will follow a phased approach with the first phase covering the next 5 years (2011-2015).

5th International Conference on Agricultural Statistics: The above proposals were presented at the 5th International Conference on Agricultural Statistics held in Kampala, Uganda in October 2010. The Conference which brought together leading experts in agricultural statistics from all over the world applauded Africa for taking the lead in the implementation of the Strategy. In particular, the approach to design the implementation plan, the proposed components of the plan and the proposed governance mechanism were endorsed by the conference. Conference participants made useful inputs that have been taken into account in finalizing the component proposals and consolidating these into a single implementation plan document. The initial budget for the first phase (from 2011-2015) has been estimated at US\$ 68.6 million. There is a proposal to establish two Trust Funds, (i) The Africa Regional Fund to be managed by AfDB and which will support activities in Africa; and (ii) a Global Trust Fund to support the Global Office activities managed by FAO, including funding of work in regions other than Africa. Enthusiasm for supporting the implementation plan was shown by various development partners in their side meeting held at the conference.

Consolidated document: The three component proposals as well as the proposal on the governance mechanism have been consolidated into a single self-contained implementation plan document that has now been shared with key stakeholders for discussion before it is finalized and published.

Preparation for assessing statistical capacity in countries: In order to better plan for the implementation of the Strategy, an assessment of statistical capacity and needs in countries will be undertaken. In a cascading fashion, a **Concept Note** on the assessment has been prepared and discussed with key stakeholders followed by the preparation of a **framework for undertaking the assessment** which has been shared with key stakeholders for discussion. The assessment will be used by countries to help establish gaps and priorities for the implementation plan of the Global Strategy. It will also provide baseline information and will constitute a valuable tool for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the implementation plan. Where possible, linkages will be made with any ongoing assessments in countries especially in the context of the design of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS).

III. Next steps

In the next few months, the following activities will be undertaken:

- finalization of the framework for assessing statistical capacity and needs in countries, developing assessment tools and visiting countries to collect relevant information,
- establishment of a Coordination Unit at AfDB with nucleus staff who will be working full time on the implementation plan, and
- mobilization of the requisite resources from development partners.

Implementation of the Strategy has begun in the first quarter of 2011. It is expected that the process of finalizing the assessment framework, developing and testing tools will be completed in the next two months. Collection of information and compilation of country profiles is expected to be completed within the next 6 months.

CONTACT

*Statistical Capacity Building Division
Statistics Department, Chief Economist Complex
African Development Bank Group
BP 323 - 1002 Tunis Belvedere -Tunisia
Tel : +216 71 10 36 43 / Fax : +216 71 10 37 43
E-mail: statistics@afdb.org
Web: www.afdb.org*