

# ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

## TWENTY- SECOND SESSION

Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, 9-13 June 2008

### SUMMARY REPORT

1. **Title:** Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS) –  
Twenty-Second Session, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, 9-13 June 2008

2. **Contact Person:** Mr. Jairo CASTANO  
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3. **Objectives:**

The meetings of the Commission are organized to: (i) assess the current status of food and agricultural statistics in member countries; (ii) inform the member countries about the FAO activities in food and agricultural statistics during the preceding biennium, particularly in Asia and the Pacific; and (iii) discuss new developments in agricultural statistics.

4. **Attendance:**

The Session was attended by a total of 60 participants, including 49 delegates from 14 member countries, viz., Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam. Six representatives from FAO and five observers from Malaysia (two) and Afghanistan (three) also participated in the Session.

Senior Officers from the Malaysian Government, including Dr. George Chan Hong Nam, Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak, were present during the Opening of the Session. He gave the inaugural speech on behalf of the Chief Minister of Sarawak. Mr Castano delivered the opening address, on behalf of Mr He Changchui, FAO ADG/RR, RAP.

5. **Programme Results:**

Thirteen technical documents, including an update on recent developments in agricultural statistics in the countries of the region, were discussed. In addition, roundtable discussions were held on two topics of the agenda covering “Rising Food Prices and the Role of Statisticians” and “the Role of National Statistics Offices in Agricultural Statistics and Agricultural Policy”. The Session’s Agenda included topics on:

1. A review of FAO’s Activities in Food and Agriculture Statistics, particularly in Asia and the Pacific since the last Session of the Commission;
2. Compendium of Metadata for National Agricultural Statistics in Selected APCAS Countries: Experience & Preliminary Findings;

3. Agricultural Statistics and Indicators for Measuring Progress in Rural and Agricultural Development (a joint FAO-World Bank Study) and its application to Cambodia.
4. Experience in the implementation of CountrySTAT, its utility and importance of metadata;
5. An update on the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010
6. Other topics such as developments in CountrySTAT, the Food Balance Sheet and Gender Statistics.

The Commission:

- Noted the work done by FAO in project identification and formulation, organization of an Expert Consultation, developments in FAOSTAT, World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010 (WCA 2010), implementation of CountrySTAT in countries, the FAO-World Bank sourcebook on indicators for tracking results of agricultural/rural development and the revision of international classifications. The Commission also noted the activities of FAO in the area of statistics relating to forestry and fishery sectors.
- Appreciated the continued efforts of FAO in building capacity in the region for enhancing the level of analysis of statistics and for undertaking census and surveys through direct assistance in the form of projects as well as through organization of workshops.
- Noted with appreciation the continued co-operation of FAO Statistics Division with the UN and other International Organisations involved in food and agricultural statistics in the Asia and Pacific region and in the world.
- Noted the results of the FAO/Japan Project GCP/RAS/184/JPN – Strengthening Regional Data Exchange System on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries (RDES), and the focal points' recommendation that RDES continue to be maintained.
- Noted the recommendations of the "Expert Consultation on Statistics on Farmers' Income Statistics", among others: (a) consistency and comparability among collections across countries and over time; (b) use of accounting frameworks like the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) and the System of National Accounts (SNA); (c) studies on under-reporting, methods to collect farm income data from areas of difficult access and the use of IT in farm income surveys.
- Noted the findings of the Compendium of the Metadata for National Agricultural Statistics in Selected APCAS Countries and appreciated that participating countries had realised the value of such an exercise for users and producers of statistics. The Commission was pleased to note the contribution of such initiative on metadata, which had improved the countries' ability to provide useful information to FAO's Agricultural Bulletin Board on Data Collection and Quality of Statistics (ABCDQ).
- Heard presentations on recent developments in agricultural statistics in the countries of the region and noted with concern that in many low-income countries, major statistical activities were possible only with donor support. A broad spectrum of emerging issues in agricultural statistics were highlighted by member countries, including dynamic changes in the agricultural sector that were leading to newer demands in agricultural statistics.
- Noted the process of development of the new FAO-World Bank Sourcebook of indicators for monitoring and evaluation (M&E), which had been preliminarily validated in a diversity of situations across 5 pilot countries viz., Cambodia,

Nicaragua, Nigeria, Senegal and Tanzania. The Commission was pleased to note that the Sourcebook would provide guidance on how to build the capacity needed for effective M&E in developing countries where conditions were less-than-ideal.

- Noted the plans of member countries for participation in WCA 2010 and the manner in which they were benefiting from the new FAO guidelines on WCA 2010. Out of the 24 APCAS member countries, 17 countries had already prepared concrete plans for participating in the WCA 2010 Programme, while three more informed their intentions to participate in the current round of WCA. The Commission also learnt that many countries were already planning to integrate their agricultural census with their population census.
- Noted that CountrySTAT had provided capacity building to partners at each step of implementation and that in the APCAS Region, Bhutan was currently in the initial phase of implementation while the Philippines had entered an advanced phase involving dissemination and sub-national advocacy strategy. The Commission further noted that a regionalized version of CountrySTAT had been adopted for demonstration under the RDES.
- Welcomed the efforts of FAO to simplify the compilation of the Food Balance Sheet (FBS) and noted that moves were being taken to reduce the list of commodities for most developing countries in order to diminish the burden of data compilation and calculations associated with FBS. The Commission learnt that FAO Statistics Division had also decided to develop a simplified FBS methodology to be integrated into CountrySTAT in order to provide a data analysis tool to an erstwhile pure provision of raw statistical information.
- Noted FAO's statistical work in Gender, particularly on the current Gender and Development (GAD) perspective, which was a progression from a focus on Women in Development (WID). The Commission noted that the gender dimension had been included in CountryStat and in the list of themes for supplementary survey in the current WCA 2010 round.

The following recommendations were made by the Commission:

**For the attention of FAO:**

- FAO should include in its programme of work the global updating of the compendium of the metadata at least once in five or ten years.
- FAO should organise a workshop for the countries to advocate and disseminate the Sourcebook of Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation that was developed jointly by FAO and World Bank.
- FAO should organise an Expert Consultation or Workshop to deliberate on steps that could be taken to promote the development and use of qualitative indicators included in the Sourcebook, such as measures of access, use and satisfaction, as a pro-active contribution for further enhancement of the usefulness of the Sourcebook.

**For the attention of Member countries:**

- Member countries should update their respective metadata regularly. Updated metadata and, as needed, new surveys and publications, should be posted on the web for wider dissemination.
- Regarding the role of statisticians in assisting policy makers formulate timely corrective measures when confronted with food market crisis, statisticians should:

- a) provide not only a description of price quotations and trends, but also analysis of factors contributing to changes in prices;
  - b) monitor the quantities of agricultural commodities traded and the prices prevailing in national, regional and global spot and futures markets;
  - c) be cautious in their choice of sources of information to preclude releasing biased or unreliable information; and
  - d) resolve conceptual issues relating to the collection of prices, e.g., difference in wholesale prices and producers prices, and those relating to specification of items for price collection.
- Countries should prepare a Medium-term Statistical Development Plan, which could include a system of designated agencies for different types of statistics and a calendar of release of statistics. The Plan would also specify the frequency, level of disaggregation and method to be employed for compilation of statistics.
  - Countries which have a decentralized system for collection of agriculture statistics, should introduce a strong coordinating mechanism among different agencies playing a role in the system or using its products. Such coordination could be achieved through establishment of permanent bodies like a board or a commission for laying down standards, creating a shared pool of statisticians in the civil service and designation of focal points for harmonization and cross-validation of statistics compiled by different agencies. Such mechanisms could bring in the benefits of a centralized system even to a highly decentralized system.

**For FAO and Member countries:**

- FAO should actively pursue the initiative of installing CountrySTAT in member countries of the Region, initially for RDES participating countries.

**For FAO and donor community:**

- Provide support for the implementation of the recommendations of the Expert Consultation on Farmers' Income Statistics that would foster increased awareness on the use of farm income data.

**Follow-up Actions:**

- The Commission welcomed the verbal invitation from the Cambodian delegation to organize the Twenty-third Session of the Commission scheduled for 2010 in Cambodia. Indonesia supported Cambodia's proposal, expressing its willingness to host the Twenty-Third Session in the event that Cambodia's offer would not materialize. Viet Nam, on the other hand, expressed its willingness to host the Twenty-Fourth Session in 2012 while Lao PDR offered to host the Twenty-Fifth APCAS Session in 2014. The Commission conveyed its thanks to these governments for their proposal. The Commission Secretariat will pursue this matter with relevant authorities.
- The Afghanistan delegation expressed its interest in joining APCAS as member. The Commission Secretariat is following up the matter.
- The report of this Commission Session will be published by September 2008.