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IN ASIA-PACIFIC COUNTRIES  
(GCP/RAS/171/JPN)

**Proceedings of the  
Second Meeting of the Focal Points**

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## **I. Background and Objectives of the Meeting**

1. The FAO Regional Project *Improvement of Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries (GCP/RAS/171/JPN)*, which had been operational since September 1998, would end in April 2002.
2. The Project Document had specified two Immediate Objectives: (a) Draw up National Statistical Development Strategies and Plans for the improvement of food and agricultural statistics and information, and implement these in participating countries; and (b) Plan for the establishment of a data base and equipment facilities in a number of countries, to provide the capability to transfer data in electronic format both to and from countries in the Region, and FAO, using common concepts, standards and classifications.
3. To match the objectives, the project had organised country studies including National Seminars, to cover institutional capability and identification of data users' needs and their impact on the national systems of food and agricultural statistics. Using the country studies which identified prioritised areas that require inputs [for the development of food and agricultural statistics], regional/sub-regional level workshops were conducted to assist selected countries address the specific areas of needs. Furthermore, using knowledge obtained from the country studies and workshops, a Master Plan/Project Proposal for the establishment of a regional data exchange system was formulated. The donor, the Government of Japan, had already expressed the resolution to provide financial support for the follow-up phase project to implement the Plan for regional data exchange system.
4. At the penultimate stage of the project, the Second Meeting of Focal Points would be organised with following objectives;
  - To conclude/review the project activities; and
  - To discuss the future directions of a follow-up phase project.
5. The Agricultural Statistics Expert of the Project would present a review of project activities and introduction of the follow-up phase project which would formulate a pilot system of data exchange system on food and agriculture statistics based on the achievements of previous phase project. The donor, the Government of Japan, would present Japan's contributions in promoting food security information in Asia and the Pacific. Presentations on the proposed food security data exchange system among ASEAN countries and ongoing related FAO activities in information dissemination and data exchange – the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems (FIVIMS) and Selected Indicators of Food and Agriculture Development in the Asia-Pacific Region – would be made, while the follow-up phase project would be expected to establish close relationship with these relevant activities from the point of view of efficiency.

## **II. Opening Session** (Agenda item 1)

### **Venue and Participants**

6. The Second Meeting of the Focal Points for the project “*Improvement of Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries*” (GCP/RAS/171/JPN) was held at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific on 22-23 October 2001. It was attended by the Focal Points from 16 participating countries; officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in Japan; observers from the Embassy of Japan and Japan International Cooperation Agencies (JICA); officials from the FAO Headquarters, Rome and the Regional Office, Bangkok. The countries represented were Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

7. The Focal Points were introduced by the Agricultural Statistics Expert, who also presented the overview and objectives of the Meeting. The list of participants is shown in Annex 1.

### **Opening Remarks**

8. The Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, Dr. R.B. Singh, welcomed the participants to the meeting. He said that it was most encouraging that all the 16 countries participating in this project were represented by their senior officials.

9. The Project was now at its final stages of completion but he expressed his pleasure that the Government of Japan continued to be a very generous supporter to FAO's many development activities; and that it had made available the funds to support a follow-up project. Thus, the situation was now unique in that a follow-up phase project would be implemented in December this year while its precursor project would continue to be operational until April 2002. He also requested the delegation from Japan to convey to the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, FAO's gratitude and appreciation for the Government's continuous support to FAO as an effective engine for food and agricultural development, in general, and agricultural statistics in particular.

10. He said that the Second Meeting of Focal Points would serve as a forum to review the project activities, and to discuss future directions that the follow-up phase project should take. While FAO was taking the lead in the implementation of this Project with support from the Government of Japan, the ultimate beneficiary of the project interventions would be the countries participating in this project.

11. He also encouraged the Focal Points to actively participate and voice out their expectations from the project. While not all expectations could immediately be addressed, FAO would take serious note and work with the Government of Japan and other development partners to find ways of helping improve the development of agricultural statistics in the Region.

12. The Agricultural Statistics Expert of this Project, he continued, would be leaving by the end of the year. The ADG wished [to be] placed on record his and FAO's appreciation for the good job done by the Agricultural Statistics Expert during his tenure

with this project. Continuation of the good management of the Project would be assured by his replacement with an equally competent Japanese expert.

13. He wished the Focal Points a successful meeting with positive outputs and an enjoyable stay in the City of Bangkok.

#### **Statement of the donor**

14. The representative from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan, Mr Hishiyama, said that it was in recognition of the necessity for the development and exchange of reliable food and agricultural statistics for ensuring world food security, that the Regional Project was implemented. The Project had several accomplishments, the first of which was an evaluation of the participating countries' situation on food and agricultural statistics and information. Another was the formulation of the master plan and the project proposal to establish the statistical data exchange system on agriculture in this region.

15. The Meeting was pleased to hear that the follow-up phase project "Strengthening Regional Data Exchange System on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries" would commence from December 2001. It would be expected to contribute toward the development of data utilisation for each country and region through data analysis, dissemination and sharing based on the formulated Master Plan of data exchange system.

16. He also stressed that there would be mutual collaboration between the follow-up phase project and the Project to support the "ASEAN Food Security Information System" (AFSIS), which was officially proposed by the Government of Thailand at the ASEAN meeting held in Medan, Indonesia on October 2001 to strengthen food security in ASEAN countries. As both projects would have similar purposes and activities, a close relationship established between them would avoid duplication of efforts. The achievement of the FAO follow-up phase project and AFSIS was expected to spread around the Asia and Pacific Region to realise the original purpose of strengthening food security.

17. He concluded by saying that MAFF Japan was thinking along the line of bilateral cooperation on agricultural statistics in the region, using the scheme of Japan International Agency (JICA), Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC) and so on, since it would not only strengthen the regional system on data exchange but also improve data quality.

### **III. Election of Officers and Adoption of the Provisional Agenda** (Agenda items 2 and 3)

18. The representative from India, Mr Dinesh K. Trehan, was elected Chair; the representative from Sri Lanka, Mr A.M.U. Dissanayake, as Vice Chair; and the representative from Nepal, Mr Tunga Shiromani Bastola, as Rapporteur.

19. The Participants adopted the Timetable and Agenda, as presented. The Timetable and Agenda are shown in Annex 2.

#### **IV. Review of Progress and Accomplishments of the Regional Project GCP/RAS/171/JPN** (Agenda item 4)

20. A review of progress/accomplishments and recommendations of the Regional Project (GCP/RAS/171/JPN) which would end in April 2002 was presented by the Agricultural Statistics Expert. It was as follows:

##### **Background of the Project**

- The idea for the Regional Project was spawned at the Sixteenth Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS), held in Tokyo, Japan in October 1996, where the need for accurate and timely data on food and agriculture was stressed.
- The Commission welcomed the offer made by the host country, Japan, to favourably consider financing the activities of this regional project.
- The Project aimed to (i) assist countries to draw up National Statistical Development Strategies and Plans for the improvement of food and agricultural statistics and information, and (ii) formulate a plan for the establishment of a data base and equipment facilities, in a number of countries, to provide the capability to transfer data in electronic format both to and from countries in the Region, and FAO, using common concepts, standards and classifications.
- The Project covered sixteen developing member countries of APCAS: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.
- The Project Document was signed by the Government of Japan and FAO in 1998, and other member countries within the first half of 1999. The Project was scheduled to last for forty-eight months with financial support from the Government of Japan. FAO was designated as the executing agency.

##### **Project Accomplishments**

- The Project collected information on the national system of food and agricultural statistics. The information obtained were used as a basis for future project activities including identification of ten appropriate countries for implementation of Country Studies (composed of in-depth reviews) and organisation of national seminars on system of food and agriculture statistics.
- Country studies were implemented to observe institutional capability and identify data users' needs and their impact on the national systems of food and agricultural statistics. The studies comprised in-depth reviews and organisation of national seminars in participating countries.
- Ten countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Iran, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam) were selected from the 16 participating countries as the target countries for Country Studies. These countries were in the early development stage of agricultural statistics and/or in transition from a centrally planned economy and/or possible countries for the introduction of the pilot data-exchange system which master plan would be formulated by the project in its duration.
- The country studies assisted the countries to acquire better understanding of their system of food and agriculture statistics for both data producers and

users. It contributed towards future development through identification of data gaps and issues on data collection methods.

- The country studies also identified areas that require inputs for corresponding assistance from the Project. To meet the identified needs of the countries, four sub-regional level workshops and consultations on specific areas were organised. They were the following: (i) FAO/SIAP Workshop on Agricultural Surveys based on Multiple Frame Sampling Methods; (ii) the Sub-Regional Workshop on Moving Towards an Agricultural Statistics System for the Market Economy; (iii) Technical Consultation on the Establishment of Data Exchange System for Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and the Pacific Region; and (iv) ASEAN Workshop on Food Security Cooperation and a Rice Reserve Management System in East Asia. Some workshops were held in collaboration with the regular programme of FAO and other relevant international/national organisations.
- As to the regional level meetings, the Project had two meetings of Focal Points, one seminar (Seminar on the Use of Remote Sensing in Agricultural Statistics) and one workshop (Improvement of Fishery Statistics in Asia and Pacific).
- The above mentioned country studies and meetings assisted the countries in the future improvement of food and agricultural statistics and information including drawing up of national statistical development strategies and plans.
- Furthermore, the Project formulated a Master Plan/Project Proposal for the data exchange system. The idea for a Master Plan for a data exchange system was discussed during the Technical Consultation on the Establishment of a Regional Data Exchange System for Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries. A draft Project Document for the follow-up phase was formulated taking account of the suggestions and comments from the experts of the consultation. It was submitted to the Government of Japan in September 2001 for approval, and would subsequently be forwarded to the expected participant-countries.

### **Recommendations**

#### *For improvement of the system on food and agriculture statistics*

- Periodic implementation of the census for agriculture.
- Collection of data on main commodities and subjects directly from primary sources using sample surveys rather than reporting system, to provide more reliable and objective statistics, using unified reporting formats, concepts, definitions and timing.
- Expansion of the range of agricultural statistics available to meet the needs of data users including governmental official sector and private sector under the market oriented economy.
- Extension of the range of statistical publications to ensure wide dissemination of data in a timely manner and strengthening the statistical capability for the offices at all levels in data collection, data processing, analysis and dissemination.
- Effective and efficient use of existing resources by statistical organisations in the countries.
- Coordination among organisations concerned with food and agriculture statistics to avoid duplication of activities; as well as the coordination and

formulation of mid/long term national plan for the improvement of agricultural statistics.

- Utilisation of existing statistics through enforcement activities of analysis and dissemination to stress the importance of statistics for data users, politicians and planners.
- Unification of reporting forms, survey data, units of area and weight, and so on.

*For the establishment of data exchange system on food and agriculture statistics*

- Set up a pilot electronic-based data exchange system for food and agriculture statistics among participating member countries in Asia and Pacific Region using harmonised definitions, standards and common Information Technology (IT) operating system. Basically, the system will be constructed with a database and Internet-WebPages as a major medium for disseminating statistics, and may be expected to vary to suit country specific conditions taking into consideration the diversity in the structures of national agricultural statistical organisations and variations in the content and coverage of national agricultural data systems among participating countries.
- Statistical personnel of national government offices would be provided skills on statistical operations including data analysis and dissemination consistent with the framework of the regional data exchange system at the regional, sub-regional and national levels.
- Corresponding to this recommendation, the Government of Japan has expressed its willingness to accept the proposal of the follow-up phase project and to contribute to development of the system financially and technically.
- The follow-up project activities would be mainly focused on the following areas: (a) data exchange framework development, (b) suitability assessment of framework to existing country level conditions, (c) pilot implementation of data exchange system in selected member countries, (d) country level capacity building, and (e) groundwork before the end of project for APCAS-wide implementation of data exchange system.
- Furthermore, the follow-up project would stimulate as far as possible maximum cooperation among related ongoing and pipeline projects to achieve the desired optimal utilisation of resources and synergy in project activities. Specifically, the Project would be expected to work closely with other related Japan-funded projects such as the Asia FIVIMS Project and a planned ASEAN support project which will also contribute to improvement of food security information system in ASEAN member countries. If the plan for the ASEAN support project becomes clear from the budgetary and technical points of view, further review of its project approach would be made in order to harmonise the implementation of both projects. The Project also should consider collaboration, such as in data sharing, with Asia FIVIMS Project.
- Participating member countries would be expected to join the follow-up phase project and cooperate to establish the system in every country and the region.

21. The Focal Points were informed that the Project results, conclusions and recommendations presented at the meeting would be incorporated in a terminal report, and sent to all the participating countries.

22. The Meeting stressed that all of the member countries participated in the meetings undertaken at the regional level, although the country studies could not cover all countries due to the limitation of resources and project period.

23. The Meeting noted the importance of improvement of data collection as well as the data exchange system. The member countries were expected to exert continuous efforts or take further steps to develop their agricultural statistics.

**V. Contributions of the Government of Japan in Promoting Food Security Information in Asia-Pacific Countries**  
(Agenda item 5)

24. The representative from the Statistics and Information Department, MAFF Japan, discussed Japan's contributions to agricultural development in the Asia and Pacific region. They were focused on three areas: attainment of sustainable agricultural development; strengthening of food security; and poverty alleviation.

25. Its overseas development assistance was comprised of bilateral cooperation in the form of either donations (technical cooperation and grants) or loans; and multilateral cooperation consisting of funds granted to international organisations.

26. For the fiscal year 1999, its technical cooperation extended to 52 projects, 26 development studies, 5520 instances of expert assistance, and technical training for 1,448 trainees; while grants-in-aid totalled more than 13 billion yen.

27. Japan's multilateral cooperation to FAO concerning food security is in terms of three programmes, which were: (i) Improvement of Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries; (ii) Development of a Vulnerability Information Base, Mapping and Dissemination System for Asia in Support of the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping System (FIVIMS); and (iii) Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Laos and Sri Lanka.

28. Under consideration was a multilateral cooperation with ASEAN – the development of ASEAN food security information system. The outline would be presented at the following session by the representative of Thailand.

29. Subsequent to the presentation of an outline of Japan's ongoing and future cooperation to the food security matters, the Meeting was informed of Japan's expectations for the regional exchange system for food and agriculture statistics. Japan expected that it would be the common property of the participating countries and would provide common benefits as well as more advantages for purposes of agricultural policy formulation. It was also mentioned that the regional exchange system would adopt common concepts and specifications and thus have standardized formats according to pre-formulated guidelines. It would likewise establish a regional/country database and homepage to store and provide statistical data.

## **VI. Proposed Food Security Data Exchange System among ASEAN Member Countries**

(Agenda item 6)

30. The representative from the Centre for Agricultural Information, Office of Agricultural Economics, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Thailand, discussed the outline of ASEAN Food Security Data Exchange System (AFSIS), which was officially proposed by the Government of Thailand at the ASEAN meeting held in Medan, Indonesia in October 2001.

31. The Meeting was informed that the AFSIS aimed to strengthen food security in ASEAN countries in terms of: (i) food security planning; (ii) monitoring and evaluation of the food security situation; (iii) analysis and dissemination of food security data. Its activities would include the Food Security Early Warning System (FS-EWR); Food Security Information Centre (FS-IC); and Food Security Human Resource Development (FS-HRD).

32. The Meeting discussed the necessity of mutual cooperation between AFSIS and the follow-up phase project to avoid duplication of activities and efforts in terms of working for very similar objectives.

## **VII. The Case of the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems (FIVIMS) and Selected Indicators of Food and Agricultural Development in Asia-Pacific Region**

(Agenda item 7)

31. The Senior Food and Nutrition Officer of the FAO Regional Office made the presentation on the FIVIMS, which refer to the network of systems that assembles, analyses and disseminates information about people who are food insecure or are at risk. The idea behind FIVIMS was that improved information could be actively used to produce better results in efforts to reduce the number of undernourished and achieve food security for all. The activities included accumulation, analysis and dissemination of information on food security.

32. The Meeting was informed that FIVIMS was a framework within which a wide range of activities may be carried out at both the national and international level in support of improved information to realize these goals.

- At the national level, FIVIMS was implemented through a linking of information systems that gathered and analysed data relevant for measuring and monitoring food insecurity and vulnerability. The national FIVIMS would be based on existing national and sub-national information systems related to food security; it would not create new ones. It would be operated and controlled by the country involved; would be country-driven, user-focused and designed in response to the needs of national decision makers. Its goal would be to contribute to the reduction of food insecurity and vulnerability; and its purpose would be to enable access to more comprehensive up-to-date information, enhance food security policy formulation; and improve the design and targeting of interventions, aside from monitor progress.

- At the international level, FIVIMS was implemented through a diverse programme of activities that aimed to support national FIVIMS and establish a common database and information exchange network, referred to as a global FIVIMS. It would generate technical materials and provide assistance for the development and application of guidelines and manuals; mobilise resources for national FIVIMS as needed; support the definition of common standards and improvement of data quality and promote information exchange and networking. The international FIVIMS programme was being developed and coordinated through the Inter-Agency Working Group on FIVIMS (IAWG-FIVIMS) to support both national and global FIVIMS. Membership of the IAWG currently includes representatives of more than 20 agencies and organisations, including bilateral donor agencies and NGOs. IAWG-FIVIMS has its Permanent Secretariat at FAO.
- As a common system for FIVIMS, a web-based decentralised information system has been developed - the Key Indicator Mapping System (KIDS), which has the function of a “mappable data viewer” to facilitate work at national and international levels.

33. After the presentation on the FIVIMS, the Chief of the Statistical Development Service in FAO Headquarters informed the Focal Points of the concept of the publication "*Selected Indicators of Food and Agricultural Development in the Region*", the first attempt of its kind and which has been most popular among the users due to its user-friendliness and the range of its coverage. Its general features included a 10-year data series, annual exponential growth rates, and sub-totals for the region, the rest of the world, and the world. Its contents were based on the FAOSTAT, which was the database available at the FAO Headquarters.

#### **VIII. Strengthening Regional Data Exchange System on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries (GCP/RAS/184/JPN)** (Agenda item 8)

34. A summary of the follow-up Phase project, "*Strengthening Regional Data Exchange on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and the Pacific Countries (GCP/RAS/184/JPN)*" was presented, including the overview and rationale, expected end-of-project situation and sustainability of project results, target beneficiaries, and project strategy. The strategy was derived from the results of the consultation with Focal Points, *Technical Consultation on the Establishment of Data Exchange System for Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Region*, March 2001, which provided useful views for the preparation of the Project Document.

35. The Project would support participating countries in terms of the establishment of the data exchange system and capacity building for data analysis and dissemination. It would conform to the established procedures of FAOSTAT/WAICENT, and would work closely with other related Japan-funded projects such as the proposed ASEAN support project for food security information system and the Asia FIVIMS Project.

36. Immediate objectives of the Project would be the following:
- Phased implementation of the Master Plan for the Regional Data Exchange System for Food and Agriculture Statistics, following the concepts formulated by the first phase project;
  - Strengthening of the national capacity for analysis, use and dissemination of food and agriculture statistics in support of national agricultural development policy and planning, including associated food security and poverty alleviation concerns.
37. In relation to the above objectives, the outputs of the Project would be:
- The identification and prioritisation of the components of the Regional Data Exchange System;
  - The development of the System and its installation in five pilot APCAS member countries;
  - Preparatory activities for APCAS-wide implementation or adoption of the System;
  - Examination of region-wide statistical standard/classification systems and modification of the Regional Data Exchange System with a view towards sustainability upon the completion of the project;
  - Convening of meetings of national Focal Points to discuss specific subjects of the Project; and
  - Regional, sub-regional and national capability building training, workshops and seminars which would focus on the development, use and maintenance of the data exchange, utilisation of statistics to address and analyse issues for sustained agriculture development, food security and poverty alleviation.
38. The inputs of the Member Countries would be as follows:
- Nomination of national Focal Points for liaison concerning project activities and participation in regional meetings as may be required. The nominees should be from the department in-charge of agricultural statistics and have responsibilities for the management and implementation of programmes in this field.
  - Facilitation of project implementation (in the case of the system hosted countries), including future development and maintenance of project-initiated systems in accordance with established procedures.
  - Sharing of their know-how (in the case of developed and developing member countries of APCAS with functional databases and Internet WebPages) on electronic data exchange operations, linking of their WebPages with the regional data exchange network and supplying agricultural statistical data to the project.
  - On the part of developed APCAS member countries, participation in project activities, especially regional-level undertakings.
39. The Meeting discussed the necessity of a long-term approach to construct the data exchange system. Although the follow-up phase project would construct a pilot system as a vessel of statistical data on food and agriculture in the project period, it would take a long time to prepare unified data items for all countries. The efforts of the countries and collaboration among related projects and activities would be indispensable.

## **IX. Highlights, Adoption of Major Recommendations and Concluding Points**

(Agenda item 9)

40. As major recommendations of the Meeting, the presentations and discussions were summarised and adopted as follows;

- The Focal Points pointed out that compliance with the requirements of the proposed regional database would take the participating countries several years. Resource limitations including the inadequacy of infrastructure and the lack of trained manpower on the part of the participating countries would also pose difficulties in setting up and maintaining the database.
- The need for hardware and software was noted by the Focal Points, who were informed that these problems had been anticipated, and would be addressed by the Project.
- It was clarified that the standardisation of formats would be given importance, and that a pilot system for distribution to the participating countries would be developed. While the countries would be encouraged to set up their own/different homepages, it was emphasised that the databases in the said homepages should have a uniform format, although some form of flexibility would be allowed.
- The Focal Points noted several ongoing and simultaneous efforts aimed at data exchange/shearing. The need for establishing a functional mechanism to strengthen coordination and complementation was emphasised to minimise duplication, inconsistencies in similar or related information systems, and to optimally utilise limited resources at country level.
- The Focal Points also expressed the view that the regional data exchange system should be able to meet the particular needs of the participating countries in terms of data items and contents of WebPages.
- On the identification of the Focal Points for the follow-up phase, the importance of having one or the same focal point for related regional projects – such as the FAO and ASEAN projects - was emphasised.
- Recognising that resource constraints would not have allowed the implementation of all activities in the participating countries during the first phase, and that the countries could not all derive the same benefits because of funding constraints, it was suggested that: (i) Sets of the detailed proceedings including resource papers of seminars and workshops, which were intended to build or develop statistical capacity, should be sent to all participating member countries; and (ii) Specific technical assistance could be given to the countries on request.
- Member countries should exert continuous efforts or take further steps to develop their agricultural statistics.

41. Aside from highlights and recommendations, the Meeting was concluded with reminders on the following issues:

- The Focal Points were reminded to send their views and ideas about the implementation of the project activities to the Agricultural Statistics Expert within two weeks so that these could be taken into account at an appropriate stage.
- They were also informed that the Project Document would be signed shortly by the Donor and FAO; and thereafter would be sent to the participating countries for approval. The Focal Points were requested to cooperate in the approval process.

## **X. Closing of the Meeting**

42. The Agricultural Statistics Expert thanked the Focal Points for their participation in the Meeting, which provided a venue for the review of the accomplishments of the project first phase and the discussion of the activities in the follow-up phase. He also expressed his appreciation for the cooperation shown by the Focal Points during the first phase project, and to the technical backstopping officers who provided him with invaluable assistance during project implementation.

43. He also acknowledged the cooperation of the Chair, Vice Chair, and the Rapporteurs for their active participation in the Meeting.

44. The Chief of the Statistical Development Service, Statistics Division, FAO Headquarters, expressed his gratitude to the Donor Government and requested the representatives from MAFF Japan to convey his appreciation to their Director General for the continuing support to the Project. He noted that the first phase project would have implemented all of its planned activities during its period. He also expressed his hopes that the participating countries were happy with the results of the first phase; and that they would continue to participate in the follow-up phase.

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## **AGENDA AND TIMETABLE**

### **Day 1, 22 October 2001**

- 08.30 - 09.00 Registration
- 09.00 - 09.45 Agenda Item 1 - Opening Session
- Overview and objectives of the meeting, *Mr. Ryuki Ikeda, Agricultural statistics expert, GCP/RAS/171/JPN*
  - Introduction of the participants
  - Opening Statement, *Mr. R.B. Singh, ADG and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific*
  - Address, *Mr. Masataka Hishiyama, Director, Statistics and Information Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan*
- 10.10 - 10.20 Agenda Item 2 - Election of officers
- 10.20 - 10.30 Agenda Item 3 - Adoption of the agenda and timetable
- 10.30 - 12.00 Agenda Item 4 - Review of progress and accomplishments of the regional project GCP/RAS/171/JPN
- 13.30 - 15.00 Agenda Item 5 - Contributions of government of Japan in the promotion of food security information system in Asia and Pacific countries, *Mr. Kimihiko Eura, Senior Statistician, Statistics and Information Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan*
- 15.00 - 16.30 Agenda Item 6 - Proposed food security data exchange system among ASEAN member countries, *Mr. Montol JEAMJAROEN, Chief Division, Centre for Agricultural Information, Office of Agricultural Economics, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Thailand*

### **Day 2, 23 October 2001**

- 08.30 - 10.00 Agenda Item 7 - Ongoing related FAO activities in information dissemination and data exchange in the region: the case of FIVIMS and Selected indicators of food and agriculture development in Asia-Pacific region, *Dr. Biplab Nandi, Food and Nutrition Officer, FAO/RAP, and Mr. Hiek Som, Chief, Statistical Development Service, FAO/HQ*
- 10.30 - 12.00 Agenda Item 8 - Strengthening Regional Data Exchange System on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries (GCP/RAS184/JPN): Objectives, activities and roles of national focal points, *Mr. Ryuki Ikeda, Agricultural statistics expert, GCP/RAS/171/JPN*
- 13.30 - 15.00 Agenda Item 9 - Adoption of highlights and major recommendations
- 15.00 - 15.30 Agenda Item 10 - Closing session



## **OPENING STATEMENT**

**Dr R. B. SINGH**

FAO Assistant Director-General and  
Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific

Distinguished Participants, FAO Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to extend to you a warm welcome to this Second Meeting of the Focal Points for the project "Improvement of Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries" (GCP/RAS/171/JPN). It is most pleasing and encouraging to see that all the 16 countries participating in this project are represented here by their senior officials. Considering that international travel is becoming more cumbersome, this strong presence underpins your commitment to the project, which we greatly appreciate. Rest assured that the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific will do its best to make the meeting proceed as smoothly as possible.

As many of you may remember, this project actually started its activities in September 1998 receiving financial contribution in the form of a trust fund from Government of Japan. The project was formulated and subsequently implemented covering 16 member countries in response to a specific recommendation of the Sixteenth Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS), held in Tokyo, Japan, in October/ November 1996. The importance of strengthening mutual co-operation and the establishment of a system for collection and dissemination of statistics among member countries were discussed in that Session, giving rise to this regional project.

I understand that the project is now at its final stages of completion. I am however pleased to inform you that the Government of Japan has been a very generous supporter to FAO's many development activities. This has been manifested in this particular project.

Sometime in June this year, a Japanese delegation visited RAP to inform us that the Government of Japan had already made available the funds to support a follow-up project, although this first phase project is still expected to continue until April 2002. With this assurance, we worked double time to prepare a follow-up project document which has been reviewed and will be signed by representatives of the government of Japan and FAO HQ. Thus, we are now in a unique situation where we will be implementing a follow-up phase project in December this year while its precursor project is still in progress and will continue to be operational until April 2002.

I am elated to know that a distinguished delegation from Japan is also present here today and will be participating in this meeting. Let me thus take this opportunity to personally request you to convey to the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, FAO's gratitude and appreciation for your Government's continued trust and support to FAO as an effective engine for food and agricultural development, in general, and agricultural statistics in particular.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Information is power. No government today can function effectively without adequate information infrastructure. The business community is dependent on the availability of reliable and timely information for its day-to-day business operations and management. Access to such information could mean continuous growth and prosperity. Failure to get advance information, on the other hand, could have catastrophic results.

Statistics has been basically conducted to meet the needs of national policy making and for planning and evaluation of projects. We are living in an environment with an ever-increasing population requiring sustained and stable food supply for survival. Food and agricultural statistics is thus playing an important role providing an indispensable guide for evolving correct policies on agriculture, development of rural area, ensuring adequate supplies of food to the people, and achieving sustainable growth of the national economy. It is no wonder therefore why every country makes efforts to improve its agricultural statistics.

The food and agricultural statistics in Asia and Pacific countries have undergone drastic changes during the last twenty years. Although reporting systems continue to be the major source of data in many countries, particularly among the former centrally planned economies, sample surveys have been gradually introduced in their statistical systems. National statistical programmes in many countries in the region now include regular agriculture surveys and censuses, albeit, concentrated generally, on production statistics. Food consumption or household income/expenditure surveys and fishery censuses have also been undertaken in a number of countries. National statistical publications are now also being issued on a regular basis. In addition, many countries are introducing the more modern information technology system for data processing, analysis and dissemination. These improvements in food and agriculture statistics are expected to benefit national agricultural development, food security and poverty alleviation, and programming and monitoring.

Permit me to highlight the situation in China. Given the high share of China's agriculture in the world's agricultural production, it is important to have reliable statistics from this country not only for the sake of agricultural planning in the country but also from the point of view of sub-regional, regional and global planning. In this context, it is gratifying that last year China completed its first national agricultural census under the FAO/Italian project and has put in place the necessary infrastructural and institutional support for regular sample surveys and censuses. Other formerly socialistic countries, such as, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia and DPR Korea should strengthen their agricultural statistics capacities. Utilisation of the agricultural statistics and information is no longer confined in governmental sector. Its use has expanded and has been serving as a stimulus for growth of the private/agribusiness sector, consistent with the progress of countries' economy and the shift of governments' policies to convert agriculture from subsistence level to a more profitable business venture.

Future agricultural development must seek congruence of enhanced productivity, food and nutritional security, sustainability, employment security and equity. Such a holistic approach will need reliable statistics not only on production aspects but also on selected

socio-economic and environmental aspects. Increasing emphasis will need to be placed on household level data on income expenditure, food consumption, education and health. Are you collecting such data? If not, necessary steps should be taken to bridge the gap. Furthermore, with globalisation now fast spreading to most countries in the world, the demand for accurate, timely and comparable information among the countries is increasing as ever. Countries which have embraced this global co-existence are intensifying their interdependence in many fields. Agricultural statistics is no exception to this trend. With the increasing importance of agricultural world trade, many countries have taken cognizance of the need to obtain timely and accurate statistical data on other countries' production, prices and share in the international market. In tandem with these developments, there is likewise an increased need for international societies to collect and share agricultural statistics as a guide to problem solving, such as stabilization of food supplies and maintaining a delicate balance with demands for food, on the one hand, and conservation of environment on a global basis, on the other.

Agricultural statistics in the Region must capture the information on small farmers, their numbers, production, productivity, access to inputs and outputs distribution, as more than 70 percent of the world's farming households are in Asia and about 80 percent of them are small farmers. There is little information available on marketable surpluses at small farms, which is a must if they have to benefit from WTO provisions. Under this environment of fast changing conditions, the project GCP/RAS/171/JPN has tried to understand and document the systems of food and agriculture statistics of participating countries in the region. Their relative strengths and weaknesses were identified and key areas for improvement were pinpointed. Several workshops and other related meetings at sub-regional and regional level were organised focusing on specific areas of data needs. These activities are expected to contribute to countries' future plans for the development of their statistical activities on agriculture consistent with national development strategies and plans.

The project's activities provided the basic inputs in the formulation of a plan for both regional and country-specific data exchange systems on food and agriculture. The feasibility of implementing this framework will now be the focus of attention of the follow-up phase project.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In the Asia-Pacific Region, time is not on our side. The number of malnourished persons in the Region has remained stubbornly high, 497 million of the world's 812 million undernourished people being concentrated in this region. This may partly be attributed to the decreasing investment in agriculture and rural sector. Agricultural statistics must capture detailed information on investment in agriculture, as it will be extremely useful to national planners in making decisions for resources allocation to different sectors. This subject is the main topic of the World Food Summit: Five Years Later, proposed to be held in June 2002 in Rome.

I understand that this Second Meeting of Focal Points will serve as a forum to review the project activities, and to discuss future directions that the follow-up phase project should take.

Let me reiterate that while FAO is taking the lead in the implementation of this project with support from the Government of Japan, the ultimate beneficiary of the project interventions are the individual countries participating in this project. It is therefore more appropriate to say that this is your project. You should therefore get the maximum benefits from this project.

During this two days meeting, therefore, I would like to encourage you to actively participate in order to have a fruitful discussion. This is your opportunity to voice out your own expectations from the project. While not all of them could immediately be addressed, let me assure you, nonetheless that we at FAO will take serious note and work with the Government of Japan and our other partners in development to find ways of helping you, either individually or as a composite group. Your discussions, I am certain, will be beneficial not only to the project but also to your countries and to the whole region of Asia and the Pacific.

Mr. Ryuki Ikeda, Agricultural Statistics Expert of this project will be leaving us on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2001. I wish to place on record our appreciation for the good job done by him during his tenure with this project. We know that an equally competent Japanese expert has been identified to replace Mr. Ikeda. This ensures continuation of the good management of the project. Once again, I wish to thank the Government of the Japan for their strong support to FAO's programmes in the Asia-Pacific Region in general, and in particular to the agricultural statistics activities.

Finally, my best wishes for a successful meeting with positive outputs and for an enjoyable stay in the City of Bangkok.

Thank you.

## **STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF JAPAN**

**Mr Masataka HISHIYAMA**

Director, Office of International Affairs  
Statistics and Information Department  
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan

Dr R.B. Singh, Assistant Director General of FAO and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, Distinguished Delegates, Officers of FAO,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my great pleasure to be able to give this statement at the opening of the Second Meeting of Focal Points for the project on behalf of the Statistics and Information Department of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan.

We recognise that it is necessary for each country to develop reliable food and agricultural statistics, and exchange and share them in order to ensure the food security all over the world. Under its recognition, we proposed the implementation of the project whose purpose is improving and standardising the agricultural statistics and promoting mutual exchange of information and statistics for Asia and Pacific countries, and it was adopted unanimously on the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS) of FAO in Tokyo in 1996. We have contributed the trust fund and dispatched an expert to support the project “Improvement of Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries” to realise this proposal since 1998.

Sixteen developing countries out of 24 APCAS member countries have participated in this project. We believe this project accomplished several fruitful results. The first achievement was the evaluation of the countries’ situation on food and agricultural statistics and information through country studies, seminars and workshops, which assisted the participating countries in the development of their statistics and formulation of statistical improvement plan on agriculture. The other was the formulation of the master plan and the project proposal to establish the statistical data exchange system on agriculture in this region.

The project is now in its last stage, since the term of the project officer will expire in December 2001 and the project itself will finish in April 2002. On the other hand, the planned follow-up phase project “Strengthening Regional Data Exchange System on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries” will commence from December 2001. The follow-up phase project is expected to contribute toward the development of data utilisation for the countries and region through data analysis, dissemination and sharing based on the formulated Master Plan of data exchange system. Taking this opportunity, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for all participating member countries of the project and relevant officers of FAO Headquarters and the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific for their co-operation and support of the projects on their execution and formulation.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Regarding the data exchange system on agricultural statistics, some of you may know that there is a plan for the development of the “ASEAN Food Security Information System” or AFSIS. The plan aims to strengthen food security in ASEAN countries, and was officially proposed by the Government of Thailand in the ASEAN AMAF+3 meeting, which was held in Medan, Indonesia, on 5<sup>th</sup> October. This plan is based on the same point of view and way of thinking of the FAO follow-up phase project. It would be useful for strengthening of food security in the Asian Region. Hence, the Government of Japan expressed during the AMAF+3 meeting its consideration of support to the development of AFSIS.

The AFSIS plan could introduce the data exchange system as a pilot system. We expect that the efficiency of the data exchange system will be verified in all ASEAN countries, and then the achievement of the FAO follow-up phase project and AFSIS would be spread around the Asia and Pacific Region. In this regard, both projects are expected to have close mutual cooperation to realize the original purpose of strengthening of food security in Asia and the Pacific Region through improvement of agricultural statistics and data sharing.

As I mentioned, there are two schemes of Japanese planned support for food security - the FAO follow-up phase project on one hand and the ASEAN support project for development of AFSIS on the other hand. Additionally, the MAFF Japan, is thinking of bilateral cooperation on agricultural statistics with the countries of this Region using the scheme of JICA, JBIC and so on, since it is important not only to strengthen regional system on data exchange but also to improve data quality.

Please keep in mind that we have the strong intention of contributing to the strengthening of food security in Asia and Pacific Region, as universally desired by peoples and countries, by using all thinkable schemes. As such, we would like to request the project member countries, the FAO Headquarters and the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific for better understanding, positive participation and continuous support to the Japanese sponsored projects.

Thank you.