



## **African Group on Statistical Training and Human Resources**

### **Activity report 2016**

#### **I. Support by the African Group on Statistical Training and Human Resources for the training component of the Action Plan for Africa of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics**

1. The activities of the African Group on Statistical Training and Human Resources (AGROST) during the period 2015-2016 focused on support to the training component of the Action Plan for Africa of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Africa. To this end, the following activities were organized:

(a) Review of the first version of the special training programme on agricultural statistics, held in November 2015 in Dar es Salaam;

(b) Finalization of the special agricultural statistics training programme in January 2016 in Dakar;

(c) Meeting to launch the special agricultural statistics training programme in May 2016 in Abidjan.

#### **A. Review of the first version of the special agricultural statistical training programme**

2. At the meeting held from 2 to 6 November 2015 in Dar es Salaam, an agricultural statistics specialization programme comprising nine modules was submitted for assessment by schools. The modules were:

- Review of basic statistical concepts;
- Agricultural statistics;
- Sampling;

- Data collection methods;
- Data processing and appraisal of results;
- Economic accounts for agriculture;
- Animal husbandry and fishery statistics;
- Food security;
- Internship.

3. Participants raised the issue of training harmonization. They recommended that assessment methods and the continuous learning framework should be better defined to avoid training centres offering different aspects of the same special programme.

## **B. Finalization of the special agricultural statistics training programme in Dakar**

4. An expert group meeting on validation of the special agricultural statistics programme was held from 13 to 15 January 2016 in Dakar. It was attended by 15 experts from the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) African Centre for Statistics; the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), Dakar; the Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT); the regional statistical training centres, namely the Ecole nationale de statistique et d'analyse économique (ENSAE), Dakar, the Regional Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (ISSAE), Yaounde and the School of Statistics and Planning, Makerere University, Kampala; the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Center, Dar es Salaam; the national statistical training centres of Madagascar and the Niger; the Institut national de la statistique et de la démographie of Burkina Faso and the Gambia Bureau of Statistics.

5. Participants finalized the following aspects of the special agricultural statistics training programme:

- Programme structure, choice of modules and teaching method;
- Training harmonization strategy: content, exercises and internships;
- Module duration;
- Student selection criteria;
- Training cost and implementation timetable.

## **C. Meeting to launch the special agricultural statistics training programme**

6. As part of the training component of the Action Plan for Africa, a meeting to finalize the launch of a short-term training programme in agricultural statistics was held from 10 to 13 May 2016 in Abidjan. Representatives of the following institutions attended the meeting: the Ecole nationale supérieure de statistique et d'économie appliquée (ENSEA), Abidjan; ENSAE Dakar; the Ecole supérieure de la statistique et de l'analyse de l'information (ESSAI), Tunis; the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (EASTC), Dar es-Salaam; the School of Statistics and Planning, Makerere University, Kampala; IDEP, Dakar; the Ecole nationale de statistique et de formation professionnelle (ENSFP), Niamey; Statistics South Africa; and ECA. The aim of the meeting

was to engage in consultations with statistical training schools to devise a road map for implementing the agricultural statistics specialization programme.

7. The meeting was opened by Mr. Kouadio Kouassi Hugues, Director of ENSEA, Abidjan and President of AGROST. ECA then gave a presentation on the institutional arrangements for statistical capacity-building in Africa. This was followed by other presentations by the schools on their programmes, experiences regarding scholarships under the Global Strategy and preparations towards the start-up of the specialization programme.

8. The various institutes made their presentations in the following order: (a) Ecole nationale de la statistique et de l'analyse économique (Dakar); (b) Ecole nationale supérieure de statistique et d'économie appliquée (Abidjan); (c) School of Statistics and Planning, Makerere University (Kampala); (d) Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (Dar es Salaam); (e) African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (Dakar); (f) Ecole supérieure de la statistique et de l'analyse de l'information (Tunis); and (g) Centre de formation et de perfectionnement, Institut national de la statistique (Niamey). Their presentations covered: (i) general programme overview; (ii) experience with the Global Strategy scholarship programme; (iii) student intake for specialization; and (iv) harmonization of statistical training.

9. The discussions dwelt on the level of preparation of the various schools in terms of implementing short-term training and providing the project with the support expected. The discussions led to recommendations for the implementation of the agricultural statistics specialization programme at statistical training centres. The meeting ended with a tour of the ENSEA premises.

## **II. Report on implementation of the training component of the Action Plan for Africa of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics**

### **A. Context**

10. The Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics came as a response to the declining quantity and quality of agricultural, rural and environmental statistics produced by the national statistical systems of developing countries. For the most part, the data produced are not regular or reliable enough to meet international standards. The Strategy was built on three pillars: (a) production of a minimum set of core indicators; (b) better integration of agriculture into national statistical systems; and (c) promotion of the sustainability of agricultural statistics production systems through improved governance and national statistical capacity-building.

11. An initial assessment of the causes of the problems mentioned above helped to shed light on some challenges that cropped up, including the availability of qualified agricultural statisticians. To meet those challenges, the training component of the Global Strategy devised a plan of action based on three main pillars:

- Building the capacities of institutions producing agricultural statistics by training competent professionals, to help them improve data quality;
- Building the capacities of institutions producing agricultural statistics to enable them to identify and prioritize their training requirements and ensure strategic human resource management;

- Building the capacities of statistical training centres to enable them to meet the demand for training of agricultural statisticians in the medium and long terms.

## **B. Implementation**

12. Since the start of the project, 14 national and regional workshops have been held, to train the staff of national statistical systems in new the agricultural statistics production methods developed by the project's research component. Staff from 44 African countries underwent this training.

13. Two manuals were developed to help enhance the capacity of national statistical systems to anticipate their training requirements and ensure strategic management of their human resources. In all, 45 human resource managers were trained in the use of the manuals.

14. In an effort to support the statistical training centres and help them harmonize agricultural statistics training programmes, several syllabuses were developed: harmonized curricula for agricultural statistical studies at bachelor's and master's levels, and a curriculum on specialization in agricultural statistics. Four syllabuses were developed under the training component on the following subjects: (a) sampling for agricultural surveys; (b) agricultural data processing and dissemination; (c) economic accounts for agriculture; and (d) agricultural census and surveys. A fifth programme on master sample frames is under preparation.

15. Thirty-nine scholarships were awarded towards the Master's programme in agricultural statistics with a view to building the capacities of the national statistical systems of African countries to produce good-quality agricultural statistics.

## **C. Prospects**

16. The project has finalized a specialization curriculum on agricultural statistics; and several statistical training centres are ready to take in students for this programme. Some 30 staff of statistical systems in Africa will undergo training. The project will help the statistical training centres to purchase equipment to improve the quality of agricultural statistical training. It will also help integrate agricultural statistics into national statistical systems, in conjunction with the technical assistance component of the Global Strategy. It will continue the organization of training workshops jointly with statistical training centres and the research component of the Global Strategy, based at FAO.

## **III. Report on collaboration between ECA and the statistical training centres for the implementation of the training component of the Global Strategy**

17. ECA is responsible for implementing the training component of the Action Plan for Africa. In this regard, and under the auspices of AGROST, it has signed agreements with statistical training centres in Africa. The first agreement will expire in November 2016. While the results have been positive on the whole, there were some implementation difficulties. Although students did undergo training and short-term training programmes were proposed, the equipment needed was not purchased. Moreover, only one class of students has been recruited.

18. AGROST therefore recommended a reassessment of the agreement. The lessons drawn from the assessment will help inform the development of an efficient programme before the end of the action plan. The plan implementation should factor in evaluation to make room for adjustments, at least once every half-year. AGROST should play a central advisory role in the process.

#### **IV. Other activities of AGROST**

19. To improve the visibility of the group and enable its members to discuss issues on statistical training, AGROST has created an online discussion platform, as a way of revitalizing the group. To remain active, the group intends to produce a comprehensive list of its members and develop an annual work programme. The focus here will be on exploiting the results obtained, with regard to standardization and harmonization of training in Africa.

#### **V. Matters for consideration**

20. AGROST intends to put the following questions to its members in an effort to review the list of active members, support the implementation of the training component of the Plan of Action, play a central role in the governance of the Pan-African Statistical Training Centre, develop a medium- and long-term activity programme and seek the necessary financing.

- Should the composition of the group be reviewed, given developments in the institutional environment?
- Under the Global Strategy, there will be collaboration with statistics schools to integrate some of the new agricultural statistics production methods into their curricula. How can AGROST support this process?
- Should AGROST devise a strategy to obtain funding for statistical training in Africa?
- What role should AGROST play in the governance of the new Pan-African Statistical Training Centre?