



39 - SPECIAL SESSION: Quality of International Statistics. The Challenges for International Statistics at Global, National and Local Levels

# Statistics Governance and Quality Assurance: the Experience of FAO

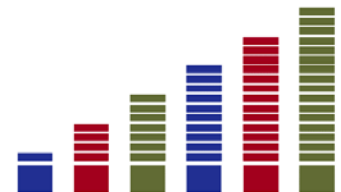
Stephen Katz, Pietro Gennari  
FAO Statistics Division



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# Meeting the challenges of 2030 Agenda

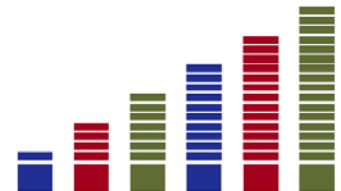
- International sources complement national data
  - “Global Public Goods”, standardized and comparable across countries
- IOs played a major role in global monitoring for the MDGs
- Even more vital for the **2030 Sustainable Development Agenda**:
  - Stronger emphasis on national ownership
  - Greater responsibilities of countries to collect data, validate indicators, and monitor progress
  - More pressure on International Organizations to demonstrate their commitment to quality and transparency
- Calls for a strong/robust statistical governance system underpinned by a transparent Quality Assurance Framework
- Experience of FAO as a Case Study in this regard



# Statistics at FAO

- Statistics is a core function, central to FAO's mandate
- The FAO Statistics Programme:
  - Provides access to harmonized, internationally comparable food and agriculture statistics
  - Develops, promotes and implements statistical methods and standards
  - Provides technical assistance services to improve statistical capacities at national and regional level

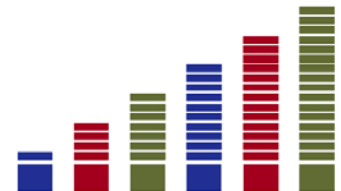
With the ultimate goal of reducing hunger and poverty through informed decisions based the best and highest quality data available



# Statistics at FAO: Governance issues

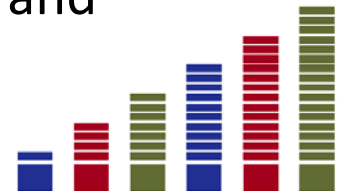
Decentralized statistical system: Governance situation (2008):

- Challenges in efficiency, effectiveness and quality
- Limited statistical coordination, lack of strategic approach
- No formal quality assurance procedures at corporate level
- Duplication of efforts & risk of inconsistent/conflicting data
- Lack of an official mechanism for the endorsement of corporate statistical standards and methodologies
- Lack of coordination with other International Organizations
- FAO not speaking with one consistent voice



# Improving Statistical Governance at FAO

- Evaluation of FAO's Statistical Programme conducted in 2008
- Key recommendations made for improving statistical governance
- Actions taken:
  - In 2012, role of **Chief Statistician** established in addition to the creation of two **internal coordinating bodies** and **focused technical groups**
    - one at a Director-level for policy and decision making on statistical matters
    - one at a technical level for technical discussions on of internal coordinating bodies within the organization
    - focused sub-groups for specific technical issues and challenges (e.g. FAO related SDG indicators)



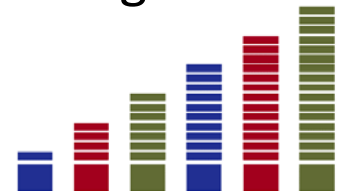


# 2016

European Conference on  
Quality in Official Statistics

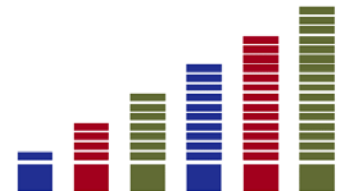
## Improving Statistical Governance at FAO (2)

- **Statistical Programme of Work** produced each biennium
  - provides an overview and a detailed description of the statistical activities carried at FAO
  - also allows in depth analysis of ongoing activities, gaps and areas for development, as well as potential ways of reducing duplication
  - externally, can be used as a guide to learn more about the substantial and complex FAO Statistical System
- **Statistical Quality Assurance Framework** developed
  - based largely on recognized quality initiatives already available at national and international levels
  - provides a set of “Principles”, which are each associated with a number of “good practices”, giving practical guidance on how to assure compliance
  - a number of tools are provided to assist in measuring the degree of compliance



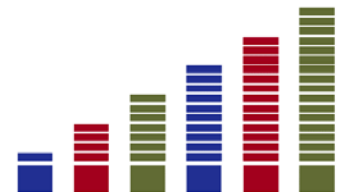
# Remaining internal issues

- Despite good progress having been made in strengthening statistics governance, as of 2015 challenges remained:
  - Chief Statistician given insufficient means to exercise authority and insufficient resources to carry out work
  - Voluntary nature of participation in coordination bodies & Quality Assurance Assessments
  - Limited commitment to quality improvement plans
  - Many statistical activities not reported in the statistical programme of work with negative impact on overall effectiveness and efficiency
  - Lack of involvement of Chief Statistician in key strategic planning bodies & resource mobilization processes
  - Dual role of Chief Statistician and Director, Statistics Division



## Further steps taken

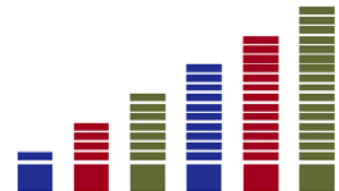
- **New accountability framework** for statistics strengthening of the role of the **Chief Statistician**
- **Overall authority for FAO's statistical work** including the review and approval of:
  - data collection activities and data requests
  - dissemination of all statistical indicators and new datasets
  - statistical capacity development projects and initiatives
  - new statistical methods, standards and tools
- Responsible for the **functional supervision of all staff and consultants** carrying out statistical work at FAO





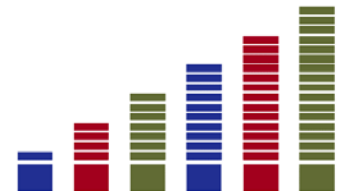
# Implementing the new accountability framework for statistics

- Creation of a **new team** exclusively **dedicated to supporting** the corporate level functions of **the Chief Statistician**
- Full Integration of the Quality Assurance Framework with the Planning Process
  - **Quality Assessment and Planning Survey**
  - on-line questionnaire, to provide details about current and new statistical activities & an indication of how these activities comply with FAO's Statistical Quality Assurance Framework
- Results of the survey will be analyzed by the various sub-groups of the internal statistical coordination bodies & used to produce **Statistical Programme of Work for 2016-2017**
- Processes that fall short in complying with the quality framework **improvement plans will be formulated**



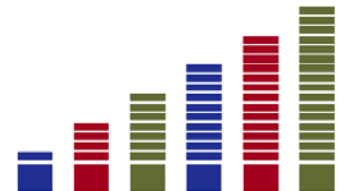
# External Statistics Governance

- Limited progress made in this regard
  - no international platform for country involvement and participation in strategic discussions on agricultural statistics
  - with weak country engagement, FAO has limited possibilities to facilitate the adoption and implementation of statistical norms and standards
  - priorities for statistical capacity development are not always established in consultation with countries, inevitably resulting in gaps, overlaps and inconsistencies across initiatives
  - matters relating to agricultural statistics cannot be strongly represented by FAO at the United Nations Statistical Commission



# Steps taken

- **International Advisory Group on FAO Statistics** established in 2013
  - informal body with purely advisory functions and is based on a very limited and incomplete membership
  - interim platform for international involvement in FAO statistical matters
- Proposal to establish a **Global Commission on Statistics** is currently being considered by FAO Member Countries
  - forum for formal engagement of Members in the formulation, review and monitoring of FAO's overall Statistical Programme of Work
  - stronger ownership and commitment of countries in the application of agreed statistical norms and standards across regions
  - to improve the overall quality of data and statistics as a Global Public Good, and increase the opportunities for support from strategic development partners



# FAO role in Monitoring the SDGs

- FAO is custodian for 20 SDG indicators
  - Compared to only 4 indicators MDG indicators
- Global role
  - collect and disseminate data; develop methods and survey tools; strengthen country statistical capacity; report on progress in both FAO and UN publications
- Regional role
  - interact with Regional Bodies and provide advice and assistance in supporting additional regional indicators, and contribute to regional reports
- National role
  - provide direct support to countries to produce the required global indicators and offer technical assistance and advice to develop additional national indicators
- **Coordinated through Chief Statistician & dedicated technical sub-group, in close collaboration with Regional Statisticians**



# Closing Remarks

- Quality Assurance is at the forefront of FAO's Statistics Programme and central to the role of the Chief Statistician
- Building blocks of FAO's Statistics Governance system, progressively implemented over time, are robust, sustainable, flexible and re-usable
- As a result, FAO is better prepared to meet new demands such as those required to support 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda
- Lessons learned are hopefully useful and relevant to other organizations striving to improve and strengthen their own statistical systems

