



## IDWG on Statistics – Technical Task Force

Minutes

24 July 2019

**Present in HQ:** Kayode Anidi (OCS), Edmundo Barrios (AGP), Lorenzo Bellu (ESA), Valérie Bizier (OCS), Ayca Donmez (OCS), Marcello D’Orazio (OCS), Pietro Gennari (OCS), Virginie Gillet (CBL), Dejan Jakovljevic (CIO), Arvydas Lebedys (FOA), Gregoire Leroy (AGAG), Preet Lidder (AGP), Iswadi Mawabagja (ESS), Victoria Padula De Quadros (ESN), Paul Racionzer (EST), Somnath Sambhudas (ESS), Yakob Seid (OCS), Chado Tshering (FOA), Stefania Vannuccini (FIAS), Sven Walter (FOA),

**Connected via Skype:** Sangita Dubey (RAP), Nancy Chin (RNE), Jessica Stewart (OCS)

### Agenda

- 1 Endorsement of minutes and review of action items from previous meeting
- 2 Planning process of statistical activities – PWB 2020-21
- 3 Corporate IT tools for statistics
- 4 FAO’s evaluation on statistics
- 5 Upcoming consultations on how to modernize FAO’s statistics
- 6 Policy on open data licensing for statistical databases
- 7 Statistical Database Terms of Use
- 8 New Statistics webpage and subpages
- 9 FAM catalogue
- 10 Launch of the SDG progress report
- 11 Revision of the M49 standard
- 12 Written consultation on the new standard on “Collecting data from National Institutions”
- 13 AOB

### **1. Endorsement of minutes and review of action items from previous meeting**

V. Bizier noted that no comments had been received from the IDWG or TTF on the item on microdata dissemination policy, which was now being validated by OCC, LEG and CIO. She added that there would be a specific item on the microdata catalogue during the meeting. In terms of the standard on the use of external data sources, ESS had provided OCS with a tentative calendar of updates, which would be circulated to the TTF and then approved at the next meeting. As there were no further comments, the minutes from the previous meeting were endorsed.

**Action:** OCS to circulate the calendar of updates from ESS to the TTF for endorsement at the next meeting.

### **2. Planning process of statistical activities – PWB 2020-21**

P. Gennari gave a presentation on the planning process for statistical activities in the new biennium. He reiterated the unique characteristic of statistics within the strategic framework and reminded the TTF that a dual approach to planning statistical results had been adopted over recent years. He explained that thematically linked outputs should continue to be planned under the five strategic objectives and noted

that all of the SOs have a specific output, which relates to evidence-based decision making, which is where statistical results should be included. He encouraged close liaison with SP teams to identify most appropriate output under each SO.

He added that cross-cutting outputs (contributing to one or more of the SOs) should continue to be planned under Outcome 6.02. He explained that O6.02 had four outputs, which cover methods and standards, capacity development, data dissemination and strengthened FAO statistics governance and coordination. P. Gennari noted that a draft proposal for O6.02 milestones had been circulated to the IDWG and TTF for comments and feedback, and he explained that divisions should take note of what has been included in O6.02, to avoid duplicating these results within the SOs.

P. Gennari outlined that there would be three innovations for statistics in the new biennium. The first would be the introduction of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for statistical outputs. He explained that as in the previous biennium, OCS would receive ring-fenced resources, which should be allocated to implementing divisions (for both O6.02 and the SOs) and that this process would be further supported by the introduction of SLAs, which would be drafted between OCS and the implementing divisions. He added that, quarterly reporting would be undertaken to monitor the use of resources, as well as to keep track of progress, achievements and any issues with delivery. These SLAs would not be included in PIREs but would be an official 'offline' agreement.

The second innovation in 2020-21 was that OCS would be able to receive technical support requests through PIREs. P. Gennari explained that in the 2018-19 cycle, OCS did not appear in the list of divisions able to provide technical support to countries. Most requests were directed to ESS and an informal agreement was reached about how to manage them. He noted that in the 2020-21 planning module this would be rectified and that it would be possible for countries/technical divisions to request technical support from OCS in PIREs. OCS would perform the role of 'SP' and allocate the technical requests received to the appropriate division for the technical expertise requested, particularly in relation to the SDGs. In order to support this process a directory of statistical services at FAO was being developed to assist countries/divisions to identify which division to ask for assistance. Once finalised, this would be widely circulated to countries/regions & HQ to support the process.

P. Gennari explained that the final innovation was the introduction of a tagging system for statistical results in PIREs. This new function would improve the overall mapping, coordination and monitoring of statistical activities across the Strategic Framework and ensure broader coverage of FAO Statistical Programme of Work. This would be done by providing baseline information on ongoing activities and identifying any missing items that should be captured through the QAPS survey.

He added that in the guidelines on planning statistics circulated by OSP as part of the corporate planning guidance, there was a section on the tagging system, which explains what should be tagged. He explained that as a broad guideline, the results/activities included in the Statistical Programme of Work should be included in this exercise. P. Gennari encouraged all divisions and SP teams to ensure that statistical results were tagged in PIREs as they are inserted in the system over the summer.

## **Comments**

I. Mawabagja (ESS) asked for clarification about where to plan statistical capacity development work, in particular the census. P. Gennari explained that historically the census had been included in O6.02 as it was considered to be a cross-cutting output, which contributed to several SOs, however, he said that he was open to proposals from ESS about moving this work under the SPs if this was considered to now be more appropriate. The location of AGRIS within the strategic framework could also be further discussed with ESS.

S. Dubey asked for clarification on the role of regional and sub-regional statisticians in this exercise and more specifically how they could provide support to the countries in this planning process. P. Gennari explained that the directory on statistical activities would be circulated to provide guidance on who to ask for technical support (on the SDGs or other thematic areas). An email had been sent in the past summarizing the support available from OCS, and this would be re-circulated in addition to the directory mentioned above.

P. Gennari also explained that the post cost distribution for 2018-19 would be circulated to the TTF for their review and revision, so that it could be corrected in the budget allocation exercise in the autumn.

#### **Actions:**

- TTF members to provide feedback/comments on O6.02 proposal by 9 August.
- The directory of statistical activities and email sent to country offices should be circulated to the TTF.
- Divisions should ensure that their results are tagged in PIREs.
- The current PCD document should be circulated to TTF members for revision/feedback on which staff should be included in 2020-21.

### **3. Corporate IT tools for statistics**

P. Gennari presented the Business Agreement between CIO and the IDWG on Statistics to the TTF and he noted that this was linked to the results of the 'Review of FAO Statistics Governance' conducted in 2017. He explained that the Business Agreement was written with objective of coming to a formal understanding of the IT applications and services required to perform corporate statistical activities and to ensure that these applications and services were properly supported at FAO.

He added that OSP had also requested this complete overview in order to gain a better understanding of the financial implications. P. Gennari underlined that the document circulated was a first draft and that the budgets provided were also tentative and included as a basis for discussion and feedback from the TTF. He added that once the Business Agreement had been approved by the TTF, it would be further discussed with CIO and then submitted to OSP to request funding.

#### **Comments**

D. Jakovljevic (CIO), thanked P. Gennari for the draft Business Agreement and the work done so far. He noted that many of the applications identified in the portfolio were quite outdated. He also underlined the sense of urgency in completing the exercise in order to secure the necessary funding.

L. Bellu (ESA) asked for advice on which application should be adopted by ESA for its quantitative data, as there was no real clarity on which tool should be used. P. Gennari agreed that making a decision on this was a priority.

V. Gillet (CBL), asked whether the new dissemination portal would replace the individual dissemination systems like AQUASTAT in the long run. P. Gennari agreed that this was an important point for discussion and said that a decision would need to be taken on this. However, he explained that in principle, the project would be working towards a single FAO dissemination platform.

I. Mawabagja (ESS) mentioned that it would be useful to take into consideration the dissemination platform used by the World Bank and P. Gennari agreed that an examination of what other UN agencies

were doing would be beneficial but noted that the FAO platform would also be serving different requirements. I. Mawabagja (ESS) also asked a question regarding the maintenance cost of FAOSTAT, that was redirected to a bilateral discussion between CIO and ESS.

S. Vannuccini added that the statistical work done for the development of the FAO data-warehouse (fao.data.org) should also be taken into consideration, as a significant effort was made under that project even if it was not completed.

#### **Action**

- TTF to send comments and feedback on the Business Agreement by 16 August.

#### **4. Evaluation of FAO's work in statistics**

P. Gennari introduced the topic, highlighting the importance of this Evaluation to better position Statistics within FAO and at international level, in this particular juncture. P. Gennari explained that the evaluation on FAO Statistics had begun and that interviews with technical divisions had already started. He had already had a one-hour preliminary interview, which had focused principally on governance. He added that in a further interview he hoped to have the opportunity to discuss quality and statistical capacity development. He reminded the TTF that the evaluation had three main objectives, which are to:

- assess the efficiency and **effectiveness** of the Organization's statistical **internal governance** and coordination mechanisms, as well as FAO's contribution to the **external** governance of food and agricultural statistics;
- examine the Organization's ability, relevance and effectiveness in providing **quality data** and effective **support** for internal and external stakeholders in data collection, processing, interpretation, validation, dissemination and the use of statistics for agricultural development; and
- identify **lessons learned** and provide **recommendations** for improving FAO's work in statistics, including within the global statistical system.

P. Gennari advised those being interviewed that, being the duration of the interviews rather short, they should make preparatory notes in advance to be able to highlight the key messages to be conveyed.

#### **5. Upcoming consultations on how to modernize FAO's statistics**

With reference to the timeliness of the evaluation, P. Gennari noted that the new Director-General would take up his position in August. He explained that he would need to be fully briefed on the importance and role of statistics at FAO. He envisaged that this would be an opportunity to further strengthen governance, particularly in relation to working with countries, and the need for a clear reporting line between the IDWG on Statistics and senior management.

He also explained that the new DG had already shown an interest in modernizing statistics at FAO, particularly with regard to the data revolution and new ways of producing data, as well as new data sources. He added that in August and September, bilateral consultations would be undertaken on this subject and that a brain-storming exercise with the TTF would be needed in order to come up with a proposal, as part of the briefing package for the DG elect. This would be complemented by the interim

report from the evaluation at the end of 2019. After this report had been circulated, P. Gennari said that the idea would be to respond to the preliminary recommendations by drafting a strategic paper for modernizing statistics at FAO.

#### **6. Policy on open data licensing for statistical databases**

V. Bizier presented the policy on open data licensing for statistical databases, which had been prepared by M Rahija and circulated prior to the meeting. She highlighted the importance of Open Data licensing for FAO and explained that the policy advocated for a Creative commons license to be applied to all statistical data disseminated through corporate databases by default. She underlined that the policy was intended for internal use and noted that further bilateral discussions may be needed on the databases that had not been included. She invited TTF members to review the document and to send comments by mid-August.

#### **Comments**

P. Racionzer (EST) noted the inclusion of GIEWS on the list of databases and asked some clarifications as for which GIEWS databases were in scope. V. Bizier suggested that a bi-lateral discussion on this would be beneficial.

I. Mawabagja (ESS) asked whether a communications strategy on the policy was planned. V. Bizier confirmed that at this point will be developed by OCS in the next few weeks.

#### **Action**

- Comments to be provided on the policy by 16 August.

#### **7. Statistical Database Terms of Use**

V. Bizier also presented the draft 'terms of use for statistical databases' document, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. She asked for feedback and comments by mid-August.

#### **Comments**

Clarification on whether the policy was linked to the existing page on 'terms of use' for FAO publications was requested and V. Bizier confirmed that it was.

#### **Action**

- Comments to be provided on the document by 16 August.

#### **8. New Statistics webpage and subpages**

V. Bizier provided a brief update on the new statistics webpage and subpages. She explained that OCS were working with OCC and CIO to include the FRA database. In addition, a space had been created for the new Food and Agriculture Microdata (FAM) Catalogue. She added that content had been developed for the sub-pages (methods and standards, capacity development & data dissemination & publications) and that it would be distributed to the TTF for comments before the next meeting. She reminded the TTF that the draft data collection webpage content had just been circulated and that comments would be appreciated.

#### **Action**

- Sub-page content to be circulated to the TTF for comments prior to the next meeting.

## **9. FAM catalogue**

K. Anidi (OCS), presented the new Food and Agriculture Microdata (FAM) Catalogue to the TTF, which was launched on 10 July to coincide with the SOFI release. He explained that the FAM catalogue can include both data collected by FAO and data collected at country-level and re-distributed by FAO. In case of country micro datasets, he said that the catalogue does not normally contain the microdata but provides a link to the national platform where the micro dataset are disseminated. He added that the team was available to provide support to colleagues on including other micro datasets in the dissemination catalogue. He also underlined the importance of having a license to redistribute the datasets.

A quick demonstration of the catalogue was given and the next steps in the process were identified. He explained that once legal templates had been approved, micro datasets already received from technical divisions could be added. In addition, country datasets from Ecuador, Djibouti, Malaysia, and Sierra Leone would be added (as per country request) and training on data deposit would begin soon.

## **10. Launch of the SDG progress report**

V. Bizier provided a brief update on the SDG progress report, which was launched on FAO.org in mid-July. The report provided a trend analysis on the SDG indicators for which FAO is custodian where data were available. A status update and insights on progress towards the achievement of the relevant targets were provided on 18 FAO indicators. The media coverage was relatively good, and OCS did some media interviews following the release of the report. The SDG report, SDG Portal and FAM catalogue received about 10 325 page views during the period of the launch 18-24 July, a satisfactory level of visibility according to OCC, given that the launch of the report coincided with the release of SOFI and other important HLPF documents. She noted that a re-launch was planned in the margins of the next General Assembly in September and that more outreach activities were scheduled in the meantime.

## **11. Revision of the M49 standard**

P. Gennari provided an update on the revised M49 standard. He explained that in recent months, the Serbian delegation to FAO had formally complained about maps published by FAO that had shown the political borders of Kosovo (even if the country name was not mentioned on the maps).

An email explaining the background had already been circulated, and he reminded the TTF that the solution proposed was to retain the code for Kosovo, but only for internal statistical purposes. He underlined that no data on Kosovo, and no map with the political borders of Kosovo, should be published.

A further issue had recently been flagged with regard to the treatment of Ukraine and Crimea, and particularly a footnote, which was based on the official position of the UN. The Federal Republic of Russia had made an official complaint to the UN Secretary General, stating that they would withdraw funding if the footnote was published. Advice on the matter was being sought from LEG and UNSD, however in the meantime, P. Gennari told divisions that they should not publish the footnote.

## **Comments**

S. Vannuccini raised a concern that the FI Yearbook had already been published online, and that it may include the footnote. She said she would need to check how the data for Ukraine had been referenced. P. Gennari suggested that she send him the text, which had used so that it could be discussed and agreed upon.

**Action**

- S. Vannuccini to send P.Gennari the text from the FI Yearbook for approval.
- OCS to communicate to the IDWG task force the final recommendations from UNSD and FAO-Legal regarding the footnote on Russia.

**12. Written consultation on the new standard on “Collecting data from National Institutions”**

V. Bizier briefly presented the new standard on “Collecting data from National Institutions” that was circulated for comments on 23 July. She also requested the members to review and confirm the content of the note on FAO’s data collections that includes the calendar of questionnaire dispatch to be maintained annually by OCS in the FAO statistics webpage on data collection, according to the standards.

**Action**

- Comments to be provided on the standard and on FAO’s calendar of data collections by 9 August.

**13. AOB**

No additional item.

The next meeting will be scheduled in mid-September.