



Inter-Departmental Working Group on Statistics
January 21st 2016

Participants: Allemand, Pauline (ESN); Tekola, Berhe (AGA); Baumung, Roswitha (AGAG); Boero, Veronica (RLC); De Simone, Lorenzo (DDN); Frenken, Karen (NRL); Gennari, Pietro (ESS); Karfakis, Panagiotis (ESA); Katz, Stephen (ESS); Kvinikadze, Giorgi (REU); Lebedys, Arvydas (FOA); Mansur, Eduardo (AGL); Prakash, Adam (EST); Racionzer, Paul (EST); Ramaschiello, Valentina (ESS); Schmidhuber, Josef (ESS); Stewart, Jessica (ESS); Varas, Samuel (CIO); Vos, Rob (ESA); Warren, Dylan (AGP); Whimpenny, Paul (CIO);

Absent: ESP, FIA, OPC, RAF, REU, RNE, TCI

Agenda

1. Review of 'Principles and Procedures for the Implementation of Admin Circular 2015/22'
2. Update on implementation mechanisms
 - a. QAPS
 - b. Sub-group membership
 - c. ToRs & VAs
3. AoB

1. Review of Principles and Procedures for the Implementation of Admin Circular (AC) 2015/22'

P. Gennari opened the meeting by thanking the IDWG and Technical Task Force for their feedback and comments on the document. He reiterated that this was an opportunity to increase overall coordination within the FAO Statistical System, to reduce duplication, to increase transparency and to support and guide divisions to improve the quality of their data. He explained that the meeting would look at key outstanding issues with the document and discuss mechanisms for its implementation.

He identified the main areas where comments had been made, which had been addressed in his email of January 13 2016, particularly in terms of the definition of statistics, and the use of the terms analysis and forecasting. He underlined that the definitions provided in the document were from official sources, and that there would naturally be some grey areas where it would be necessary to perform a closer review on a case by case basis. He noted that the document had been further updated to better clarify these points as well as to provide clearer information regarding projects with a statistical component. He explained that one important addition to the document, and to the overall process, was that Divisions could request bi-lateral meetings with the Chief Statistician to help identify which of their activities fall under the scope of the AC.

R. Vos voiced his support for the principles behind the Admin Circular and emphasized that the practical implementation would test these principles and help to clarify where any changes may need to be made. He underlined the enormous amount of work that implementing the AC will entail, explaining that in ESA alone 40 separate activities have been identified as potentially being covered by the AC.

B. Tekola asked for clarification regarding how to treat cases of statistical activities, which are mandated by an FAO body (e.g. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture), and highlighted that this may cause duplication of efforts in terms of the approval process. P. Gennari clarified that in his opinion the governing body is responsible for setting the priorities, whilst the

Chief Statistician and IDWG have a role in deciding the modalities of how these priorities are delivered.

E. Mansur shared his support for the AC and underlined the importance of a quality assurance process for FAO data. He also emphasized the new opportunities and challenges that monitoring the SDGs will bring, and FAO's role in this. P. Gennari added that as FAO has a substantial role in the SDG monitoring process, and that it is extremely important that the methods being used by the Organization have been fully tested and vetted.

L. De Simone added that the geo-spatial team were fully supportive of the initiative, and recommended refining the definition provided in the document to specify that the AC covers 'geo-referenced data *for statistical purposes*'. S. Varas also supported modifying the definition on geo-spatial data. P. Gennari added that there was an ongoing conversation regarding the need for corporate cooperation on geo-spatial information. One option could be to have a dedicated sub-group within the IDWG Technical Task Force focused on the statistical aspects of this field. However, this would be discussed in greater detail with DDN.

V. Boero highlighted the need to more clearly define the role of the Regional Statisticians in this process, particularly with regard to statistical capacity development projects in the field, noting that often Regional Statisticians are not aware of projects going on in their respective regions.

G. Kvinikadze seconded V. Boero's point regarding the need for better communication with Regional Statisticians on projects in the field. He also underlined that projects are not only limited to capacity development activities, and added that it would be extremely beneficial to have an overview of all ongoing projects in the region.

Action: Definition to be updated to specify that the AC covers 'geo-referenced data *for statistical purposes*'.

Action: On request, Chief Statistician to meet with interested divisions on a bi-lateral basis to determine the scope of the AC in relation to their statistical activities.

2. Update on implementation mechanisms

a) Status update on the Quality Assessment and Planning Survey (QAPS)

P. Gennari explained that as stated in the Principles and Procedures document, the key mechanism underpinning the implementation of the AC is the "Quality Assessment and Planning Survey" (QAPS). He added that this comprehensive survey is now being drafted and is based closely on the questionnaires developed for the last Statistical Programme of Work combining the quality assurance aspects of the Statistical Quality Assurance Framework checklist. Where possible, closed questions will be used, and a set of standard replies will be provided. The QAPS should be undertaken by all divisions active in the field of statistics on an annual basis. V. Ramaschiello, who is developing the survey, proposed that before the survey is released for completion by all divisions it should be piloted by a few key players to ensure that it is viable. It was confirmed that, where necessary, bi-lateral meetings between divisions and the Chief Statistician could be held prior to the distribution of the QAPS in order to identify the activities to be included in the survey.

Action: QAPS survey to be piloted by a small group of volunteers during February.

b) Membership of sub-groups

P. Gennari explained that another key mechanism for implementing the AC was the support provided by the Technical Task Force sub-groups. He noted that several of the groups are already well established and have been working together for some time. However, they often rely on the participation of the same people. He added that membership to the sub-groups is open to all members of the IDWG on Statistics and although voluntary, he highly recommend divisional

involvement in the four groups on: Data Collection, Quality and Methods, Classifications and Standards, and Statistical Capacity Development.

He also explained that a sub-group should be created to focus on the indicators to monitor FAO-relevant SDG targets. In terms of creating a new sub-group on the use of geo-spatial information for statistical purposes, P. Gennari agreed that a decision would be taken following further discussion on how to proceed with DDN.

Once the membership of the sub-groups had been confirmed, he suggested that brief ToRs for each should be drafted.

R. Vos highlighted the danger of duplicating work and elongating the approval process by dividing the responsibility for review between task teams, and also emphasized the enormous amount of work this would entail.

P. Gennari explained that approval process would adopt a step-wise approach, and agreed that activities may require review on different levels. He noted that it would not be beneficial to review the same activity five times for five separate reasons. V. Ramaschiello added that it might be wise to adopt the same strategy used in the Statistical Programme of Work 2014-15, where the dominant component of each activity was identified. R. Vos agreed this may be one approach but underlined that in some cases a holistic approach would be required. P. Gennari added that the bi-lateral meetings with divisions could help to clarify these questions.

Action: Chief Statistician to collect nominations for membership of the sub-groups via email.

c) ToRs & VAs

P. Gennari informed the IDWG that as stated in the 'Principles and Procedures' document he would circulate some proposals for the wording to be included in ToRs and VAs for statistical posts, which would help to facilitate the approval process.

Action: Chief Statistician to circulate suggested wording to be used when drafting ToRs and VAs for people carrying out statistical activities.

3. AoB

No further items were discussed.