



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

*Quality Assessment and Planning Survey
(QAPS)*

2018–2019 Edition

Main Characteristics and Results

Version	Date	Author	Description
<i>0</i>	<i>July 2018</i>	<i>Marcello D'Orazio</i>	<i>Initial draft</i>
<i>0.1</i>	<i>November 2018</i>	<i>Marcello D'Orazio</i>	<i>All figures updated</i>
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1. Introduction

The Quality Assessment and Planning Survey is a FAO internal survey carried out by the Office of Chief Statistician (OCS) with a two-fold objective:

- i) Collect information on FAO statistical activities needed for compiling the bi-annual FAO Statistical Programme of Work (SPW)
- ii) Assess the compliance to the FAO Statistics Quality Assurance Framework (SQAF) of FAO statistical activities dealing with production and dissemination of statistics.

The first edition of the survey took place in 2016¹. This document refers to the second edition of the survey carried out in the first half of 2018, whose information served for preparing the 2018-19 SPW edition and the 2018 quality assessment (as per reference to point ii).

FAO SPW 2018–2019 focus is on four statistical functions:

1. Data Output. All FAO statistical activities that produce and disseminate statistical outputs; usually these activities involve the collection, processing and dissemination of data and statistics. Statistics can be disseminated through databases/portals or through statistical publications, typically yearbooks, bulletins and monitoring reports which provide a comprehensive compilation of internationally available statistics at world, regional and national levels, for an appropriate historical period.
2. Statistical Standards. FAO activities aimed at developing methods, standards, definitions and classifications for food and agriculture statistics.
3. Statistical Capacity Development. All FAO activities aimed at providing technical assistance to improve member countries' capacity in collecting and disseminating food and agricultural data, including all training activities aimed at strengthening the technical skills and competencies of national statisticians.
4. Statistical Coordination and Governance. All activities for internal coordination of FAO statistical work as well as coordination of statistical activities with international partners.

It is worth underlying that the information collected through the QAPS is crucial for OCS day-by-day work to fulfill the requirements of FAO AC 2015/22, in particular in the approval process of:

- ToRs of consultants to be involved in statistical activities;
- Questionnaires for data collection;
- Statistical projects or projects with a statistical component of capacity development, data collection, etc.

¹ Some results of QAPS 2016 can be found here http://intranet.fao.org/statistics_coordination_portal/standards_for_quality_compliance/gaps_results_2016/en/

2. QAPS questionnaires and preparatory phase

Different questionnaires were developed to collect information on the four statistical activities (there were 5 questionnaires in 2016): a single questionnaire for data output, statistical databases and statistical publications, and one questionnaire for each of the other activities (see Table 1). The formulation and layout of the questionnaires were improved with respect to those used in 2016 QAPS edition, taking into account also the feedback received by respondents. In particular, the sequence of questions was improved (including the organization in sections and sub-sections) and detailed skip patterns were introduced.

Table 1 – Questionnaire and corresponding statistical activity

Questionnaire	Statistical functions
QAPS1	Data Output: from collection to dissemination of statistical outputs
	Statistical Databases
	Statistical Publications (yearbooks, bulletins and monitoring reports)
QAPS4	Statistical Standards
QAPS5	Statistical Capacity Development
QAPS6	Statistical Coordination and Governance

All the QAPS questionnaires share a section with identification details (title of activity, responsible officer, status, CSA code, etc.) while the other sections are designed according to the characteristics of the activity the questionnaire refers to.

The QAPS questionnaire related to data output (QAPS1) is the most comprehensive and covers the main phases of a statistical production process, as sketched by GSBPM², adapting it to the particular case of an international organization whose input data are usually statistical outputs produced by national statistical agencies (commonly defined secondary data). Compared to the 2016 edition, the questionnaire has a new structure in line with GSBPM, a new section with questions investigating in more detail SDG-related issues (when relevant) and additional questions to investigate the production and dissemination of gender disaggregated statistics, developed in collaboration with the ESP division³.

The QAPS data collection was carried out through CAWI questionnaires developed by FAO with the software package Survey Solutions⁴ and administered with a web-based platform. This choice permitted to overcome most of the technical issues encountered in the 2016 edition of the QAPS, with beneficial effects on the navigation (skip-patterns, sections, sub-sections, etc.) and completion of the

² “Generic Statistical Business process Model” ([GSBPM; Version 5, December 2013](#)) developed by the UNECE.

³ As part of a larger initiative related to mainstreaming of gender statistics at FAO corporate level.

⁴ Survey solutions is free CAPI/CAWI/CARI software to undertake large and complex surveys developed in the Data group of The World Bank. See <https://mysurvey.solutions/>

questionnaires. Consequently, a general reduction of the response burden was achieved if compared with the 2016 exercise.

The on-line data collection was preceded by a preparatory phase aimed at identifying the list of FAO pertinent statistical activities, at both headquarter and regional level, their type and the corresponding focal point. This task was carried out at the beginning of 2018, in close collaboration with the focal point of the technical divisions and regional offices who participate in the IDWG on Statistics. This pre-inquiry phase ended with the identification of 239 statistical activities (see Table 2).

Subsequently, each responsible officer of one or more statistical activities identified in the pre-inquiry phase received an e-mail with the invitation to complete the relevant questionnaires. The e-mail provided login credentials to enter the survey web area, the links pointing to the QAPS questionnaires and detailed instructions for their compilation. In addition, the data collected with the QAPS 2016 were sent the focal points of each Division/Regional office, to facilitate the completion of questionnaires related to activities already surveyed in 2016. As in the 2016 survey, support to the FAO officers targeted by the survey was provided by OCS staff through the email address QAPS-Support@fao.org.

3. QAPS main results

The data collection started in April 2018 and ended at the beginning of June 2018 (although some late responses arrived in July 2018). As shown in Table 2, the survey collected 223 (210 + 13 added a posteriori) completed questionnaires which provided information on 237 (224 + 13) statistical activities. Unfortunately, for 9 of the identified statistical activities the required information was not reported. For 3 of them, relevant information was added manually since they are ongoing activities already surveyed in the QAPS 2016 and not discontinued in the meanwhile (the list of non-reported activities is provided in Annex A).

At the end of the QAPS data collection, the data gathered were reviewed for quality control and for the compilation of the 2018-19 edition of the FAO Statistical Programme of Work (SPW 2018–2019). This phase permitted to identify 18 questionnaires referring to the same activity (duplications), especially similar statistical capacity development activities performed in different countries. In other cases, a single questionnaire was used to document two or more strictly related activities (typically data collection and corresponding statistical public dissemination of the results). This is mainly a consequence of using a unique questionnaire for data production and dissemination, since statistical publications based on a single data collection activity could be documented with the same questionnaire. Finally, different technical divisions not always used the same approach for documenting their activities: in some cases, they opted for grouping similar activities in a single questionnaire, while in other cases, they split complex activities in their components, filling in multiple questionnaires. This problem will be addressed in the next QAPS cycle.

As a result of this review, a total of 18 questionnaires were merged or deleted, bringing the final number of valid completed questionnaires to 205⁵. In the rest of the document, the analyses will refer to these 205 valid completed questionnaire.

⁵ In the SPW 2018-19 a total of 208 activities are described, including the 3 ongoing activities already surveyed in 2016 for which questionnaires were not completed in 2018.

Table 2 – FAO statistical activities in 2018–2019 and corresponding QAPS questionnaires by division/regional office.

Division	Activities from pre-inquiry survey	Activities discontinued	Added after pre-inquiry	Total for QAPS	Activities merged x in y	Expected questionnaires	Completed questionnaires	NOT completed questionnaires	Non-response but added to the SPW	Merged a posteriori X in Y	Added a posteriori	Removed a posteriori	Total for SPW
AGA	5			5	2 1	4	4						4
AGP	2			2		2	2						2
CBD	1			1		1		1					0
CBL	3			3		3	3						3
CIO	1			1		1	1						1
ESA	18			18	8 1	11	4	7	2				6
ESN	7			7	3 1	5	5						5
ESP	3			3		3	3						3
ESS	58	5	2	55	4 2	53	53				8	1	60
EST	12	1		11	2 1	10	10						10
FIA	32			32		32	32			2 1			31
FOA	21			21	2 1	20	20			2 1			19
OCC	1			1		1		1	1				1
OCS	30	2		28		28	28				5		33
RAF	6			6		6	6					1	5
RAP	10			10		10	10			2 1			9
REU	9			9		9	9					2	7
RLC	6			6		6	6					3	3
RNE	14			14		14	14					8	6
Total	239	8	2	233	21 7	219	210	9	3	6 3	13	15	208
							95.9%	4.1%					

Table 3 provides a summary of completed questionnaire by Division/Regional Office and type of statistical activity. It is important to note, first of all, that the 2018–2019 QAPS edition shows an 8 percent increase in the number of valid completed questionnaires compared to the 2016 exercise (205 vs. 190).

ESS is the division with the highest number of completed questionnaires (about 30 percent) followed by OCS, FIA and FOA. In line with their respective mandates, OCS concentrates its activity on the development of standards and governance, while the other technical divisions have a large share of activities devoted to data collection and dissemination of statistical outputs.

Table 3 – Completed valid questionnaires by type and division.

Divisions/ Regional Offices	Data Output	Statistical Databases	Statistical Publications	Standards	Capacity Develop.	Governance	Total	Rel. Freq (%)
AGA	2	1	1	0	0	0	4	1.95
AGP	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0.98
CBL	1	1	0	0	1	0	3	1.46
CBD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
CIO	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.49
ESA	3	1	0	0	0	0	4	1.95
ESN	2	0	1	1	0	1	5	2.44
ESP	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	1.46
ESS	28	4	6	10	8	4	60	29.27
EST	7	0	2	1	0	0	10	4.88
FIA	16	8	0	5	1	1	31	15.12
FOA	8	0	1	4	4	2	19	9.27
OCC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
OCS	3	1	0	13	0	16	33	16.10
RAF	0	0	0	0	4	1	5	2.44
RAP	0	0	0	0	8	1	9	4.39
REU	0	0	0	0	7	0	7	3.41
RLC	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	1.46
RNE	0	0	0	0	3	3	6	2.93
Total	73	17	13	34	38	30	205	
<i>Rel. Freq (%)</i>	35.61	8.29	6.34	16.59	18.54	14.63		

Table 4 – Completed valid questionnaires by type in 2018 compared to 2016 QAPS edition.

QAPS type in 2016	QAPS type in 2018						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	56	0	0	0	0	0	56
2	0	9	0	0	0	0	9
3	0	0	11	1	0	0	12
4	0	0	0	14	0	0	14
5	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
6	0	0	0	0	0	13	13
Not reported/started	17	8	2	19	37	17	100
Total	73	17	13	34	38	30	205

About 50 percent of completed questionnaires (105 out of 205) concern statistical activities already reported in 2016 edition of the QAPS (see Table 4). As expected, about 1/3 (37/100=37 percent) of the new activities document statistical capacity development projects implemented in countries by regional offices. A significant increase of newly reported activities is also registered for the development of statistical standards and implementation of coordination mechanisms, mainly linked to the establishment of the OCS office (at the beginning of 2017, just after the 2016 QAPS survey was completed).

4. Strengths and weaknesses of the QAPS 2018

The 2018 edition of QAPS survey achieved a higher coverage of FAO statistical activities than the previous edition, mainly due to the following factors:

- i) Preparatory phase aimed at creating a list of ongoing and planned activities in biennium 2018–2019 (by type and division);
- ii) Better data collection tool (online CAWI software developed in Survey Solutions), without limitation in the number of activities that could be reported;
- iii) Stronger involvement of the Regional Statisticians.

The revision of the questionnaires and the adoption of the new data collection tool contributed to improve data quality and to decrease the reporting burden. Nonetheless, prior to the processing of QAPS results, a thorough data revision/validation was needed to prepare the SPW 2018-19 and to score data output activities. It required a non-negligible effort, in particular to identify possible duplicated activities and validate/impute missing CSA codes. In addition, a few statistical activities were still not reported (for instance, completed questionnaires cover only 18 of the 21 SDGs indicators under FAO custodianship). Further improvements of the questionnaires and the data collection process are planned for the next QAPS cycle, in line also with the comments received by the focal points.

In summary, the main limitations identified in the QAPS 2018 are the following:

- limited under-coverage of FAO statistical activities (few activities not listed in the preparatory phase and limited non-reporting of the identified activities);

- heterogeneous behaviour of the focal points in documenting their statistical activities (more activities in one questionnaire or single activity split in more questionnaires);
- reporting errors (duplicated or misclassified activities);
- extensive efforts required for the validation/revision of the completed questionnaires.

One of the actions suggested to address these weaknesses in future editions of the QAPS is to improve the preparatory phase and to ensure a stronger involvement of the IDWG-TTF focal points. In particular, better instructions should be prepared and provided to focal points in the preparatory phase on:

- how to classify statistical activities;
- how to increase homogeneity in documenting activities (number of questionnaires to be completed in relation to the identified statistical activities)
- how to fill in critical questions which contribute to SPW (title, description, CSA code, SOs, intra-division cooperation, SDG-related activities).
- how to avoid the duplication in reporting, which involves a higher cooperation between units in HQ and regional offices.

Additional actions that would further improve the QAPS results could be:

- Strengthen the buy-in of the managers during the preparatory stage, by communicating better the objectives of this process and its impact on the development of the statistical program of work and corporate reporting.
- Tag statistical activities in the PWB 2020–2021 and in the FPMIS system to facilitate the identification of new statistical activities and eliminate the need of some questionnaires (e.g. QAPS5 on Statistical Capacity Development activities).
- Develop new tools to manage task related to monitoring and follow-up (i.e. sending automatically e-mails to the non-respondents, etc.).
- Improve the questionnaires by introducing additional checks to avoid incorrect reporting and missing values.
- Ensure the availability of the server for a longer period so that missing or incorrectly classified questionnaires can be added during the data validation stages.

The additional efforts in the preparatory and data collection phase should be compensated by a reduction of the effort in the validation/revision of the completed questionnaires. Moreover, using the same questionnaires (slightly revised to take into account the suggestions received) and data collection tool should allow to pre-load the data already reported (obviously only for statistical activities that will be still in place in 2020–2021) thus facilitating the data collection phase and consequently, a further reduction of the response burden.

Annex A

Table A1 – Activities without a completed questionnaire

Division	Responsible officer	Title of statistical activity	Type of statistical activity	Included in SPW 2016–2017	Included in SPW 2018–2019
CBD	Irene Hoffmann	Survey on Access and Benefit-Sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ABS)	Data collection/processing/dissemination	No	No
ESA	Abdi Roble	Rural food security rapid assessments covering the agriculture and Livestock sectors	Data collection/processing/dissemination	Yes	No
ESA	Abukar Yusuf	Nutrition surveys	Data collection/processing/dissemination	Yes	No (possible duplication)
ESA	Cindy Holleman	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)	Statistical standards	No	No (seems discontinued)
ESA	Cindy Holleman	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)	Data collection/processing/dissemination	No	Yes
ESA	Jean Balie	Price incentives and public expenditures monitoring indicators	Statistical publications	Yes	Yes
ESA	Nicholas Sitko	Climate resilience in Sri Lanka	Data collection/processing/dissemination	No	No
ESA	Nicholas Sitko	Data processing in Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique	Data dissemination	No	No
OCC	Claudia Nicolai	FAO Country Profiles	Data collection/processing/dissemination	No	Yes