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Organization of the
United Nations

REPORT OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

15–19 February 2016
Thimphu, Bhutan



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**REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (RAP)
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
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ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AGRIS	Agricultural Integrated Survey
AIM	Agro-Industry Measurement
AFSIS	ASEAN Food Security Information System
AMIS	Agricultural Market Information System
APCAS	Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
CADIS	Center for Agricultural Data and Information System
CAPI	Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing
CPC	Central Product Classification
DFA	Development Flows to Agriculture
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FBS	Food Balance Sheets
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIES	Food Insecurity Experience Scale
FNS	Food and Nutrition Security
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEA	Government Expenditure on Agriculture
GHG	Greenhouse Gas Emissions
GIS	Geographical Information System
HS	Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System
IAEG-SDG	Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MIS	Management Information System
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council, Maldives
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
NSDS	National Statistics Development Strategy
NSO	National Statistics Office
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OOF	Other Official Flows
PoU	Prevalence of Undernourishment
RAP	Regional Action Plan (for Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics)
RGB	Royal Government of Bhutan
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAARCSTAT	Programme for cooperation in statistics in SAARC countries
SEEA	System of Environmental-Economic Accounting
SOFI	State of Food Insecurity
SPARS	Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics
SUA	Supply Utilization Accounts

TCP	Technical Cooperation Programme
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCA	World Census of Agriculture
WFP	World Food Programme

REPORT OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Introduction

1. The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGB) hosted the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS) convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Thimphu, Bhutan from 15 to 19 February 2016. The session was attended by 76 participants including 50 delegates from APCAS member countries viz. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Republic of Korea (ROK), Thailand, the United States of America (USA) and Viet Nam. Four observers from the Maldives, Samoa, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS), and 16 staff from FAO also attended.

Opening Session

2. The Minister of Agriculture and Forests, His Excellency Yeshe Dorji, presided over the Marchang Ceremony, a traditional Bhutanese votive ceremony, to mark the opening of the Session.

3. Mr Chencho Norbu, Officiating Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan welcomed all participants to Thimphu, and expressed the RGB's gratitude to FAO for accepting Bhutan's offer to host the session. Mr Norbu thanked FAO for the support provided to the Government in organizing this Session. He noted that APCAS has provided strong support for the development of agricultural statistics in the Asia and Pacific region.

4. As the outgoing APCAS Chair, Mr Samaychanh Boupha, Head of the Lao Statistics Bureau, and Vice Minister of Planning Investment of Lao PDR, expressed his sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan for hosting the Session. He was honoured to chair the 25th APCAS Session and was confident that the 26th Session would be a success. He welcomed Mongolia as a new member of APCAS.

5. Mr Pietro Gennari, Chief Statistician and Director, Statistics Division of FAO, addressed the Commission thanking the Royal Government of Bhutan for hosting this Session. He marked the importance of this session noting the successful close of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, and the coming transition to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

6. Delivering the keynote address to the Commission, Mr Yeshey Dorji expressed his sincere thanks to the organizers for the opportunity to open such an important event, and to the Commission for accepting the invitation for Bhutan to host the 26th APCAS Session. He noted the two major challenges of food security and climate

change and the need for urgent responses which would require strong coordination and cooperation. Mr Yeshey Dorji recognized that agricultural statistics play vital role in planning growth and development for poverty reduction in this largely agrarian region.

7. Mr Mukesh Srivastava, APCAS Secretary, thanked members of the local organizing committee of the Royal Government of Bhutan and their staff for their dedicated work in making this event successful. He also thanked officers of FAO from Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, Headquarters in Rome and local FAO representation for their assistance in formulating the agenda, preparing papers and supporting the organization of the event.

Election of Chair, Vice-Chair and Drafting Committee

(Item 2 of the Agenda)

8. The outgoing Chair, Mr Samaychanh Boupcha, Head of the Lao Statistics Bureau and Vice Minister, presided over the election of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Drafting Committee. Mr Chencho Norbu, Secretary (Officiating), Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan, was unanimously elected Chair of the 26th APCAS Session. Ms Sera Bose, Principal Statistician, Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji, was elected Vice Chair of the Session.

9. The Commission then constituted a Drafting Committee Chaired by Mr Romeo Recide (the Philippines) with Mr Kuenga Namgay (Bhutan), Ms Sarah Hoffman (USA), Ms Shafia Aminath (Maldives), Ms Nongnooch Deetae (Thailand) and Ms Edith Faaola (Samoa) as members of the Committee.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

(Item 3 of the Agenda)

10. The Commission adopted the agenda given in Appendix A as well as the associated timetable. Appendices B and C contain lists of delegates and observers and a list of relevant documents respectively. The speeches delivered in the Opening Sessions are given in Appendices D, E, F and G. A list of member countries of the Commission, as of February 2016, is given in Appendix H.

FAO's Activities in Food and Agriculture Statistics in Asia and the Pacific since the Last Session of the Commission

(Item 4 of the Agenda)

11. Mr Srivastava introduced APCAS/16/4.1 'Overview of FAO activities in Asia and the Pacific region and follow-up to the recommendations of the last Session of APCAS'. He indicated that in the two years since the last APCAS a number of normative works and project-related activities had been undertaken, with a significant increase in FAO activities in the region in the area of agricultural statistics. In relation to APCAS, he informed the Commission that the APCAS25 report had been published and as Secretary, he had been involved in preparations for APCAS26; he noted that APCAS26 has nearly 50 technical documents covering diverse dimensions of agricultural statistics. He also provided information about follow-up actions taken on the recommendations of the last APCAS.

12. Mr Srivastava advised participants of changes to the *Regional Statistical Yearbook* and continuing work by the FAO Regional Office in producing the monthly newsletter *Asia Pacific Food Price and Policy Monitor*. He also advised of a technical report *Crop Monitoring for Improved Food Security* jointly published by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and FAO. This report summarizes the best practices and the statistical methodologies in the region through a series of technical papers.

13. Mr Srivastava reported on other activities of the Regional Statistician including (a) technical assistance to countries, (b) involvement in the Regional Action Plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, (c) Strengthening Agricultural Market Information Systems in selected countries, (d) Building Statistical Capacity for quality food security and nutrition information in support of better informed policies for selected countries and (e) cooperation with other organizations and agencies.

14. In the second presentation of the session, Ms Sangita Dubey of FAO introduced APCAS/16/4.2 'Issues in the collection of FAO data'. The presentation highlighted increasing data requirements due to a focus on evidence-based policy-making and the need to provide data to compile SDG indicators. However, she noted that less than desired data were being provided to FAO through its established data collection mechanism and key areas of non-response patterns were demonstrated. Non-response and incomplete reporting result in the need for imputations to compute regional/international indicators, resulting in lower quality and less timely data. Ms Dubey emphasized the need for countries to improve their responses to FAO questionnaires.

15. *In efforts to improve response rates to FAO questionnaires, the Commission recommended FAO and member countries to improve coordination mechanisms by (a) maintaining up-to-date focal point(s) lists and data reporting calendars, (b) developing and piloting data-sharing methodologies such as online questionnaires and (c) close monitoring of responses [by FAO] to FAO questionnaires. The Commission also recommended FAO to publish methodological guidelines to facilitate completion of the questionnaires by countries. The Commission further recommended that countries collaborate with FAO to request and support targeted capacity development activities on this topic.*

Progress on the Regional Action Plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

(Item 5.1 of the Agenda)

16. Three presentations were made during the session to provide details on the progress on the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. The first presentation, APCAS/16/5.1.1 'Global strategy: An overview and summary of progress' was presented by Mr Allan Nicholls of FAO. The Commission was briefed on the ongoing implementation of the Global Strategy in the region and the need for developing Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SPARS) for the countries in the region was highlighted. Specifically, it was mentioned that the regional governance mechanisms (i.e. the Regional Office and the Regional Steering Committee [RSC])

were functioning adequately and that the activities in support of the technical assistance, and communication and advocacy pillars were progressing well. It was noted that the key constraint in the implementation of the Global Strategy in Asia and the Pacific was in identifying suitable consultants with expertise in capacity assessments and strategic planning.

17. This was followed by APCAS/16/5.1.2 'Progress in technical assistance activities in the region' by Mr Dalip Singh of FAO. The presentation discussed a number of technical assistance activities carried out in the current 19 implementing countries under the Global Strategy in Asia and the Pacific including: the establishment of national governance mechanisms in support of agricultural and rural statistics; the development of a road map for the formulation of SPARS; the in-depth country assessment; the identification of short-term technical assistance activities and ultimately the drafting and endorsement of the SPARS document. Mr Singh indicated that technical assistance activities planned for 2016 would focus on continuation of SPARS development in the implementing countries and furthering work on endorsed technical assistance activities.

18. Mr Srivastava then presented APCAS/16/5.1.3 'Strategic planning for agriculture and rural statistics: issues and challenges'. Firstly, he explained how SPARS vision of a sustainable agricultural statistics system is different from the previous stand-alone capacity development approaches. Secondly, the SPARS document has been conceptualized to outline a long-term strategy for capacity development of the national agricultural statistics system as well as the action plans of the next few years to implement that strategy. In this respect, SPARS is a unique national document, which defines the architecture for development of statistical infrastructure in the country and provides synergies for data collection systems through a national survey calendar and an integrated framework for census and surveys. To conclude he stressed the common issues and challenges encountered in SPARS development with special focus on coordination mechanisms, roles and responsibilities of data producers, and resource sharing.

19. APCAS/16/5.1.5 'Reform and development of China's agricultural statistics in recent years and future plan' was then introduced by Ms Hou Rui from the National Bureau of Statistics in China. The presentation highlighted the range of methodological approaches and the recent use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to plan and conduct agricultural censuses in China. She explained that the use of ICT technologies such as remote sensing, mobile phones and web-based systems has improved the efficiency of data collection systems in rural areas. Ms Hou Rui also highlighted a number of other ongoing activities in the country including conduct of a grain survey, methodological reforms, furthering international cooperation and the work done for the third national agricultural census.

20. Five additional country presentations were made from the Philippines (APCAS/16/5.1.5), Bhutan (APCAS/16/5.1.6), Lao PDR (APCAS/16/5.1.7), Samoa (APCAS/16/5.1.8) and Bangladesh (APCAS/16/5.1.10) to highlight the country experiences on the development of SPARS in Global Strategy-implementing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The Philippines, while not a Global Strategy-implementing country, shared experience in transitioning from a highly decentralized to a more

centralized statistical system. For countries participating in the implementation of the Global Strategy in Asia and the Pacific, a number of identified areas for technical assistance were shared; these included: issues of poor inter-agency coordination resulting in duplication of efforts, poor monitoring and evaluation systems, and data collection systems being not holistic. The Commission was informed that a number of these issues would be addressed in SPARS formulation, which a number of Global Strategy-implementing countries have either recently approved or are nearing approval. While different levels of reforms and adjustments are being made within the country-specific statistical systems, the Commission concurred that SPARS, once developed and implemented, would be useful and effective in not only improving statistical systems in member countries, but also in harmonizing data collection and dissemination.

21. The Commission noted the concern of some member countries about their ability to realize the implementation of SPARS owing to a lack of financial resources and poor human resource capacity in some countries. It was highlighted that the Global Strategy work has improved the visibility of agricultural statistics in the national statistics systems and raised expectations of the stakeholders for better quality statistics. To meet these aspirations, countries are making efforts to raise resources but will also need further financial and capacity development support from development partners, at least in the initial phase of implementation of their SPARS.

22. APCAS/16/5.1.9 'Global Strategy: Sri Lankan perspective' was contributed but not presented due to inability of the delegate to attend these session.

Agricultural Market Information Systems (AMIS) and related issues (Item 5.2 of the Agenda)

23. An introductory paper, APCAS/16/5.2.1 'AMIS progress in Asia and the Pacific' was presented by Ms Sangita Dubey on behalf of Mr Francois Fonteneau also of FAO. Ms Dubey provided some background to the AMIS project, including its scope and main activities. The presentation stressed that AMIS activities cover research, outreach, market monitoring and capacity development, and that commodities covered by AMIS are maize, milled rice, soybean and wheat. She reported on the status of national data submissions to AMIS and outlined several statistical capacity development activities. Further information was provided about two large projects in 2012-2017 supported by Japan and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The project supported by Japan focused on stocks and production of rice only and was implemented in the Philippines and Thailand; it was completed in 2015. The project supported by the BMGF focused on stocks, market prices and production forecasts of four crops and global methodological development which are currently being implemented in Bangladesh, India and Nigeria. The next steps of AMIS are to continue pilot innovations and build capacity in Bangladesh and India, respond to clearly identified country needs in terms of technical assistance identified through SPARS and promote data exchange and policy dialogue.

24. This was followed by four papers which described country implementation of AMIS project activities. AMIS implementation in the Philippines, APCAS/16/5.2.2, was presented by Ms Dulce Regala, Philippines Statistics Authority. She described 'Pilot *palay* crop cutting survey in the Philippines', a project aimed at capturing benchmark information on the average yield per hectare of *palay* (paddy) in a certain domain in the five pilot provinces with high-yielding *palay* production. The survey results can serve as a 'barometer' for validating production data from other surveys. It was noted that crop cutting surveys are time consuming, need well-trained staff and are expensive.

25. APCAS/16/5.2.3, 'AMIS implementation in Thailand' was presented by Ms Nongnooch Deetae from Ministry of Agriculture of Thailand. She pointed out that three activities were undertaken under the AMIS project namely, Data Quality Control on Rice Survey, Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and a Rice Balance Sheet. Data Quality Control on Rice Survey was implemented through in-depth review and included a study tour in the Philippines for sharing experience in implementation of data quality control of rice at national and regional levels. It also included training on data quality control to enhance capacity development in this area for reducing survey errors and increasing data quality of rice surveying in Thailand. CAPI was undertaken to support staff from Ministry of Agriculture in collecting survey data by using tablets; the World Bank experts provided software for making electronic questionnaires and conducted in-country training courses for ministry staff. Rice Balance Sheet items consist of household consumption, foreign tourists' rice consumption, industrial uses, animal feeds, farmers' saved seeds and seed purchase.

26. Ms Leli Nuryati, Head of the Crops Data Division, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Indonesia, presented APCAS/16/5.2.4 which shared their experience with using AMIS balance sheet methodology. Ms Nuryati advised that establishing a Center for Agricultural Data and Information System (CADIS) was an important part of the ministerial organizational structure. The purpose of CADIS was to lead agricultural statistics and information systems services and to conduct capacity development. The balance sheet methodology followed in Indonesia used stock data for measuring stocks of rice plus production data for measuring the production of paddy, maize and soybean plus the export and import data derived from official customs data. Indonesia also measured utilization of these four core crops by measuring feed, seed, post-harvest losses, industrial use and food use. Various forecasting techniques were also used throughout different times of the year to help maintain the commodity balance sheets. Examples of their balance sheet calculations were presented for each of the core commodities outlining data sources and productivity. Indonesia commented that they have seen a noticeable improvement in their agricultural statistics and intend to follow up with various training events, discussions and surveys to be conducted in the near future.

27. Mr Bidhan Baral, Joint Director, Agriculture Wing of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics presented experience with AMIS in APCAS/16/5.2.5. He mentioned that AMIS objectives have synergy with National Statistics Development Strategy (NSDS) goals and will ensure provision of reliable data for measuring progress of perspective plans and preparing food balance sheets. The crops being focused in Bangladesh under AMIS are rice (with its three most common seasonal varieties), potatoes, maize

and wheat. Some of the main activities of AMIS have been improving area estimation methodology for rice and maize crops, developing a forecasting method for rice and potato production, assessment of the use of food grains stock for rice, wheat and maize, and providing necessary training for these respective activities.

28. In moving forward with AMIS, Bangladesh recognizes areas of concern with crop area estimation, production forecasting, and stock assessment. Some of the challenges in area estimation are the majority of farmers with small farm sizes, the rapid change of farmer motives, movement of population, inadequate human resources for management of survey field work, and lack of ICT infrastructure. Despite these challenges, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics has made progress with AMIS in the analysis of data on land ownership, crop cultivation patterns, calculation of trends and coverage. A methodology has been tentatively developed, and the assessment of agro-processing, market price data, production trends, irrigation patterns and food stock systems has been carried out.

Promoting technical cooperation in the field of agricultural statistics to build country capacities

(Item 5.3 of the Agenda)

29. Mr Srivastava and Mr Anthony Burgard of FAO jointly presented APCAS/16/5.3.1, 'Capacity assessment in the region'. Mr Srivastava gave some background to the need to assess the capacity of the statistical systems, the experiences of the 2011 exercise and the need for a fresh round of assessments. In response to recommendations from the last APCAS, a short version of the questionnaire has been developed which includes only those questions which are needed to derive capacity indicators. He advised that this questionnaire will shortly be sent to all countries not covered by Global Strategy work, and that guidelines and support will be provided to assist completion by countries. Mr Burgard provided an overview of the dimensions of statistical capacity and a summary of preliminary results from completion of the short questionnaire in Pacific Island countries. Main capacity issues identified in the region were lack of availability of core data, poor coordination among agencies and lack of advocacy to encourage use of data, as well as issues related to lack of resources, lack of suitable ICT and limited use of standards and classifications. He also outlined what was required to respond to these capacity gaps.

30. Mr Naoki Makita, Director, Statistics Planning Division, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan presented APCAS/16/5.3.2, 'South-South cooperation being implemented by Japan'. The presentation provided an overview of technical assistance provided by Japan on a bilateral basis since 1994 and on a multilateral basis since 1998. Mr Makita highlighted the project to Strengthen Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) in Thailand and the Philippines and the potential to broaden application of methodologies and results of that project to other countries. He also provided information about a project to support the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD) using Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) agricultural experts. He also noted that Japan is willing to conduct more technical assistance activities to improve agricultural and rural statistics and also has Group Training Courses to increase the statistical capacity of staff from agencies in the region.

31. The third presentation of the session was given by Ms Lakshmanan Savithri, from the Secretariat of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), who introduced APCAS/16/5.3.3, 'SAARC activities in support of statistics in the region'. The presentation described the activities of SAARCSTAT which was established to foster cooperation in the field of statistics, in particular to finalize standard formats for exchange of data in social and economic fields. The various SAARCSTAT subgroups were described as well as modalities of SAARCSTAT meetings which are intended to provide networking and sharing of best practices and experiences. It was noted that training and capacity development are part of the key areas of cooperation in statistics, and that international collaborations are in place with ADB and PARIS21. *The Commission recommended that SAARC should explore methods of collaboration with FAO to improve the profile of agricultural and rural statistics in SAARC Secretariat and to assist SAARC countries to improve the quality and availability of agricultural and rural statistics.*

32. Ms Nongnooch Deetae from the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Thailand presented APCAS/16/5.3.4, 'AFSIS activities in support of statistics in the region'. Ms Deetae gave an overview of AFSIS, including its goal to ensure and strengthen ASEAN+3 long-term food security, primarily through the development of an ASEAN+3 Food Security Information System. Ms Deetae then described AFSIS activities over the last three years which included (a) database development and enhancements, (b) production of integrated food security information reports and models, (c) human resource development and (d) exploration of cross-cutting issues and collaboration with a range of agencies.

Monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

(Item 6.1 of the Agenda)

33. Mr Pietro Gennari, FAO presented APCAS/16/6.1.1, 'Overview of the SDG process, the next steps and FAO's role in the monitoring framework'. He explained that the SDG indicators will drive the international statistical agenda for the next 15 years (and beyond). Politicians developed the targets for the SDGs, but the international statisticians via the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG) were responsible for developing the monitoring indicator framework for those targets. While most of the indicators have been accepted and finalized, there are still 80 indicators that need further methodological work before they can be completed. The IAEG-SDG will continue to work on the indicators throughout 2016.

34. It was noted that there are three goals that are associated with the FAO vision and mandate (Goals 2, 14, 15) and four goals to which FAO can make important contributions (Goals 5, 6, 12, 13). FAO has identified 22 indicators for monitoring 17 targets that are under the FAO mandate. There are several FAO initiatives that support the SDG indicators, such as the Global Strategy and supporting countries in survey data collection via the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) module, the Agricultural Integrated Survey (AGRIS) and the establishment of a Global Survey Hub to support countries in the design and implementation of an integrated agricultural survey programme (AGRIS, LSMS-ISA).

35. Two country presentations were made from India (APCAS/16/6.1.2) and Nepal (APCAS/16/6.1.3) to highlight their preparations for monitoring the SDGs. Mr Rajeev Lochan, India, discussed the work India has been doing on identifying suitable statistical indicators for global and national monitoring of the SDGs. He briefly outlined the criteria for selecting global indicators and the principles of adoption of indicators for monitoring SDGs. He then focused on Goal 2 of the SDGs and discussed several targets and relevant indicators. For specific indicators under Targets 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.a, 2.b and 2.c, India has determined the data availability of proposed indicators, including how often and through which source the data are obtained. He raised concerns about the difficulty of measuring some indicators related to sustainable agriculture. Mr Badri Kumar Karki, Nepal began his presentation with a snapshot of MDG targets and achievements of Nepal before a discussion of SDGs. He also focused on Goal 2, and advised that Targets 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 have all been reviewed for data availability of indicators. SDG Goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 13 are also considered agricultural goals for Nepal. Due to the different mandates of various ministries and agencies, coordination is difficult and can cause duplication and conflicting statistics. Nepal has identified data gaps for the agricultural goals. Duplication and gaps identified through the process of understanding the SDGs are now being addressed through the process of preparation of the National Strategy for Development of Statistics.

36. *During interventions, several countries shared their concerns about the global indicators selected by the IAEG-SDGs as some of them are not easy to understand and/or are not produced by the National Statistical System. The Commission also recommended that FAO should take the lead in setting standards and providing technical support at national and regional levels for the production of the necessary data to meet the SDG monitoring demands, especially on the new indicators identified by the IAEG-SDGs.*

World Programme for the Census of Agriculture (WCA 2020)

(Item 6.2 of the Agenda)

37. Mr Dalip Singh, introduced APCAS/16/6.2.1, 'Main features and changes in WCA 2020, Volume 1: Programme, concepts and definitions' on behalf of Mr Jairo Castano, FAO. He indicated that WCA 2020 Volume 1, which was then in-print, dealt with methodological and conceptual aspects, while Volume 2 was the operational guidelines on implementing the census which dealt with the practical details on the steps involved in conducting an agricultural census. He continued to provide more details on the main features of Volume 1. He highlighted the close linkage of WCA 2020 to the Global Strategy and then discussed the four modalities of conducting an agricultural census as outlined in the WCA 2020. In response to increasing demand for data, the WCA 2020 has also increased the number of census items with a distinction between essential, frame and additional items. It was also reported that the WCA 2020 has two new themes; fisheries and environment/greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and that there is an increased emphasis on the use of information technology for data collection, processing and dissemination.

38. The four features retained in WCA 2020 were mentioned as the emphasis on integration of agricultural census within the overall framework of the system of agricultural census and surveys, linking population census with agricultural census, increased use of community-level data and collecting gender disaggregated data. He further explained the main changes in the concepts and definitions of WCA 2020. They are: (i) retaining the statistical unit and agriculture holder definitions, (ii) sub-holding and sub-holder concepts have been omitted as the approach for assessing the role of gender in the holding has been revised, (iii) forest or other wooded land has been redefined to come in line with the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework (UNSD, 2012) and (iv) employment concepts have been updated to be consistent with the new statistical framework of the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013). There have also been a number changes in themes/items and the classification in WCA 2020. Updates in classifications were cited as: (i) land-use classification updated to be consistent with the SEEA – central framework, (ii) areas of economic activity updated and made consistent with the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) Rev. 4.0, (iii) crop classification and a classification of livestock updated and made consistent with the Central Product Classification (CPC) version 2.1 and (iv) machinery and equipment classification updated to be consonant with the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS 2012). He concluded by outlining the way forward for WCA 2020, indicating that Volume 1 which was then in print would be translated into five different languages and preparatory work of Volume 2 was progressing. He informed that WCA 2020 would be disseminated to countries through regional roundtables during 2016-2018.

39. Mr Allan Nicholls introduced APCAS/16/6.2.2, 'Outline of WCA 2020, Volume 2: Operational guidelines on implementing census of agriculture' on behalf of Mr Jairo Castano, FAO. He explained that this volume would be a revised version of the FAO SDS6, 1996 and will deal with the practical details on the steps involved in conducting an agricultural census. As such the contents will provide new guidelines that will serve as a reference document for countries in designing and implementing agriculture census operations. The approach to WCA 2020 was described as innovative, taking into consideration features of Volume 1 and advances in statistical methodology including fast-growing digital and mobile phone technology. Additionally, it was mentioned that the document will build synergies and complementarily with a wide range of existing results and publications relevant to statistical programmes. He further mentioned that the contents of the document will include information on how to prepare strong national census proposals, how to implement the four census modalities and updated guidance on legal and institutional frameworks with planning, budgeting and expenditure control, staff recruitment, training, example of good practices and reference to cost-effective methodologies and tools.

40. He then moved on to the structure and format of the document. He stated that the document will be flexible and easy to update. It will address aspects that do not change so rapidly and aspects that change frequently; it will contain examples of country practices as a part of web-based knowledge and information systems. This was followed by information on the outline of the document. He concluded the presentation by providing a time line for the preparation of the document and provided some points for discussion among the participants.

41. *The Commission recommended that country members provide feedback on the outline of Volume 2 of WCA 2020 to FAO.*

42. Mr Pietro Gennari presented APCAS/16/6.2.3, 'Agricultural Integrated Surveys (AGRIS): Rationale and Methodology'. AGRIS initiative is a farm-based modular multi-year survey programme. AGRIS is designed as a cost-effective way for national statistical agencies to accelerate the production of quality disaggregated data on the technical, economic, environmental and social dimensions of agricultural holdings. The rationale for AGRIS comes from the recognized need for better, cheaper and faster statistical data on the agriculture and rural sectors, and the farm level. A number of the world's poorest countries have not conducted any agricultural annual surveys or censuses over the last 15 years. It is believed that AGRIS will be able to collect 65 percent of the Minimum Set of Core Data required to meet the current and emerging demands of national development policies. In addition, adopting the AGRIS approach will help countries to monitor the newly established SDGs, namely targets 2.3, 2.4 and 5.a. AGRIS is a ten-year integrated survey programme that lays the foundation for an effective agricultural statistical system and complements the agricultural census, which can inform national policy design and implementation, improve market efficiency and support research.

43. Suggested methodologies include a modular approach with the use of a core module which will be administered annually supplemented by rotating modules that will be collected with a lower frequency (every 2–2.5 years) covering topics that do not have much change over time such as farm machinery, production methods, equipment etc. AGRIS can cover technical, economic, environmental and social dimensions of agricultural holdings. AGRIS can also collect gender disaggregated data on key topics such as identifying male/female-headed households and assess women's contribution to agriculture. Examples of topics and data items that can be covered with core modules were presented along with examples of topics and data items that can be covered using rotating modules for countries to consider.

44. FAO is developing the toolkit that will be used in AGRIS that will guide countries on rotation of the modules, generic questionnaires and sampling processes. This toolkit is slated to be ready in the latter half of 2016. FAO advises that at the national level implementation should align with national priorities namely NSDS/SPARS. In addition countries should customize questionnaires, data flows and sampling from the toolkit to fit national contexts. FAO will advise when countries can access toolkits.

45. Four country presentations were also made in this session by the delegates from Cambodia (APCAS/16/6.2.4), Thailand (APCAS/16/6.2.6), Viet Nam (APCAS/16/6.2.5), and Bhutan (APCAS/16/6.2.7), which shared their experiences and the issues faced while conducting agricultural censuses, followed by recommendations of strategies they deem fit to resolve issues pragmatically.

46. Mr Khin Sovorlak from the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) presented APCAS/16/6.2.4, '2013 Agriculture Census of Cambodia: Challenges, lesson learnt and road ahead'. He indicated that the 2013 census was conducted based on FAO recommendations and was the first comprehensive agricultural censuses conducted by Cambodia, covering the whole nation. The census provided wide-ranging

information from land holdings, to crops and livestock holdings, fishery operations and sources of food, highlighting not only the importance of agriculture but also of natural resources, especially for the resource-poor population. Traditional face-to-face interviews using survey questionnaires was used. Pilot testing was done on smaller scales to address potential issues and improve the questionnaires and approach. The census findings indicated the enormous importance and roles agriculture and related activities played for most of the Cambodian population. It also presented household consumption patterns of different types of food.

47. Some of the issues related to conduct of the census include lack of adequate resources such as funds, human resource capacity, non-inclusion of peri-urban agriculture, access issues owing to mountainous terrain as well as some of large holder operations. Several capacity development and preparatory measures were recommended to overcome the weaknesses identified in the current census in the next census in 2018.

48. The presentation of APCAS/16/6.2.5, 'Rural, agricultural and fishery census in Vietnam' was made by Mr Pham Quang Vinh from General Statistics Office of Viet Nam. Mr Pham presented the existing statistical system of Viet Nam and shared experiences on censuses and statistical surveys, particularly the processes, outcomes and issues faced by the existing system. Mr Pham also highlighted that the Rural, Agricultural and Fishery Census 2016 which is scheduled to take place in July 2016 will be carried out with a change in methodology, contents and coverage based on FAO's latest recommendations. This upcoming census will be the fifth and one of the most comprehensive censuses. The census plans to cover the extant agricultural landscape encompassing areas of, but not limited to, land-use, livestock, poultry, mechanization, equipment and production support activities, as well as farm economics including sales, impacts of agriculture on the environment and so forth. All information, where relevant, is to be collected in a gender-disaggregated manner.

49. Ms Sureerat Santipaporn from National Statistical Office, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology presented APCAS/16/6.2.6, 'Agricultural census in Thailand'. She highlighted the processes and frameworks they used in the agricultural census in 2013. She also showed how data collection in Thailand has progressed owing to the use of tablets and web-based systems in lieu of the traditional paper-based questionnaires. She also indicated how personnel capacity has been enhanced through international exposure trips and through master trainers. The presentation also indicated efficiency gains and tracking possibilities via improved IT facilities, but noted some issues related to data synchronization and logistical issues arising from difficult topographical nature of some regions such as mountains and islands, as well as weather conditions and network connectivity.

50. Mr Birkha Gurung, National Statistics Bureau of Bhutan (NSB), presented APCAS/16/6.2.7, 'Bhutan statistical system and the agriculture and rural statistics'. He described the structure of the national statistical system in Bhutan, including the stakeholders involved, and the key statistical activities across sectors, including agriculture. It was noted that Bhutan will begin the process of transitioning from a decentralized to a centralized system under the recent instruction of the Government. The transition would provide for improved planning and use of scarce

human and financial resources, and reduce issues of duplication and respondent burden. However, it was noted that under a centralized system, the ministries/agencies can continue to conduct small-scale specific surveys with clearance from the NSB.

51. The Commission welcomed the timely availability of the new guidelines for the WCA 2020 and the plans to roll-out these guidelines through regional roundtable meetings in 2016. *The Commission noted the continuing concern about the lack of full funding to undertake an important statistical operation like an agricultural census, and so recommended* FAO to provide support for capacity development for the planning and implementation of the integrated programme of agricultural censuses and surveys.

Subsector statistics: Livestock, fisheries and forestry

(Item 6.3 of the agenda)

52. APCAS/16/6.3.1, 'Status and recent development of fisheries and aquaculture statistics' was presented by Ms Sachiko Tsuji, FAO, who explained some of the unique characteristics of fishing and aquaculture, as well as types of data that are needed and currently collected. Information on social and economic aspects, in particular of small-scale operations, and monitoring of environmental and ecosystem health remain significant challenges. Efforts to improve fisheries and aquaculture statistics include the development of the guidelines for census and census-type surveys for small-scale fisheries, and the fisheries module in the WCA 2020. There are increasing needs to monitor aquatic resources and ecosystems together with fisheries and aquaculture sector performance. FAO has made efforts to enable further integration of existing data collection mechanisms by improving global statistical standards, such as CPC and SEEA land and water-use classifications and guidelines for integrated data collection.

53. Mr Md. Monwar Hussain, Bangladesh, presented APCAS/16/6.3.2, 'Fishery statistics in Bangladesh: Issues, challenges and plans'. He reported that the fisheries sector was very important in Bangladesh as it contributed almost one-quarter of the agricultural gross domestic product (GDP). The issues and challenges for further development of fisheries were varied, and fishery statistics were important tools for resource management. In order to improve fisheries statistics, Bangladesh had developed a project proposal to update the survey framework in collaboration with development partners. In addition to a comprehensive survey framework for inland fisheries resources, other potential fields of cooperation include stock assessment of marine fisheries resources, developing GIS/MIS, and institutional capacity development.

54. APCAS/16/6.3.3, 'Fish STATS: Data collection mechanisms in fisheries sector' was presented by Ms Shafia Aminath, Maldives who described the history of fishery statistics in the Maldives, including how challenges had been overcome as the nature of fisheries changed over time. One important change had been the introduction of registration and use of logbooks. Some of the remaining challenges included reef fishery data, recreational/sports fishing data, further needs for ICT improvement and lack of logbook-use awareness. The sustainability of certain types of fishing in Maldives was certified via the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) label. Ongoing

efforts for improvement included creating an eco-label for tourist reports with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) assistance, developing a mobile application for reef data collection with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) assistance and producing awareness-raising materials for fishers to highlight the importance of logbooks and helping them to complete them.

55. Ms Ismayanti, Indonesia, introduced APCAS/16/6.3.4, 'Improving the methodology of data collection on aquaculture in Indonesia'. She narrated how Indonesia had been improving its methodology for data collection on aquaculture based on the results obtained through the census of agriculture. She further elaborated on types of data collection, levels of data collection, timing and processing of data, and the flow of the data. Surveys were conducted annually and quarterly, while a census was conducted every ten years. In 2015, the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) and the National Statistics Office of Indonesia (BPS) cooperated to work on improving statistical data collection on aquaculture. They conducted a pilot project to redesign the household survey methodology, update the sampling frames, establish aquaculture working teams and recruit additional enumerators. Some of the changes in the pilot project included changes in the sample design and frequency to produce estimates at lower geo-administrative levels and increase in commodity coverage. From 2016, data from aquaculture companies will be collected by BPS annually and MMAF quarterly, with data processing conducted jointly. Some of the remaining challenges include training of enumerators and improving the data verification and analysis processes.

56. The Commission recognized the importance of close collaboration between line ministries and national statistical offices for fulfilling the comprehensive monitoring needs for fishery sector. In particular, the census provides a unique opportunity for collecting framework information and improving regular data collection systems. *The Commission recommended that countries consider further integration of fishery information needs into national data collection systems, in particular into the census, and enhance collaboration between line ministries and national statistical offices.*

57. APCAS/16/6.3.5, 'Livestock statistics in Mongolia' was introduced by Ms Eldevochir Erdenesan, National Registration and Statistics Office, Mongolia. She began by noting that Mongolia collects two types of agricultural statistics one coming from the official statistics including census and surveys, and the other from administrative statistics. The agriculture census (including livestock) uses a combined method covering households and entities, whereas an annual survey is conducted to meet livestock insurance. She further revealed that Mongolia is currently in the process of data collection for the 2015-2016 census and the sample methods include price survey of agricultural products, cost and earnings, yields for livestock and annual livestock census. She then provided detailed information on the survey modules used for livestock. The presentation was concluded by providing the way forward and challenges for strengthening agricultural statistics in general focusing on institutional strengthening, including capacity development and streamlining the system to accommodate SDG indicators; a snapshot was given on the ways to access statistical data of Mongolia. *The Commission noted the good use of ICT for data dissemination in Mongolia and suggested that countries should explore ways to use ICT for data collection as well for reducing the time lag in data availability.*

58. Mr Alekh Kumar Sahu from India introduced APCAS/16/6.3.6, 'System of integrated livestock survey for data collection in India'. He began by stressing the importance of the livestock sector to the economy of India, and then provided a brief snapshot of the scope and coverage of the livestock sector. He indicated that the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare carries out two major statistical operations: the Livestock Census and the Integrated Sample Survey. A recent initiative has been taken to estimate fodder production using crop yield estimation surveys on a pilot basis. He progressed by providing an outline of the livestock census, which is a nationwide survey and aims to collect information on populations of animals and poultry at village and town levels in rural and urban areas. He then provided an overview of the integrated sample survey, which focuses on livestock production data through estimation of the milk status of animals in different seasons. He stated that the results of this survey assist the State Animal Husbandry Department to formulate and implement policies to increase production, improve genetic resources, enhance animal disease control and assess feed and fodder management. He concluded by repeating the importance of the livestock sector in the human food chain and the need to maintain updated information on livestock and related products. *The Commission noted India's innovation in modifying the scope of crop yield estimation survey to estimate fodder production as well.*

Food security statistics and recent activities in the region

(Item 6.4 of the agenda)

59. In APCAS/16/6.4.1, 'Food security statistics in the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals' Mr Carlo Cafiero, from FAO presented FAO's current and planned activities for improving food security measurements in light of the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The presentation highlighted the enormous task the SDGs placed on FAO and its member countries in monitoring the SDG targets, particularly SDG target 2.1, "By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food for all year round". The presentation emphasized the need to enhance collaboration among member countries in establishing and using agreed statistical standards, methods and tools for measuring household food security. The presentation also acknowledged that the SDGs better reflect food and agriculture targets than the MDGs, and the call for action to ensure food access to the world's population. He reported that an Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG) has already been established at the UN Statistical Commission as the mechanism to define the monitoring framework for the new agenda. He further presented a number of indicators proposed by FAO that have been included by the IAEG-SDG among those proposed for monitoring progress towards target 2.1. These indicators were based on FAO's experience with the use of the Prevalence of Undernourishment (PoU) and of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) through the Voices of the Hungry project.

60. Subsequently, Mr Cafiero presented APCAS/16/6.4.2, 'Overview of global food security: The state of food insecurity in the world – meeting the 2015 international hunger targets and taking stock of uneven progress'. This presentation highlighted the

key outcomes from the analysis of data presented in the 2015 State of the Food Insecurity (SOFI) report, broken into three main sections. The report first focused on undernourishment around the world based on global monitoring and achievements towards the two international hunger targets of the World Food Summit and of the Millennium Development Goals. This was followed by the section 'Inside the hunger targets' which focused on comparing trends in undernourishment and underweight in children. The report finally presented the drivers of change in food security and nutrition. The presentation also highlighted that although the group of countries in the developing region as a whole has achieved MDG 1, Target 1c to "Halve the proportion of undernourished people by 2015", there is still a large number (793 million) of people estimated to be undernourished in 2014-2016, the majority (778 million people) of which live in the developing region. The last part of the presentation highlighted the challenges for food security indicators that derive from moving from the MDGs to the SDGs. It showed how the new agenda is more ambitious and of a universal nature. As a result, it places much more attention on existing inequalities within populations rather than simply on differences among populations. It highlighted how both the current indicator on the Prevalence of Undernourishment and the new proposed indicator based on the FIES will need to be informed by timely and reliable data produced by national statistical systems, while using common standards and harmonized methods. One overarching problem remains the quality of the data on food consumption.

61. *The Commission recognized the importance of reconciliation of data coming from economic, social and health domains within the framework of Food Security Statistics.*

62. *The Commission encouraged all countries to explore sharing microdata from Household Budget/Consumption/Expenditure surveys with FAO's Statistics Division as far as the legislation of statistical confidentiality allows.*

63. *Countries were encouraged to explore adding a module of questions for estimating food insecure population based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale in the ongoing large-scale surveys like population censuses or household income and expenditure surveys.*

64. *The Commission recommended that FAO should coordinate with the ILO, United Nations Statistics Division and the World Bank in exploring additions to the FIES module.*

65. This background presentation was followed by three presentations from Bangladesh (APCAS/16/6.4.3), Nepal (APCAS/16/6.4.4) and the Philippines (APCAS/16/6.4.5) which shared their country experiences in implementation of FAO's regional project TCP/RAS/3409. 'Building statistical capacity for quality food security and nutrition information in support of better informed policies'. The project has three components:

- Using the food security module of FAO's ADePT software for analysing data available from national household surveys;

- Applying FAO methodologies to compile Supply Utilization Accounts (SUA) and Food Balance Sheets (FBS) from data on agricultural commodity balances; and
- Reporting Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) information in line with FAO guidelines and indicators.

66. The presentation from Bangladesh (APCAS/16/6.4.3), was divided into two parts. The first part 'Measuring Food Security in Bangladesh: Challenges and Way-Forward' was presented by Ms Salima Sultana from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Ms Sultana disclosed that the FBS was prepared in Bangladesh up to 2005. She also presented an update of the latest FBS for the period 2009-2013, the report of which is due in February 2016. She acknowledged the technical support provided by FAO in terms of training, consultancy and publication. Preliminary findings showed an improving food security situation particularly in relation to the availability of rice and fish, and reduction in per capita import of rice, while other indicators did not show significant changes. The presentation also showed the challenges arising from data gaps, non-availability of timely data and the need to conduct more surveys to obtain missing data; it suggested identification of core data sets and better usage of administrative data to counter some of the issues identified.

67. In part 2 of the presentation Mr Feroz Al Mahmud, Ministry of Food, Bangladesh presented 'The use of agricultural statistics in monitoring the national food policy plan of action and country investment plan in Bangladesh'. Mr Mahmud briefly highlighted government policies that have relevance to Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) and indicated that an FNS policy is due. The presentation concluded with a summary of challenges such as lack of disaggregated data and access to micro-data, as well as the challenge of acquiring timely data.

68. APCAS/16/6.4.4, 'Food and nutrition security: A status report of Nepal' was presented by Mr Hem Raj Regmi from the Ministry of Agriculture Development, Nepal. He indicated that food security has been included in the constitution of Nepal as a citizen's basic right and Nepal has made concerted efforts in reporting food security data since 1988. Some of the lessons learned from activities on the project include the need for capacity development at the local level for committed efforts in deriving an effective FNS management system. It was also reported that FNS monitoring needs multi-sectoral coordination and support at all levels. However, it was also acknowledged that information generated so far was useful for stakeholders in making policy decisions.

69. The final presentation on this agenda was APCAS/16/6.4.5, 'TCP/RAS 3409: Project implementation in the Philippines, findings, issues and challenges' by Mr Romeo Recide from the Philippines Statistics Authority. Mr Recide presented processes and activities carried out in implementation of TCP/RAS/3409 in the Philippines. Several capacity development activities, both in- and ex-country in collaborating countries, have been carried out. These activities aimed to enhance the capacity of personnel responsible for conducting analyses and reporting on food and nutrition status based on FNS indicators, SUA and analyses of food consumption data using FAO's ADePT food security module. Project implementation did not experience any major issues, although some minor issues encountered – such as in extending the compilation of SUA to complete the FBS – were easily resolved, owing to

extensive capacity development activities carried out in the process. It was also reported that the Philippine Statistical System is already gearing up to support the generation of FNS statistics, indicators and technical reports on a regular basis. Strong advocacy among data producers and users was highlighted as a way forward to enhancing use of food security data for policy-making.

70. *Based upon the successful experience of the project on improving food security information, and the request of member countries for continued technical support in this domain, the Commission recommended that FAO should continue this support.*

Governance of agricultural statistics

(Item 7 of the agenda)

71. Mr Pietro Gennari introduced APCAS/16/7.1, 'Proposal to establish a global commission on food and agricultural statistics'. Elaborating on the background and the need for a Global Commission, he mentioned that the constitution of such a commission will not only help FAO leverage adoption and implementation of statistical standards but also provide a platform for articulation of the statistical capacity development requirements of countries more effectively. He further observed that although the existing statistical governance mechanisms, where available, have allowed country participation in the regional statistical debate, they have not been as effective in influencing the policy agenda at the regional level. He also underlined the main limitations when dealing with statistical issues at the global level, including low visibility, inequities across regions, inefficiencies and absence of country roles in global coordination. He stressed that the establishment of the Global Commission will help to address these limitations and also provide a mechanism for influencing agenda and decisions taken by FAO governing bodies.

72. Strong support for the proposal was expressed by the recent sessions of the Working Group on Agricultural and Livestock Statistics for the Latin America and the Caribbean (2015), and the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (2015). The proposal was also supported by the previous session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (2014). The FAO Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters also mentioned review of the proposal in 2014 and recognized the usefulness of such a body; it requested the proposed Terms of Reference and sought clarification on the relationship with the existing regional bodies.

73. Mr Gennari clarified that the current proposal is more comprehensive than the one presented at the previous APCAS session as it clearly defines the relationship between the global and regional governance mechanisms. In the new document, a two-tiered approach is proposed that leverages the strengths of a global focus with interaction at the regional level. In particular, a Global Commission on Food and Agricultural Statistics would be created and all the current members of regional bodies as well as the non-members would be invited to participate. They would thus have the opportunity to influence the decision-making process in the FAO Council and Conference. At the same time, permanent Regional Working Groups would be created as subsidiary bodies of the Global Commission for all regions. The Regional Working Groups would meet before the Global Commission to identify regional issues/approaches and come up with recommendations to be brought to the attention of the

FAO Global Commission. Finally, a Bureau of the Commission would be created with one representative from each region to serve on the inter-session period.

74. After the presentation, members shared their views on the implications of establishment of the Global Commission and its relationship with the existing regional bodies. Members strongly supported FAO's initiative on strengthening global governance for agricultural statistics. They also suggested that the regional governance mechanism should be made more effective and more open to sub-regional needs and circumstances. Some members expressed concern that replacing existing 'Regional Commissions' with 'Regional Working Groups' may dilute country participation levels and expression of their aspirations.

75. In response to the reservations expressed by some countries, Mr Gennari explained that with the establishment of the Global Commission, the transformation of the Regional Commissions in Regional Working Groups would be necessary, on the one hand, in order to establish the necessary reporting lines, and only a formality, on the other hand, as the functions will remain the same. This is also demonstrated by the experience in Latin America and the Caribbean where the current regional governance body is a Regional Working Group. In the end, the functions attributed to the Regional Working Groups will be a decision taken exclusively by FAO member countries.

76. *At the end of the deliberations, the Commission recommended the establishment of the Global Commission on Agricultural Statistics using the two-tiered approach and recommended that the functions and representations of the new regional bodies would either be enhanced or equate to those of the Regional Commissions/APCAS in order to meet country aspirations at the regional level.*

Advances in economic, social and environmental statistics

(Item 8 of the agenda)

77. Ms Sangita Dubey presented APCAS/16/8.1, 'Macro-economic statistics for agriculture: New FAO databases on agricultural capital stock and agro-industry measurement'. Ms Dubey highlighted concerns over the long-term decline in the share of agriculture value added of the Asia-Pacific region and the recent research within FAO to better understand the contribution of the agro-industry value chain and linked industries to the agriculture sector beyond the scope of the national accounts classification of agriculture. This research led to a collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) to develop two databases on (a) Agro-Industry Measurement (AIM) and (b) Agricultural Capital Stock and Related Structural Statistics, each containing a suite of variables and indicators to better assess agriculture's economic contribution.

78. The Commission recognized FAO's approach to constructing the agricultural capital stock and AIM databases, and encouraged FAO to publish these data as provisional analytical databases for validation and feedback. FAO requested member countries to provide official country estimates on agricultural capital stock and other variables, where possible, or information to improve estimates of items such as depreciation rates on agricultural capital.

79. *The Commission encouraged member countries to participate in the FAO-UNIDO process to develop an international statistical definition of 'agro-industry' based on existing classification systems, and to share definitions used at the country level. The Commission encouraged FAO to provide technical support.*

80. APCAS/16/8.2, 'System of environmental-economic accounting, forestry and fisheries' was presented by Mr Francesco Tubiello, FAO. He noted that the emerging System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for agriculture, forestry and fisheries (SEEA-Agriculture) proposed a coherent and statistically robust framework for economic accounting and would link agri-environmental indicators, input, production and pollution statistics to more easily monitor the environmental and economic performance of agriculture. He further noted that FAO was currently working on development of SEEA-Agriculture for national use, including utilization of its full set of environmental and economic data and indicators within FAOSTAT. It was highlighted that FAOSTAT contains global coverage of integrated and compatible time series of statistics for about 200 countries covering agricultural production, prices, trade, forestry, fisheries, land use and agricultural inputs, agri-environmental indicators, and emissions.

81. *The Commission endorsed FAO's proposed SEEA-Agriculture strategy, characterized by a phased approach in order of data complexity to support statistical capacity development in member countries. The Commission encouraged FAO to develop a strategy for exploring the usefulness of SEEA-Agriculture towards development of SDG indicators within a coherent, transparent and comparable monitoring framework. The Commission recommended FAO to support countries in Asia and the Pacific through establishment of country pilots.*

82. APCAS/16/8.3, 'Investment financing statistics (Government expenditure, Credit to agriculture, ODA, Foreign Direct Investment and Country Investment Profiles' was presented by Ms Sangita Dubey. Ms Dubey presented FAO's recent work in developing two statistical databases on agricultural investment financing: domestic Government Expenditure on Agriculture (GEA); Development Flows to Agriculture (DFA), including Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Other Official Flows (OOF), domestic financial sector Credit to Agriculture, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in agriculture. Ms Dubey further described the data sources and methodology behind the investment financing statistics, the new indicators created and key results.

83. *FAO encouraged countries to respond to the FAO GEA questionnaire, and to collaborate with their central banks in reporting Credit to Agriculture. The Commission recommended that FAO provide technical assistance to members in improving the collection and reporting of GEA and Credit to Agriculture data.*

84. Ms Park Kyung-ah, Director, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Republic of Korea (ROK) introduced APCAS/16/8.4, 'Case study of Smart Farm Map for supporting agricultural policy in Korea'. The presentation briefed the commission on the historical changes in ROK agriculture, its contribution to the country's economy and impact on rural livelihoods and migration. To respond to the changing environment, ROK plans to develop its sixth industry of the agriculture sector where farmers not only produce agricultural commodities but also manufacture, process and market

them, and where they also engage in services such as agri-tourism. To meet the data demands for this policy, ROK has embarked on digitization of its farm maps linking them with agri-food statistics and administrative data enabling it to undertake agricultural services such as cropland and forest management, forest fire management and carbon inventory estimation. The commission took note of the latest technical tool and best practice for its possible use in other countries.

85. Mr Francesco Tubiello presented APCAS/16/8.5 'Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission from agriculture, forestry and land use: FAOSTAT data analysis and tools in support of capacity development in member countries'. He indicated that FAO's role is to improve agricultural statistics with a focus on GHG emissions and to provide support to member countries to report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He demonstrated the availability of a global greenhouse gas emission database by country, with tools to support member countries to build a robust inventory and perform quality assessment/quality control analyses on activity data and emissions. He referred to the possibility of direct work with member countries and noted a focus on building linkages with climate reporting and rural development goals, and on coherency among relevant programmes.

86. *The Commission welcomed FAO to work on GHG emission analysis tools, based on FAOSTAT's emissions' database, including function for data quality control and assurance, indicators and geospatial data. The Commission encouraged FAO to continue its regional and national capacity development activities in Asia and the Pacific, to address the challenges of member countries on GHG emission statistics for agriculture, forestry and land use.*

87. APCAS/16/8.6 'Collecting producer prices at point of sale: rationale, challenges and proposed solutions' was introduced by Ms Sangita Dubey to present experience from Uganda. Ms Dubey provided information on the context and role of agriculture in Uganda and the collection of various producer prices in that country, before describing the statistical programme cycle in relation to producer price indices for agriculture. In particular, Ms Dubey focused on four components of the cycle, namely identifying users and prioritizing needs; establishing definition and determining indicators and outputs; designing a sampling and data collection strategy; and compiling and disseminating indicators and products. Considerations in deciding on scope and coverage and in designing an appropriate sample were also discussed. One of the key issues discussed was the decision on where to measure producer prices and reasons for collecting prices at the point of sale, using cattle as an example. Ms Dubey then described the challenges in collecting and compiling producer prices.

88. *The Commission recommended that FAO compile an updated manual on statistics pertaining to prices received by farmers, and document existing challenges and good practices in the field. The Commission encouraged member countries to share with FAO documentation of their programme for compilation of Producer Price Index for Agriculture sector, including questionnaires, meta-data and challenges and solutions in implementation of the programme.*

Any other business

(Item 11 of the Agenda)

Venue, Date and Topics for the Next APCAS Session

89. Fiji, Indonesia and Bangladesh offered to host the Twenty-seventh Session during 2018. The Secretary committed to pursuing the matter with relevant authorities in these countries.

90. The APCAS Secretary sought suggestions for topics for the next session. The topics proposed by member countries included: (a) Sustainable Development Goals, (b) Census of Agriculture, (c) Big Data in Agriculture, (d) Food Security, e) Food Balance Sheets, (f) fisheries statistics and (g) statistics to monitor sustainable agriculture.

91. Members were advised that additional topics should be referred to the Secretary for consideration.

Other Matters

92. A special side event was organized on Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a development framework. The delegates were given a presentation on the Bhutanese Gross National Happiness Framework by Mr Norbu Wangchuk of the Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat, Bhutan. Mr Wangchuk explained that the framework of Gross National Happiness is a development approach that seeks to “achieve a harmonious balance between material well-being and the spiritual, emotional and cultural needs of an individual and society”, and is founded on the belief that happiness is the ultimate desire of every citizen.

93. The objective of the GNH framework was explained as including: (a) Setting an alternative framework of development, (b) providing indicators to sectors to guide development, (c) allocating resources in accordance with targets, (d) measuring people’s happiness and well-being, (e) measuring progress over time and (f) comparing progress across the country.

94. Mr Wangchuk further explained that the GNH framework is based on four pillars of (a) sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, (b) preservation and promotion of culture, (c) conservation of the environment and (d) good governance. The Commission extended its appreciation to the GNH Commission Secretariat for sharing this alternative measure for national development.

95. At the request of participants, the delegates for United States were invited to present their system of Agricultural Statistics. Mr Mark Miller and Ms Sarah Hoffman of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) presented APCAS/16/AOB1, ‘Methods for Crop Statistics in the United States of America’. The document outlines the scope of major statistical activities for the estimation of crop statistics in the United States and highlighted the methodologies used in some of them. The presenters stressed the importance of establishing a survey calendar and its key role in coordinating the statistical activities.

96. Ms Sangita Dubey presented APCAS/16/ADB2, Issues in the collection of FAO data – Results of the APCAS Questionnaire. The presentation was a synthesis of information gathered during the session from member countries.

97. The host government, the RGB, arranged a field visit for the delegates to the Research Development Centre and the Lamperi Royal Botanical Park.

Adoption of the report and closing of the Session

(Items 12 and 13 of the Agenda)

98. The Commission concluded the Twenty-Sixth Session on 19 February 2016 after considering and adopting the report prepared by the Drafting Committee, with amendments.

Agenda

- I. Opening Ceremony**
- II. Election of Officers (Chair, Vice-Chair and Drafting Committee)**
- III. Adoption of Agenda**
- IV. FAO's activities in food and agricultural statistics in Asia and the Pacific, and follow-up to the recommendations from the last Session**
- V. Assessment of Progress in the implementation of ongoing capacity building activities in the region**
 1. Progress on Regional Action Plan of Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics
 2. Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) and related issues
 3. Promoting Technical Cooperation in the field of Agriculture Statistics to build Country Capacities
- VI. Methodological developments and new capacity development initiatives**
 1. Monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
 2. World Programme for the Census of Agriculture (WCA 2020)
 3. Sub-sector Statistics: Livestock, Fishery and Forestry
 4. Food Security Statistics and recent activities in the region
- VII. Governance of Agricultural Statistics**
- VIII. Advances in Economic, Social and Environmental Statistics**
- IX. Any Other Business**
- X. Adoption of the Report**
- XI. Closing of the Session**

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APCAS/16/8.3	8	Investment financing statistics (Government expenditures, Credit to agriculture, ODA, Foreign Direct Investment and Country Investment Profiles)
APCAS/16/8.4	8	Case study of Smart Farm Map Agricultural Policy in Korea
APCAS/16/8.5	8	Greenhouse Gas emissions from Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use: FAOSTAT data analysis and tools in support of capacity development in member countries

Doc. No.	Agenda Item	Title of Document
APCAS/16/8.6	8	Collecting producer prices at point of sale: rationale, challenges and proposed solutions. The Uganda Experience.
APCAS/16/AOB1	AOB	Methods for Crop Statistics in the United States of America
APCAS/16/AOB2	AOB	Issues in the collection of FAO data – Results of the APCAS Questionnaire

Opening Address

By

Mr Pietro Gennari

FAO Chief Statistician and Director, FAO Statistics Division

at

**The Twenty-Sixth Session of the
Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics**

Thimphu, Bhutan

15 – 19 February 2016

.....

The Honourable Yeshey Dorji, Minister of Agriculture and Forests of the Kingdom of Bhutan,

Dr Samaychanh Boupha, Vice Minister, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Government of Lao PDR and current chair of APCAS

Mr Chencho Norbu, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests

Representatives of the diplomatic community, development partners, international and regional organizations, Distinguished delegates, Colleagues from FAO, Ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and for my own part it is a great pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to all participants of this 26th Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS). I am especially grateful to the Royal Government of Bhutan for cordially offering to host this meeting in the beautiful city of Thimphu that provides, with its cultural heritage and beautiful landscape, a stimulating environment for vibrant and fruitful discussions.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr Yeshey Dorji, the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Forests, for sparing his valuable time to inaugurate this meeting and sharing his thoughts.

I am delighted to note that some 60 delegates from 17 of the 25 member countries are attending this session. This represents a significant increase from the last APCAS session in Vientiane. I also welcome a new member, Mongolia, and Maldives and Samoa who are attending this session as observers and have expressed their interest in becoming APCAS members. This greater interest in APCAS participation demonstrates the increased importance of food and agricultural statistics in both national and the international agendas at a time when we need more timely and reliable statistics for monitoring the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Excellency, and distinguished delegates,

The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) process ended in 2015. The Asia-Pacific region has achieved important results for achieving several MDG targets. In particular, the region reached the Millennium Development Goal 1C hunger target of *halving, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger*. However, the region still faces huge food security problems with approximately 490 million inhabitants still suffering from chronic hunger. One of the goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is precisely to address this unfinished business.

Most importantly, the 2030 Agenda offers a holistic vision for the people, the planet and for global prosperity. The 17 goals and 169 targets are universal and indivisible – no one can be separated from the others. The Agenda advocates for a transition towards sustainable pathways to development, more fully and effectively integrating the social, economic and environmental dimensions of human activities. Informing the world on these three dimensions calls for a comprehensive programme of data integration across different statistical domains and different data sources.

FAO's mandate and current work intersects with many SDGs, particularly those related to poverty, hunger, sustainable consumption and production, and sustainable use of natural resources (including forests, mountains and soil, oceans, water and energy). Goals 1 and 2, with their promise to free the world from poverty and hunger, are at the very heart of the 2030 Agenda.

Food matters: the way it is grown, produced, consumed, traded, transported, stored and marketed, holds the fundamental connection between people and the planet, and the path to inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Without rapid progress in eliminating hunger and malnutrition as well as in ensuring sustainable food systems, the entire set of SDGs cannot be achieved by 2030.

FAO is committed to working with member countries to reach these goals. FAO can serve as a convener and facilitate inclusive policy dialogue and convergence in efforts through partnerships at all levels, besides offering its technical expertise. FAO can also support the development of standards, promote their adoption and assist member countries in the process of gathering the required data and information for policy design, monitoring and evaluation.

Excellency, and distinguished delegates,

It is well known that data availability was one of the key constraints in the implementation of effective policies for MDG achievement. The challenge of monitoring the 2030 Agenda is going to be even greater. Many statistical domains are new, and some of them are not normally covered by official statistics. Many new indicators are proposed, most of them not fully established in terms of methodology and the data collection process. The need to ensure that no one is left behind calls for the production of highly disaggregated data for all the key population groups, minorities and geographical areas. New data sources and new data producers which are not part of the national statistical system are going to compete with the traditional data producers.

In order to address all these challenges, we need innovative and cost-effective methods and tools. We also need to rely more on partnerships with other agencies, sharing scarce resources and establishing collaborations with the private sector and civil society organizations.

Everybody recognizes that the digital world today is leading to the generation of an enormous amount of data in the private sector. These 'big data' contain an immense amount of information and knowledge, and mining them is being hailed as a credible strategy in helping to meet the increasing demand for development data. This entails a new role for the national statistical offices which are expected, not only to coordinate the efforts of all the data producers in a country, but also to provide the necessary quality assurance mechanism for the validation of data produced by the new actors. We are on the verge of a blossoming 'data revolution', which calls for a greater role for statistical professionals in guiding non-statisticians. Some countries are already moving in this direction and have produced some encouraging results using big data or credit card data, especially in the field of health statistics. We need to work hard to find similar solutions for food and agricultural statistics as well.

Excellency, and distinguished delegates,

APCAS is well placed to be one of the key fora for discussing these important issues and for providing guidance on the way forward. During its 50 years of existence, APCAS has played a prominent role in giving critical directions to FAO's work in agricultural statistics. FAO values the contribution of member countries and takes into account the deliberations of this forum in defining corporate strategic priorities and in planning activities to fulfil its mandate.

In response to countries' requests, over the past two years FAO has made every effort to produce innovative statistical methods and tools for the collection and dissemination of agricultural statistics and has strengthened its support to member countries for improving their agricultural statistical systems.

The single biggest effort in this regard is the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. At the regional level, FAO, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), has a target to provide technical assistance, training and research support to 20 countries in the region from 2013 to 2017. Eleven out of 15 selected countries in the Asia-Pacific region have already conducted the in-depth assessment of their statistical capacity and others are expected to finish it very soon. The Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SPARS) is already at the approval stage. To support implementation of SPARS, the Global Office in Rome has already published 23 different technical manuals and no less than 40 additional products are expected by the end of 2017.

I am also happy to inform you that FAO has launched the new World Programme for Census of Agriculture (WCA 2020) which is expected to guide the collection of structural data on farms from 2016 to 2025. The WCA 2020 advocates for the development of an integrated census and survey programme, to ensure the regular production of basic data for the agriculture sector. It broadens the scope of traditional

censuses to include the livestock, fisheries and forestry sub-sectors, on the basis of the recognition that often these activities are carried out by households in an integrated manner. Greater use of remote sensing, GIS and digital devices for data capture and dissemination is being promoted as tools that will meet the demand for more disaggregated data and for more timely information, reducing the time needed to publish the census results.

As the WCA 2010 round draws to an end, this also marks a new record coverage, with 132 countries that have completed an agricultural census in the period 2006-2015. FAO has assisted many of these countries, especially those with more limited statistical capacity, and will continue to do so in the WCA 2020 round.

Regarding food security statistics, the Statistics Division has completely overhauled the food balance sheet methodology and prepared the related documentation, including various training materials. Workshops based on the new methodology are envisaged to start in 2016, possibly in cooperation with sub-regional partners, like the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

FAO has also developed a new indicator of food insecurity based on the difficulties that people experience in accessing food. This indicator is designed to meet the new monitoring requirements of SDG target 2.1. This indicator will complement the traditional work of FAO on food security statistics.

Finally, we have also made great strides in improving our economic and environmental statistics. A new database on development assistance was released on FAOSTAT at the end of 2015 and over the next two years, we plan to continue and strengthen investment statistics. This will help Asia-Pacific countries to measure investment flows to agriculture from all sources, domestic and foreign, public and private.

In tandem with work on economic statistics, we have improved and expanded our environmental statistics. This includes continued progress on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts, the so-called SEEA, agri-environmental indicators and greenhouse gas emissions statistics, which will all be presented and discussed in this APCAS session.

Excellency, and distinguished delegates,

APCAS provides a unique opportunity for senior officials from member countries to deliberate on important statistical issues. This meeting has a comprehensive agenda to address. In addition to the topics mentioned above, papers will be presented on many different topics, all of which are listed in the agenda before you. I am glad to note that for most agenda items, there are technical contributions from various member countries.

I encourage the Commission to constructively exchange views and to widely share the wealth of knowledge and experience present in the region. We look forward to the Commission's recommendations, which will help member countries to align their statistical activities to global standards and assist FAO in orienting its programme of work to national needs.

In closing, let me once again convey my sincere gratitude to the Royal Government of Bhutan for hosting this meeting and for support to food and agricultural statistics. We are particularly grateful to our colleagues from the Ministry of Agriculture, who worked closely with the FAO Regional Office for Asia-Pacific and the FAO office in Bhutan to make all the organizational and logistical arrangements for this session. And I wish to thank my colleagues from FAO headquarters and the regional office for their technical contributions towards making this meeting productive and successful.

Finally, I wish you a fruitful exchange and a pleasant stay in this beautiful city of Thimphu.

Thank you!

Address of Outgoing Chair

By

Dr Samaychanh Boupha

Head of the Lao Statistics Bureau, and
Vice Minister of the Ministry of Planning and Investment

at

**The Twenty-Sixth Session of the
Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics**

Thimphu, Bhutan

15 – 19 February 2016

.....

Ladies and gentlemen:

I wish to express my compliments and sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests of the Royal Government of Bhutan for hosting this 26th Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS) in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in this scenic city of Thimphu.

It has been a great honour for Lao PDR to have chaired APCAS for the past two years since its historic silver jubilee session held in 2014 in Vientiane. Helming this unique forum of distinguished agricultural statisticians from member countries has been a significant occasion for us. It has been an enriching experience of insightful deliberation on technical issues and shared best practices to improve agricultural statistics in the region for the greater cause of strengthening food security and people’s well-being. I compliment all the countries for their dedicated efforts in progressing their respective systems to respond to the needs of data users with better agricultural statistics and contributions to APCAS.

It is greatly satisfying to be part of APCAS, moving from strength to strength over time in providing support and guidance in matters related to agricultural statistics and maintaining the highest technical standards. APCAS membership has also increased since we met last with the addition of Mongolia as a member country. I extend a very cordial welcome to Mongolia as the new APCAS member as well as to Maldives and Samoa who are attending as observers, and have shown their interest in joining APCAS. I express sincere thanks to their respective governments for extending support to their participation at this meeting. I am sure their shared experiences will be enriching and they will also derive benefit from APCAS deliberations.

Agricultural statistics have always been anchoring evidence-based decision support in tackling the problems of poverty and hunger. Over time, challenges on these fronts have become more complex and they have heightened the need for more detailed quality statistics on food and agriculture. I am proud to say that APCAS has responded to the accelerated momentum of expanded data demand and data

standards and enthusiastically implemented the Global Strategy to Improve Agriculture and Rural Statistics in the Asia Pacific region. I thank the member countries for their encouraging response in this context.

However, as we stated in the last APCAS session, most countries in the region face serious resource crunches in their respective statistical systems to meet this rising demand and concomitant expectations as they are developing and agrarian in nature. Hunger and poverty impinge the Asia-Pacific region the hardest. In spite of their earnest desire to improve agricultural statistics and participate in the implementation of global strategy, these countries lack the necessary resources. I urge the Commission to consider the aspect of resource mobilization in the regional perspective of strengthening agricultural statistics, specifically in the contemporary context. I consider APCAS an apt forum for encouraging responses from development partners and also stimulating sub-regional and South-South cooperation to obtain the much-needed resources. Our shared concerns fall under the purview of the recently agreed resolve to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and the resultant higher demand for quality data on diverse aspects of food and agriculture, in which the Asia-Pacific region is a major stakeholder.

As the outgoing chair, I convey greetings to my successor and offer my best wishes for continued dynamic leadership of APCAS. I am sure that our mutual collaboration will infuse fresh energy in APCAS endeavours to achieve better agricultural statistics for best meeting the expectations of users and stakeholders. My deepest thanks to the Royal Government of Bhutan for the excellent hospitality that has been extended to the delegates, leaving no stone unturned for their comfortable stay in this majestic city.

I now join you in looking forward to the success of the 26th Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics.

Thank you.

Inaugural Address of His Excellency

By

His Excellency Yeshey Dorji

Minister of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan

at

**The Twenty-Sixth Session of the
Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics**

Thimphu, Bhutan

15 – 19 February 2016

.....

Honourable delegates,

Distinguished speakers,

FAO representatives,

My dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen:

It is heartening to be among you attending the inaugural ceremony for the 26th Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS).

Let me begin by thanking the organizers for giving me this opportunity to take part on behalf of the Royal Government of Bhutan and also for selecting Bhutan as the venue for the meeting. I would like to warmly welcome all our esteemed delegates from over 25 countries who have come to attend this session in Thimphu.

APCAS brings together senior agricultural statistics officials from member countries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the Asia-Pacific region, who are responsible for the development of this discipline. This is a crucial occasion when they review developments in their agricultural statistical systems since the last session and exchange ideas with experts from FAO and other organizations on the state of food and agricultural statistics in the region.

At the global level, the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics integrates agriculture into the National Statistical Systems (NSS) in order to ensure data compatibility across countries.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to more than 57 percent of the global population. Many of the countries in this region depend largely on agriculture and the rural economy. The region is also home to more than 62 percent of the world's undernourished people. The region therefore needs to take measures to eradicate poverty, which is largely a rural phenomenon. In this context, statistics have a huge role to play. Policy decisions made on hard evidence are crucial to sustain growth.

Increasingly, agricultural data are seen in the broader context of the social, environmental and economic needs of the population. Data and numerical information have played a vital role in the growth and development of agriculture.

Unfortunately, many of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region suffer from poor agricultural statistics. The capacity to produce and disseminate good quality statistics in the agriculture and associated sectors is lacking or poor. We need to improve significantly in this area.

Fortunately, our development partners, FAO in particular, and other major players like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, have taken major initiatives in recent years to address this gap. These include the launching of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. I am happy to note that Bhutan, like many other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, is one of the beneficiaries of this initiative. Bhutan's version of the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SPARS) which is called the Strategic Plan for Renewable Natural Resources Statistics (SPRNRS), has recently been drafted with the help of FAO and will be launched in a couple of months from now. I believe we will also be making a brief presentation of our SPRNRS at this meeting to gather valuable feedback from the esteemed participants.

As regards the statistics system in Bhutan, the National Statistics Development Strategy (NSDS) of the Bhutan Statistical System is formally in place, with the National Statistical Bureau (NSB) as the apex body for coordination and production of national statistics. The NSB gathers information from the ministries and their subsectors and releases regular information on national statistics including national accounts, poverty assessments and living standards, among many other subjects.

Cascading from the NSDS, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests has adopted a decentralized statistical structure. It has its statistical programmes administered and operated by various departments (agriculture, livestock and forests). The Statistical Coordination Section of the Policy and Planning Division spearheads the overall coordination of the agricultural statistical information system in the ministry.

I have no doubt that this meeting will prove to be another important forum to exchange experiences and ideas, provide improved and innovative management systems on agricultural statistics and therefore take the rising ascendancy of the importance of agricultural statistics to the next level.

Let me once again thank each and every one of you for taking time to be here.

I wish all our visitors a very happy stay in Bhutan.

Tashi Delek!

Vote of Thanks

By

Mukesh Srivastava

APCAS Secretary, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

at

**The Twenty-Sixth Session of the
Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics**

Thimphu, Bhutan

15 – 19 February 2016

.....

Your Excellency, APCAS Chair, distinguished delegates, colleagues from FAO and the Royal Government of Bhutan, ladies and gentlemen:

I am privileged to propose a vote of thanks for the 26th session of APCAS on behalf of the Secretariat and the delegates.

I would like to express gratitude to the Royal Government of Bhutan for hosting this meeting. I was highly impressed by the commitment shown by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Forests when I first came to evaluate the preparedness of the country, before an offer was made by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to organize APCAS in Bhutan. We moved forward together, believing “where there is a will, there is way”.

I am particularly impressed by the growing enthusiasm of the countries in this Commission and their contributions. I have noted that the number of technical contributions has increased from below 20 in Phuket in 2006 to nearly 50 at this session. I would like to express sincere appreciation to the delegates for their contributions and their governments for sending them long distances, from as far away as the Pacific theatre.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of Mr Pietro Gennari, Chief Statistician of FAO for this meeting, which is evidenced by his personal presence here. Such a rich agenda would not have been possible without his guidance, particularly the global perspectives on statistical development.

Today’s meeting would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of the Liaison Office, under the able leadership of Mr Kencho Thinley and colleagues in the Secretariat. Most of them have worked tirelessly to ensure that visas, air tickets and other documents have been ready in time. My sincere thanks to the Bhutanese team. As the APCAS Secretary, I take the responsibility for and apologize if some minor slips that might have occurred and where we were not able to meet expectations of the delegates.

It was a challenge for the hotel staff to make arrangements for a meeting of this scale. I thank them all for their efforts and I would particularly like to mention Ms Navina for her availability and willingness to sort out logistical issues.

Before I finish I must acknowledge the contribution of Bhutan Philanthropic Ventures for acting as FAO's local service provider for this event.

The list of contributors is long and it is not possible to mention all of the people involved. My sincere thanks are due to every one of you who worked behind the scenes for this event.

Thank you and Tashi Delek!

**Member Countries of the Commission
as of February 2016**

Afghanistan	Lao PDR
Australia	Malaysia
Bangladesh	Mongolia
Bhutan	Myanmar
Cambodia	Nepal
China, People's Rep. of	New Zealand
Fiji	Pakistan
France	Philippines
India	Sri Lanka
Indonesia	Thailand
Iran, Islamic Rep. of	United Kingdom
Japan	United States of America
Korea, Republic of	Viet Nam

DATES AND PLACES OF SESSIONS OF THE ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

First	–	Tokyo, Japan, 26 September – 3 October 1966
Second	–	New Delhi, India, 9 – 14 December 1968
Third	–	Bangkok, Thailand, 26 – 31 October 1970
Fourth	–	Seoul, Korea, 6 – 12 October 1972
Fifth	–	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 16 – 20 July 1974
Sixth	–	Manila, Philippines, 25 – 31 March 1976
Seventh	–	Bangkok, Thailand, 17 – 23 August 1978
Eighth	–	Kathmandu, Nepal, 26 – 31 October 1980
Ninth	–	Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2 – 7 December 1982
Tenth	–	Jakarta, Indonesia, 26 July – 1 August 1984
Eleventh	–	Seoul, Korea, 29 May – 3 June 1986
Twelfth	–	Colombo, Sri Lanka, 10 – 16 August 1988
Thirteenth	–	Bangkok, Thailand, 29 October – 2 November 1990
Fourteenth	–	Beijing, China, 8 – 13 June 1992
Fifteenth	–	Manila, Philippines, 24 – 28 October 1994
Sixteenth	–	Tokyo, Japan, 28 October – 1 November 1996
Seventeenth	–	Hobart, Australia, 2 – 6 November 1998
Eighteenth	–	Bali, Indonesia, 6 – 10 November 2000
Nineteenth	–	Seoul, Republic of Korea, 21 – 25 October 2002
Twentieth	–	New Delhi, India, 20 – 24 September 2004
Twenty-first	–	Phuket, Thailand, 11 – 15 September 2006
Twenty-second	–	Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, 9 – 13 June 2008
Twenty-third	–	Siem Reap, Cambodia, 26 – 30 April 2010
Twenty-fourth	–	Da Lat, Viet Nam, 8 – 12 October 2012
Twenty-fifth	–	Vientiane, Lao PDR, 18 – 21 February 2014
Twenty-sixth	–	Thimphu, Bhutan, 15 – 19 February 2016

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